



# ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

## August 2009 Newsletter



*Indigofera basedowii*, near 2 Mile Gap

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Web site: [www.geocities.com/alicenats](http://www.geocities.com/alicenats)

**Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month** (except December and January) at 7:30 PM at the Olive Pink Botanic Garden. Visitors are welcome.

**Postal address: P.O. Box 8663 Alice Springs, Northern Territory 0871**

## **REMINDERS FOR NEXT MEETING**

**Gate Opener:** Bob  
**Supper:** Mandy  
**Note Taker:** Not required

## **MEETINGS**

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> August:** Annual General Meeting and Member's Night.  
**Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September:** Star Gazing with Stuart Traynor

## **TRIPS/ ACTIVITIES**

**1-3 August** Long weekend, 3 day/2 night to Mordor Pound  
**Sun 9<sup>th</sup> August** South side of Mt Gillen, Leader: Connie Spencer  
**Sat 22<sup>nd</sup> August** A 3/4 of a day walk in the hills to the north of the Larapinta subdivision. Approx. 10 km on rough 4WD tracks. Easy with a few ups and downs. Bring lunch. For information regarding meeting place and time contact: Connie Spencer on 8952 4694.  
**Sat 12<sup>th</sup> September** Ridge walk from Trepina Gorge to John Hayes Rock Hole – or reverse.  
**Sat 19<sup>th</sup> September** Sustainability Fair  
**19-26 September** Bird Week

## **NEWSLETTER DEADLINE**

Deadline for articles for the next newsletter **21st August 2009**  
Newsletter editor: Emily Findlay - [robbiemily@hotmail.com](mailto:robbiemily@hotmail.com)

## **SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Subscriptions can be paid at the next meeting, or to the Club at PO Box 8663 Alice Springs or Treasurer Rosalie Breen 8952 3409 [rosalie.breen@email.com](mailto:rosalie.breen@email.com)

Fees will be confirmed at the AGM, see note page 7



## Annual General Meeting

**Please do not stay home in August because it is the AGM. This meeting is usually a good chance to socialise, and you are not likely to be shanghaied onto the committee against your will, we have at least one volunteer for each position. The present committee has done a great job of organising the club for years, but it would be good to have a few enthusiastic newcomers to bring new ideas and perspectives.**

**Bob Read  
President**

## Treasurer's Report

The audited report from the Treasurer is available, ring Rosalie Breen on 89523409 if you want to check it out before the AGM.

### **Hugh Gorge**

Saturday and Sunday 11 & 12 July 2009  
By Connie Spencer

It was an early start when Graham and Shirley picked me on a brisk Saturday morning (still dark) at 6:30 am! We arrived at Birthday Waterhole a couple of hours later having bumped and banged our way over the rough access track. The early start was not in vain as we were rewarded with the most glorious deep orange colour as the sun kissed the ranges.

Shirley and Graham donned their packs and proceeded to do the overnight walk from Birthday Waterhole to Hugh Gorge while I settled down under the shade of a large River Red Gum with a cup of coffee, listened to the birds and watched a Cormorant at the waterhole. I was waiting for the next entourage to arrive and catch a lift to Hugh Gorge.

Some two and a half hours later I could hear the low rumble of vehicles approaching long before I saw them. Meg and Sally dropped Hugh and Paddy off, two more overnight walkers while I climbed aboard for Hugh Gorge. Rosalie, Gavan, Pat and Allan had also arrived nearly making our party complete. And so it was on to the Hugh Gorge trailhead to set up camp with Bob catching up with us along the way.

Sunday morning arrived and we started our trek up the gorge. Early in the morning we were selecting the sunny side of the gorge to walk but it soon warmed up and we were looking for the shade. The southern end

of Hugh Gorge has pools of water, majestic River Red Gums and dense stands of Teatree. The Larapinta Trail pamphlet on this section says the Teatrees are Black Teatree but I beg to differ. Whilst there is Black Teatree, I think the dense stands are either Narrow-leaved Paperbark or Creek Teatree. We continued up the gorge stopping often to admire the stunning walls that make the gorge, discuss various plants, and catch glimpses of birds, the most stunning being the Black-chinned Honeyeater.

We passed Hugh Junction and made our way north to where the gorge narrows with deep water. What a spectacular sight and well worth the boulder hopping and climbing to get there. Ferns and Cliffside daisies were clinging to the fractured gorge walls. On our return we stopped for lunch in a wider section of the gorge with a sand bank on one side and a "garden of Eden" on the other extending up to the base of the sheer quartzite cliffs. The number of cycads was amazing and in the middle of this garden was a large drooping Bullock Bush which led to considerable discussion as just what it was! It was a very leisurely lunch as we were loathed to leave such an idyllic spot but leave we must or the overnight walkers would begin to wonder what had happened to us.

We arrived back at camp mid afternoon, made room for the extra passengers (the overnight walkers) in the various vehicles and then made the bone-jarring journey back to Birthday Waterhole to pick up Graham and Shirley's vehicle.

Transportation for the weekend was a logistical nightmare but thanks to Rosalie, persistence paid off and I managed to do a walk that has been on my "to do list" for over 30 years!



*Rosalie Breen*

### **Reflections at Hugh Gorge**

Footnote: We also saw a pair of Black-chinned Honeyeaters in the Gorge.

Bob



**DAWN ON SPENCER HILL**

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2009

Leader Rosalie Breen



*Barb Gilfedder*

Much to our great delight Rosalie conquered Spencer Hill just before sunrise.



*Barb Gilfedder*

*Eremophila latrobei*



*Barb Gilfedder*

*Eremophila freelingii*

And Barb found the sunrise effects on the flora on Spencer Hill.

Thank you Rosalie for a great morning (though it was hard getting out of bed) and the cake at the top was an added bonus.



*Barb Gilfedder*

Sue Fraser captured the sunrise on Mt Gillen from Spencer Hill.



## CHESTNUT TEAL

This male Chestnut Teal recently turned up at Alice Springs sewage ponds.

He is a rare visitor there.

The Chestnut Teal is in the centre, Pacific Black Duck on the right and the other 3 birds are the much more common Grey Teal.



Barb Gilfedder

## Twitter's delight: rare bird spotted

By Emma Masters.

(Posted Mon July 13, 2009 12:46pm AEST)



Northern Territory scientists say they have found a rare bird – the northern shrike-tit – in north-east Arnhem Land.

Researcher Simon Ward says the first record of the threatened bird in the Northern Territory was at

Borrooloola in 1913 and there have been very few recorded sightings since.

Dr. Ward says it is exciting to make the first find of the northern shrike-tit in the Arnhem Land area.

“We didn’t know that they were in north-east Arnhem Land so we wouldn’t have spent a lot of time looking for them up there,” he said.

“We wouldn’t have expected that necessarily to be good habitat for them but we now know that it is. “And at the moment any habitat we can find for the species is really important for it and our conservation of it.”

He says the northern shrike-tit is classified as vulnerable because there are so few records of it. They’re only found basically in the Top End and the Kimberley.

So they’re only in the north and probably 70, 80 percent of the records come from the Northern Territory.

Most of the recent ones of those have come from the area around Katherine down to Mataranka. So we’re getting more records of the species in now, but they’re still a very enigmatic little creature.

## “TILLITES” AT 2-MILE SADDLE?

This comes out of the trip on 21<sup>st</sup> June.

A number of pieces of literature refer to tillites in the 2 Mile saddle east of Ellery Big Hole. (Tillites are rocks deposited by glaciers, usually with large rock fragments, not rounded by water in a fine matrix). I found this puzzling as the saddle is over Heavitree Quartzite, a unit not known to include tillite.

The new Larapinta Trail pack (2nd edition) says *“As you cross over the top of the saddle, you’ll see evidence from a worldwide ice age that happened about 750 million years ago. The reddish-brown rock with lots of rounded lumps in it is a tillite, made of debris dropped from a glacier. It’s called the Areyonga Formation.”*

The Areyonga Formation does include tillites, age between 725 and 780 million years, which can be seen near the access road into Ellery Big Hole. However this formation is south of the Trail and not crossed by it at all (see diagram below). It is not clear whether “the reddish brown rock” refers to the cemented colluvium, or to a reddish layer of pebbly sandstone in the Heavitree Quartzite that outcrops nearby.



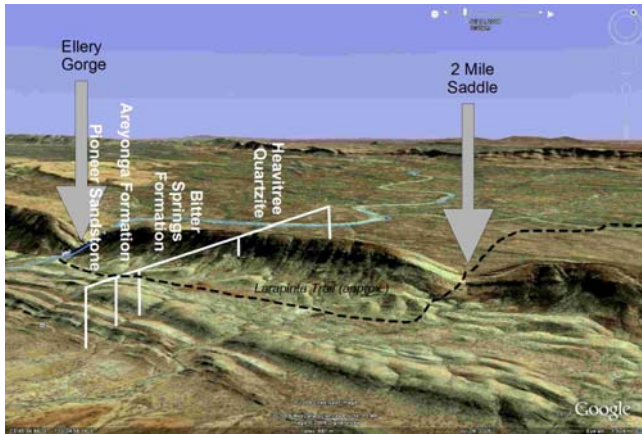


Figure 1 View of 2 Mile saddle from Google Earth

John Chapman's book on Larapinta Trail says "On the west side above the saddle there is a distinctive, red, rock face. This is composed of tillite and looks similar to conglomerate. It was formed in a shallow sea from the debris of a glacier around 750 myo and illustrates how much the climate of these ranges has changed".

This is even more confused. The "red rock face" is in fact cemented colluvium, (see photo below) and a casual inspection shows that it is far younger than the old rocks of the Amadeus Basin.



Figure 2 Cemented colluvium in the saddle.

Below is a diagrammatic section through the saddle.

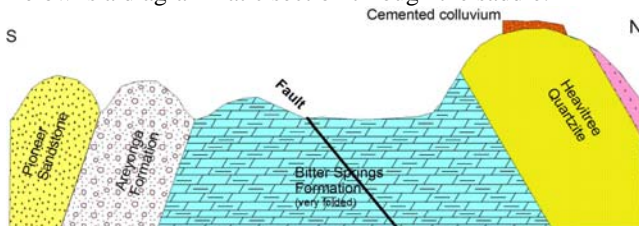


Figure 3 Diagrammatic section through saddle

A brief history of the area is below:

1. About 800 My (million years) ago, the Amadeus Basin opened and sand (now the Heavitree Quartzite) was deposited on the older rocks.
2. In deeper water, limestone, dolomite and siltstone were deposited.
3. 725 to 780 My, ice deposited tillite of the Areyonga Formation. (This was the Cryogene, or "snowball earth".)
4. Sedimentation continued up to about 360 My, (I will not list all the units) with some uplift events when the northern edge of the basin was over-thrust hence the Heavitree Quartzite now being overturned. The weaker Bitter Springs Formation was crumpled during these movements.
5. A long period of erosion produced a near flat landscape in which a river had carved what is now 2 Mile Saddle through a ridge of Heavitree Quartzite much lower than the present day one.
6. Further erosion and uplift led to the capture of this river by Ellery Creek, and left the gap as a saddle.
7. At some stage after it had ceased to be a river valley the bottom was filled with colluvium, that is rock fragments and soil accumulated at the base of slope. This colluvium has been cemented during weathering and then partly eroded away.

A search of the web turned up two other references to tillite at this location. As this mistake is in print no doubt it will be continued for decades to come.

Robert Read

### Pitchi Richi Progress

We are continuing with our short 2-hour working bees at the sanctuary, between 10.00 am and 12 noon, on Saturday mornings.

Jobs needing to be done include raking pathways and trimming obstructive branches over paths, poisoning new growth buffel in garden beds and pulling up clumps of buffel to southern part of the site, where Elsa left off.

If you can bring a rake, a wheelbarrow, as well as a hoe/pick for the clumps of buffel. Please bring

any other tools you feel we could need (trimming saws, etc), if you are able.

Bring a drink and some lunch to have under the bough shade afterwards, where we can also have a good yak. As always, entry is via the river-side gate, to the west of Chapman's House.

Domenico Pecorari is in the process of putting together a grant submission for the Federal Government's "Jobs Fund" program, for funding to carry out restoration works to Chapman House (est. \$ 225,000.00) and for re-fencing the Sanctuary with a dog and rabbit-proof fence ( est. \$ 50,000.00) .

**Dom can be contacted at:** Mobile: 0414 772 914  
 PH & FAX: 8952 5420 (Wk) or 8952 7546 (Hm)  
 E-mail: [dpecorari@westnet.com.au](mailto:dpecorari@westnet.com.au)

*Rhondda Tomlinson*



This is the result of Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> July 2009 hard work of buffel removal by a few hard working volunteers. Just think of the difference that can be made with more hands on deck.

### Fees

The committee has considered fees, and will submit a proposal for a slightly revised fee structure at the AGM.

Fees were put up some years ago to cover the cost of insurance. With the continued growth in membership and the reduction in costs thanks to digitizing the newsletter we are now running a

healthy surplus, which has allowed us to make donations to organizations whose aims we support.

A proposed fee structure is below.

	Present fees	Committee Proposal
Family	\$30	\$30
Single	\$25	\$20
Concession family	\$25	\$25
Concession single	\$20	\$15
Interstate (or out of town) newsletter subscription	Non existent	\$10

The last classification would not be members and would have no voting rights. There are a surprising number of people who have moved away who still like getting the newsletter. \$20 for 10 digital newsletters a year is a bit expensive. This option would not be available to Alice Springs residents.

Bob Read (President)



**ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INCORPORATED**  
**Minutes of General Meeting held at Olive Pink Botanic Garden**  
**on Wednesday 8 July 2009**

**Open:** President, Bob Read declared the meeting open at 9.00pm.

**Present:** 15 people attended.

**Apologies:** Jenny Purdie

**Minutes of previous Meeting:**

Unfortunately the minutes of the June meeting had not been circulated as part of the July the newsletter as usually occurs, (the minutes of the May meeting were circulated for a second time). The minutes on the June meeting were read to the meeting. Moved for acceptance by Bob, seconded by Connie. Accepted.

**Matters Arising:**

- So far Mark Carter has not submitted a proposal for funds to support Central Australia Bird week.

**Treasurer's Report:**

There is a current balance of \$2281

**Correspondence In:**

Western Australian Naturalists Club  
NT Field Naturalists Club

The Naturalist News – July 2009  
Nature Territory – July 2009.

**Correspondence Out:**

Fiona Walsh

Thank you for presentation at June meeting

**General Business:**

- Next meeting will be the AGM. This is a time when we can reconsider the club fee structure. Rosalie has some ideas – Bob suggested that these ideas be included in the next newsletter so that people can consider them before the AGM
- The club will be looking for new committee members and in particular for a new President.

**Outings/Trips**

- 11-12 July Birthday Water Hole/Hugh Gorge trip on coming weekend still to be finalized.
- 26 July – dawn on Spencer Hill is as planned
- 1-3 August trip to Mordor Pound is on hold as Bob may have work commitments
- Sunday 9 August – planned walk has had to be cancelled as Connie can no longer lead it.

**Sightings:**

- Ian Campbell has seen 2 white-backed swallows and 4 black chinned honey-eaters near his home on Palm Circuit. The whistling kites in the area have young but the young striated pardalote have now left their nest.
- Barb reported seeing lots of white-backed swallows at the Sewerage Ponds as well as crimson chats.

**Next Meeting:** Wednesday 12 August 2009

Note taker: Not needed for this meeting

Supper: Mandy

Gate: Bob.

**Meeting closed** at 9.30 pm.