

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

JUNE 2004



President	Bob Read	8952 1935	rread@octa4.net.au
Vice-President	Kevin Boyle	0422006140	
Secretary/	Connie Spencer	89524694	constans@austarnet.com.au
Treasurer	Barbara Gilfedder	8955 5452	fedders@octa4.net.au
Property Officer	Rosalie Breen	8952 3409	
Public Officer	Leoni Read	8952 1935	rread@octa4.net.au
Newsletter Editor	Emily Findlay	8955 0313	robbiemily@hotmail.au

Web site members.iinet.net.au/~alicenats/

ALICE SPRINGS FIELD
NATURALISTS INC.
NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2004

Meetings

Wednesday 9 June, 7:30 PM at the
OLSH staffroom off Sadadeen Road.
Speaker Helen Puckey –
Carpentarian Rock-rats

July 14th, Michael Barritt on Central
Australian possums.
August 11th, AGM (any suggestions or
offers for a short presentation welcome)

Field Trips

Saturday 5 June. Walk from Wigley's
Waterhole to Telegraph Station. Meet 7.30
am at the Sargent Street sign on North
Stuart Highway. Leader – Rosalie Breen.

• **Sat Sun & Mon 12 13 & 14 June -**
APS & FNC combined trip to an *Acacia*
pickardii stand on Andado Station
visiting the Mac Clarke Conservation
Reserve (*Acacia peuce*) on the way. Meet
7:45am for an 8am departure at the
Information Bay on the South Stuart
Hwy. High clearance 4WD vehicle
required. Fuel for a distance of 800 km
(this includes a 10% reserve). Contact
Connie Spencer on 8952 4694. See note
below for more details.

Saturday, Sunday 26, 27 June.
Winnecke Goldfields. Mainly driving,
with options to wander around the area.
Leader – Kevin Boyle.

Sat & Sun 17 & 18 July Hamilton Downs Youth
Camp
Sat, Sun & Mon 31 July, 1 & 2 Aug Horseshoe
Bend subject to permission.
Sat & Sun 14 & 15 Aug James Range subject to
permission.

SUGGESTIONS WANTED

**If you have any suggestions for field trips you
would like the club to undertake, please let**

any member of the committee know. We
would love to have your suggestions.

Kindred organizations events

Wednesday 2nd June - Australian Plants
Society - 7:30 pm - **Olive Pink Botanic
Garden. Guest Speaker, Colleen
O'Malley on "Gouldian Finches, Fire
Ferals and fickle seed resources**

National Bird Awareness Day

Conservation Volunteers
Sunday 6th of June – 9am to 12pm,
Ilparpa Swamp bird viewing area, on
Ilparpa Road

You are warmly invited to celebrate
National Bird Awareness Day on 6th
June, with local bird enthusiasts at
Ilparpa Swamp and Alice Springs
Sewage Ponds.

For anyone who is interested in Central
Australian bird life, enjoys bird
watching or would like to learn more,
this is a great opportunity to bring on
your binoculars and join us.

Rob Burgoyne from Birds Australia will
provide an introductory talk on the local
bird life in the area. From here we will
move on to the Alice Springs Sewage
Ponds, where we will spend the rest of
the morning bird watching with local
'birdos' assisting in bird identification.

Conservation Volunteers Australia
(CVA) staff will be hosting the day,
providing a morning tea for all
participants and can provide transport to
and from the site by request.

For more information or to let us know
that you are going to join us, please
contact CVA on 8953 6411.

Francis Smith Memorial Park

The Minister for Lands and Planning has approved renaming the park on Burke Street the FRANCES SMITH MEMORIAL PARK in recognition of the dedicated work that Frances carried out in this park for 30 + years and for her involvement in other community issues.

Acacia pickardii trip

June 12, 13 & 14 2004

Trip leaders: Connie & Stan Spencer

Acacia pickardii – a small, prickly tree, often gnarled with a windswept look. So, what's so special about it that you would want to make a 700 km round trip just to have a look?!

Well, its conservation status is listed as "vulnerable". It's known only from 3 locations in the NT as well as from Mt Gason Bore on the Birdsville track in SA. We have only seen one of the populations in flower and once in the 14 years we have been checking up on them and of that flowering event we only managed to find one seed pod with one seed in it! But best of all is that this particular stand that we will be visiting are the giants of this species and very fine specimens indeed.

Stan and I came across this population 10 years ago. It is located in a sheltered valley rather than on the tops of the windswept mesas in the area. We have been revisiting the site roughly every two years since then and it always feels like visiting old friends.

*For this trip, we will assemble at the Information Bay opposite the Old Timers Home on the South Stuart Highway at 7:45am for an 8am start on Saturday 12th of June. We will travel down the Old South Road to the Deep Well Station turnoff, then head east to the Allambi Road with a stop at a stand of Red Mallees (*Eucalyptus eucentrica*). This is subject to permission. Otherwise, we will travel via Santa Teresa to Allambi Station.*

*On reaching the Andado road, we will travel through the Train Hills and along the Rodinga Range before heading south between the sand dunes on the edge of the Simpson Desert. We will leave the Andado road at the turnoff to the Mac Clarke Conservation Reserve and head towards North Bore stopping to have a look at the *Acacia peuce* in the Reserve.*

From this point, the going will become a little more challenging as we make our way towards East Bore and a camp for the night. It will be a long day and probably after 5pm by the time we reach camp.

*Sunday will be spent having a look at the grand specimens of *Acacia pickardii* plus a couple of other stands and then making our way towards home with a camp hopefully in Gidgee with a beautiful red sand dune as our backdrop.*

Monday we will head for Alice via Santa Teresa with a couple of stops to look at some more rare plants in the area.

If you are interested in joining us on this trip please contact Connie on 8952 4694.

New Members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members:

Jill Brew

Margaret and David Hewitt

Margaret and Jim Lawrence

O'Callaghan

Miranda and Albert Sage

Rosalie Schultz

Moya Tomlinson

Rhondra Tomlinson

(we have missed welcomes for a few months)

There are now 32 memberships, the highest in the time that I have been here.

Club Subscriptions

Club subscriptions will be due in August. As flagged in the previous newsletter the committee considers that we need to increase subscriptions. There was some discussion at the last meeting (see minutes below), and a modified proposal was suggested. Further comments and discussion are welcome before the AGM when the matter will be voted on.

Field Trip Reports

Walking on the wild side. By Kaye Percy 18/04/2004

Destination: Slot Gorge, south side of Mount Gillen.

Six intrepid trekkers set out at 8am from Ilparpa clay pans area, following a boundary fence to our destination as this gives a more direct route to the Slot Gorges in the area. Strolling along at an

easy pace we encountered a variety of flora; Fork Leaf Corkwood, Ironwoods, Red Mallee, Native Orange, cassia and Butterfly Bush in flower. Hills to the right of us changed from limestone to dolomite rock and areas of spinifex were also evident. In the fauna department Zebra Finches, 2 Euros and a low flying bat that had an unexpected encounter with a barb wire fence. Also land snail shells.

Once at the base of the Slot Gorge we scrambled on up further into the depths of this shaded area encountering lots of rocks, Spearwood trees, Cypress Pines, Lemon Grass, Mountain Wandarrie, rock ferns and *Ptilotus* plants.

Enjoying a rest break and admiring the view back out to the Ilparpa range we had a Grey Shrike Thrush perch in a tree above us and entertain us with a repertoire of sounds.

On the return journey we spotted Rufous Whistler, Willy Wagtail, White-plumed Honeyeater, wrens, grasshoppers, mistletoe in flower, Meadow Argus and Lemon Migrant butterflies.

Finished our journey at 11:45am.

Thanks go to our trip leader Connie Spencer for a very interesting mornings outing.

Bowmans Gap, Ormiston Gorge

Moya Thomlinson

Over the Anzac Day weekend six of us overnighted at Bowman's Gap in Ormiston Pound.

For Angela, Connie, Kaye, Rhondda and Moya the trip started on Saturday evening at the Ormiston gorge campground. Our appetites for the delights ahead were whetted with a stroll up the rocky slope to the Ghost Gum lookout. On the way Connie identified *Acacia validinervia* and various *Ptilotus* spp in fluffy flower.

At the lookout we could see the gorge through which we would return in two days' time, and on the other side of the gorge several rock wallabies sitting in attitudes of deep or perhaps just sleepy contemplation.

Back at the camp we were visited by a living club logo, the Spinifex Pigeon. The next morning Rosalie joined us and we set off on the Pound walk, first crossing the low hills bordering the Pound. An internet search tells me that the term 'pound' may be derived from the late Old English term for a stone enclosure to shelter livestock. In Australia, pounds are deep cliff-enclosed valleys that form when the soft rocks of a valley floor erode more rapidly than the enclosing harder rocks which remain as cliffs.



The hill vegetation was recovering very well from the latest fires, helped by recent rain. We found flowering Holly Grevillea and Desert Rose, a Bush Banana in fruit, and then to redress the balance in favour of the animal kingdom we met a couple of toadhopper grasshoppers (*Bufo* sp?). Over the last of the hills forming the Pound wall we were amongst *Eucalyptus normantonensis* with its rough fissured bark. The drier spinifex-covered floor of the Pound was liberally sprinkled with alarmingly large spider holes. Soon we came to a creek bed where an inviting pool made an unofficial lunch stop for one who couldn't wait. From here we left the path and headed upstream to an officially decreed lunch

stop beside another pool where we disturbed a burrowing frog - perhaps Spencer's.

From here we went even more feral with a short cut over spinifex covered undulations to finally rejoin the creek as it forces its way through the north-western Pound wall. Here spinifex hopping was replaced by rock hopping, although by now most of us were running out of hop. We found a bit more energy after locating a pleasant water hole for our camp, then continued unencumbered by packs further into the Gap. Here the creek forms a series of water holes in which we found snails and various forms of insect life, and on one rock some Painted Finches. The last of the year's crop of young Long-nosed Dragons scurried away underfoot as we scrambled over the water-smoothed boulders.



Back at the camp water hole it was time for sundowners by the pool as bats flitted overhead. We managed to stay awake for the Telstra 7.15 satellite, but shortly after we were all asleep on a comfy ledge of river sand.

The next day we followed the creek back into the Pound (passing a very large and fortunately sluggish brown snake) and through the majestic red walls of Ormiston Gorge. Rock wallabies were still thinking deep thoughts on the ledges. I loved every minute of the walk and it has inspired me to get out bushwalking every weekend since! Thanks to everyone for adding something to make the trip enjoyable and interesting.

Other News

From the ABC Tuesday, 4 May 2004

Darwin eradicates feral pigeons

Parks and Wildlife have successfully eradicated feral pigeons from the city's landscape.

Northern Territory wildlife management officer Rob Taylor said an eradication program that began in 1996 has removed almost all of the birds.

Mr Taylor says the pigeons carry diseases that affect native birds and humans and at one stage their population was significant.

"Some areas in Darwin, they were in huge numbers," he said.

"For example, at the Fannie Bay racing stables, we took out 1,000 animals from that area."

Geological time gets a new period

Story from BBC NEWS:

Geologists have added a new period to their official calendar of Earth's history - the first in 120 years.

The Ediacaran Period covers some 50 million years of ancient time on our planet from 600 million years ago to about 542 million years ago.

"There's always been a recognition that the last part of the Precambrian is a special time before the first shelled animals, when there are these weird, mesh-like creatures of uncertain affinity," Professor Jim Ogg, secretary-general of the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS), told BBC News Online.

"Now it's an official part of the timescale."

'Snowball' Earth

The Ediacaran begins at the end of the last ice age of the Snowball Earth, or Cryogenian Period, a term given to a series of glaciations that covered most of our planet between 850-630 million years ago.

One theory proposes that these climate shocks triggered the evolution of complex, multi-celled life.

The name Ediacaran takes its name from the Ediacara Hills in the Flinders mountain range of south Australia.

Editor's Note: Rocks of this age occur in the Amadeus Basin near Alice Springs.