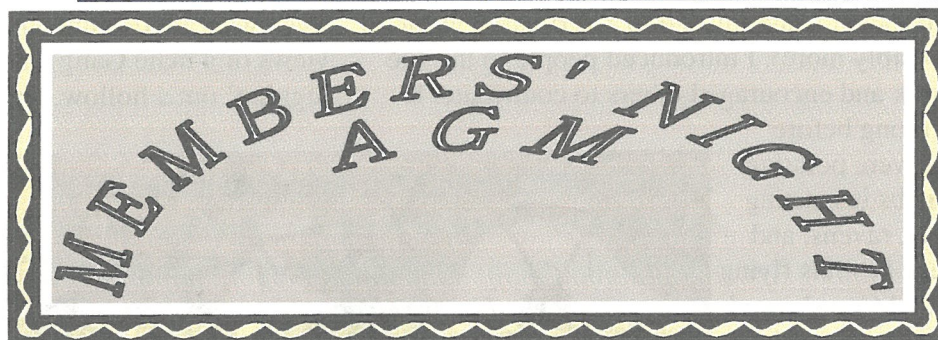


October2007

OBJECTS: To foster an interest in an awareness and an understanding of nature

MEETING THURSDAY October 4
8:00 pm Australian National University
Meeting details back page



October is 'members night' and the Annual general meeting. As in previous years, members are encouraged to bring along items of interest, related to nature, and to talk about them. This is intended to be informal and relaxed.

Examples of items may include:

- Nature art or photography;-Poetry on nature;-Items of thought, for discussion;-Stories about a favourite animal, plant or nature park.
- Any other point of interest, which relates to nature.

To encourage members to attend, the following talks have been organised, to help provide a base:

- Nature of South Africa
- Early-flowering plants of Canberra
- Threatened species and communities
- Molonglo valley
- Tassie's old growth forest - what we have got and what we are losing...
- Some animals of the Rockies

But remember, this is your night, so please bring something along. Whether a feather or a friend, it will all be welcomed. For more details please contact Benj Whitworth on 62544 556

Outing – Mulligan's Flat Nature Reserve **Saturday October 6th, 5.30pm**

Following the success of last year's outing, we have decided to return to Mulligan's Flat Nature Reserve to enjoy another frog chorus. For those of us who made it last year, it's a chance to brush up on our frog call identification skills. Mulligan's Flat Nature Reserve is red gum – yellow box grassy woodland and home to many plant and animal species including around seven species of frog. We'll meet at the carpark, which is well signed from Horse Park Drive - drive along Gundaroo/Mulligan's Flat Road for 2.2km, turn right and travel a further 1.8km on an unsealed road and you'll find the carpark on your left. A 5.30pm start will allow us time to walk into the Reserve and observe some of its flora and fauna before the light fades. We'll be returning to the carpark at around 7.30pm so it will be dark. We'll keep to the main path so walking will be easy except for the last bit down the slope to the carpark where loose gravel can be slippery. Please wear sturdy shoes, bring warm & waterproof layers, a torch and water. For car-sharing or further information, please call Paula on 0428 654 044.

FIELD NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA

FIELD NATTER

Gossan Hill- Sunday 9th Sept: Report on the Spring flower walk

At 2 pm an enthusiastic bunch of 'walkers' gathered, waiting to enter Gossan Hill. Along with the Field Nats members, a number of people interested in the site, primarily from COG and ANPS had been invited/turned up, and this led to a very large group of 23 (possibly more). I introduced people to the site and walk and encouraged others to contribute. It

wasn't long before people were pointing out galahs inspecting hollows, ravens, and nankeen kestrels flying over, and Con showed us a nest of choughs which had 3 very large nestlings. Being early in the 'Planto' season (ie early Spring) my plant ID skills were a bit lax, so I got some wrong (pointed out by Pam and Colin), but then we noticed finger orchids all around us that we had been trampling on, all pink/white and blue finger orchids, mainly being *C. caerulea* (blue) and *P. fuscata* (pink/white) that Christian identified.

Moving further in, the birds were surprisingly silent so John from ANPS explained ID of Acacias, we found a grove of Nodding blue lilies (*Stypantra glauca*) in flower, and another batch of orchids, and around the corner we found white-flowered Beard heaths (*Leucopogon* spp?). John convinced us there were plenty more and heading West we got distracted by speckled warblers, white naped and yellow faced honeyeaters and kangaroos. Along a ridgeline we found yam daisies (*Microseris lanceolata*), yellow Urn heath (*Melichrus urceolatus*), local Grevillea

alpina, Ploughshare wattle (*Acacia gunnii*), more orchids (yawn), Early Nancy lilies (*Wurmbea dioica*) {see article page 3}. Jean, Rosemary, Maureen, Mike, discussed ID characteristics.

Even with a large and yabbering group we had close views of a male Gang Gang 'inspecting/feeding/digging' out a hollow, and three spotted pardalotes

with a male displaying.

Not much further on were olive backed orioles, which excited Murial, Matthew, Debbie and Maureen.

Heading back up the west-side's hill we were discussing the beauty of rosellas when we encountered the early flowering *Cryptandra amara* (and how inconsiderate that it didn't have a common name) and a Noisy

Friarbird and talked about nature with Blanche, Damon, Paula, and Helen, while Mike and Pat waved goodbye.



Photos : Mike Kneebone



For the shortest walk of the year, it almost took the longest and is the first time we have actually lost people. But everybody was really impressed with this small nature park and Canberra flowering in Spring. After the walk I was distracted by many orchids and *Olearia* in flower at the NW corner of Bruce

ridge, as well as singing king parrots and common bronzewings.

Benj

Photos from Paula & Damon; Mike and Pat

Early Nancy



Early Nancy photographed on last month's excursion by Mike and Pat Kneebone.

The species has male and female plants as separate individuals, an expensive option but one that ensures cross-pollination.

Wurmbea dioica is known as Early Nancy and is a bulbous, herbaceous plant that reaches a height of 15 to 20 centimetres with three widely separated, linear leaves. Each plant bears from two to seven flowers. They are white with purple blotches carried on an erect stem. This herb is one of the first wildflowers to come out in spring and late winter. *Wurmbea dioica* is found in all Australian states except the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

The Early Nancy has a confusing sex life. The following is an extract from the ABC Science show recorded in 2001

“Robyn Williams: Has the sex change phenomenon been known for a long time?

Glenda Vaughton: It's been observed in plants, that plants are able to change sex in response to rather abnormal stimuli, hormones, high temperatures, various chemicals. What we don't know about sex change is the extent to which it's adaptive or whether it's just development noise and occurs because the plant just cannot finally precisely control its gender expression.

Robyn Williams: Was it well known in *Wurmbea*?

Glenda Vaughton: Well, we dug them up from the field and brought them into the glasshouse and in the next year they flowered as the opposite sex and we were rather amazed by this and thought at first that we'd simply mislabelled the pots.

Robyn Williams: You would be, yes.

Glenda Vaughton: Then we realised what was actually happening was a sex change and it was a very predictable thing that when we brought the males in and put them under good conditions, gave them lots of water and fertilizer they changed into hermaphrodites and flowered as hermaphrodites. When we kept them under poor conditions they maintained their male expression. And it's certainly something we've noticed in the field as well. For example, after a bushfire when conditions are generally very favourable for plant growth there is an increase in the frequency of hermaphrodites in the population, they increase from about 10% normally up to about 40% after a bushfire and then this gradually drops down over the ensuing years.

Robyn Williams: Yes, so after the bushfire you want to get reproduction going as vigorously as possible.

Glenda Vaughton: That's correct and also probably that after a bushfire there's an influx of resources in the form of nitrogen and phosphorous as a result of the fire, and so there's probably an influx of soil nutrients and the plants react to this.

Robyn Williams: So how many more discoveries like this are there to be made, do you think, out in the Australian bush of these plants who can change sex?

Glenda Vaughton: I think it's probably limitless and the main problem that we have is that there's not enough people out there actually looking for these sorts of things.”

Dr Glenda Vaughton is a Senior Lecturer University of New England Armidale NSW

TYPES OF MAGPIES

When I first started birding my trusty 1958 Neville Cayley *What bird is that?* described three species of magpie. Now there is only one species, but divided into eight subspecies of Australian magpie.

The **black-backed magpie**, originally known as *Gymnorhina tibicen tibicen*, has been split into at least three black-backed races:

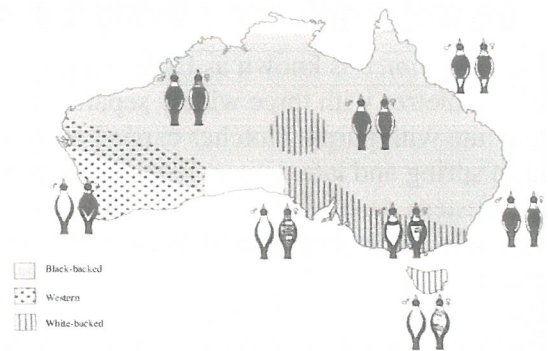
- *G. tibicen tibicen*, found in eastern New South Wales
- *G. tibicen terraereginae* found across Queensland, central and western New South Wales and into northern South Australia
- *G. tibicen eylandtensis*, found across the Northern Australia
- *G. tibicen longirostris*, found across northern Western Australia

The **White-backed Magpie**, originally *G. tibicen hypoleuca*, has similarly been split into races:

- *G. tibicen tyrannica*, a very large white backed form found across southern Victoria
- *G. tibicen telonocua*, found in southern South Australia
- The **Tasmanian Magpie**, *G. tibicen hypoleuca* a small white-backed subspecies with a short compact bill found on King and Flinders Islands, as well as Tasmania.
- The **Western Magpie**, (originally the third species) *G. tibicen dorsalis* in the fertile south-west corner of Western Australia.

While the three races, *tibicen*, *hypoleuca* and *dorsalis*, were for many years considered separate species, they still were noted to hybridise readily where their territories cross, with hybrid grey or striped-backed magpies being quite common.

From the map it appears that the ACT is a location of overlap of the races. Certainly you can see a lot of variation in Canberra, including a few white backed. Do the club's birdos have more to add?



From *Australian Magpie* Gisela Kaplan



Article Chris Bunn

Photos Philip Bell

In the bookshops

FORTHCOMING - Following the success of "The big twitch", Sean Dooley presents a guide to the secret world of birdwatching - "Anoraks to Zitting Cisticola: a whole lot of stuff about birdwatching". Due for release in October this book offers, often amusing, insights into the language, behaviour, haunts and habits of both birders and birds.

Identifying plants of grassy ecosystems of the ACT region - a field-based course

Dates: Thurs 22 & Friday 23 November 2007 (choose one or both days)

Canberra: Australian National Botanic Gardens & an ACT conservation reserve

Objectives:

- To improve skills in identifying plants of the ACT region
- To learn to recognise species which indicate quality or conservation value of the site.

Course outline:

The course will be mostly field-based. You can register for day 1 or day 2 or both days.

- Day 1: for beginners and those less experienced
- Day 2: for those with more experience.

Day 1 will start with an introductory session in the ANBG Theatre before going to the field site. All Day 2 will be in the field.

Skilled tutors will guide you through practical identification techniques. Participants will work in small groups and will move between habitats and tutors during the day. Numbers will be limited by the number of available tutors.

Course fee:

(includes catering, transport, information pack, hand-lens & GST):

ANPC member: \$100 per day *Concession (ANPC member): \$75 per day

Non-member: \$110 per day *Concession (non-member): \$85 per day

* Concession for non-employed: e.g. volunteer community group members, full-time students, pensioners.

Registration:

Registration form is available on the ANPC website

<http://www.anpc.asn.au/canberra20071122.html> or the ANPC office (details below)

Registrations close: 5.00pm Monday 12 November 2007

[This course is assisted by an ACT Environment Grant and the Centre for Plant Biodiversity Research; the Australian National Botanic Gardens; NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change; ACT Parks, Conservation and Lands; Greening Australia Capital Region; Friends of Grasslands].

The National Office

The Australian Network for Plant Conservation Inc (ANPC) GPO Box 1777

Canberra ACT 2601

Tel: 02 6250 9509 Fax: 02 6250 9528

email: anpc@anpc.asn.au; website: www.anpc.asn.au

The ANPC is a national non-profit, non-government organisation dedicated to the conservation of Australia's native vegetation.

Field Naturalists Association of Canberra Presidents report for 2006-07

Field Naturalists goal is 'to foster an interest in, an awareness and an understanding of nature'. The first year leading Field Nats I focussed on members, improving the value of being in the club and achieving the goals, while the second year has built on this, extending further out into the general community.

Newsletter

The newsletter is the main contact for all members of the club, so improvements to this will provide most benefit to all members. The newsletter was always good, but Chris has now created a great newsletter in both format and content and printing in colour adds a lot to the information. Philip Bell's printing and distribution has maintained price (eg through more being emailed) while improving quality. The newsletter has also included more local content, with Maureens book reviews, Debbie's stories, member's tidbits and photos being particularly memorable. Thanks also to consistent contributors such as Chris, Rosemary and Paula.

Meetings

Field Naturalists has great speakers at meeting nights and this year was no exception. After Rosemary von Behrens went to Tasmania, Rosemary Blemings took up organising the meetings, with help from the committee. All talks were very interesting. Presentations that stuck in my mind were George Heinsohn on Dugongs, Barry Richardson on Jumping Spiders and Andrew Glikson's intriguing yet worrying talk on climate change.. But I know the talk by Kenn Batt on Clouds and Ian Frasers talk on Patagonia were also very appealing to members.

After the club received insurance last year, processes were set-up to advertise talks (by committee) and this led to a large increase in attendances at meetings, from an average of about 22, to an average of 36.8 people per meeting over 10 previous meetings I attended, with a maximum of 65. Plus visitors were present at most meetings. So basically attendance has increased by 1/3rd, with a subsequent increase in education/ communication as well as raffle income (thanks also to Pam Fenning). The main dramas have been a hail storm and also people not being able to find the location- We are working on the latter.

Field trips

Field trip attendance has also increased over the year, with usually over 10 members, (rather than 6), and up to 23. Some particularly successful trips were Bungonia Gorge near Goulburn and the Honeyeater migration near Tharwa, with all members leaving with great memories. But even local walks, for eg Gossan Hill, have been well attended. But please remember, I am supposed to only coordinate walks, not lead every one, so thanks to Paula and Rosemary for stepping up to the plate and leading.

Conservation

When walking in nature it is hard not to get attached to sites and worry about their degradation. Field Naturalist's has taken a slightly more active step in its conservation role, with us now having 2 members on the Conservation Council, and for example providing comments on Fire (through Tony) and Kangaroo grazing (represented by Dierk). Rosemary Blemings also led a very successful campaign on the Molonglo valley that had impact on ACT politicians. These small steps have raised our profile and credibility in conservation circles.

Other

Membership has risen from 60 memberships to 70 memberships, due mainly to advertising. The club (Philip) is also working at developing a new email list and online chat group to discuss nature and distribute nature-related information. We are contantly working at fixing teething problems with coordination. We have been working to coordinate nature-related groups more effectively in Canberra. Thanks also to everyone for helping out while I have been sick.

Finance

Field Naturalists is a non-profit society. To improve value to members we improved the newsletter, for minimal cost and this achieved great gains for all members. Having said that, our small club (70 members) has accumulated large funds and continues to do so simply because it has become so adverse to spending any money, even on core functions. This year, increases in newsletter costs have been more than compensated by increases in membership, attendance at meetings and raffle money, and donations. Debates over money should be made more 'effective' in the future.

Please see Bob's Financial statement for further information on the finances and thanks to Bob for taking on this important role over the past year.

Benj Whitworth
President
Field Naturalists Association of Canberra
18/9/2007

Audited Treasurer's report for the year July 2006—June 2007

The audit was conducted by Ken Hanna, Chartered Accountant. He found no problem with the financial "books". In fact I was commended on the quality of the records, the use of excel for that purpose, and the monthly summary statements available for him to review. Ken conducted a rigorous review of the financial information provided, and was satisfied that all was in good order. Ultimately everything was in "balance".

Bob Lehman (treasurer)

**FIELD NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION OF
CANBERRA INCORPORATED**

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30TH JUNE, 2007

	2006 \$	2007 \$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Bank Cheque Account	2,408	1,817
Term Deposit	8,875	10,340
Petty Cash Advance	20	20
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	<u>11,303</u>	<u>12,176</u>
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Membership Fees In Advance	792	-
NET ASSETS	<u>10,512</u>	<u>-</u>
MEMBERS' FUND		
Members' Fund at Beginning of Year	10,195	10,512
Surplus for Year	316	1,665
MEMBERS' FUND AT END OF YEAR	<u>10,512</u>	<u>12,176</u>

**FIELD NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION OF
CANBERRA INCORPORATED**

**INCOME EXPENDITURE STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE, 2007**

	2006 \$	2007 \$
INCOME		
Members' Fees In Advance	792	792
Membership Subscription	1,360	1,360
Raffles	339	339
Tea Money	65	65
Donations	230	230
Interest Received (Term Deposit)	464	464
Interest Received (Cheque Account)	2	2
TOTAL INCOME	<u>3,252</u>	<u>3,252</u>
EXPENDITURE		
Affiliation Fees	30	100
Newsletter Printing	574	381
Postage	403	300
Post Office Box Rental	107	115
Presentations (Speakers and ANU)	136	68
Student Prize Vouchers	-	300
Sundry Expenses	388	23
Insurance	-	300
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>1,647</u>	<u>1,587</u>
INCOME EXCEEDS EXPENDITURE BY	<u>316</u>	<u>1,665</u>



Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra

Who are the Field Naturalists?

The Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra (FNAC) was formed in 1981. Our aim is to foster interest in natural history by means of meetings and regular field outings. Meetings are usually held on the first Thursday of each month. Outings range from weekend rambles to long weekends away. Activities are advertised in our monthly newsletter. We emphasise informality and the enjoyment of nature. New members are always welcome. If you wish to join FNAC, please fill in the member application below and send it in with your subscription to the FNAC Treasurer at the address below:

President: Benj Whitworth, tel w 6272 3192 h 62544556

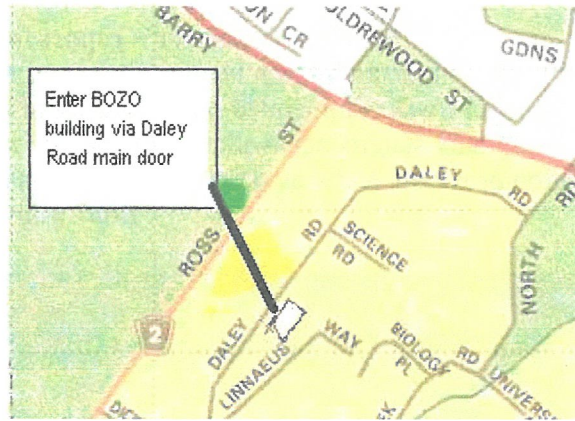
Secretary: Rosemary Blemings, tel 02 6258 4724

Website: www.geocities.com/fieldnaturalist/index.html

Newsletter editor: Chris Bunn <chris_b@webone.com.au

Tel 02 6241 2968. Member contributions welcome.

Published and distributed by Philip Bell



Monthly meeting venue: Division of Botany and Zoology, Building 116, Daley Rd, Australian National University. Park (occasionally the adjacent building 44). Meetings start at 8 pm and are followed by refreshments.

FIELD NATURALISTS ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA INC.

GPO Box 249

CANBERRA ACT 2601

Print Post Approved

PP 233744/00022

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

Family name: First name:

If a family membership, please include the first names of other members of the family:

.....

Postal address:

Suburb: State: Postcode: Home phone:

Work phone: Email address:

Subscription enclosed: \$.....(Single/Family \$20) Donation: \$.....

How did you hear about FNAC? Please circle: FRIEND? OTHER? Please specify: