

October 2021

ISSN: 1836-2761



FIELD NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA INC. GPO BOX 708  
JAMISON CENTRE ACT 2614

# FIELD NATTER

## October 2021 newsletter

Due to ACT lockdown orders there will be no monthly meeting until further notice



*Spring is here*

## Contents

Spring is sprung	2
A case of identity?	2
Internet links of interest	2
A stroll along the 'bidgee'	3
Plant a variety of herbs and natives for bee forage	4
Drought: remnants of wildlife carers	4
Blue-tongue lizards are resistant to red-bellied black snake venom, Australian study finds	5
What was a useful species and what not back in 1901 the year of independence.	5
Returning visitor	5

## Spring is sprung

The calendar says it is Spring. How wrong can you be – Spring is sprung.

The wattles have been stunning this year. There are at least seven kinds on our block.



The Wood Ducks have been wac-wac-wac-wacing in the trees looking for a nesting hole. A Bush Fly has appeared. Jacky lizard is enjoying the sunshine. Fan-Tailed Cuckoos have been here trilling for weeks now and a female has also passed through. Currawong chases off Sparrowhawk.

Yellow-faced and White-eared Honeyeaters and Fantails are here. Glycine and Bear's Ears are delicately flowering. Returning Cuckoo Shrikes and Orioles have been sighted. Yes, Spring is sprung.

**Colin Pask**

Other sightings have been:



## A case of identity?

I saw this in the garden recently and thought it was both interesting and curious. At first I



thought it was a case moth caterpillar, but the curious thing about it is that the banksia cone to which it is attached is completely solid. Which raises the question as to what it could be and how does a banksia cone end up on a correa?



Does anyone have any suggestions? I have brought it inside and supplied it with fresh leaves and will wait further developments.

**Deidre Shaw**

## Internet links of interest

### Tidbinbilla Musk Duck Ripper

Vocal imitations and production learning by Australian musk ducks (*Biziura lobata*). Carel ten Cate and Peter J. Fullagar

This is of local interest as it reports on the original Tidbinbilla Musk Duck Ripper, who learned to vocalise 'You bloody fool'.

<https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rstb.2020.0243>

### Starling photography

A modern approach to a 19th-century photography technique celebrates both the art and science behind one of the planet's most mesmerizing spectacles.

<https://www.biographic.com/starling-studded-skies/>

## A stroll along the 'bidgee'

Recently it being a fine, warm, sunny day I decided to take myself for a stroll along the Murrumbidgee River. Given that we are only allowed one hour of exercise I didn't want to go too far afield so I chose a route close to home.

I commenced my walk from where Athllon Drive crosses the dam forming Lake Tuggeranong. I then proceeded to where the Centenary trail leaves the road and heads off into the bush heading towards the river. At the commencement there was a profusion of native clematis (*Clematis microphyla* var *leptophylla*) whose delicate, dainty flowers I much prefer to the gaudy, brightly coloured exotics



*Clematis microphyla* var *leptophylla*

Whilst I was admiring the clematis I was observed by a couple of curious kangaroos. They were not in the least bit timid and just stood there watching me.



Curious kangaroos

Then I arrived at the river, which was flowing swiftly due to the recent rains. From this point on I was in constant view of the river and its ever changing vistas as the path wound along the river bank.

My next encounter with brightly coloured flowers was with wattle but there being so many types I was unable to identify them, although I thought they might be poverty wattle (*Acacia dawsonii*) or currawang (*Acacia doratoxylon*). They looked magnificent, particularly when the sun shone on them.

I could see banksias but they were not in flower at this time.

Spaced along the track were red grevilleas. They all appeared to be the same and I would take a stab at it and say they were mountain grevillea (*Grevillea alpine*),

At the end of the walk just as I was about to leave the track I was greeted by a truly magnificent



*Grevillea*

specimen of a wattle tree in its full glory in the sun shine.



*Acacia*

I ambled along for some time enjoying the flowers and scenery until I ended up at Pine Island, which meant my time was up and I had to return home.

**Deidre Shaw**

## Plant a variety of herbs and natives for bee forage

We can all help the health of our local environment by planting a 'bee banquet' in our gardens for bees and other beneficial insects and birds throughout the year. Studies have shown that by increasing the diversity of flowering plants in our gardens, there will be a good balance of predators that eat other insects (ladybirds, birds, lizards, frogs) and pollinators (bees, butterflies, beetles) that facilitate pollination so plants can produce fruits, vegetables and seeds.

Pollinators are the foundation of biodiversity and their presence in landscapes creates food for a wide range of other animals. Australia is already one of the most urbanised countries in the world, with a predicted increase to 90% of the population living in cities by 2050. "Urbanisation is a major driver of ecosystem degradation and habitat loss and is a global threat to biodiversity." (Australian Native Bees, 2016 NSW DPI, p.45). When land is cleared for urban development, many species lose their homes and food supplies. New developments are often 'all house/no garden' and so there is an additional need for street plantings to provide a good range of food and habitat. By providing these resources in urban green spaces, native bees and other pollinators populations can be attracted and sustained, which in turn supports the biodiversity within urban landscapes. Many new developments also have sites for 'Community Gardens' which benefit from pollinator friendly plantings surrounding them.

Bees eat nectar and pollen. Nectar gives them energy for growth, breeding, flying and keeping warm.

Pollen is the source of bees' protein and fats for muscle growth in brood and young adult bees.

For a healthy immune system bees and other pollinators need us to:

- Plant flowers in clumps of up to 1 metre across as it is easier for pollinators to find and reduces foraging distance. Many native bees have limited flight ranges of up to 500 metres. Plants should be of varying size and height to provide shelter for insects in different niches.
- Provide a variety of plants that flower at different times with overlapping so there is something to eat particularly around Jan – March when bees are building up their nests and there are fewer flowers around in the extreme heat.
- Choose a range of colours of flowers. Bees have good colour vision and are particularly attracted to blue, violet, purple, yellow and white. They like petals with nectar guides including stripes and spots.
- Native bees prefer a variety of 'local' native plants. They are largely ground dwelling and prefer soil free of pesticides and fertilizers. Leave areas of the ground undisturbed for native bee nesting sites. Keep dead wood and trees in paddocks for habitat.
- Butterflies prefer red, orange, pink and white flowers with a trumpet shape that hold nectar.
- Plant heirloom varieties of herbs and perennials as hybridisation has reduced the nectar and pollen in many flowers.
- Use organic seeds and seedlings to ensure plants have not been treated with pesticides. For suppliers please go to the Organic Suppliers section of [actforbees.org](http://actforbees.org) website

The [full article](https://actforbees.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ACT-for-Bees-Planting-List-Sept-2021-.pdf) is available on the web site (<https://actforbees.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ACT-for-Bees-Planting-List-Sept-2021-.pdf>).

## Drought: remnants of wildlife carers

On Mt Rogers reserve (15.09.21.) there are several remaining symbols of neighbours' concern for wildlife in the drought. The rain-water in this one reflects the canopy whilst showing the depth of care: the included brick so that drinkers with short legs can reach the water without drowning. Moss spores



have lodged in the brick's cracks and germinated towards providing a horizontal green wall look-alike. In the water there's a disintegrating donation from a currawong: seeds that, on soil, would lead to the establishing of invasive plants that would out-compete native species. Amongst the leaf-litter that's recovering from a 2018 Hazard Reduction Burn, Hydrocotyle or Stinkwort grows amongst clover-like leaves and non-native grass seedlings. The leaf litter hides the thousands of invertebrates, fungi and microbes that are returning nutrients to the thin, rocky soils....but all this means nothing to the youths who, whilst Covid-frustrated, have started a bike track through the woodland. They can enjoy a downhill adrenalin rush at the expense of the balanced habitat.

**Rosemary Blemings**

## Blue-tongue lizards are resistant to red-bellied black snake venom, Australian study finds

Blue-tongue lizards have developed a resistance to the venom of the red-bellied black snake, according to new research.

The largest animals in the skink family, blue-tongues seem to have evolved a chemical resistance to the snake venom, while carnivorous monitor lizards – goannas – that feed on Australia’s venomous snakes have not.

Researchers at the University of Queensland have analysed the effects of seven snake venoms on the blood of two species of blue-tongues – the common blue-tongued skink and the shingleback – and three goanna species, all of which would interact with these snakes in the wild.

In a study published in the journal *Toxins*, they found the blue-tongues seemed to have evolved a

specific blood component – a serum factor – that prevents their blood from clotting when exposed to red-bellied black snake venom.

“We tested other venomous snakes that live in the same region as blue-tongues but are much smaller and therefore wouldn’t be feeding on a blue-tongue.”

“The [blue-tongues’] form of resistance was so selective that it only impeded the red-bellied one but not the other snakes that had similar venom.”

Fry said the blue-tongue lizards likely evolved the resistance as a chemical defence, because they are slow and cannot easily outrun predators.

The blood of the three goanna species tested was not resistant to the venom – likely because other external protections are sufficient.

## What was a useful species and what not back in 1901 the year of independence.

*Chronicle* (Adelaide, SA : 1895 - 1954), Saturday 6 July 1901, page 28

The close season instituted by the Birds Protection Act of last session for a number of native and imported birds has now begun. The object of the Bill is to leave the birds untouched during the nesting season, and so prevent the extermination with which many of them were threatened. Under the schedules to the Act emus, swans, wild geese, and plovers of all kinds are protected from June 1. The close season for wild ducks and bustards, or native turkeys, begins on August 1, and for all

other wild birds, except those specially exempted from protection, it commences on July 1. In each case the season of protection ends on December 20. A number of other useful birds, such as owls, mopokes, swallows, laughing jackasses, kingfishers, thrushes, wagtails, robins, bower birds, seagulls, &c, are protected all the year round. The birds which on account of their destructive qualities are not protected are the crows, wattle birds, silver eyes, cormorants, sulphur-crested cockatoos, hawks, snipe, rosella parrots, English sparrows, chaffinches, and starlings.

**Kevin McCue**

## Returning visitor

Each spring for the last few years I’ve had a female Satin Bowerbird visit the birdbath in my back yard. Today it was back again, enjoying a splash in the water (though clearly I need to give it a good scrub out).

My backdoor neighbour has previously told me that she has seen this bird (and more than one) numerous times, I only seem to spot it a few times a year. I’m not sure where it spends the rest of the year, or perhaps the weather is just too cold for me to venture out the back.





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 Blemings I

[president@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:president@fieldnatsact.com)

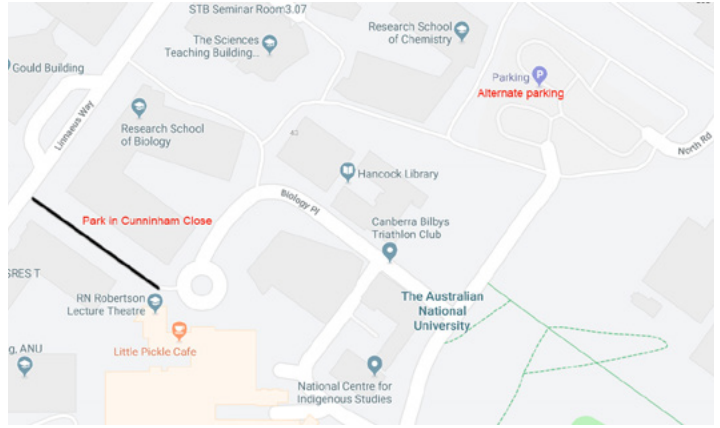
**Email:** [secretary@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:secretary@fieldnatsact.com)

**Website:** [www.fieldnatsact.com](http://www.fieldnatsact.com)

**Treasurer:** [treasurer@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:treasurer@fieldnatsact.com)

**Membership:** [membership@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:membership@fieldnatsact.com)

**Newsletter Editor:** [editor@fieldnatsact.com](mailto:editor@fieldnatsact.com)



**Monthly meeting venue:** Jan Anderson Seminar Room, R. N. Robertson Building, Biology Place, Australian National University

**Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra**  
**GPO Box 708**  
**Jamison Centre ACT 2614**



### Membership application or renewal

Surname: ..... 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: .....

How did you hear about FNAC? Please circle: Friend

Other Please specify: .....

Subscription (Single/Family \$25) Donation: \$.....

*Subscription renewals are due on 1 July each year*

**Pay by post** (include completed form)

Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra  
GPO Box 708  
Jamison Centre ACT 2614

**Bank transfer** (renewals only: form not needed)

Account name: Field Nats  
BSB: 325 185  
Account number: 03545251  
Reference: **Please include your name**