

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Newsletter



*A beautiful adult Boobook Owl, one of a family of three, who tried to find shade roosting in Barb's garden during some of the hottest days of Summer.
Photo by Barb Gilfedder.*

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month (except December & January) at 7:00 PM at Higher Education Building at Charles Darwin University. Visitors are welcome

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Web site:

<http://www.alicefieldnaturalists.org.au>

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NEXT NEWSLETTER

The deadline for the next newsletter is **Friday 22 March 2013**. Please send your contributions to Barb Gilfedder at fedders@octa4xxx.net.au

MEETINGS

- Wed 6 Mar **APS Annual General Meeting** at OPBG Visitors' Centre at 7.30pm. This will be followed by a presentation by Jenny Purdie "**Wildflowers of Western Australia**".
- Wed 13 Mar **ASFNC** Meeting 7.00 pm at the lecture theatre in the Higher Education Building at Charles Darwin University. – Speaker: Simon Ward "**Birds of Antarctica**"
- Wed 10 April **ASFNC** Meeting 7.00 pm at the lecture theatre in the Higher Education Building at Charles Darwin University. – Speaker: Lee Ryall "**Trilobites**"
Pam Keil will also talk briefly about "**Dalhousie Springs**"

FIELD TRIPS / ACTIVITIES

If you wish to take part in any of these trips or activities it is advisable to ring or email the leader of that particular trip beforehand.

- Sun 3 Mar **Shorebird Count** at Alice Springs Sewage Ponds. Birders and scribes needed. Meet at the sewage ponds at 7.00am sharp. It should take about an hour. Wear shoes and hat. Contact Barb Gilfedder – details below.
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- Sun 3 Mar **ASFNC** Evening walk in the hills with Meg Mooney. Meet at Meg's place 43 Kilgariff Crescent at 5.45pm. Leader Meg Mooney 8952 8029 moon3@iinet.net.au
- Fri, Sat, Sun 15,16,17 Mar **ASFNC** Drive out to 2 Mile waterhole near Glen Helen on Friday night. Camp at 2 Mile or Glen Helen or accommodation at Glen Helen. Saturday morning float or swim through Glen Helen to see Organ Pipes rock formation and more. Return Saturday afternoon or Sunday – all flexible. Leader Cec Sutton - details below
- Sat, Sun 13, 14 Apr **ASFNC** Drive out to Serpentine Chalet Saturday afternoon and camp. Easy walk on Sunday morning. Leaders – Wendy and Ian Mann 89527808 wikks@gotalk.net.au
- Sun 21 April **ASFNC** "The Pinch" drive and walk to this historic site, an old road through the hills. Approximately 150km round trip. High clearance 4WD needed. Take morning tea and lunch. Meet Information Bay opposite Old Timers at 8.00am. Leaders - Jim and Marg Lawrence 89525049 margnjim.asp@gmail.com
- Tues 23 April Full Moon picnic at Ilparpa Claypans. Meet at Information bay opposite Old Timers at 5.15pm. Bring own picnic, chair and drink. Leader Cec Sutton - details below.

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Please delete the xxx when emailing – their placement is an attempt to stop some spam emails.

February Speaker – Meg Mooney

Report by Lee Ryall; Images from Meg Mooney

Land and Learning: Two-way science in Aboriginal Community Schools

Land and Learning: Two-way science in Aboriginal Community Schools was the title of Meg Mooney's talk to the February meeting of the Field Naturalists. This program evolved through Tangentyere Landcare education activities. One or two project officers, depending on funding, each support around three schools at a time to teach Indigenous language and culture linked to western science, using an investigative, hands on methodology.

The program, which works with each school for at least a year, has worked in 27 communities over the 15 years of its existence. Meg has been involved for 11 of those years. The funding of the program until 2009 came primarily from the National Heritage Trust but also from several other federal government programs and Central Land Council. The program stopped for a year because of lack of funding but since early 2011 the CSIRO Scientists in Schools program has funded it.



The beauty of this program is that it starts from the children's own interests, building on their knowledge about the bush. It makes learning science both relevant and accessible. Bush trips form the basis of the work on the school's chosen theme for study. Possible focus areas include animals/birds, plants, water and fire.

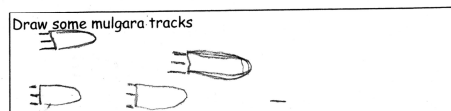
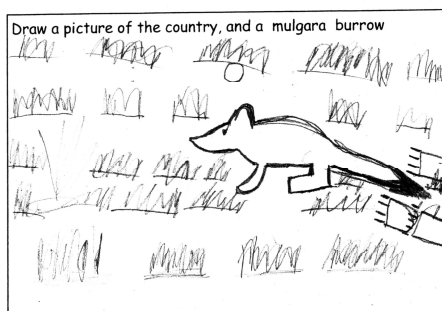
The project officers work with elders, Indigenous assistant teachers and families. The year starts with working out the themes to be covered. Work starts from the familiar area of Indigenous language and culture and then brings in Western science and scientific methodology. Learning in this way encourages children to be proud of their culture and feel strong.

The Mulgara



What is its Luritja name? murftja

What kind of country does it live in? yanpi



The mulgara is rare because too many get eaten by

cat and fox and too

much country gets waru.

Project officers assist with preparing high quality resources, including local plant and animal photo-cards for general use in the classroom, and booklets about the children's activities. The booklets use pictures of the children working out bush as well as illustrations and writing they have done themselves. Over the years Land & Learning has also developed a number of large format booklets for communities on managing fire, wetlands and feral animals, which are available from their website <http://www.schools.nt.edu.au/tlcland/>. Resources are often written in Indigenous languages and in English, keeping a strong connection between home life and learning and the school.

Some of the examples of activities and theme work were fascinating. Work in an animal or bird theme might start with the study of burrows, tracks, eating habits and dung. This might then expand to look at habitats, life-cycles and food chains, through activities such as picture-based surveys and mapping. Rangers sometimes help with trapping small mammals and reptiles, which are weighed and recorded by the children. Feral animals is a another topic often covered.

The study of plants moves from their use for bush medicines and bush foods to examining and labelling plant specimens and plant

parts in English and Indigenous languages, and looking at growth through germination experiments and life cycles. Similarly, the water theme might start by looking at soaks and identifying water plants and animals (possibly using microscopes), and develop to look at life cycles, food chains, aquatic ecosystems, the effects of fencing and feral plants/animals, and water quality issues.

The talk opened up an awareness of the way two cultures can be integrated in community schools, and made doing so seem a lot of fun. The program Meg presented looks both valuable and, given that it 'runs on a shoestring' cost effective. Hopefully it will continue to operate for many years to come.



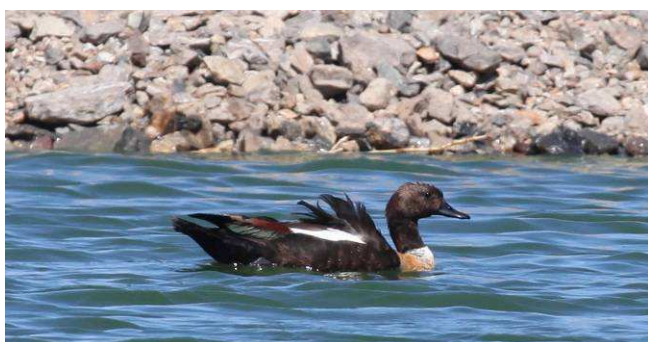
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Birdwatching at the Sewage Lagoons - Saturday 9 February 2012

Report by Connie Spencer ; Photos by Chris Watson (Shelduck) & Connie Spencer (Field Nats)

The morning dawned overcast and cool by Alice Springs standards. Perfect weather to kick off the Alice Spring Field Naturalists events for 2013 with a walk around the sewage lagoons checking on the bird life.

There were your usual suspects of Stilts, Avocets, Dotterels, Sandpipers, and a plethora of Ducks, Teals and Grebes. However, of greatest interest and excitement was a colourful Australian Shelduck, uncommon in our area. It really is a stunning bird with its black head glossed with an iridescent green sheen, then a white collar, followed by a cinnamon or chestnut neck. Wings have a white panel beside dark green with black or brown wing tips (below).



A Chestnut Teal, another colourful bird with a conspicuous white patch on its flank, proved to be a hit also. It even stayed still long enough for us to get a good look at it through Barb's scope.

Continuing on our travels around the lagoons Shane spotted some Orange Chats. Hard for me to discern from their cover of dried yellow vegetation but when one perched itself on top of a green shrub we had an excellent view of it and its bright yellow (not orange) colours! We went on to see even more of them in our wander.

A Glossy Ibis stood out amongst the avocets at the foot of a lone dead tree. Although it looked black to me, the books say it is brown with an iridescent sheen.

And last but not least, a Whiskered Tern. Nothing unusual about it – just that I managed to get a good look at it through the scope as it perched on a rock.

These birds were my pick of the day. Thanks Barb for organising the outing.



CONFUSED STILT or “a stilt by any other name...”

by Barb Gilfedder

This beautifully elegant bird, resident at Alice Springs Sewage Ponds, has every right to feel disorientated. It has had a name change, courtesy of the International Ornithological Committee. “The initial goal of the IOC World Bird List project was to compile a set of unique English-language names for the extant species of the birds of the world.” Their recommendations for Australian bird names have been adopted by Birdlife Australia. What we always called a Black-winged Stilt is now officially a White-headed Stilt. Its scientific name is also changed from *Himantopus himantopus* to *Himantopus leucocephalus*. This makes it even more confusing because the Banded Stilt which we occasionally see at the ponds is *Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*. ‘*Leucocephalus*’ means white-headed. There are other scientific name changes but we will leave those for Chris Watson to worry about.

Another bird we frequently see at the Sewage Ponds is the Wood Duck. It always had ‘Maned’ in brackets in my Field Guide. It is now officially called Maned Duck.

I have looked through the new list and tried to find the changes to our local birds and this is what I have come up with. Some have an extra bit added to an existing name; some have had a word removed; some have hyphens added or removed – See list below. New name in the first column, old name in the second column.



A Stilt with a new name.
Photo: Rosalie Breen



Remember to call these Maned Ducks not Wood Ducks. Photo; Mat and Cathy Gilfedder

White-headed Stilt	Black-winged Stilt
Maned Duck	Wood Duck
White-winged Tern	White-winged Black Tern
Australian Pied Cormorant	Pied Cormorant
Eastern Osprey	Osprey
Australasian Darter	Darter
Australian Painted-snipe	Painted Snipe
Eastern Barn Owl	Barn Owl
Australian Reed Warbler	Australian Reed-Warbler
Grey Shrikethrush	Grey Shrike-thrush
Black-faced Cuckooshrike	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Red-tailed Black Cockatoo	Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo
Black-tailed Nativehen	Black-tailed Native-hen
Australian Crake	Australian Spotted Crake

All the Fairy-wrens have lost their hyphens – now they are correctly written as Fairywren. Button-quails followed suit, and are now Buttonquail. I have probably missed some local bird changes. If you notice any more please let me know.

If you would like to see the complete world list you can find it at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org/ioc-lists/master-list/>

Thank you to Don and Llaine Hadden for identifying all the Australian changes and pointing them out to me in alphabetical order and to Mat Gilfedder for explaining the scientific name significance of the Stilts.

AFRICAN SAFARI PART 3 –ZAMBIA

Text by Steve Sinclair, Photos by Jenny Purdie

We said goodbye to our SAVE companions at Musango camp and Jen and I were whisked away to the other side of Lake Kariba in a 24 foot fibreglass launch with a Volvo Penta under the deck. It was a very smooth trip considering how choppy it was in the middle of the Lake. Our skipper, a local working for a Kariba charter company, had no charts, compass or GPS and for half of our trip we couldn't see land. He took us straight in. As he said, "I have done this before" and tapped his head, indicating that that was where his GPS was. He has done this many times I suspect. On remarking to others, this lack of navigation equipment in this modern age, I got the enigmatic reply of TIA (This is Africa).

From Kariba township we travelled by pre-booked, Bush Camp Company vehicle, out of Zimbabwe across the dam wall and into Zambia. This is where we got away from the tourist traps for a while and saw a little of what life is like in a world where there is no dole and a pretty stuffed-up economy. The road we were on is the main Cape Town to Cairo route, Africa's highway one. Travelling through the hills there was barely 100 metres of road without massive scars cut into the bitumen by overloaded trucks going down and over the edge on their sides and roofs. Truckies earn their money here.



We overnighted in Lusaka, (the first sign I saw I thought was advertising soup). Next morning to the airport for a 1 hour flight to Mfuwe. From the airport and in short order we were in the bush again and after a change of vehicle at Mfuwe Lodge, The Bush camp Company's main camp we headed off to Bilimungwe. Three and a half hours on dirt tracks with lots the afore mentioned animals on the way, including an owl the size of an eagle (it was nearly dark by this stage), named unsurprisingly, the giant eagle owl. Arriving at Bili to the same warm welcome, luxurious rooms and beautiful food, we got to meet the staff and other guests. Our camp captain was Simon, a pom who wanted something different to his London office job, well he got it. He was an excellent mine host and ran the camp well. Only

a max of eight people per camp makes for a very relaxed feel. Our guide Manda is one of the most well respected guides in Zambia; he had won an international award for guiding a few years previously. Guides of this calibre really make the African experience something special. He didn't just get his knowledge about the animals from Google, but he knew many of the animals personally and knew their personality and temperament. His stories about poaching would require an "X" rating if on television. We also saw leopard, carmine bee-eaters, saddle-billed storks and crowned cranes. Some of these birds have to be seen to be appreciated.

Bilimungwe is in the South Luangwa Park and the Luangwa River flows through it. The accommodation overlooked a waterhole which was visited by elephant, giraffe, baboon, vervet monkeys, warthogs and many of antelope; there are too many different types to mention them individually, although I have checked them off in a guide book in case you want to ask. Consequently an after lunch camp was interrupted often with ele trumpeting, baboon fighting and monkeys sliding down the thatch roof. Thank goodness they sleep at night. The giraffes were the only quiet animals. The women of the SAVE mob had nicknamed them the "Supermodels" after the way they walk.



After two days at Bili we moved up the river to Kapamba Camp. The camp commandant was a young African bloke with the unlikely name of Brinsley. But despite this he was a really nice bloke who couldn't do enough to make us comfortable. Our room here was a little different as it was three sided, rendered local rock with a massive bathroom and a bath the size of a spa. The fourth side looked out over the river and was a series of decorative gates, so we



could look out over the river from bed. Our guide, James was another good bloke who had an encyclopaedic knowledge of the animals but he didn't have the empathy that Manda had. Also he was a pretty average driver; I'm glad it wasn't my Land Rover. But we got on really well with him. Fortunately for us a pride of lions had moved into the area, consisting of two adult females and five cubs from two different litters. For an unknown reason there was no male (poaching?), consequently the females were very protective of the cubs. A new male taking over an existing pride will usually kill all the cubs to bring the females into season and to strengthen his gene pool. Although it is likely that this last point is probably an

idea arrived at by boffins, not lions. The upside of this from our point of view was that the lionesses wanted somewhere safe to leave their cubs while they hunted. What could be safer than the front yard of a safari camp? I kid you not. At breakfast (daylight) the staff would find that the cubs had been sleeping on the lounge cushions, and even carted one cushion down to the river bank. Coming back from a night drive Jen and I were escorted to our room where we found the whole family camped outside our room. We quietly slipped inside and closed the gate (front door) while they quietly watched us and then ignored us. During the day we had watched them chewing on a warthog that would have only been a snack for seven lions. The next day after the visit, we found them camped in some long grass just lying around doing what cats do (not much), and while watching, the lead female leapt up and stared across the river and then shot off with the others in hot pursuit. At this point we heard the yip of painted dogs, so we took off also, but we had to go down river for a kilometre before we could cross and then we had to bush bash along the far bank with the Mr Bean of four wheel driving at the wheel. When we finally got there, we found the lions neck deep in an adult puku (one of those antelopes) and four seriously pissed off painted dogs on the outskirts. The dogs had made the kill but didn't have the horsepower to hold off the cats. We had Gee & Tee's (and beer) while another perfect African red sun set over the scene of carnage in front of us.

That was our last night at Kapamba and the next morning we headed to our last safari camp, Kuyenda. At Kuyenda we met another Zambian/African legend, Phil Berry, a man who grew up in the bush and as a young man become a park ranger and rose to a high position before leaving to start his own safari camp (which he later sold to the Bush Camp Company and now runs for them). He has dedicated his life to wild life conservation and has his own collection of stories to rival any of the others we had heard. He would be over 70 now and still doing his own game drives and walks (he could outwalk me 2 to 1). He is a quiet man and you have to ask questions to get him talking and then you need a tape recorder because the information is over whelming for the new comer to Africa (me). Unfortunately we only had two days at Kuyenda and then we had to move to the main lodge at Mfuwe to be near the airport for our gruelling trip back to Oz. At Mfuwe lodge we had an afternoon game drive that was a bit like the public taxi ride we got at Chobe. We did however get a good photo session with a leopard in a sausage tree and of course the gin and tonic and beer was good. The plane trips home were a version of hell that you don't want to know about!



ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INCORPORATED
Minutes of general meeting at Higher Education Building, Charles Darwin University
Wednesday 13 February 2013

Following presentation by Meg Mooney, "Land and Learning -2 way Science in remote community schools".

Present: 22 Members and visitors and 2 apologies, as per attendance book.

Previous minutes – accepted.

Business arising from the minutes:

Offer by ASFNC to erect seats at Sewage Ponds for bird watchers was declined by Power and Water.

Correspondence :

- **Standley Chasm-** Email exchange with Ray Prunty, manager Standley Chasm, about our recent visits. Barb asked him if it would be possible to contact Nana Jean (Jean Mack), and/or other traditional owners to arrange a combined tour. There is now a discount system for locals to visit Standley Chasm.
- Email exchange with Rory Richards, of RM Williams, Manager of Henbury Station re. possibility of a visit to Duck Swamp in the future. Positive response.
- Re. Nominations for Australian National History Medallion. Peter Latz was suggested. Michael Laflamme to research and write nomination.
- National register of Field Naturalist Clubs checking our entry still current. Cecily to confirm no changes

Treasurer's Report:

Balance at 13/2/13 \$3535.06

Subs \$265

Debits \$397 for hats, Treasure hunt, web hosting, stamps

General business:

- Club hats for sale \$18
- Hat presented to Colleen O'Malley our first life member.
- Hats to be presented to Adam Yates and Michael Green for assistance provided to our club.
- Planning meeting was successful at organising trips for first half of year - thank you to leaders. Also speakers until midyear - thanks to Meg Mooney.
- Pam Keil will give a brief talk on research at Dalhousie Springs at April meeting.

Past Activities/Trips discussed:

- Spencer Hill walk was enjoyable.
- Treasure Hunt at Desert Park was great fun.
- Sewage Ponds visit - highlights included Australian Shelduck, Chestnut Teal, Glossy Ibis and lots of Orange Chats.

Future activities:

- 24 Feb. Flagon Hill walk - Leader Connie Spencer. 6-30 am at Flynn's Grave
- 3 March Shorebird Count 7am Sewage Ponds.
- 3 March 5-45pm 43 Kilgariff Cres. Leader Meg Mooney. Walk in hills

Sightings:

- *Varanus tristis* in garden - Barb and Jim Gilfedder (This was later identified as *Varanus gouldii*, Sand Goanna by Chris Watson)
- Bearded dragons in gardens reported by Marg Lawrence and Neil Woolcock. Marg's was killed by a neighbour's dog.
- Lots of Black Kites around. Also 4 Tawny Frogmouths – Pam Keil
- Splendid Fairywrens in garden; Darters and Cormorants at Ormiston – Neil Woolcock
- Cockatiels on block, and also assorted birds sheltering from heat under verandah – Colleen O'Malley
- Boobook Owls roosting in trees in garden – Barb and Jim Gilfedder.
- Baby Brown Quail, also egg and adult near Wigglys – Pam Keil

Next meeting: 13 March. Speaker: Simon Ward

Notetaker: Meg (or Pam)

Supper: Rhondda

Meeting Closed 8.54pm

NB. Some concern from John, Security Officer at CDU, that 2 people attending our meeting were hassled by a group of Aboriginal teenagers. He had called police and those 2 people gave him written reports of the incidents.