

If not claimed within 14 days please return to the Alice Springs Field  
Naturalists Club Inc. PO Box 8663, Alice Springs, NT 0871

August 2003



President	Bob Read	8952 1935	rread@octa4.net.au
Vice-President	Kevin Boyle	0422006140	
Publicity Officer	Rosalie Breen	8952 3409	
Secretary/Treasurer	Lyndal White	8955 0525	LMP56@bigpond.com
Property Officer	Kaye Percy	8952 3405	
Public Officer	Sue Fraser	8952 5728	suefra@hotmail.com
Newsletter Editor	Beth Hansen	8953 3728	hansenbeth@bigpond.com

Web site <http://www.octa4.net.au/alicenats>

# Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club

August 2003

## CLUB NEWS

**Meetings** are held on 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month, at OLSH staffroom

**Next meeting: Wed Aug 13<sup>th</sup>, 7.30pm:** Felicity Forth of Waterwatch

**Wed Sept 10<sup>th</sup>, 7.30pm:** Robbie Henderson, What is in your backyard?

**Wed Oct 8<sup>th</sup>, 7.30pm:** Joe Benshemesh, Marsupial Moles

**Wed Nov 12<sup>th</sup>, 7.30pm:** Andy Harrison, Indigenous Land Protection

**December:** Party -- date & time to be confirmed.

## TRIPS

**August 2<sup>nd</sup> –4<sup>th</sup>** Larapinta Trail, Stage 4. Simpson's Gap to Birthday Waterhole. Overnight walk. Please let Bob Read know if you are coming.

**August 16<sup>th</sup>:** overnight trip to Boggy Hole in Finke Gorge National Park. 4WD essential. Meet 9 am at Flynn Grave.

Late Aug Sept Date to be set. jointly with APS, assisting with surveys at Finke Gorge (Palm Valley). Chris Brock will co ordinate and run a pre field trip workshop.

September, date and time to be set. Assisting with netting fish in the Fringe Lily Gorge, Does anyone have an inflatable boat?

*For further information on any of the above, contact Bob Read 8952 1935.*

## KINDRED ORGANISATIONS' ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

Please confirm details with the organisations listed.

Dates	Activities	Venues / Contacts
Wed Aug 6 <sup>th</sup> , 7.30pm	Aust. Plants Soc. (APS) monthly meeting: Guest Speaker	at Botanic Gardens  Ph. 8952 5229
Aug 16- 17 <sup>th</sup>	APS trip to <i>acacia latzii</i> monitoring site (Note unfortunate clash with Boggy Hole)	contact APS Colleen O'Malley on 89521541(w).
	Waterwatch learning session program on 10/07/03 to be held at Greening Australia.	

## WALKING ON THE WILD SIDE

by Kaye Percy

**Larapinta Trail - Stage 2. From Simpsons Gap to Mulga camp. approx 28km return, on 8 & 9th June 2003.**

Expedition party- Myself, Gavin and Rosalie Breen.

After a limo ride to Simpsons Gap chauffeured by my daughter, we headed off on the trail approx. 8:30 am with Gavin setting the pace. Rosalie and I walked at our own comfortable pace.

The trail to Bond Gap is an easy walk, although some of the trail was overgrown with buffel grass.

We arrived at Bond Gap at 11:15 am, took the packs off and headed to check inside and around Bond Gap. A narrow chasm was filled with water and reeds at one end of the chasm. After photo snaps and a bite to eat, Rosalie decided to leave one of her water bottles hidden in bushes to pick up on the return journey, thus hoping to make her pack lighter.

Heading off again at 12.05 pm the trail started to test our stamina with climbing uphill as we headed away from Bond Gap. As we climbed higher, we were rewarded with lovely views of the area.

The next section of the trail to Arengue Bluff was rather rough and very overgrown with buffel which slowed our pace down some. Walking through mulga woodland, we had shade most of the time, vegetation very dry and birdlife rather quiet with an occasional bellbird call.

Once through the mulga woodland and back on to open flat ground, Arengue Bluff is prominently to the right. More photo snaps. Walking until 2.15 pm, we decided to have lunch under the shade of tea-trees in a creek crossing.

Our last section of the walk was well rewarded with spotting a red capped robin (male). At first glance, I thought it was a mistletoe bird, but as it flew into a tree close to us, a brilliant red-capped head and breast were on full show for us. Also in

the same area, were variegated fairy wrens and finches - at last some bird activity.

We arrived at 3.30 pm. at our 5 million star accommodation. Mulga Camp, which was situated on an alluvial creek flat, consisted of a fireplace, wooden tables, seats, water tanks and a pit toilet. What more could one ask for?

After a short rest and sorting of packs, firewood collected, creek-bed exploring and sleeping spots selected, the campfire was lit ready to cook our evening meal. While preparations were in hand a brown falcon came in for a closer look at us and a few red tailed black cockatoos flew by. After a hearty meal, dishes done, we were ready to hit the sleeping bags by 8 pm.

Sometime during the night I thought I heard a horse neigh and I definitely heard someone snoring. Next morning I thought maybe I had dreamt about the horse until Rosalie said she had heard galloping sounds as well. The snoring I'll leave for Gavin and Rosalie to debate about.

Leaving camp at 8.45 am. Gavin doing a quick trip up onto the ridge to the west, while Rosalie and I started our return journey and Gavin catching us up. During the morning's walk, we spotted another red capped robin (male), finches, Port Lincoln parrots and wrens, with Rosalie being very close to the wrens and actually seeing them peck scale off a tree trunk.

Making good time back to Bond Gap, 10.50 am., a short rest was in order. With the collection of Rosalie's dumped water from the previous day accomplished, we were back on the trail again, only 6.8 kms to go. Weather wise, Monday was slightly warmer than Sunday with hardly any breeze, 3 kms to go another rest for Rosalie and myself.

With an expected arrival time of 2 pm. at Simpsons Gap, we arrived at 1.57 pm, although Gavin had arrived back a short time before us. A short wait for our limo ride back to town chauffeured by my husband. Thanks Rosalie and Gavin for your wonderful company.

## Mirage

While working at a drill site on Andado, on a rise about 20 m above the level of the plain. I was intrigued by the variation in views of some of the distant hills. One of these I determined, using a map and compass, to be the Black Hill Range, about 130 km away.

After sunrise each morning it could be clearly seen. Some mornings by 9 AM it had risen further above the horizon, giving the appearance of a substantial mountain range only about 20 km away. Some mornings bright shimmering mirages like water appeared in the middle distance. From then on the amount of the distant ranges shrank, while the tall visible parts rose further, before shrinking back. For most of the day only their highest parts could be seen as small blue smudges above the horizon.

Clearly this is the result of air of different temperatures bending rays of light around the curvature of the earth's surface. In the morning the temperature inversion, that is a layer of warm air over colder air causes light to bend down toward the surface of the earth, and objects below the horizon can be seen. Later in the day as air near the ground is heated light bends away from the surface, and tall objects below the horizon may disappear. RR

### **From the NT Field Naturalists Newsletter, May 2003.**

#### **A worm mystery by Lorrae MacArthur**

Why do worms have a mass migration one night a year? On the night of March 31<sup>st</sup>, whilst tracking frogs at East Point, I noticed an unusual amount of worm activity. The following day, there were hundreds of dried-up worms on the ground at East Point & they were noticeable around (Northern Territory) University (Darwin). Did anyone else notice this phenomenon & / or have any ideas as to why?

Other items in the Newsletter included:  
David Williams, on a hydrodynamic model of Darwin Harbour  
Fiona Douglas, on Surveying Bats

## **BOOK REVIEW, "Red Sand, Green Heart", by J.L.Read, published Lothian Books.**

---

I found this an interesting book. The author was for many years the environmental officer for the Roxby Downs Mine, but the book ranges far beyond the mine area to Lake Eyre and across much of northern SA.

The book's breathless "boy's own" style is rather irritating, but it contains much interesting material, from speculation as to how pelicans know that Lake Eyre has flooded, to searching for Inland Taipans, and the depressing tale of the extinction of the southern-most colony of Black-footed Rock Wallabies.

The human population also features, from graziers to the protesters camped near Roxby. Much of the tale of the destruction wrought by feral animals and over-grazing (SA has fared much worse in this respect than the NT) we know only too well, but there are some new slants here. There is some thought-provoking material on kangaroo harvesting, the future of the outback, and the possible influences of increasing carbon dioxide levels and global warming pushing even more species to the brink. RR

### **Sightings**

---

-- at Mt Isa in early July: A short, Grey-haired Breen & a taller Bearded Breen checking out the dinosaur display;  
-- throughout Western & Central Outback Qld.: brolgas, bustards, & wedge-tailed eagles galore ... &, sadly, for several hundred kilometres, there were dead 'roos almost every 150 metres or so.

In NSW, off Lennox Head (just south of Byron Bay): Eight humpback whales, including one very close in to the headland. It was heading straight for 3 small fishing boats, disappeared for a while & then breached less than 10 metres from one of the boats for a closer look. The others were further out to sea, breaching, circling, doing backflips & tail-whacks before heading north again for their Harvey Bay winter holidays.

Beth Hansen, Lennox Head NSW