

OBJECT: To foster an interest in nature

September 2020  
ISSN: 1836-2761



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

# FIELD NATURALIST

## September 2020 newsletter No monthly meetings until further notice



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## Observations

I have had some interesting observations this month.

There was some excitement among the birdos after a sighting of three Blue-faced Honeyeaters in Curtin. After some more detailed information from the person who first reported them I was able to visit the area and get a few photos while they visited for around 10 minutes. An other report did indicate that they had been in the area since February but not attracting the interest of this latest sighting.

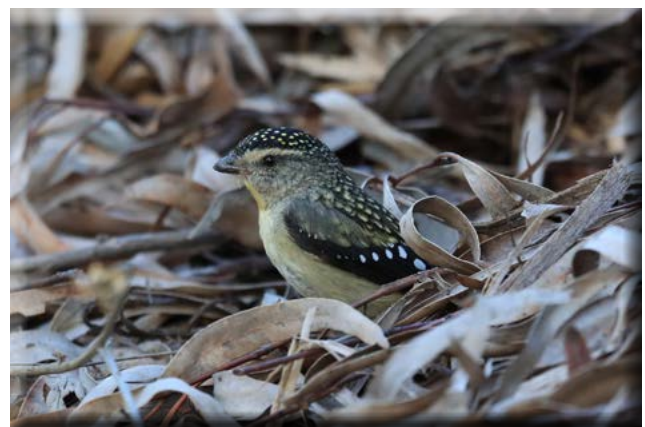


At the Australian National Botanic Gardens, the resident Owlet Nightjar has not been seen for some times, and since the January hailstorm the entrance to its tree hollow has become overgrown with the epidural regrowth giving more evidence that it is no longer in residence.

However, there has recently been a sighting of a new Owlet Nightjar that presents a more accessible view of its hollow. This is obviously a different bird as it has much more brown colouring of its feathers.



I managed to find this bird with some help but also found three separate nesting pairs of Spotted Pardalotes at the gardens.



The resident Satin Bowerbird has moved on from its usual spot – or perhaps this is junior making his own bower and the original male is now longer around.

The new bower is a little further away and I watched one day as he seemed to be adding to his bower, but then began destroying it. After making a start at dismantling the bower he then grabbed several blue decoration objects and disposed of them under some nearby shrubbery. Having done this he came back and then thoroughly ripped into to completely destroying the bower. Several days later he had started rebuilding the bower but I think it was a little further back and less in direct sight of observers.

Moving away from birds, I have long wanted to visit the pedestrian bridge that has been built over

## Observations

the Molonglo River. Since the development of Denman Prospect, Butters Bridge is now within easy walking distance so I finally made the visit.

While I managed an easy access I did have to crawl through a fence and it seemed that other easier paths are now being blocked by further prosed development of Denman Prospect. Checking the Internet I found that there are many walking tracks in the area but that at least one group walked to Butters Bridge from Kama Nature Reserve: an 11 km round trip. Google Maps seems to show that the shorter current legitimate access trails from Denman Prospect will take longer than the track I took.

Crossing the bridge to the track that would lead back to Kama, signs say that the area is open to possible cattle for fire management but luckily this was not the case on my visit. This area is also being used for the disposal of felled trees etc but there are a number of large sandstone boulders that are of interest.

It is possible to access the river and after the recent rain I found a pool that had not yet dried out after the flooded river. I found a pair of yabby claws that looked like they were the remains of a recent meal. More interesting however, were a number of what appeared to be sticks moving across the bottom of the pool. In fact, they were perhaps hollow bits of grass or reeds.

I collected and cut one open and was very surprised by the occupant. Despite it being a fresh water river, I thought I'd find some kind of crab or shell fish. Instead I found a caterpillar type creature. Its body looked like a shelled prawn and it had an apparent carapace around its head and shoulders. The front legs around the head were long and crab-like but it had two claw-like legs at the end of the abdomen. It was nothing like anything I had seen before.



After some research I discovered that this was in fact the larvae of a caddisfly.

Lastly, my other surprising find was much closer to home, in my home in fact.

It's not often that I go into my spare bedroom so it was surprising that when I did recently (and even more surprising that I moved the window curtains) that I spotted a beetle climbing up the window. I fetched a bottle and collected the beetle and when photographing it later realised that it is a longhorn beetle: species *Tessaromma undatum* (Velvet Eucalypt Longhorn).



Just how a longhorn beetle managed to get inside my house I cannot imagine.

**Alison Milton**

## Links from Matthew Higgins

My latest short video, 'Bush birth: new seasons', is now on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/uQKsV2qW6xs>

The description of the film on the YouTube page reads: "Whether in the paddock or the bushland, seasonal change brings new life in Australia. Filmed by Matthew Higgins in the south-east of the continent, mostly near Bega and also around Canberra, 'Bush Birth' captures some of the glory of nature and the pulse of life. In the face of environmental degradation there is still much beauty to be enjoyed and conserved. The music is 'Rainforest Canopy' by Magic in the Other."

If you watch and enjoy the video, please forward the link to others so that the wonders of our (precious little unburnt!) country can be more widely appreciated.

**Matthew Higgins**

## News from the Conservation Council

### **ALP announce food waste collection and compost facility**

Food scraps sent to landfill generate methane that escapes to the atmosphere. It is also a waste of nutrient-rich organic material that should be returned to the earth. ACT Labor proposes to expand green bins to all Canberra households by 2023 to collect both garden waste and food scraps. The organic waste will be sent to a commercial composter, with the resulting compost to be sold to the market.

While this proposal would be a valuable service particularly for apartment residents, we have yet to see detail about how the service would affect local composting services and how the compost might be distributed for community gardens and urban greenery.

The ALP have paired this proposal with a government education program 'Love Food Hate Waste' to help households make the best of their food and throw away less.

### **Call on Defence Housing Australia to rethink Lawson North development**

Over a hundred conservation groups, scientists, land managers and volunteers from across Canberra and the region have called on Defence Housing Australia to rethink their proposed housing development at Lawson North, raising concerns that the proposal will damage critically endangered Natural Temperate Grasslands and Box-Gum Woodlands, and related flora and fauna species.

Helen Oakey, Executive Director of the Conservation Council, Geoff Robertson, President of Friends of Grasslands, and Rainer Rehwinkel, Grassland Ecologist, invited journalists to see the Lawson North Grasslands site where Defence Housing proposes building 570 dwellings.

The grassland at this site is one of only thirteen areas in the ACT over 100 ha in size, and is the largest area of Natural Temperate Grassland in Belconnen. In addition, the site provides habitat for bird species protected under the Commonwealth EPBC Act such as the Superb Parrot, and other bird species protected under ACT legislation like the Scarlet Robin.

Site plans show stage one of the project would impact the grasslands through what is known as

an urban edge effect. Stage two built directly over grassland and box woodgum habitat.

The proposal had previously attracted the attention of Lawson residents concerned about a lack of shared community spaces, parking and traffic management as well as the potential impact on endangered species.

### **ACT Greens announce \$53m conservation strategy for repairing the land**

Protecting our remnant nationally-important grasslands and woodlands, building our urban forest and investing in restoration at Namadgi will be so important in the next decade, especially as we seek to increase Canberra's climate resilience.

Last week, the ACT Greens announced a \$53m "repairing the land" plan that includes the expansion of our urban neighbourhood forests and wildlife corridors, increased funding for Namadgi and the ACT Parks and Conservation Service, as well as the employment of 10 new Indigenous rangers. Amongst the commitments include the planting of an additional 500,000 urban trees over the next 4 years.

This followed an announcement released by Canberra Liberals on June 5th, who are committing to plant 1 million trees over the next 10 years. A Canberra Liberals Government have also offered a Green Space Guarantee to make sure that in every suburb, there is green space for families and community groups to enjoy the outdoors within a 10-minute walk from residencies.

### **Six months on: bushfire recovery**

The Conversation's special project "Flora, Fauna, Fire" tracks the recovery of Australia's native plants and animals after last summer's bushfire tragedy, with scores of scientists lending their expertise. Learn of the scientists coaxing nature back to life. See satellite maps showing how the land has sprouted since the fires, and explore the animal, plant and invertebrate species now at greatest risk of extinction.

"There's certainly lots to be worried about when we read about the world these days. But it's encouraging to know that after such a catastrophic bushfire season, our wild places are showing signs of new life."

[Read more online.](#)

## Activities

### **11–13 Sept (Fri-Sun): Joint ParkCare Display – Jamison Centre, Macquarie**

This highly successful public event is held every year to showcase the contributions made by ParkCare groups and other volunteers at reserves in the Belconnen area. We will be joining the Friends of Black Mountain, Friends of Aranda Bushland, the Friends of Grasslands (FOG), the Ginninderra Catchment Group, the Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park (STEP) and the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group (CIMAG).

### **Sunday 20 Sept 9.00 am at Dungowan St, Hawker: Pinnacle Bird Walk**

This spring is shaping up to be a terrific year for birds at the Pinnacle, with many species already building nests or, in some cases, already sitting on completed nests. This walk will be an opportunity to take a closer look at some of the resident species at the reserve as they settle into their breeding season.

### **Saturday 10 October, 10.00 am at the Springvale Drive entrance opposite De Salis Street: Pinnacle Wildflower Walk**

We are fortunate to have two people as knowledgeable as John Fitz Gerald and Nola McKeown to act as guides for a walk in what promises to be an excellent season for wildflowers at the reserve. With the wonderful rain we've had in recent weeks, we're set to have one of the best wildflower displays at the reserve for years. Don't miss it!

### **Saturday 10 October: Black Mountain Spring Wildflower Ramble**

Following the tradition of Dr Nancy Burbidge and George Chippendale the annual Black Mountain Spring Wildflower Ramble will once again take place in October. If you need further information please contact Linda Beveridge by email or phone. Email: [friendsofblackmountain@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofblackmountain@gmail.com) Mobile: 0437 298 711.

## New field guide for orchids in the Southern Tablelands

Authors Jean Egan, Tony Wood, Roger Farrow, and Tobias Hayashi are releasing a new field guide to orchids of the Southern Tablelands.

The Southern Tablelands of NSW and the ACT contain over 180 species of orchid flora, with this new guide hoping to assist orchid enthusiasts, bushwalkers and citizen scientists identify orchids they encounter in the field.

The guide will be available from September in selected local bookshops and visitor centres and for purchase from the authors online. The online cost is \$45, with postage and packing included.

To be added to the direct mailing list to receive notice of this publication, please [email Roger \(r.farrow@iimetro.com.au\)](mailto:r.farrow@iimetro.com.au).



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.

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**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: Your name