

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

April 2006



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Web site : <http://www.geocities.com/alicenats/>

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club 2006

intexta_forest.doc

Meetings

Please Note
New meeting venue
Olive Pink Botanic Gardens
on Tuncks Road.

7:30 pm on the second Wednesday of the month.

Wednesday April 12th: 7.30pm. Dr Charlie Carter on the Larapinta Trail

Trips / Activities

Sat 8 April

Owen Springs Reserve. Permission granted to visit waterhole on the Hugh River nr the homestead. Meet Flynn's Grave Memorial, Larapinta Drive, at 7:30 am. Leader Bob Read on 8952 1935

New Members

A big welcome to New Members!

Susan Nightingale

Emma Bliss

Guest Speaker Report

Emily Findlay

'A Taste of the Pacific – more than just Cocktails and Coconuts' -

Highlights of Emily and Robbie's 12 month Pacific experience in Vanuatu.

Report next newsletter

Trip Reports

Moonlight walk/bike ride to Picnic Spur

Simpson's Gap Bike Track

Saturday 11th Feb 2006

By Liz Carpenter

Those of us who weathered the "highest and longest" summer temperatures on record in Alice Springs were lured out of our insulated cocoons by the promise of our first cooler night in months. The moon was nearly full and the humidity had dropped. The 4km journey didn't seem impossible.

11 people gathered at the landmark of Flynn's Grave shortly before sundown. 5 of us headed off on bicycles at the start of the sealed "Simpsons Gap Bicycle Path". The other 6 walkers drove to the start of the Emergency Use track 2.5 km further up Larapinta Drive before walking on the dirt track. This met up with the sealed path.

There was enough light for us to take in the panoramic views of the MacDonnell Ranges to the east and west and on arriving at the picnic spot to clamber up the rocky hill above the picnic spur. Here there was a hint of breeze to cool us while we waited for the walkers.

We enjoyed a pleasant picnic under the ancient Bloodwood Trees before hitting our respective tracks under a brilliant near full moon.

The flies were kind to us. There were no snakes and hardly a bird.

But a nice interlude.

Intertexta Forest.

Report by Rosalie Breen

On 25 February Connie took us to the Intertexta forest on the western end of Ilparpa Claypans. Us was Elsa Corbet, Jenny Purdie, Colleen Burke, Narelle Russell, Rosalie Schultz, Rhondda Tomlinson, Beth Hansen, Bob Read, Liz Carpenter and the reporter.

It is named for the wonderful stands of the so called Bastard Coolibah, *Eucalyptus intertexta*. It is a special habitat which Peter Latz describes as "This is the best stand of this species known in Central Australia: not only because of the number and maturity of the trees, but also because of the diversity of associated perennial plants"



Coolabah

Photo: Rosalie Breen

The coolibahs are old specimens many with single trunks, denoting that fire has not entered the area for many many years. We strolled among the trees delighting in their different growth habits and discovering other tree species. There were also ironwood, beefwood and an occasional river red gum. On the outer eastern edge were corkwoods.

It is called a forest because of the quite dense undergrowth of shrubs and herbs and grasses. A few of the shrubs we saw were *Eremophila longifolia*, though not in flower, *Hakea leucoptera* (needlewood) with its woody seedcase and *Pittosporum angustifolium*, called native apricot because its small green fruits (as we saw them) dry and open to an apricot colour. We found a native jasmine with a couple of white flowers left. The small red berried *Einadia nutans*, climbing saltbush was doing just that, twining among other plants. *Chenopodium auricomum*, a big saltbush which usually grows on the Barkley, was located and identified. Although the grasses were drying we identified many species including curly windmill, Queensland blue, golden beard grass, silky browntop, and *Leptochloa fusca* (brown beetle grass) a tough looking grass which lined a few clay-based and nardoo growing depressions. *Persicaria* sp., commonly called a knotweed (a type of dock), grew in low lying areas too. There was quite a lot of an introduced weed *Malvastrum americanum*.



Photo: Rosalie Breen

There is another Coolibah, *Eucalyptus coolabah subspecies arida* (formerly *E. microtheca*). This one is mostly found in more low lying areas, likes it wetter. It surrounds the claypans here, and true to its old name has small fruits 2-4mm long, 2-5mm diameter, and the valves just poke out (exserted), whereas *E. intertexta*'s are longer with a diameter of 6-8mm and have inserted valves i.e. they don't poke out. Also it has dull bluish leaves.

We walked out of the forest, over claypans shimmering in the sun and crazed with cracks in infinite patterns. We then drove off for breakfast in the shade beside one of the biggest pans, sharing fig and almond bread, dates, biscuits and plums. Thanks to all.



Photo: Rosalie Breen

Iparpa Landcare Group had their general meeting on 5 March including a cleanup. They have had working bees in the forest and the claypans to remove rubbish and buffel grass. The area is much improved and this active group will ensure that this special area is well protected and preserved.

Land for Wildlife Bird Workshop 12-03-06

Written by Rosalie Breen

Cassie Wright from Land for Wildlife (see last newsletter) organised a workshop at the Reilly's property near Honeymoon Gap, for Field Naturalists and Land for Wildlifers. So there was a big turnout. After an introduction we split into three groups each led by an expert birdo, and went off to explore different habitats. Will Cormack went to the river red gum river. Bob Read set off up the limestone and spinifex hills and Rob Burgoyne took his group along the track in the valley. To the north was the steep quartzite face of the Heavitree Range, but no-one went up there. After wandering around for about half an hour (and getting mixed up in our habitats), we returned to the house and compiled the lists and enjoyed a generous breakfast and much conversation. Between the three groups we collected round 32 different species of birds which will be a great record for Lesley and David whose hospitality we greatly appreciated.

Bird Watching workshop

Bird List by Cassie
from the Reilly's place,
near Honeymoon Gap
7.40am-9.20am
March 12th 2006

* These species were seen by only one group.
All others seen by two or three groups.

Along River

Australian (Nankeen) Kestrel
Crested Pigeon
Crows
Galah
*Grey-crowned Babbler
*Magpie-lark
Mistletoebird
*Pied Butcherbird
*Red-tailed Black-cockatoo
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater
White-plumed Honeyeater
Willie Wagtail
Zebra Finch

Through spinifex hills then up track

Australian Ringneck
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
*Black-faced Woodswallow
Crested Pigeon
Galah
*Grey-headed Honeyeater
*Grey Shrike-thrush
Little Woodswallow
Mistletoebird
Red-backed Kingfisher
*Spinifex Pigeon
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater
Torresian Crow?
*Weebill
* Western Bowerbird
*Western Gerygone
White-backed Swallow
Willie Wagtail
*Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Yellow-throated Miner
Zebra Finch

Far Valley group

Australian Ringneck
Australian (Nankeen) Kestrel
*Budgerigar
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Crested Pigeon
Little Woodswallow
*Peregrine Falcon
Red-backed Kingfisher
*Rufous whistler
*Singing Honeyeater
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater

White-backed Swallow
White-plumed Honeyeater
Willie Wagtail
Yellow-throated Miner

Outing to Conlin's Lagoon

alias Rifle Range Swamp
Saturday 18th March 2006
By Connie Spencer

It had been eight years since Field Nats visited Conlin's Lagoon - a much nicer description than swamp although neither fitted the bill this time as it was very dry. Not so, on my two previous visits.

After parking our cars near Roe Creek we made our way through buffel grass and coolabahs to the claypans. This stand of coolabahs is a pure stand of *Eucalyptus coolabah subsp. arida* and not a mixture like the Coolabah Swamp on the Eastside of town which also has *Eucalyptus intertexta* (we visited a pure stand of these coolabahs last month near the Ilparpa Claypans). If you are keen to be able to distinguish the two, you will need to examine the seed capsules.

We wandered through tangled Lignum onto the smooth hard-baked claypans dotted with very dry clumps of Swamp Canegrass. The smooth surface provided us with tracks to examine and contemplate as well as patterns made by arching canegrass stems blowing in the breeze. Many stopped to marvel at the stumpy, gnarled, twisted trunk of a grand old Coolabah.

As we left the claypans, we entered sandy herbfields dotted with large old Fork-leafed Corkwoods with their characteristic thick corky bark. We then proceeded to the low range of hills to the south and made our way along animal paths to the top. Looking back we could see the full extent of the claypans and looking into the next valley we noted very different vegetation – more Ironwoods and Ghost Gums.

Time goes quickly when you are having fun and it was soon time to make our way back to our vehicles. The undisturbed nature of this swamp/lagoon as opposed to the Ilparpa Swamp and the Coolabah Swamp on the Eastside make it a unique place within the municipality of Alice Springs and we are privileged to be able to visit it. A big thank you to Karen for organizing permission to visit and a key to the gate.

If you want to know what birds we saw, ask Bob or Helen or Lou. I don't think it was all that exciting a list.

Participants: Karen May, Michael Barritt, Bob Read, Beth Hansen, Kaye Percy, Rhondda Tomlinson, Rosalie Breen, Marie & Lou Leidwinger, Helen Morgan, Susan Nightingale, Maryann Kohlberger & yours truly.



Coolabah trunk. Conlins Lagoon. Photo: Connie Spencer

Creature Feature

Does anyone recognise this birdwatching wagon?



Photo: Andrew Twyman

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