

September 2014  
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GPO BOX 249  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

FIELD NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION OF CANBERRA INC.

# FIELD NATURALIST

MEETING—THURSDAY 4 September 2014

7:30 pm Australian National University

Gould Seminar Room, Building 116, Daley Road, ANU, ACT

details back page

## Wattle: its place in Australia's heritage

Speaker: Pat Wright

Pat Wright will present social and cultural viewpoints on the place of wattle in Australia today. Golden Wattle, *Acacia pycnantha*, was chosen as our national floral emblem in 1988, and Wattle Day is now recognised as the first day of spring - September 1st. Pat has spoken to us before on the fascinating topic "Who is the smartest; plants or animals?" She continues to gather information about plants on her travels and was a long time guide at the ANBG.



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# Kamchatka, the Russian Far East

by Adrienne Nicholson & Cecilia Melano

**Lead** by Rosemary Purdie with a holidaying teacher as interpreter for the guide, driver and go-fer, the adventure took 10 visitors into and across land very different from Australia's ancient continent. (September-October 2013).

**Ashfields** made for tortuous walking as did rocks, stones and incredible lava flows. The lava forms were solidified into the most amazing forms and shapes by earth's surface temperatures. They appeared frozen yet were merely warm in comparison to the molten degrees in the bowels of volcanoes.

**Naturalists** Cecilia & Adrienne delighted in seeing how the lifelessness after recent eruptions had been transformed into herbfields a few seasons after extreme heat's devastation. New life emerged in sequence because organisms have mechanisms for survival in the harshest habitats. Germination of spores and seeds and new growth happens in our millennia, replicating tenacities from the beginning of time.

**Day-to-day** lives of the Kamchatkan people captured as A & C briefly shared their hospitality, filmed their houses, towns and farms as they passed through. Did we, as the armchair travellers, pause to remember that snow and ice cover their country for most of each year? Did we reflect on the brilliance of the locals' adaptations to climate? Did we, living in often-unnecessary luxury consider why we can no longer accept hardship or constraints?

**Once** the road was no longer there. It had been obliterated by a lava flow. Pioneeringly, a new route was created round the obstruction without fanfare

and without an Environmental Impact Statement.

**Fungi**, lichens and mosses are among the first colonisers of land affected by volcanic eruptions. Their effects in Kamchatka seem even more stunning than among Australia's long-eroded igneous rocks. They provide colour, pattern and texture for discerning photographers drawn to macro-detail.

**Incredible** to constantly have volcanoes in the distance or as goals within walkers' sights. The dramatic cones are such a contrast to our worn Australian peaks. There were glimpses of hot springs, boiling mud and the unforgettable glow of fire from depths that transform the geomorphology diagrams of many of our pasts. And all this with areas of residual snow still unmelted in summer.

**Cold**, camping and clothing. The Kamchatkan climate dictates flora and fauna's responses to the cold. Photos showed how people had created their traditional clothing from the available natural materials and retained unique cultural patterns as their response to the region's harshness. The visitors' tents, sleeping bags and clothes were only just adequate, especially on windy or wet days.

**Each** presentation complemented the other perfectly. Cecilia brought photos and memories which gave context to the uniquely different places and scenes. She showed the group's sightings and their activities with amazing views as backdrops. Adrienne's work reflected their naturalists' flair especially for the invertebrates and the minutiae of details. Local teenagers put on a musical performance showing a complementary blend of rock

with generations of indigenous self-expression.

**Audience** participation was relatively muted as Field Natters absorbed our guides' accounts and interpretations. We thoroughly enjoyed photographs we wished we'd taken ourselves. There was plenty to marvel at, learn from and muse over. Alison, Bob, David, Dierk, Helen, Jean, Kevin, Margaret, Pam, Rosemary, Shirley, Sonja, Warwick and I were transported from Tasmania's ancient coasts to Ring of Fire country...new land-in-the-making.

**Naturalness** in response to the severity of weather and climate shows the human spirit at its best. Kamchatkans seem to have retained their sense of community, or perhaps their definition of civilisation has not yet been wrested from them. There's a certain purity and resilience to the locals' lives that we have lost through our association with 'modernity' and by our urban lives being divorced from nature and from wildness.

**Danger** raised its head several times through sightings of photogenic but unpredictable bears. The crew and Kamchatkans generally, take bears very seriously. Carrying rifles and using flares to distract the animals is necessary. Loss of food supply in some places has increased the incidence of bears being hungry and seeking dogs and stock as food near villages. Photos of paw prints in the damp soil or ash showed the huge size of the Asian Brown Bears in comparison to the ANU's talisman bear near the meeting room.

**Fish** were caught for the group's meals from crystal clear streams and rivers. Some of the fungi

were included in the menu. The wildflowers seemed especially brightly coloured. This great beauty results from the plants' need to make effective use of the very short growing, flowering and pollination season.

**Incredible** for those with landcaring histories were the birch forests, the rich succession of tree and shrub diversity and, we hoped, a minimal weed problem.

It was sobering to see where forests and other vegetation had thrived on the richness of volcanic soils only to be overrun by lava or scorched to death by heat when the direction of material from a more recent eruption destroyed decades of optimistic regrowth.

**Rhododendrons** and other Ericaceae were at once familiar and yet strange in their shrubby forms of adaptation to climatic extremes and the volcanic geology. Yellow Snapdragons, white glass-like sporangia, a curled green caterpillar, toxic blue Aconite flowers and a huge array of toadstools were among the diversity Adrienne captured and brought to us.

**Everyone** with a retained sense of curiosity thrives on the chance to explore, to learn and to marvel at new sights and experiences. Thanks to our two travellers taking on the 'adventure of a lifetime' we were taken to see a fabulous, unspoilt, natural world far beyond our reach. If you missed Adrienne and Cecilia's photos try [www.jtdytravels.com](http://www.jtdytravels.com) and search for Kamchatka.

**Rosemary Blemings**  
August 2014.

## *Tasmanian molluscs and the two-way street of Bass Strait*

by David Dedenczuk

During a previous presentation David had shown us the diversity and complexity of sea-shells from the South Coast's shorelines. Through this he revealed how he'd been drawn into studying and loving shells over many years. Molluscs may seem to be simple life forms when they're found in every home as beachgoers' collections yet their colours, patterns, geometrical forms and range of shapes become fascinatingly addictive for devotees and students.

At the August, AGM meeting David introduced us, through photographs, to the Tasmanian setting which draws appreciators to the challenges of the hunt in

approved areas of the island's spectacular and largely unspoilt coasts.

Photographs of Tasmanian mollusc species illustrated the second half of his talk and were used, significantly, as examples of marine life being affected by global warming within our lifetimes.

We were challenged to think about warming oceans causing organisms to move away from habitat changes. I'd not seriously considered ranges of water depth and that each zone would have its own mollusc fauna. How would apparently sedentary marine creatures move to areas where temperatures supported their life-

cycles? When mollusc species move into new territory what are the impacts on species already inhabiting that niche? Threats to the very formation and existence of shells from the acidification and heating of the oceans are inevitable. Oceanic currents are being altered. David whetted our appetites for another course on the wonders of shells and even for getting down on hands and knees to search more comprehensively for miniature beauties when next at the beach.

Thank you David.

**Rosemary Blemings**  
August 2014

## Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra Annual General Meeting Minutes September 5, 2013

**Apologies:** Tony Lawson, Silvie Sampson, Adrienne Nicholson

**President's report:** Rosemary von Behrens spoke to her report.

*Acceptance moved Dierk von Behrens, seconded Warwick Daniels*

**Treasurer's report:** Bob Lehman spoke to his Budget statements.

*Acceptance moved Warwick Daniels, seconded Rosemary von Behrens.*

Bob moved that Sandy Jack be appointed Auditor again, seconded Rosemary Blemings.

Bob also suggested that FNAC Annual Subscription remain at \$25.

*Moved Chris Bunn, seconded Bob Lehman.*

Rosemary von Behrens proposed that Dierk von Behrens be Returning Officer,

*seconded Kevin McCue.*

Positions were declared vacant.

The following nominations were accepted with members' agreements.

**President:** Rosemary von Behrens: *Nominated Bob Lehman; Seconded Rosemary Blemings*

**Vice President:** Chris Bunn: *Nominated Bob Lehman; Seconded Pam Fenning*

**Secretary:** Tony Lawson: *Nominated Warwick Daniels; Seconded Kevin McCue*

**Treasurer:** Bob Lehman: *Nominated Rosemary von Behrens; Seconded Sonja Lenz*

**Public Officer** Rosemary von Behrens: *Nominated Chris Bunn; Seconded Deidre Shaw*

**Committee Members:**

Rosemary Blemings: *Nominated Rosemary von Behrens; Seconded Mike Doyle*

Margaret Kalms: *Nominated Rosemary von Behrens; Seconded Rosemary Blemings*

**Newsletter Editor:** Alison Milton

**Raffle organiser:** Pam Fenning

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

Dierk von Behrens was seconded to the committee after relinquishing his role as Returning Officer. *Nominated Warwick Daniels; Seconded Margaret Kalms*

We were then treated to a talk on Molluscs by a member, David Dedenczuk.

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These 2013 AGM minutes are being included in this September 2014 Field Natter as they were not available at last month's AGM. This was an oversight on my part. My apologies.

**Rosemary von Behrens.**



## **FNAC Committee 2014–2015 elected 7 August 2014**

President:	Rosemary von Behrens
Vice President:	Rosemary Blemings
Secretary:	Vacant
Treasurer:	Bob Lehman
Committee:	George Heinsohn Margaret Kalms Dierk von Behrens Kevin McCue Tony Lawson
Editor:	Alison Milton
Auditor:	Sandy Jack

## **Stories and photos needed**

**This could have been your story or photos.**

**Thank you to Rosemary Blemings and Dierk von Brehens for regularly writing article for publication in Field Natter, but it would be good to hear from some other members.**

**It doesn't have to be War and Peace. Perhaps you've seen something interesting in the backyard, while out and about; been on a trip or excursion; taken a photo (or two) that you'd like to share; or even waxed poetic. All contributions are greatly appreciated. Please email the Editor at [alison.milton@health.gov.au](mailto:alison.milton@health.gov.au) and share the load.**

**In the meantime, I hope you enjoy these photos taken while out and about at Tidbinbilla, the Pinnacle Nature Reserve and Mulligans Flat in the past few weeks.**



## Activities

### Black Mountain wildflower ramble

One of the very popular events in Spring is the Black Mountain wildflower ramble.

Join wildflower lovers for the Burbidge/Chippendale tradition of celebrating the spring flowering with the 43rd 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, relatively easy bush tracks and good company. It will be sponsored by Friends of Black Mountain, NPA, U3A, ANPS, ANBG Friends, Field Naturalists, and the Molonglo Catchment Group. Who knows what spring will bring this year in the 'jewel of the crown of Canberra Nature Parks'. 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.

**Saturday 11 October:** 9:30 am sharp to 12 noon (or later)

**Belconnen Way entrance:** just before Caswell Drive turnoff (heading West) (look for the balloons).

**Please book:** by providing your name and phone number to [friendsofblackmountain@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofblackmountain@gmail.com) so there are enough guides. **Contact:** Jean Geue on 6251-1601.

### A city of food

Urban Agriculture Australia would like to invite you to "A City of Food" Speakers Series in September this year, which will investigate the potential for urban agriculture in Canberra.

Each event will be held at the Pilgrim House Conference Centre, Johnson Auditorium, on Northbourne Avenue every Wednesday evening throughout September (3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th) between 6.00 pm and 7.30 pm.

This Speakers Series is intended to provoke thought and discussion within the Canberra community on the potential for both small scale, and possibly commercial, urban agricultural ventures and enterprises within the urban spaces of the ACT.

Achieving this has the potential to provide significant positive outcomes to Canberra, its community, economy and environment. To succeed, however, will require support from individuals, businesses and government working together to achieve optimal outcomes in the urban development of our city.

See the website for details of speakers and how to book a ticket: [www.uaa.org.au/city-of-food-series](http://www.uaa.org.au/city-of-food-series)

Month	Speaker	Topic
4 September	Pat	Wattles
2 October	Ken Hodgkinson	Grasslands and their care
6 November	Danswell Starrs	Freshwater Fish Ecology
4 December	Christmas party	BOZO meeting room

### Raffle prizes needed

**Pam** has been doing a wonderful job of running the FNAC raffle at general meetings for, what was that? perhaps more than 15 years!!

Well done Pam.

However, the raffle needs prizes and for that Pam needs you. Yes you!

Time to go through your cupboards for all those little items you no longer use or want and bring them along to donate as raffle prizes. As the

saying goes, 'One man's junk is another man's treasure' (or woman as the case may be.





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 **Phone:** 6254 1763

**Email:** fieldnaturalist@yahoo.com.au

**Website:** under construction

All newsletter contributions welcome.

**Email:** alison.milton@health.gov.au

**Editor**



**Monthly meeting venue:** Division of Botany and Zoology, Building 116, Daley Rd, Australian National University. (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: