



FIELD NATTER

Field Naturalist's
Association of
Canberra

September 2006

Field Naturalist's Association of Canberra

September Speaker 8:00 pm Thursday Sept 7

Rachelle McConville of Frog Watch

(Location details back page)

The ACT and Region Frogwatch is open to everyone with an interest in frogs. Frogwatch aims to involve large numbers of volunteers of all ages to undertake frog monitoring in the ACT and Region, and to increase community awareness of the plight of these fascinating creatures.



Outing- Bruce Ridge- Sunday 10th September. 2pm

Bruce Ridge is an interesting walk in the middle of Belconnen. The site has been impacted substantially with past fires, the building of a road, and impacts from the drought. The spot we will be visiting faces North and is one of the earliest flowering sites in Canberra nature parks that Benj is aware of. Hopefully we will see the recovery of the site from drought and fire, and 'progress' with the new road. Heading along the

bike path around the AIS there are good stands of scribbly gums and white barked brittle gums and some very large applebox trees. Hardenbergia, many species of acacias and other heath plants should be in flower. Many birds should be nesting, particularly rosellas and pardalotes. Honeyeaters should be observed on their return migration. If we make it that far and head across the new road there are good stands of mature

Yellow box and Red-gum. Meet at the Corner of Purdie and Haydon Dr, Bruce. There is parking along Purdie St. Walking should be easy, for a couple of hours, but bring suncream and wet weather gear if required. Camera for flower shots, would be useful.

Contact Benj Whitworth on his Mobile 0409 544 557

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Floriade
Every Sunday 16 Sept- 15 Oct
12 - 1 pm.

How to Grow Native Plants

Join the ANBG Gardens' experts for this series. In the ANBG Theatre

Covers

Native Garden Concepts
Propagating Australian Plants
Irrigating your native garden
Maintenance

**THE HOBBYISTS HAVEN
AND
COLLECTORS CORNER**

Opening hours Sunday 24th September 10.00 A. M. to 4 P.M.
At the September Lifeline Bookfair there will be a special sale intended for the collector and hobbyist. Over the last few years Lifeline has received in donations an eclectic mixture of books, pamphlets and ephemera that will appeal to the specialist collector and hobbyist. These have been difficult to sell at previous bookfairs because they have been too fragile or specialist to place on sale in the general Bookfair and not of sufficient interest for the antiquarian Bookfair. So at this bookfair they will be selling these items at very good prices in a separate area that will allow them to be displayed without damaging them.

The categories that have been selected for this special sale are:

Militaria
Game Playing and Modelling
Natural History
Science Fiction miscellanea
Craft and Small Collectible ephemera (stamps,coins,cards)
Old Car and Truck Manuals
Transport
Old Computers (pre-IBM PC)
Old Records
Technical Manuals and Pamphlets

Listed below are some of the items for sale in the Natural history collection:

Natural History

Various Floras to different parts of Australia (SA, NE NSW, Tas,etc)
Various botanical keys to plant groups
Wildlife in Australia – complete volumes and odd issue from the 1940s and 1950s
Handbook to Horticultural and Viticultural Cultivation 1921
Complete Bound and Unbound volumes of Australian Native Plants
Wildflowers of Australia – booklet pub by Shell Australia
Bakers book on Hardwoods
Bound and unbound 1940/50s volumes of Crosby Morrison's "Wildlife"
Mixed books on gold and minerals
Journals of Entomological Society

Submitted by Grahame Clark



**Predation by house cats, *Felis catus* (L.), in Canberra, Australia.
II. Factors affecting the amount of prey caught and estimates of the impact on wildlife**

Barratt DG

WILDLIFE RESEARCH 25 (5): 475-487 1998

Information on the amount of vertebrate prey caught by house cats in Canberra was collected by recording prey deposited at cat owners' residences over 12 months. The amount of prey taken was not significantly influenced by cat gender, age when neutered, or cat breed. Nor did bell-ing or the number of meals provided per day have a significant influence on the amount of prey caught. The age of the cat and the proportion of nights spent outside explained approximately 11% of the variation in the amount of prey caught by individual cats. In all, 43% of variation in predation on introduced species (predominantly rodents) was explained by distance from potential prey source areas (i.e. rural/grassland habitat) and cat density. The mean number of prey reported per cat over 12 months (10.2) was significantly lower than mean predation per cat per year based on estimates made by cat owners before the prey survey began (23.3). Counts of the amount of prey caught by house cats were highly positively skewed. In all, 70% of cats were observed to catch less than 10 prey over 12 months, but for 6% of cats, more than 50 prey were recorded. Estimates of predation by house cats, particularly extrapolated estimates, should be treated with caution. The total number of prey caught by house cats in Canberra estimated using the sample median was approximately half the estimate based on the sample mean. Predation estimates alone do not prove that prey populations are detrimentally affected, especially in highly disturbed and modified environments such as suburbs. Impacts on native fauna are likely to be most significant in undisturbed habitat adjacent to new residential developments.

From an idea and contribution by Deb Saunders

Scarlet Robin

A scarlet robin that Maureen and I have seen a number of times in our back yard recently. Our last recorded sighting of a scarlet robin here was in 1991.

(Scarlet robins are now returning to their breeding territories.)

AUTUMN DAY FLYING MOTH *Apina callisto* 17th August 2006 (species of the month) by Rosemary Blemings

Having dental reasons for visiting Turner & walking from the ANU bus stop brought unexpected rewards. With time in-hand (it was 9:15) I crossed McCaughey Street, went through the mixed plantings west of Masson Oval, went across the drain that's Sullivans Creek there & onto the oval. It's a series of concrete circles for discus & shot putt at this point & surrounded by short grass that may well mimic the cropping of pre-development kangaroo mobs. Quite soon I realized that over the mown grass, weedy forbs and bare soil patches were hundreds of black caterpillars. They ranged in size from a centimetre to almost 5 cms. I recognized them as *Apina callisto* larvae but the name didn't return until after the dentistry!

If the caterpillars had stopped to feed the target species was often the widespread introduced Plantain. Some had paused to try forb rosettes or the occasional grass clump but many were in transit. This isn't a Cape Weed or Crane's Bill area so perhaps they were 'adapting' to circumstances. There were no caterpillars in the denser grass where tussocks had been allowed to reach 70-120mm in height.

It's possible that numbers were denser in the shade of other large trees near the bike-path. I've never seen so many in any one area. There were plenty of the necessary bare patches with one 4cms larva busy making its tunnel & piling up 2mm nuggets of soil prior to pupating.

When preparing to cross the 'creek' again, down the 45 degree concrete slope, I was surprised to come across more moving caterpillars. Some were heading down towards the central run of reasonably clear-looking water, others were heading up towards the oval. There was at least 20m between the 'creek' & the main 'grazing herd'.

Had I missed this activity earlier? Was this caterpillars' version of "puddling"? Did they all need water or only some of the hundreds?

These traveling larvae were mostly 20mm to 40mm. They went to the water's edge & slightly into the shallows and then out again after, perhaps, a minute or so. Were they drinking? Presumably their setae warned them of the fast flowing depths & they retreated to begin the climb back to the oval.

I realised that occasionally unfortunate paddlers were being swept along by the current having lost their footing. If fate was kind to them they might be washed up onto a leafy snag of debris. But this might mean being, on the 'wrong' side of the drain. If rescued there was a recovery period of some minutes before a climb-out was attempted. Looking back over the oval I noticed that the caterpillars didn't appeal as prey to a magpie or an unidentified small beige bird.

Subsequently, larvae are everywhere in suitable habitat, but not in Turner numbers.

In a previous article Rosemary wrote

Originally *Apina callisto* probably had a free run of our area as inland Southern Australian grassland closely cropped by macropods. Around Belconnen, at least, they have adopted suburban open spaces that most naturalists would be forgiven for dismissing as degraded wastelands. Bulldozed, scraped, scoured into landscapes that planners have dictated, some of these spaces are mown because they are roadsides, near drainage embankments, are appendages to ovals and inter-facility areas.

Wahlenbergias, *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*, Vittadinias and some native grasses may also cheer the naturalist in the spaces where mowing simulates the macropods' grazing. Patches of soil between tussocks and forbs are also vital to the species' lifestyle for on these their eggs are laid.

Once their instars are completed the larvae begin the construction of vertical tunnels* by removing pieces of soil. By September holes the diameter of a pencil in inter-tussock spaces, may reveal caterpillars coming to the surface every 7-10 seconds with pieces of soil which are left in an accumulating pile near the entrance. The evidence of these pupation tunnel entrances may disappear with the next shower of rain and the question is raised, how do the soft-on-emergence young moths cope with the journey up the tunnel and breaking through the debris in the original tunnel and hole? They may wait, exhausted beside the hole whilst their unfolded wings dry or await the sun's warmth. Their emergence is triggered by rain which also may stimulate a burst of plant growth in the last weeks of Autumn.



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Club updates

From the Committee meeting

- Raffles income had increased
- The first run of new members' kits was exhausted. They were a good idea & should be continued.
- Suggested an Australia Day BYO breakfast
- Recommended that the membership fee remain at \$20. This will be discussed during the Annual meeting

Members'night

The night of the Annual meeting is traditionally members' night. So if you would like to do a short presentation on any subject of your choosing please see Rosemary Von Behrens, Benj Whitworth or one of the committee members.

Welcome to new members

Louise Kench Fisher ACT

The Raffle

Did you receive any Christmas presents you'd rather not own? Bring them to the next FNAC meeting for RAF-FLE prizes. Gardens are being productive now & Dave Spratt donated some preserves in February. The raffle-odds are brilliant & profits benefit everyone in FNAC. (Pam Fenning is helping by being in charge of the prizes as well as the ticket sales)

Show & Tell.

Please bring along items of interest for discussion, display, identification or wonder...

Thanks

Thanks to the members that have elected to have their newsletters emailed. It really helps the club by helping to keep costs down & making our annual subscription the best value around!

From Philip Bell

I have been experimenting with the new Google product Picasaweb, whereby you can put up your photos for free on the web together with captions - and invite comment.

What I have done is a development of the photo essay that was in *Field Natter* last February. Members may like the option of clicking on the link and having another look. It included many photos not in the previous field natter - and also many comments in the captions not previously included.

The link is:

<<http://picasaweb.google.com/philipbell/PhotoEssayOnLightRailInOrleans-France>>

A REPUTATION FOR LECHERY

Fulfilling the promise of a less depressing quote from Graeme Gibson's *The Bedside Book of Birds* proved quite difficult. Most of the pieces are too long or painful to contemplate in the cruelty of human/bird interaction, which is the case in part of the following, but the rest of it could be considered a bit of light relief:

"A REPUTATION FOR LECHERY

The sparrow, "Venus' son", as Chaucer called the bird, has a reputation for lechery which still survives in the Victorian music-hall refrain "Me Old Cock-sparrow!" Like the dove, the sparrow was sacred to Venus, the goddess of love, and early natural historians declared that both birds had no equals for salacity. Modern ornithologists seem to agree with such findings, although some authorities maintain that 'coition is normally solicited by the female'.

Today we welcome the sparrow in our noisy polluted cities because it is one of the few birds prepared to nest cheerfully behind the bright hoardings of supermarkets or gas stations. Yet in 1559 a Lutheran pastor in Dresden implored the Elector of Saxony to help him exterminate the sparrow because of "their incessant and extremely vexatious chatterings, and scandalous acts of unchastity committed during the service, to the hindrance of God's Word and of Christian Doctrine".

The lascivious Devil might assume the form of a

.....*their incessant and extremely vexatious chatterings, and scandalous acts of unchastity....*

sparrow. When St. Dominic was preaching from behind a grille to some sisters in a Roman convent, a sparrow suddenly flew through the air and hopped on to the sisters' heads. According to Blessed Cecelia, the saint told one of the nuns to catch the bird and hand it to him. Holding the bird in one hand he 'commenced plucking off the feathers saying the

while: "You wretch, you rogue!" When he had plucked him clean of all his feathers amid much laughter from the Brothers and Sisters, he pitched him out saying: "Fly now if you can, enemy of mankind..."

Nymphomaniac witches transformed themselves into sparrows, and physicians declared that a roasted sparrow was a splendid aphrodisiac. "This is an undeniable Aphorism", said the seventeenth-century physician Culpepper, "that whatsoever any creature is addicted unto, they move or incite the man or woman, that eats them, to the like; and therefore Partridges, Quails, Sparrows etc. being extremely addicted to Venery, they work the same effect in those Men and Women that eat them."

BERYL ROWLAND (1918-2003), Scotland/Canada from *Birds with Human Souls*.

Contributed by Phyl Goddard [who hasn't been to Sunday school lately but seems to remember there is something in the New Testament about Christ claiming that not a single sparrow falls without God noting it?]

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN TO ALL MEMBERS THAT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Field Naturalists Association of Canberra will be held on Thursday 5th October at 8:00 pm at the Division of Zoology and Botany, Building 44, in the Australian National University.

Business:

- a) To confirm the minutes of the last preceding annual general meeting.
- b) To receive from the committee, auditor, and servants of the Association reports upon the transactions of the Association during the last preceding financial year.
- c) To elect the officers of the Association (President; Vice President; Treasurer; Secretary) and the ordinary committee members
- d) To appoint the auditor and determine his/her remuneration
- e) To conduct other business of which notice has been given

Nominations for election of members of Committee shall be made in writing (see below) and shall be delivered to an officer of the Association by Monday September 25. If insufficient nominations are received to fill all vacancies on the committee, the candidates shall be deemed to be elected and further nominations shall be received at the annual general meeting.

I hereby nominate _____

BLOCK LETTERS

A member of the Field Naturalists Association of Canberra Inc

For the position of _____

Name of Proposer _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Name of Seconder _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Acceptance of Nomination

I _____ accept nomination for _____

Signature of Nominee _____ Dated _____

Newsletter contributions welcome

Sightings, reports, travelogues, reviews, photographs, sketches, news, comments, opinions, theories — in fact anything relevant to natural history. Please forward material to chris_b@webone.com.au or 13 Burnside Street Watson ACT 2602. Any queries please phone 6272 5540

**Field Naturalist's
Association of Canberra**

Who are the Field Naturalists?

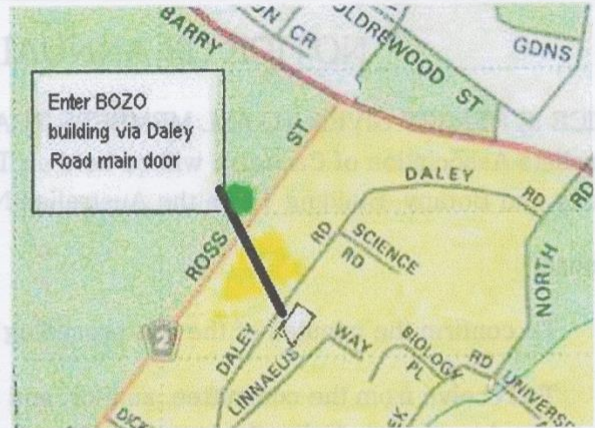
The Field Naturalists Association of Canberra (FNAC) was formed in 1981. Our aim is to foster interest in natural history by means of meetings and regular field outings. Meetings are usually held on the first Thursday of each month. Outings range from weekend rambles to long weekends away. Activities 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 02 6254 4556

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.



Monthly meeting venue: Division of Botany and Zoology, Building 44, Daley Rd, Australian National University. Park in Linnaeus Way. 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: