

claimed within 14 days please return to the Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club
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ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB OCTOBER 2003

MEETINGS

Wednesday October 8th:

Joe Benshemesh on Marsupial Moles. 7:30 PM.

In the staffroom of OLSH off the Sadadeen Road.

Wednesday November 12th:

Jose Petrick, on Egypt. 7:30 PM.

In the staffroom of OLSH off the Sadadeen Road.

TRIPS

October 11th and 12th, assisting with fish survey at Fringe Lily Gorge. 4 WD needed. This will be an overnight camp, but anyone who wants to come for the day may.

October 19th, WaterWatch – Wigley's Waterhole. Leader: Rosalie

Sun 23 Nov 2003	Walk in hills in vicinity of Scout Hall off Larapinta Drive. This will be an early morning walk. Leaders: Connie & Barbara
Late November	Bradshaw Walk at night. Leader: Bob
Sun 7 Dec 2003	End of Year breakfast at the Telegraph Station. 8:30 am
Dec 2003	Sewage Ponds – early morning. Leader: Bob
Feb 2004	Sewage Ponds – early morning. Leader: Bob
Early March 2004	One of walks in Telegraph Station vicinity. Leader: Rosalie
March 2004	Kunoith Bore
April 2003	Slot gorge southern side of Mt Gillen. Leader: Connie
April 2004 (school holidays)	Newhaven
May 2004	Chain of Ponds (Trephina)
Sat, Sun & Mon 5, 6 & 7 June 2004	Mac Clark Conservation Reserve (Acacia pence) and Acacia pickardii. This would be a combined FNC & APS trip.
After rain	Proposed activity: setting up a light trap.
Possible overnight camp	at Old Hamilton Downs one weekend next year if there is sufficient interest.
Unknown	Walk from Wigley's to the Telegraph Station. Organiser: Rosalie

KINDRED ORGANISATIONS EVENTS

Wednesday 1 October, meeting of the Australian Plants Society, 7:30pm at the Olive Pink Botanic Garden. Guest Speaker: Peter Meech from Alice Springs Nursery on *pruning native plants*.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please note that subscriptions are now due. If you have not paid already please do so as soon as possible. The Committee has resolved that this year the cut off will be November, that is no more newsletters if you are still unfinancial.

New Members

We welcome the following new members to the club.

Clarry Smith
Kay Bailey
Danae Moore

NEWS

Australian Naturalists' Network Get Together 2004

The Western Australian Naturalists' Club will host the third *Get-together* in the spring of 2004. The dates are:

- Pre-tour – Wednesday 22 September to Saturday 25 September.
- Core program – Saturday 25 September to Monday 4 October 2004
- Post tour – Tuesday 5 October to Friday 8 October.

The venue including accommodation for the core program is the Perth International Big 4 Tourist Park, Hale Road Forrestfield WA 6058.

The co-ordinators would appreciate an early indication of attendance.

Contact Connie on 8852 4694 for a copy of the information that has been sent to the club.

Surveys at Finke Gorge NP

This was called off because there were only three starters. Unfortunately many of those interested had other commitments.

In the event the weather would have made it unpleasant anyway.

We will try again around May next year.

The Sewage Ponds

Freckled Ducks are back, including one male in breeding plumage.

Also Oriental Plovers, Red-necked Stint, Pectoral Sandpiper as well as the usual Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and Red-capped Plovers.

Website

I was a bit disconcerted to find that the website I operate for the club had disappeared.

On enquiry I found that this was a result of hackers attacking the octa4 server where the site is. The problem has now been fixed.

RR

Grey Falcon Sighting - "HOW COOL IS THAT?"

That's what my birdo son in Canberra answered when I e-mailed him about the Grey Falcon I had seen in our garden in Battarbee Street.

I was out sweeping the stone path, when I realised that the White-plumed Honeyeaters were making a lot of noise continuously. Up in one of the kurrajongs was a bird of prey, less than ten metres away from me. I first thought it was a Hobby, but it was light grey on its back like a Cuckoo Shrike, then I realised it was even lighter grey underneath and was very yellow around the eye and had yellow legs. I felt sure it was a Grey Falcon. It flew into next door's gum tree. It was carrying something in its left foot. I dashed inside, grabbed Jim and the binoculars and we got another brief look at it in there, till it flew further towards town. I checked the books, then walked around the block, but couldn't find it again.

It had probably been in our kurrajong for a while, because I was aware of the Honeyeaters for ages before I investigated.

Yee
eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeh!

Barb Gilfedder

Moas

The New Zealand Moa, which became extinct around 800 years ago, came in three sizes, ranging from 60kg to 250kg - and they are all the same species. DNA analysis shows that there are no genetic differences. It was a puzzle for researchers until they realised that the very large moas were females who were three times bigger than the males. *Professor Alan Cooper, Saturday 20/09/2003 ABC Science show.*

Wildwatch Australia

Recently the ABC Natural History Unit called for expressions of interest from individuals or organisations interested in taking part in an interactive survey project. For the first time ever, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's radio, TV and online divisions are planning to work together to use Australia-wide coverage to find out about wildlife in people's gardens.

ABC Natural History Unit would like the information from the survey to be of use to national organisations involved in biodiversity conservation. It aims to map overall trends and to provide important data on urban wildlife across the continent.

To generate nation-wide interest and interactive audience participation, there will be television segments on *George Negus Tonight* and *Richard Morecroft Goes Wild*, local and national radio programs, online content and a series of follow-up half-hour television programs.

ABC estimate over a million interested households will participate in the project, and the data could form the basis for further research.

Unfortunately expressions of interest closed September 25th, however The Target launch date February 2004 - 'The Year of the Built Environment'. I think interested Field Nat members could still take advantage of this opportunity, and would have great ideas about possibilities for involvement. If your interested then the contact the Natural History Unit.

ABC Natural History Unit
GPO Box 9994
Melbourne Vic 3001

Clare Thomson ph:03 9524 2344 e:
thomson.clare@abc.net.au
Or Robert Hayward ph: 03 9524 2341 e:
hayward.robert@abc.net.au

NT scientist uses bustard to health-check hush

A Northern Territory scientist is using Australia's largest flying bird to measure the health of arid landscapes in the Tanami Desert.

Mark Ziembecki says studying the movements of the nomadic bustard could provide pastoralists with vital information on rainfall patterns and the effects of land clearing on the environment.

He says bustards are better indicators than smaller birds because they can still fly while wearing a satellite transmitter, which is the size of two matchboxes.

"Using satellite telemetry we can look at the larger scale movements, and then relate those

sort of movements to rainfall patterns, types of land management and areas of grazing intensity," he said.

He says the species is strongly affected by land clearing and cultivation.

"They might be able to indicate particularly favourable areas that are in good condition, so the pastoral industry for example, might be interested to know that particular area hasn't been grazed too heavily." *ABC News online Sunday, September 21, 2003*

Govt boosts funds for cane toad research

The Federal Government has today set aside an extra \$200,000 to fight cane toads. The funding is in addition to the \$3.5 million the Commonwealth has already invested in research. The funding follows a review report that found the CSIRO's world-leading research into finding a biocontrol is progressing well and offers good hope for a long-term solution.

Federal Environment Minister David Kemp says the research has achieved a world first, successfully inserting cane toad DNA into an amphibian specific virus.

By inserting the modified virus into a cane toad tadpole, it is hoped the immune response will prevent the toad from maturing to the reproductive stage. The CSIRO research is expected to take up to 10 years.

The cane toad has already made its way to the outer Darwin rural areas and is expected in the city in larger numbers this wet season.

ABC News online Saturday, September 20

\$20 Million for Major Environmental Work in NT

The Australian and NT Governments have signed a Natural Heritage Trust bilateral agreement that will inject up to \$20 million into extensive environmental work throughout the territory over the next four years.

The bilateral agreement triggers funding under the \$2.7 billion Natural Heritage Trust Program which was announced by Federal Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Dr David Kemp, NT Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries, Dr Chris Burns, and Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Warren Truss. "Under the agreement, Federal Government funding of up to \$20 million will be matched by existing NT contributions to manage and improve biodiversity, sustainable natural resource management and build community capacity to manage the environment," Dr Kemp said.

Part of the funding will support urgent action identified by the regional body - the Landcare Council of the NT.

Mr Truss said the Natural Heritage Trust is entering into a new phase focused on developing local solutions for regional problems.

"Communities will have access to resources to address critical natural resource management issues based on sound economics and science, taking into account social and environmental impacts on regional communities," Mr Truss said.

"In addition, the interim funding includes \$1.34 million to support a network of locally employed facilitators and coordinators across the Territory. "Local level facilitators and coordinators are fundamental to the NHT because they will engage local communities in the integrated regional planning process and support the on-ground activities of community groups."

For the first time, the NT will have a network of 27 facilitators and coordinators

Priority Projects for Central Australia

- **Todd River Remnant Vegetation Management - Greening Australia NT (\$60,924)**
Community, agencies and local government working together to address threats, identified through previous community consultation workshops, to vegetation health and biodiversity conservation throughout the Todd River Catchment. These threats include poor land management and land development practices that lead to soil erosion, weed invasion and inappropriate fire regimes. Contact: Michelle Rodrigo Ph 08 8953 2882 or michelle.rodrigo@nt.greeningaustralia.org.au
- **Indigenous Community Based Landcare Project - Tangentyere Council (\$107,100)**
The project supports remote communities for Indigenous land management in the Central Australian region. This will be through direct seeding programs and through the provision of devolved grants. Contact: Wayne Davis Ph 08 8953 3120 or tangle@octa4.net.au
- **Looking After Our Soils: Better Outstation and Road Development on Aboriginal Lands - Central Land Council (\$79,900)**
This project looks after and manages soil on Aboriginal lands in Central Australia to reduce environmental problems. The significant problems of erosion and soil deposition will be reduced by appropriate earth works, drainage and erosion control. Contact: David Alexander 08 8950 5006 or david.alexander@clc.org.au

Joint Media Release

Federal Minister for Environment and Heritage Dr David Kemp & N T Acting Minister for Lands and Planning Dr Chris Burns