

OBJECT: To foster an interest in nature

October 2013  
ISSN: 1836-2761



GPO BOX 249  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

FIELD NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA INC.

# FIELD NATURALIST

**MEETING—THURSDAY 3 October 2013**  
**7:30 pm Australian National University**  
Gould Seminar Room, Building 116, Daley Road, ANU, ACT  
details back page

## Macquarie Island

**Speaker: Trish Macdonald**

Trish was the Station Leader at Macquarie Island for the year 2011–12. Macquarie Island is a wildlife paradise, one of the few tiny landfalls in the great Southern Ocean. Trish will talk about the island, it's wildlife and the people who live and work there.



## Contents

Koala Surveys on the Southern Tablelands	2
Koala at a Smorgasbord	3
Mt Rogers visitors September 2013	5
Annual General Meeting outcomes	6
Spotter's corner	6
Activities	7
Bush Heritage Australia	7

# Koala Surveys on the Southern Tablelands

Dierk von Behrens

On 30 and 31 August 2013, koala survey work continued in and around **Black Ridge Conservation Reserve** following the methodology of Koala Recovery Coordinator Chris Allen from the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. Eight participants were instructed to be particularly on the lookout for evidence of koalas in *E. bridgesiana* (Apple Box).

Chris had identified and marked seven 1 km grid intersection points on the relevant map. Our task was to track these down via GPS, identify and mark, using red plastic tape, the closest tree to each of these points, then identify and temporarily mark a further 29 trees that have a breast-height diameter of over 15 cm. Special metal measuring tapes are used for this purpose. While the tape is wrapped around the circumference of each trunk it actually records the diameter!

Starting from the tree closest to north from the central one – which becomes Tree No 2 – and proceeding in a clockwise direction these are then surveyed as follows:

- The surface of the ground for one metre from tree base is carefully scanned for koala scats. If scats are found, details are reported and recorded.
- If not, the surface litter is carefully scraped away – beginning inside the downslope circumference of the 1 metre wide search annulus – looking for possibly buried koala scats. These are reported and recorded if found.
- At each 1 km grid intersection search location scats other than Koala are identified on first discovery (e.g. ‘macropod’ once only), reported and recorded.
- The number of each tree, its species and the cumulative breast height diameter of all the stems

Koala in *E. paniculata* (Grey Ironbark)



of that tree at this height, as well as the number of such stems are also captured, as well, of course, as the presence or not of koala scats.

- Koala scats – see photo in the following article by Rob Summers – tend to be somewhat shiny, have faint lengthwise ridges and round ends. When snapped apart they break cleanly and show extremely fine content, unlike Brush-tailed Possum scats, which are coarser and do not break as cleanly, nor do they show longitudinal ridging.

## Findings

Apart from Cow, Deer, Goat, Wombat, Brush-tailed Possum and macropod scats (Kangaroo, Wallaby), ours included Ring-tailed Possum and Echidna droppings. The Ring-tailed Possum ones – smaller than those of Brush-tailed ones – repeat the rings on their tails as faint ridges around their droppings. The Short-beaked Echidna droppings consisted mainly of sand and broken, glistening insect carapaces.

Surveying four intersection points on Friday 31 August and three the next day we found evidence of the presence of Koalas at each of the three sites within Black Ridge Conservation Reserve and such presence at only one site outside the areas under conservation management – that one close to the northern border of Mt Clifford Flora Reserve. Incidental observations also established substantial Koala feeding on *E. bridgesiana* trees in the south-west corner of the settlers’ cottage clearing! How could we have missed them?

If interested in participating in future surveys, please contact Chris Allen on [chris.allen@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:chris.allen@environment.nsw.gov.au) or talk to Dierk at any Field Nats meeting.

# Koala at a Smorgasbord

Rob Summers - all photos by Rob

Photo: *E. bauerana* (Blue Box)

In March this year I was in Adelaide while there I visited the Waite Arboretum, Arboretums are a bit of a favourite of mine. The Waite arboretum includes a large planting composed entirely of Eucalypts (and Corymbias) from all over Australia including several rare species and unusual hybrids. It is situated in suburban Adelaide with bumper to bumper peak hour traffic outside the chain link fence on three sides morning and evening.

Walking through admiring the trees I happened to look down and my eyes automatically registered the presence of Koala scats. The Koala must have had a harrowing journey through suburbia to have got there. A little further on I noticed a tree with an unfamiliar weeping form but very familiar leaves, which I discovered from the tag was *E. bauerana* (Blue Box) growing in a more dwarfed form than we see locally due to the lower rainfall. The ground under this tree was absolutely littered with scats from feeding, which is something we haven’t noticed with *E. bau* at home. And that gave me an idea. The resident Koala has the free choice of several hundred eucalypt species to feed from including several known ‘primary’ browse species from Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales including *E. microcorys* (Tallowwood), *E. propinqua* (Mtn Grey Gum), *E. sideroxylon* (Red Ironbark), *E. viminalis* (Manna Gum) as well as the locally endemic *E. camaldulensis* (River Red Gum) and *E. leucoxylon* (Yellow Gum), which we had seen scats under when bushwalking in the Adelaide hills. All of these ‘primary’ trees were obviously regularly browsed. With all these to choose from how does the palatability of the species from our areas of interest in S.E. NSW measure up at a Koala Smorgasbord? I went through the collection and have given our

species the Koalas’ rating as indicated by amount of use (pellets).

There could be other reasons for the Koala’s use of some trees. The *E. baerana* with the heavy litter of scats was the nearest tree to a container left under a dripping tap by considerate staff after record hot and dry weather and other trees may have provided the best shelter or sunbasking dependent on the weather. And perhaps there are Koala reasons like feel or smell or taste as well.

The nomenclature at the arboretum may vary from what we commonly use e.g; *E. racemosa* ssp *Rossii* would probably be just *E. rossii* (White Gum) for us. Similarly we don’t currently recognise the Stringybark *E. yangoura*, which to me was very like *E. globoidea* (White Stringybark). None the less it was interesting to see that the most heavily browsed tree in the arboretum was our local Koala favourite *E. longifolia* (Woollybutt) and also that *E. cypellocarpa* (Monkey Gum/Mtn Grey Gum) and *E. tereticornis* (Forest Red Gum), which are known browse trees here, barely got a look in.



Koala scats under *E. bau*



*Eucalyptus yangoura*



Species/region	Heavy use	Some use	Not used	Comment
<b>Bermagui/Tanja</b>				
<i>E. cypellocarpa</i> x2		x		Only 1 scat found, trees at outside edge of planting
<i>E. muelleriana</i>			x	
<i>E. yangoura</i>		x		Looks like <i>E. globoidea</i> (see photos below)
<i>E. tereticornis</i> x2			x*	Only 2 scats found probably from neighbouring tree
<i>E. bauerana</i>	x			
<i>E. eugenoides</i>			x	With a label on it! see photos below
<i>E. longifolia</i>	x*			Browsed so heavily the top 2/3 died! see photo
<i>E. sideroxylon</i> x2		x		Closely related to <i>E. tricarpa</i> our local Ironbark
<b>Eurobodalla</b>				
<i>E. fibrosa</i>		x		Common from Moruya Nthwards
<i>E. paniculata</i>		x		Common from Bermagui river Nth. Koala in residence.
<i>E. kartzoffiana</i>		x		Araluen Gum (limited range)
<b>Sthn Tablelands</b>				
<i>E. pryoriana</i>		x		
<i>E. blakeleyi</i>	x			
<i>E. dwyeri</i>		x		
<i>E. camaldulensis</i>	x			Might be present?
<i>E. bridgesiana</i> XNortonii		x		Looks like ordinary <i>E. bridgesiana</i>
<i>E. melliodora</i>		x		
<i>E. nortonii</i> x2	x			
<i>E. racemosa</i> ssp Rossii			x	Looks like Rossii

The *E. cypellocarpas* at the Arboretum were on the fringe of the planting somewhat removed from most of the other browse trees and the Koala had gone to the effort to visit them. But the *E. tereticornis* were in among the other browse trees but were not visited. Maybe this is another example of palatability being dependent on variable traits within individuals of a species. The use levels

of *E. paniculata* (Grey Ironbark) and *E. fibrosa* (Broad Leaved Red Ironbark) and their relative abundance in Eurobodalla Shire is also hopeful for surveys up there. I know that the team has had much discussion over the ID of *E. eugenoides* (Thin Leaved Stringybark) so I have included photos of a specimen with an actual label attached. I wish they had tags on in the bush sometimes.

*Rob Summers is an Arborist living in Bermagui NSW. He has been involved in NPWS Koala Recovery Surveys on the NSW Far South Coast and Southern Tablelands since 1997 initially as a volunteer and then as a contractor. This article was originally written for the team members.*



# Mt Rogers visitors September 2013

## Rosemary Bleming

In a week that also registered sightings of Speckled Warblers, Double-Barred Finches, male Golden Whistlers and transitory Rose Robins, Mt Rogers hosted five Scarlet Honeyeaters. They feasted on Almond trees' nectar in the Frogmouths' territory off Schwarz Place, Flynn.

The Frogmouths have converted many Mt Rogers folk into enthusiastic, observant naturalists just by nesting in a convenient Eucalypt for several springs. They never seem to mind how many stand and stare during their incubation and caring period. The Scarlet Honeyeaters were unconcerned at our presence, the locals' chatter, our photographic crew, our dogs and COG members who'd been alerted by email.

Best of all other walkers, newcomers and those admitting to being "not interested in birds" were instantly drawn into the spectacle. Their contact with the tiny, brilliantly plumaged Canberra rarities gave them time to marvel and admire.

They couldn't believe the "Scarlets" size, their swiftness and the presence of White-naped and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, Silvereyes and occasional Wrens. Time-out in the middle of their morning walks gave them a spectacle-in-miniature, captured here through Roger Williams' photographs.

The Almond trees somehow advertised their nectar attracting the magical visitors' deviation from their normal range.

Five kilometres away, on Saturday 31st August, advertising drew crowds to UniCan to see the Whale Balloon.

Honeyeater (*Myomela sanguinolenta*) – Photo by Roger Williams



# Annual General Meeting outcomes

Rosemary spoke to her President's report. Dierk moved it be accepted and Warwick Daniels seconded it.

Bob spoke to his Budget Statements. Warwick Daniels moved they be accepted and Rosemary von Behrens seconded it. Accepted unopposed.

Bob moved that Sandy Jack be appointed Auditor again, seconded by Dierk von Behrens, and accepted unopposed.

Bob suggested that FNAC Annual Subscription remain at \$25. The Motion was moved by Chris Bunn, seconded by Bob Lehman, and approved unopposed

Rosemary von Behrens proposed that Dierk von Behrens be Returning Officer, Kevin McCue seconded this.

Dierk took the floor and declared all positions vacant.

The following nominations were accepted with members' agreements.

<b>President:</b>	Rosemary von Behrens	Nominated Bob Lehman	Seconded Rosemary Blemings
<b>Vice President:</b>	Chris Bunn	Nominated Bob Lehman	Seconded Pam Fenning
<b>Secretary:</b>	Tony Lawson	Nominated Warwick Daniels	Seconded Kevin McCue
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Bob Lehman	Nominated Rosemary von Behrens	Seconded Sonja Lenz
<b>Public Officer</b>	Rosemary von Behrens	Nominated Chris Bunn	Seconded Deidre Shaw
<b>Committee members:</b>	Rosemary Blemings	Nominated Rosemary von Behrens	Seconded Mike Doyle
	Margaret Kalms	Nominated Rosemary von Behrens	Seconded Rosemary Blemings
	Dierk von Behrens*	Nominated Warwick Daniels	Seconded Margaret Kalms
<b>Newsletter Editor:</b>	Alison Milton		
<b>Raffle organiser:</b>	Pam Fenning		

Tony was thanked for being prepared to be nominated again for Secretary although unable to be at the meeting.

\* As returning Officer, Dierk was not eligible to nominate for a committee position. However, he was appointed as a committee member after the Annual General Meeting.



Send a photo and / or a short report to the Editor at [alison.milton@health.gov.au](mailto:alison.milton@health.gov.au)

## Spotter's corner

What have you spotted this month?



In Kinsella Street, Higgins, a pair of yellow wattlebird chicks fresh from their nest, being feed by a parent.

## Activities

### Saturday 12 October 2013: 9.30 am sharp to 12 noon (or later) Black Mountain Wildflower Ramble

Belconnen Way entry, just before Caswell Drive turnoff (look for the balloons). Join wildflower lovers for the Burbidge/Chippendale tradition of celebrating the spring flowering with the 42nd annual Black Mountain wildflower ramble. Discover the surprising diversity of tiny orchids, bush peas, wattles and billy buttons with experienced guides. Following the tradition set by Nancy and George, this will be a social occasion with a morning tea break (BYO), relatively easy bush tracks and good company. It will be sponsored by Friends of Black Mountain, NPA, U3A, ANPS, ANBG Friends and Field Nats. Who knows what spring will bring this year in the 'jewel of the crown of Canberra Nature Park'. It's always fascinating to see how diversity and abundance differ. Our Patch field guide will be on sale for \$15 and some handouts provided. All welcome. Bring your friends especially those who are new to plant identification. BYO morning tea, hat, sunblock, water and stout shoes. **Please book:** [friendsofblackmountain@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofblackmountain@gmail.com) so we have enough guides. **Contact:** Jean Geue on 6251-1601.

### Sunday 13 October visit Black Ridge

Black Ridge is a 1922 Ha property that has a Voluntary Conservation Agreement upon it, located between Bredbo and Cooma. Please register your attendance with Rosemary von Behrens 6254 1763. 4WD's needed after the front gate. Car pooling where possible. Meet at Rothlyn Road turnoff on Monaro Highway at 10 am (approx 14 k's south of Bredbo).

Month	Speaker	Topic
3 October	Trish McDonald	Macquarie Island, rabbit, rat, mouse control during her time as station manager for the Australian Antarctic Division
7 November	Dr Leo Joseph Australian Wildlife Collection	New Guinea Australia connections
5 December	Christmas party	

## Bush Heritage Australia

On 5th September Bush Heritage Australia held two get-togethers for local members of Bush Heritage. Gerard O'Neill was there to meet BHA donors, explain aspects of Bush Heritage's work and to allow us to ask questions of the two on-ground staff members also present. Scottsdale near Bredbo was often cited as an example of the organisation's vision and reserve management processes.

Since many people may feel they belong to large organisations in isolation I asked how many BHA members/donors there were in the Canberra region.

Here's some info on Bush Heritage Australia supporter numbers.

Based on people who have given at least one donation in the last 12 months:

ACT = 716

Broader Canberra = 708 (those postcodes loosely defined as 'Canberra')

Canberra Postcode = 37

As a proportion of all supporters who gave in the past 12 months, those from ACT make up around 4.3%, despite only being 1.4% of the Australian population.

**Rosemary Bleming**

---

*Bush Heritage is a national non-profit organisation that protects Australia's unique animals, plants and their habitats.*

*They do this by acquiring and managing land of outstanding conservation value, or by working in partnership with other landowners. Their vision for 2025 is to protect 1 per cent of Australia.*



Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra Inc.

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.

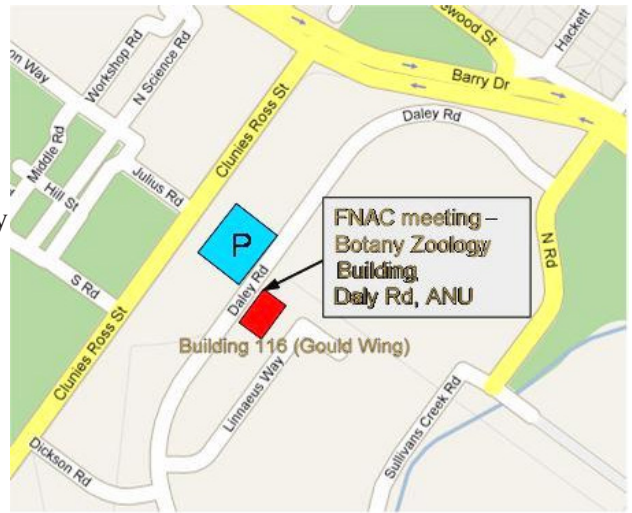
President: Rosemary von Behrens pH: 6254 1763

Email: fieldnaturalist@yahoo.com.au

Website: under construction

All newsletter contributions welcome.

Editor



**Monthly meeting venue:** Division of Botany and Zoology, Building 116, Daley Rd, Australian National University. Park (the Xmas meeting is at the adjacent building 44 and will start at the earlier time of 6:30 pm)

**Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra  
GPO Box 249  
Canberra ACT 2601**



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 \$25) Donation: \$.....

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