



February 2015

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Newsletter



The year started off with a boom! Rain, rain, everywhere, rivers running, and green hills full of life. Todd River at full flow (just before they closed Taffy Pick) with another storm on the horizon, photo by Pamela Keil.

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.

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

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Web site:

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

Email: contact@alicefieldnaturalists.org.au

NEWSLETTER

The deadline for the next newsletter is **Friday 20 February 2015**.
Please send your contributions to the club email contact@alicefieldnaturalists.org.au
Please **send photos and text separately** as combining them causes formatting issues.

ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Contact: contact@alicefieldnaturalists.org.au

- Fri 6 Feb** **Dead Centre BowHunters Archery Range Walk;** Meet 6am opposite Old Timers. Walk along Archery Range tracks. We will walk up to the low saddle north of the range to admire the Claypans and Conlon's Lagoon (or not bother and look at birds instead). You can head back anytime to get to work on schedule. Leader: Cecily Sutton 0412 501 396 or cecsutton@gmail.com Please contact her for more details.
- Sun 8 Feb** **Shorebird Count at Alice Springs Sewage Ponds;** Counters and scribes welcome. Meet at the birders' gate – end of the short road off Commonage Road opposite the tip shop at 7.00am sharp. Wear closed shoes and bring binoculars. Leader: Barb Gilfedder 89555452 bjfedders@gmail.com
- Wed 11 Feb** **Meeting** 7.00pm at Charles Darwin University Higher Education Building lecture theatre.
Speaker: Ian Coleman, Curator at Olive Pink Botanic Garden. "Future Directions for a Globally Unique Treasure." Ian will welcome audience input and discussion on this subject.
- Fri 13 Feb** **Stroll around Olive Pink Botanic Garden** with Curator, Ian Coleman. Meet at the OPBG car park at 5.00pm. Leader: Barb Gilfedder 89555452 bjfedders@gmail.com
- Wed 18 Feb** **Visit to Pitchi Richi Sanctuary** Dinner afterwards at Heavitree Tavern if you wish. Meet at Riverside Gate of Sanctuary at 5:45 for tour at 6pm (Cross the Todd on Palm Circuit Causeway then immediately turn right onto a dirt road. It is the first gate.) Please wear enclosed shoes. Alice Springs Heritage has facilitated this and would appreciate a small donation to continue restoration of the Sanctuary. Leader: Cecily Sutton 0412 501 396 or cecsutton@gmail.com Please let her know if you are coming to Tour only or would like to dine out as well.
- Fri 20 Feb** **Eastside walk** Meet at 6am at eastern end of Eagle Court (Alice Springs Street Directory reference 8:C2). Walk along single track and fire trails to Sunset Hill and beyond. Walk back the same way, so you can leave anytime to get to work on time. Leader: Cecily Sutton 0412 501 396 or cecsutton@gmail.com
- Wed 11 Mar** **Meeting** 7.00pm at Charles Darwin University Higher Education Building lecture theatre.
Speaker: Graham Ride on the evolution of Parks from the NT Reserves Board to the NT Conservation Commission to the NT Parks and Wildlife Commission: philosophy, policy, planning and implementation from the 1950s until the present.

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY

Contact: **APS Secretary** karlee.foster@opbg.com.au

- Sun 8 Feb** **APS Walk up Trig Hill** followed by a BBQ provided by APS. Meet at Trail Station at Telegraph Station, 5pm.
- Wed 4 Mar** **APS AGM Meeting** at Olive Pink Botanic Garden at 7:30pm. Photo presentation by Barb Gilfedder on a recent trip to Tasmania

BIRDLIFE CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

Contact: birdlifeca@gmail.com

- Wed 25 Feb** **BLCA Meeting.** 7:00pm at Alice Springs Desert Park meeting room; **Speaker: Mark Carter:** Birds of Scotland. All welcome to join. The talk will be followed by a BirdLife monthly meeting.

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Committee Members

President	Barbara Gilfedder	8955 5452;	Public Officer	Rhondda Tomlinson	8953 1280;
Vice-President	Lee Ryall	8953 6394;	Property Officer	Rosalie Breen	8952 3409;
Secretary	<u>POSITION NOT FILLED AT AGM</u>		Minutes Secretary	Connie Spencer	8952 4694;
Treasurer	Neil Woolcock	8955 1021;	Website and Newsletter	Pamela Keil	8955 0496.

email address: contact@alicefieldnaturalists.org.au

**We do need a Club Secretary. The position is not very arduous. We write few letters.
Please volunteer if you can help us out. Barb Gilfedder, President.**

KUYUNBA 29 November 2014 by Connie Spencer; Photos by Rosalie Breen and Lye Lang

I should have written this as soon as we completed the outing! The memory is a bit fuzzy now but, I recall noting on the drive along Hatt Road to Kuyunba that the stands of Mulga (*Acacia aneura*) were healthy looking and that the Colony Wattles (*Acacia murrayana*) were loaded with seed pods.

Kuyunba is an Arrernte Aboriginal word meaning 'place of the uninitiated young men' and has strong ritual importance. Only adult men are to complete the 700 m loop walk and as we were five women we dutifully obeyed the sign which advised us only to go as far as the gallery of rock paintings.



As there hadn't been much rain since April, all the smaller plants were quite dry and shrivelled-up, but trees and larger shrubs were fine. We scrambled up the rocky ridge above the rock carvings and perched ourselves on a large flatish boulder and surveyed our surroundings, commenting on a Ghost Gum (*Corymbia aparreinja*) and questioned the identity of other plants. As we were viewing these plants through binoculars, no conclusions were reached and it was not the right time of year to go scrambling through bushes and over boulders to get a closer view.



Eventually, as the sun rose and so too the temperature, we made our way back down to the rock paintings and returned to our vehicles via the same route. Along the way we noted the very different form the young Ironwoods (*Acacia estrophiolata*) have to the mature trees. The latter being a graceful tree, with a willow-like appearance and the juveniles had short, spiny leaves which gave them a prickly appearance. The Native Pine (*Callitris glaucophylla*) is the dominant tree species along the walk, especially along the base of the ridge.

Thank you Cec for organising and leading the walk and to the two Rosalies and Lye for your company – a pleasant way to spend an early Saturday morning.

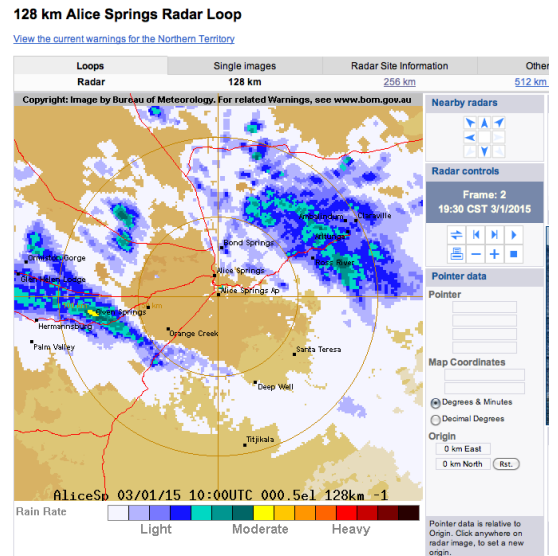
Rain: Bringing Life to the Desert

A photographic journey through the lush times following the rains in January 2015

photos by Pamela Keil, Rosalie Breen, and Barbara Gilfedder

If you were watching the weather on Saturday 3 Jan, it all looked very promising, but the rain just seemed to miss us...

Alice Springs 7-day Weather Forecast							
	Sun Jan 4	Mon Jan 5	Tue Jan 6	Wed Jan 7	Thu Jan 8	Fri Jan 9	Sat Jan 10
Summary	Possible thunderstorm						
Maximum	30°C	31°C	31°C	27°C	29°C	28°C	25°C
Minimum	23°C	22°C	23°C	22°C	22°C	23°C	22°C
Chance of Rain	60%	80%	90%	90%	80%	90%	90%
Rain Amount	1-5mm	5-10mm	10-20mm	20-40mm	10-20mm	10-20mm	5-10mm
UV Index	Extreme						
Frost Risk	Nil						
Wind Speed	9am: 12 km/h 3pm: 20 km/h	9am: 18 km/h 3pm: 23 km/h	9am: 20 km/h 3pm: 29 km/h	9am: 24 km/h 3pm: 28 km/h	9am: 22 km/h 3pm: 25 km/h	9am: 21 km/h 3pm: 23 km/h	9am: 20 km/h 3pm: 24 km/h
Wind Direction	ENE	E	E	ESE	E	ENE	NW
Relative Humidity	53%	44%	64%	48%	70%	56%	77%
Dew Point	17°C	17°C	20°C	19°C	21°C	21°C	20°C



But we know not to trust the weather and it seemed to change every time I looked – but it seemed to change for the good – if you like rain... And the ants seemed to think something big was on the way:



There was lots of misty rain around, soaking the ground throughout the week, and Thursday 8 January the big storms hit, and the Todd flowed from bank to bank...



And it kept raining... for three days! The Todd would drop a bit, the rains would come, and the River would rise... The Todd flowed, the Hugh flowed, the Finke flowed, Trepina Gorge flooded, Ormiston flooded, a few houses flooded, Ilparpa claypans and swamps filled... roads closed east, west, north, south. And people came out of the woodwork to take photos and experience the amazing transformation as the desert came to life! Frogs are calling, birds are breeding, and buffel has turned the Centre green.



If you haven't been out there yet, get out and see the amazing spectacle that is the Red Centre after rains. The flowers, ferns, birds, and frogs are all out there waiting for you! And all the moisture in the air has meant some beautiful sunsets on top of it all!



History of the Alice Springs Field Naturalists by Bob Read

I have never been sure as to when the Alice Springs FNC first started. I had thought it was about 1974, but Elsa Corbett believed that it existed in the 1950's. My wife suggested trying Trove, the digitised Australian newspapers available online.

The Centralian Advocate has been digitised for the period 1947 to 1954, and searching found the article below published 27 September 1947.

Centralian Advocate (Alice Springs, NT : 1947 - 1954)

FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB OF CENTRAL AUS.

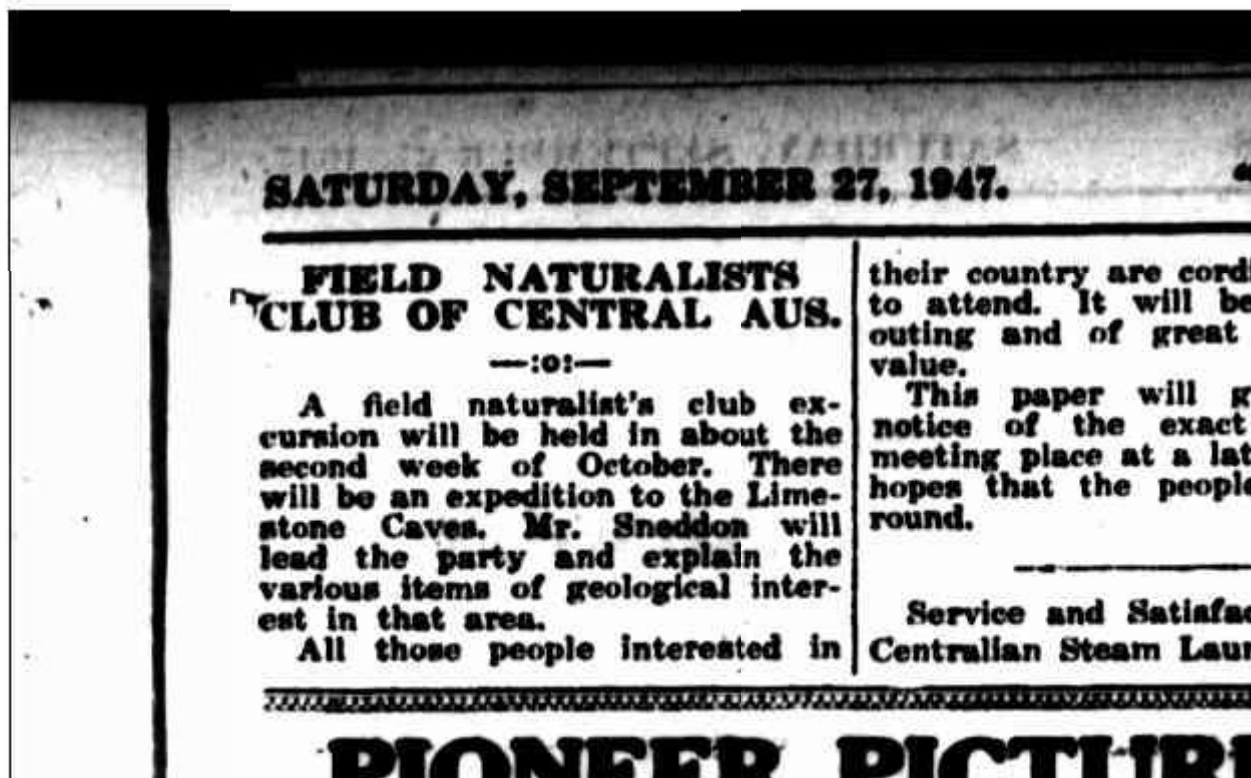
A field naturalist's club excursion will be held in about the second week of October. There will be an expedition to the Lime stone Caves. Mr. Sneddon will lead the party and explain the various items of geological interest in that area. All those people interested in their country are cordially invited to attend. It will be a healthy outing and of great educational value. This paper will give further notice of the exact time and meeting place at a later date and hopes that the people will rally round.

A search of the Advocate files for Sneddon showed that there was an Inspector of Mines of that name, presumably the same person.

The location of the "Limestone Caves" is not clear. This could refer to what are now known as the Bat Caves, but these are unusual in that they are in conglomerate, not limestone. However caves in limestone in the region such as Bryn Cave are less suitable for a club excursion.

A field naturalists club has not existed continuously since that time. I believe it was re-started about 1974, and has been in recess at least once since then.

When The Advocate is digitised for the period after 1954 it will be easy to search for other early references to Field Naturalists in Alice Springs.



ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INCORPORATED
Minutes of the general meeting held at the Higher Education Building
Charles Darwin University – Wednesday 12 November 2014

Following a presentation by Peter Nunn on *Black-Breasted Buzzards*
Thanks to Pam Keil for note taking and Connie Spencer, Graeme and Jackie Shaughnesy for supper.

Meeting opened at 8:20pm

Present/Apologies: as per attendance book (18 members, 1 visitor and 6 apologies)

Previous minutes accepted by the meeting.

Correspondence In/Out

To Adam Yates - Thank you for being last month's speaker

Treasurer's Report

Due to the absence of the Treasurer, Neil Woolcock, during the month of October/November a report was not available.

Lee Ryall purchased a box of chocolates as a thank you for John, Security Officer at CDU.
Receipt for the amount of \$17.50 submitted for reimbursement. All in favour.

General Business

Rhondda Tomlinson advised that she along with Rosalie Breen, Barb and Jim Gilfedder plus Bob and Leoni Read attended the 2014 Field Naturalists Get Together in Hobart during October. They will be compiling a report for the newsletter.

Graeme and Jackie Shaughnesy advised that this would be their last meeting as they have sold-up and are moving to Adelaide. ASFNC members wish them well.

Past Outings/Activities

- Sat 1 Nov 2014 – Bike ride/walk to the Knoll picnic area on the Simpsons Gap Bike track cancelled.

Future Outings/Activities

- Fri 21 & Sat 22 Nov 2014 Camp/walk to Fish Hole on Larapinta Trail cancelled.
- Sat 29 Nov Walk around Kyumba Reserve off Hatt Road. Meet 6:30 am at the Information Bay opp. Old Timers Home. Leader Cec Sutton.

Sightings

- Bev Gray observed numerous Plovers on the CDU grounds.
- Pam Keil observed Bar-tailed Godwits amongst the Stilts at the Sewage Ponds.
- Lee Ryall reported seeing a Long-nosed Dragon in her garden.
- Neil Woolcock reported seeing a Fire-tailed Skink.

Next Meeting – Wednesday 11 February 2015

Meeting closed – 8:30 pm