

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

March 2007



President	Bob Read	8952 1935	rread1@bigpond.net.au
Vice-President	Karen May	8953 1446	kmmb@bigpond.net.au
Secretary	vacant		
Treasurer	Barbara Gilfedder	8955 5452	fedders@octa4.net.au
Property Officer	Rosalie Breen	8952 3409	rosalie.breen@email.com
Public Officer	Rhondda Tomlinson	8953 1280	rhondda.tomlinson@nt.gov.au
Newsletter Editor	Liz Carpenter	8953 6750	ecarpenter@iinet.net.au

Web site : www.geocities.com/alicenats

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club 2007

Meetings

7.30 pm on the second Wednesday of the month.

Venue: Olive Pink Botanic Garden, Tuncks Road

Mar 14 Speaker Chris Palmer, Entomologist. Second instalment with "Higher Order Insects".

April 11 Speaker to be announced

Trips / Activities

Sat Mar 10 Visit Kyumba Reserve near Pine Gap off Hatt Road. 2-3 hour easy plant focussed walk around the Reserve. Meet 7:30am @ info bay opposite Old Timers, South Stuart Hwy. Leader: Connie Spencer. Contact: 8952 4694

Sat 17 Mar Miss Pink's Birthday celebrations at Olive Pink Botanic Gardens. See Announcements in this newsletter.

Sat 24 Mar Owen Springs Reserve. Visit waterhole near ranger station. Meet 7.30am Flynn's Grave. High clearance vehicle recommended. Contact Bob Read on 89521935.

Easter Long Weekend. Fri April 6-Mon 9th Newhaven Reserve or Ringwood Station. 4WD essential for both. To be decided on by Bob Read pending rainfalls.

Sat 21 April. N'Dhala Gorge.

New Members

A BIG WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Suzanne and Michael Elderfield, Melanie Brougham, Rita Anderson and Jez Hann.

Guest Speaker Report

Trip Reports

BOB'S BIRTHDAY AT THE SEWAGE PONDS

By Rhondda Tomlinson
Sat. 10th February 2007.

Some pre-preparations went on before hand but 7.00am was the meeting time at the Sewerage Ponds – Alice Springs.

Arriving at the Ponds a welcoming Happy 60th Birthday sign with balloons and a "Grey Falcon" birthday hat greeted Bob Read as his wife Leonie dropped him off. Of course a photo with the hat was insisted upon.

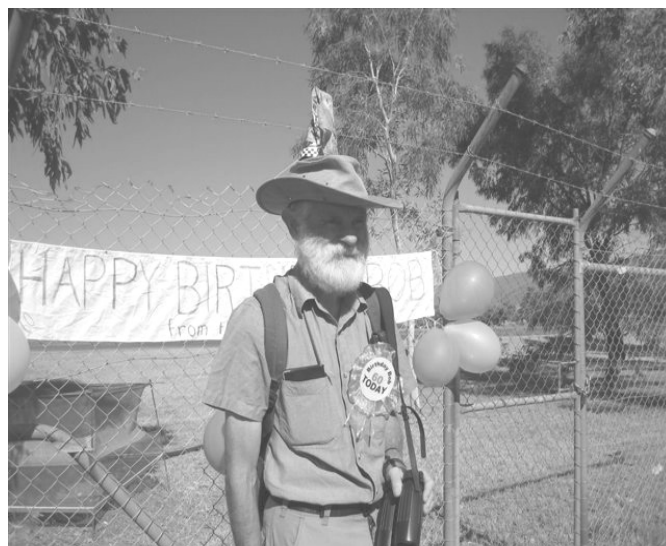


Photo Rosalie Breen

The first sighting was 'mozzies' (or midgies), but Bob informed us they were vegetarians.

The morning was perfect with the green evidence from the recent rains. The reflections would have been perfect except for the above mentioned insects skimming in and out of the water.

3 Black Swans, Masked Lapwings and Black-winged Stilts started the bird list. For the bulk of the list you will have to consult the bird people.



Photo Rosalie Breen



Photo Rosalie Breen

The skeleton trees in the drained ponds proved an interesting haven for Red-capped Plovers, Red-kneed Dotterels, Red-necked Avocets, Sandpipers and a Tern sitting on a pole. In the distance Fairy-martins were collecting mud for their nests.



Photo Rosalie Breen

Barb with her 'bird scope', excelled in honing in on many of the pond residence and /or visitors. Black Ducks, Australasian Grebes, "Peewees" also rate a mention. A Brown Songlark was spied at the foot hills on top of a bush. It proceeded to glide and flutter above us.

An Avocet made its presence known as it flew and called warning of our presence and trying to discourage these 'Grey Falcon crowned intruders'. (Explanation: each person wore a party hat topped with a Grey Falcon picture so Bob could observe the Grey Falcon to fulfill a long desired wish). The Crows had their say as well.

There was a Straw-necked Ibis way in the distance but the scope soon brought it to within view. There were Hoary-headed Grebes, Pink-eared Ducks on the water, and at Bev's feet two eggs on the edge of the track.

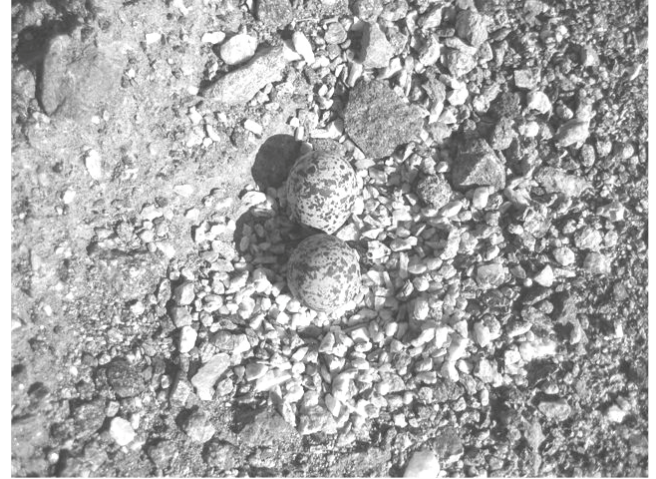


Photo Rosalie Breen

This explained some carry on by a group of birds including a Red-capped Dotterel. From the bird hide looking back through the scope we saw the Red-capped Dotterel sitting on the eggs.

(Ed. Two Red-capped Dotterel chicks, and two Red-kneed Dotterel chicks seen at the ponds weekend 24-25 Feb. by both Will Cormack and Liz Carpenter, so it must be true).

Nearing the gate Wood Sandpipers were seen on the edge of the pond but flew off when they realized they were the centre of attention.

Returning to the cars we all dispersed and an hour later most of us to met up again at the Olive Pink Botanic Garden where Leonie Read had prepared a great morning tea celebration. There must have been 25 or 30 people, including some surprise family arrivals from down south all wishing Bob a very Happy 60th birthday.

Many thanks to Leonie.

SUNRISE ON SPENCER HILL

Sun. 4th February
By Rosalie Breen, Leader.

The Telegraph Station Park holds many "treasures" for walking. One of my favorites is a climb to Spencer Hill in the early morning to watch the dawning sun spreading its glow of light across to Mt Gillen and the far western ranges, to open a new day. Especially in summer, early morning is cool and quiet, worth sharing. This time with Jim and Margaret Lawrence, Jude Mapleson and friend Marg Collins., Rhondda Tomlinson, Rosalie Schultz, Barb Gilfedder, Connie Spencer, Bob Reid and Gavan Breen, we set off at about 5.45 am from Gosse St playground.

Spencer Hill was named after Professor Sir Walter Baldwin Spencer, an anthropologist and scientist who

with F J Gillen, is well known for studies, and collections of photos of the life and customs of the Arrernte people. During the war army staging camps were established around Anzac Hill and later in the Eastside area. A number of concrete blocks can be found around the base of Spencer Hill, a legacy of this era. One not manmade feature is "Harry's Chair", a rock very suitable for a seat and on which Harry Bloomfield used to sit during his morning walk from his home in Old Eastside.

Spencer Hill itself is composed of Alice Springs Granite, the same as most of the hills in the Telegraph Station area. The granite weathers to an orange rounded, bouldery terrain, and consists of quartz, both the pink and white Feldspars, with Biotite and Muscovite. These were clearly seen at the spot where we started and ended the climb from the main track. Also of geological interest are the many veins of white quartz with clear edges, which intrude into cracks within the granite. In one spot is an outcrop of dark coloured Dolerite, part of the Stuart Dyke Swarm (also seen on the Simpsons Gap bike path)

After admiring the views from the top of the hill we dropped off down to Middle Park Waterhole in the Todd River. Plenty of water after the January rains and it created some beautiful reflections of the River Red Gums along the bank, in its perfectly still waters, the early sun colouring the leaves golden. This was a favorite picnic spot for the people at the Telegraph Station when it was in operation, and still is a camp spot for Aboriginal and other peoples, and a favorite walking area for those with dogs who like a swim. (e.g. Colleen's Djari). We noted debris from the flow quite high in the trees but not on overflowing the banks. Then, a few walkers had to leave, while the others scrambled up again to the northern peak for a different view, of the alluvial flats and the sandy bed of the river with patterns left from the running water.

It is a good area to revise many of the local trees and plants. Dominant is the Witchetty Bush, with Corkwoods, Ironwood, Dead Finish, and Bloodwood. As we ascended *Eremophila freelingi* was in flower, and many plants of the white indigo. A *Solanum* was flowering, *Sida* species, even one Spade flower. On top is an extensive Fig Tree, Whitewoods and *Sarcostemma* (Caustic Vine). Grasses were taking advantage of summer rains. We saw Kangaroo Grass, Bottlewashers, Mountain Wanderie, and Lemongrass. (And plenty of Buffel mainly on the flats where the area had been deliberately burned last year ensuring a perfect regeneration opportunity for Buffel!). I have to admit to not paying much attention to the birds but I know it is a favorite for many species on the flat and of course along the river. Bob and Barb kept tabs in that field.

Come again in winter (don't have to get up so early), when the sky colours are deeper because the mornings are colder.

Night Parrot found

e-News 19 February 2007

As reported in last Friday's Australian newspaper, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service Rangers found a dead Night Parrot at Diamantina National Park in November 2006. The specimen was positively identified by Queensland Museum. This is the first confirmed sighting since the Boulia specimen in 1990 although several unconfirmed but credible sightings have been made since, most recently in the Pilbara WA. The bird appears to have died after colliding with a fence some weeks before.

Recent flood rains in the Channel Country has made access for follow-up surveys difficult and it is probable that any surviving Night Parrots in the area will have redistributed in the months since this bird died.

Birds Australia will be looking to assist Qld Parks and Wildlife with any subsequent surveys.

Birds Australia
415 Riversdale Road
Hawthorn East VIC 3123
Australia
Ph 1300 730 075
www.birdsaustralia.com.au

**Garden for Wildlife (GfW)
Launch 24th March
10 am
Olive Pink Botanic Garden at
the
Blakeman Shelter**

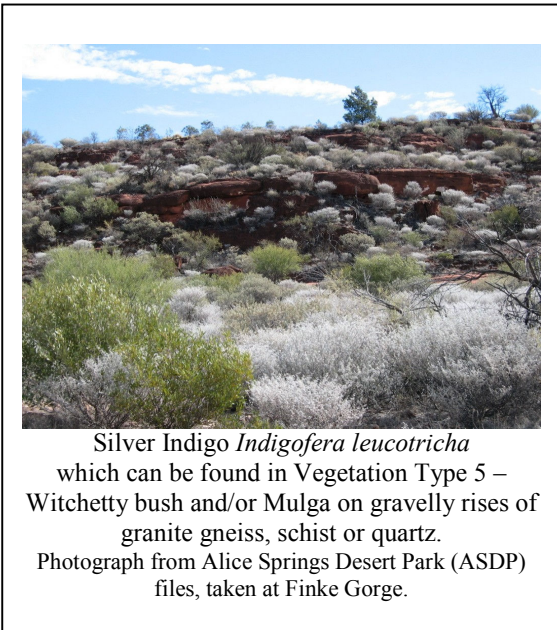


Register your name for membership at the launch.

There will be a plant sale by Olive Pink Botanic Garden, Greening Australia Nursery and Tangentyere Nursery.

Garden for Wildlife will be a sub-program to the currently existing Land for Wildlife programme, which targets rural properties. Garden for Wildlife will be a voluntary, non-binding nature conservation scheme targeting town blocks within Alice Springs.

The purpose of this initiative is to encourage, guide, support and recognise landholders taking a positive approach toward nature conservation on private land through planting or encouraging local native species. Garden for Wildlife will promote community



Silver Indigo *Indigofera leucotricha*
 which can be found in Vegetation Type 5 –
 Witchetty bush and/or Mulga on gravelly rises of
 granite gneiss, schist or quartz.
 Photograph from Alice Springs Desert Park (ASDP)
 files, taken at Finke Gorge.

participation in nature conservation and environmentally friendly practices.

To become a GfW member, a registration fee of \$10 is required. You will receive a registration pack, which will include a 15cm by 15cm sign to place on their letterbox or front fence, and will help spread the word about the scheme and its benefits as well as provide information to help get you started on developing a Garden for Wildlife.

Membership will be web based, via the www.lowecol.com.au web site, simply hit the Garden for Wildlife logo. From here you can access information relating to all areas of wildlife gardening in Central Australia. An important feature currently being developed by Tim Collins and Sarah Wilson from the Alice Springs Desert Park in consultation with Dave Albrecht's vegetation types will be the web site Vegetation Map developed for the Alice Springs suburbs. This will provide members with knowledge of the vegetation that is native to their area. From here members can view the vegetation type that may have occurred before housing development, which will guide individuals in what plant species can be planted in the particular soil type and area they live. The website map will be a very important tool for extending local vegetation areas and linking habitats together, creating wildlife safe corridors.

Few things are as rewarding as getting to know and understand the local wildlife of Alice Springs in your own backyard. Observing a Mistletoebird feeding on the flowering Mistletoe bush in your backyard or wandering through a native flowerbed and seeing a Long Nosed Water Dragon scurry behind a rock are just a few of the exciting wildlife that you may see in an Alice Springs Garden for Wildlife.

Heidi Groffen
 Garden for Wildlife Coordinator

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hallo All,

Olive Pink Botanic Garden is hosting an exhibition of Miss Pink's wildflower sketches called *Art in the Garden* opening at 3.30 pm Saturday 17th March at OPBG Visitor Centre. Everyone is welcome to attend the opening! The exhibition runs from 17th-31st March from 10am – 4pm. It's going to be a ripper, and includes archival material about Miss Pink's sketching tour in 1930, as well as botanical pieces by local artists Patricia Weeks and Sally Mumford.

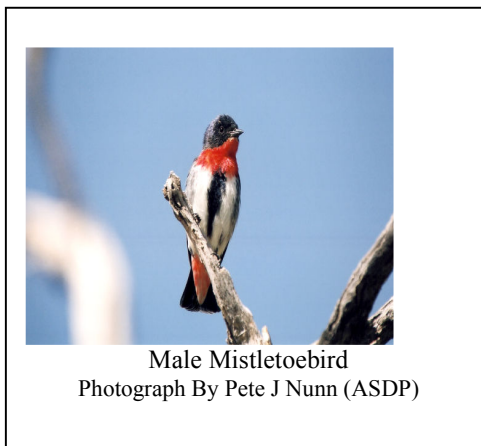
If you have some time to spare we would love to have you volunteer to sit in the exhibition for a 2 hour spell to keep an eye on the works and field basic queries and sell poster prints and raffle tickets we have associated with the exhibition. Please email me curatoropbg@internode.on.net if you can volunteer time – we'd really appreciate that!

Also there is a starlight dinner event to mark Miss Pink's birthday on that same night 17th March 6.30 pm for a 7 pm start. Tickets cost \$45 per person for a 3 course meal and complimentary drink at the start. BYO rest of wine/beer. We are having Professor Julie Marcus speak about Miss Pink (particularly what's known about her sketching trips and time at the Garden), plus an unnamed esteemed botanist (yet to confirm, hence the crypticness) talk about the range of wildflowers in Miss Pink's sketches. Plus some gorgeous live music. Please contact Colleen curatoropbg@internode.on.net or ph. 0437942524 to book your ticket/s.

We are also running a raffle as part of the exhibition with main prizes being original framed botanical painting/drawing by Patricia Weeks and Sally Mumford. There are also native plant packs and lunch vouchers as minor prizes. Tickets cost \$2 each or you can buy a book of 10 for \$18, or 2 books of 10 for \$30. Tickets will be on sale during the exhibition or beforehand at the Garden. If you want to help sell tickets to business or workplaces or to friends we would greatly appreciate your help. Contact Colleen or Jenny Purdie to get books of tickets to sell.

Finally there will also be two native plant sales during

the exhibition period. OPBG will hold one on Saturday 17th March 8am-11am with a great selection of species, including hard to get



Male Mistletoebird
 Photograph By Pete J Nunn (ASDP)

hold of ones and bushtucker species. (Any one wanting to help during the sale/or in setting it up would be welcomed with open arms – contact Colleen if you can help out). The second sale is on Saturday 24th March 8am-11am and will have plants from OPBG, Greening Australia and Tangentyere Nursery to coincide with the launch of the Garden for Wildlife Program at Olive Pink Botanic Garden 10 am.

We hope to see you out at the Garden at some/all of these events!

Colleen O'Malley
Curator

Olive Pink Botanic Garden
Tuncks Rd (PO Box 8644)
Alice Springs NT 0871

Ph. (08) 8952 2154
Fax: (08) 8953 5522
Mob. 0437 942524
email: curatoropbg@internode.on.net
website: www.opbg.com.au

CRITTER WATCH for the Alice Springs Desert Park

For anyone interested in being involved in an exciting new project at the Alice Springs Desert Park. This project is called Critter Watch, and it simply means observing and recording information about animals in captivity. Critter Watch is designed to observe animals and their behaviours in a captive situation. People (staff and volunteers) will be trained on observations and recording information.

Here at the park we are interested in gaining more knowledge about species in our collection, as well as working with the community with sharing their skills and knowledge regarding observations of fauna life.

If you are interested in being involved with Critter Watch or wanting to know more information please contact Natasha Hoffmann at the Alice Springs Desert Park (Zoology section) on 89 518719 or 89 518788

Natasha Hoffmann
Alice Springs Desert Park
Zookeeper – Bird Department

Ph: 89 518719
Fax 89 518777

MEDIA RELEASE

Desert Sand Skipper

26 Feb 2007

An endangered butterfly rediscovered in central Australia after 35 years is thought to be linked intimately to the recent summer rains.

Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (NRETA) entomologist Dr Chris Palmer said he found a number of butterflies while carrying out a targeted survey for the species in the Chewings Range, west of Alice Springs. “The Desert Sand Skipper is a small, cryptic butterfly that is only found in the Macdonnell Ranges in the southern NT” Dr Palmer said.

More information can be found at:
www.nt.gov/nreta
or contact Dr Chris Palmer on 08 8951 8205

Copy Deadline for articles for the next newsletter
Friday 30th March 2007

Photocopying

Courtesy

LJ Hooker Real Estate