



April 2015

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Newsletter



Gumleaf Grasshopper Nymph (*Goniaea australasiae*) pretending to be a dried up leaf... and doing a really good job of it! Seen at the Intertexta Forest, by Ilparpa Claypans. Photo by Pamela Keil, ID by Bob Read.

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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NEWSLETTER

The deadline for the next newsletter is **Wednesday 22 April 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

Wed 8 April Meeting 7.00pm at Charles Darwin University Higher Education Building lecture theatre. Speaker: **Pamela Keil** – Special presentation for Farewell to Shorebirds – Shorebirds in Alice Springs?! The importance of inland wetlands and the central Australian migration routes.

There are no field trips scheduled for April. Several Members of our Committee will be away for short periods. If any Member would like to organize a trip or walk, please let me know and I will forward details to the membership. Barb.

2, 3, 4 May Mayday long weekend: three day trip to and around **Newhaven Reserve**. Two nights camping with toilets and showers at campground. Contact Jim Lawrence to express interest - Phone 0428 823 631 or email jim.lawrence.asp@gmail.com Leader: Barb Gilfedder. Let Jim know as soon as possible.

Sat 9 May Guided Tour of Old Timers' Museum with Megg Kelham, who knows the museum items well and investigated the provenance of many of them. She promises to look at the exhibits with an environmental twist. Meet there promptly at 2.00pm. Contact: Barb Gilfedder Phone 89555452. Individual donations requested.

Wed 13 May Meeting 7.00pm at Charles Darwin University Higher Education Building lecture theatre. 'Sadness and Beauty: People, Plants and Landscapes in central Australia' **Fiona Walsh** will introduce several recent short films made with central Australians. The films have been co-edited with David Nixon and screened on ABC TV.'

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY

Contact: **APS Secretary** Jude.pringle@nt.gov.au

Sun 12 April Walk along the Todd River at 11am. Meet at Council car park for walk and talk about both sides of the river – Buffel and Couch on the town side vs natives on the east side. Ken Johnson has been looking after this area and spraying for years. Optional lunch at the Chifley 1pm.

Sun 19 April Working Bee at the Show Site for a general tidy and prune, dripper system repair or renewal. Please bring your gardening equipment.

BIRDLIFE CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

Contact: birdlifeca@gmail.com

Sat 11,18 Apr Shorebird Counts for Farewell to Shorebirds: 8am start, Alice Springs Sewage Ponds; Guests welcome to join the count & learn about shorebirds.

Wed 22 April Monthly Meeting. 7:00pm in the meeting room, Alice Springs Desert Park.

Wed 29 April AGM 7:00pm in the meeting room, Alice Springs Desert Park. Nominations close 7 April. Contact the email above if interested in joining the group or the committee.

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	Charissa Allan	0400 343241;	Committee member	Connie Spencer	8952 4694;
Treasurer	Neil Woolcock	8955 1021;	Website and Newsletter	Pamela Keil	8955 0496.

email address: contact@alicefieldnaturalists.org.au

Congratulations and many thanks to Charissa Allan who volunteered to be our Club Secretary!

March Speaker: Graham Ride “The Evolution of Parks” Report by Lee Ryall

Graham Ride was an interesting speaker, offering us a personal and often anecdotal view of the growth in the Parks in the Territory. He started work with the NT Reserves Board which commenced operations in 1956, with a tiny budget of less than a million dollars. Consequently his talk covered a time of monumental changes in thinking about park reserves and related environmental issues.

When Graham started work with Parks, many of the aspects of Parks we take for granted were primitive or nonexistent- facilities such as toilets, garbage bins and showers were conspicuous in their absence, interpretations were limited, cars and campers generally had unrestricted access. He mentioned the human side of some of the changes that occurred- talking about locals' resentment when they could no longer drive wherever they wanted, and arguments with building inspectors who felt the dividing walls were not high enough between the gents' and the ladies' toilets.



FJ Gillen and son Brian; overlooking the Alice Springs Telegraph Station



Alice Springs Telegraph Station

Graham was passionate about his role and his work- he told us that he was known as 'Little Hitler' to some of the rangers he supervised, but pointed out that they thanked him for his insistence in the end. The new approach to Parks involved setting up park areas with a central wilderness area, some walks and an outlying scientific research area. Public use areas include campgrounds, interpretation stands, water, and toilets. The wilderness areas aimed at setting up representative examples of ecosystems, allowing natural adaptation by removing external factors. This would permit natural cycles of change- be they 30 years or 300 years long.

The conduct of surveys was important to planting and other management decisions, even in the 'pocket handkerchief parks'. Graham talked about dealing with the red tape around aerial mapping

and recording by sitting in the back of a plane, cutting a hole in the metal skin and hanging out, camera in hand, frantically snapping the scene below.

While he was opposed by pastoralists, and some environmentalists, he was also faced with more unexpected opposition- demands for mainstream style housing for the park rangers rather than low energy living. He pointed out that there are always hard choices that have to be made. He found that by partnering with environmentalists he could, for instance, give them the choice of which trees had to be removed in making access roads, handing over some of the hard decisions.



Cows... lots of cows at the Telegraph Station waterhole



Bradshaw children at Conlan's Lagoon

Campaigns to change public attitudes were conducted over the years, and Graham talked about the development of “Nature's Boarding House” posters, and passed around copies of the cartoon like artwork educating people about appropriate behaviour in Parks - such as leaving dogs at home and being careful with their rubbish. Over his time, interpretations grew from checklists to informative, interesting and multi-cultural brochures, using new technology such as the first electric typewriter and the first fax machine (eight minutes per page) in town.

During his talk, a selection of slides from the archives played in the background, additional evidence of changing attitudes and times. The slide show included shots of tents up against the Rock, horrific images of prisoners in chains, faded colour photography of mammals and scenery and memorable floods. These were gathered from collections dating back to 1905 and gave us a tantalising hint of the richness of such an archive.

We had a fascinating evening, visiting old memories and listening to the tales of someone who is obviously deeply committed to the planning, establishment and management of the Parks in the NT. Thanks Graham.



Morgan Flint 1944 – 2015. We will miss him. Spot him in a few photos from Field Nats archives.

Excursions: Pitchi Richi and the Intertexta Forest

Editor's Note: The Field Naturalists went on several excursions this past month, but we have not yet received any write-ups. Barb and I (Pam) had some photos to share from these excursions, so here's a photo montage of some of the things we saw during the Pitchi Richi and Intertexta excursions and a few of our thoughts.

If you do enjoy an ASFNC excursion, please take a few minutes to reflect on what you enjoyed and send us a small write up and a photo or two. Even a paragraph adds a lot! You don't need to describe the whole excursion, just your impressions or favourite part.

Some sights from Pitchi Richi - Barb Gilfedder

To those of us who remember Pitchi Richi from visits 35 years ago, when it was an interesting place to take our children, it now seemed depressing and rundown. However the Ricketts' sculptures are still magic and caught the evening light beautifully. Don't miss the exhibition of photos of them at the Residency, opening on Thursday. Please support Tara Leckey and Heritage Alice Springs in their bid to get the Pitchi Richi site restored and reopened to the public.



Scenes from the Intertexta Forest (following the drying out after the January floods)



Field Nats enjoying the many sights of the Intertexta Forest ; photo by Barb Gilfedder

Pamela Keil. Unfortunately, I was only able to enjoy a short 45 minutes of the Intertexta Forest walk because I had to be back to work at Desert Park. Luckily, it's just a short jaunt away – so I at least got to enjoy that 45 minutes. And what a lot we saw!! In that short period, we saw or heard almost every parrot/cockatoo species possible. Red-tailed Black Cockatoos were flying over head, Ringnecks were there in abundance, a pair of Mulga Parrots flew by as I made my exit, the rest of the crew reports finding Cockatiel and Budgies later (after I left, sadly). But the crown of all was when a flock of around a dozen or more Major Mitchells came flying in above everyone's heads, checked out the trees, noticed us standing there, and took off for a spot farther downstream. Beautiful!

In addition to the beautiful birds, we saw heaps of flowers and insects. Here are a few of the sights I caught before I had to leave...



I somehow spotted this amazingly well camouflaged Gumleaf Grasshopper, which Bob Read informs us is a 5th instar nymph.



Some nymphs and an adult bug (different species?) hanging out on a weed species *Malvastrum americanum*.

And some evidence that yabbies and frogs had a great time here... at least until the puddles dried.



Here's an Eye Test for you.... Can you find the giant wolf spider?



Witchetty bush at Alice Springs Desert Park; Photo by Pamela Keil

Answer:



ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INCORPORATED
Minutes of the general meeting held at the Higher Education Building
Charles Darwin University – Wednesday 11 March 2015

Following a presentation by Graham Ride on *the evolution of the NT Reserves Board to the NT Conservation Commission to the NT Parks and Wildlife Commission and the philosophy, policy, planning and implementation since the 1950's*.
Thanks to Lee Ryall for note taking and Marg Lawrence for supper

Meeting opened at 8:15pm

Present/Apologies: as per attendance book (17 members, 1 visitor and 4 apologies)

Previous minutes accepted by the meeting.

Business arising from the minutes

- Charissa Allen volunteered to fill the secretary position. Much appreciated by the committee and the members. All in favour. This position has been vacant since the AGM in August 2014 with various members filling in.

Correspondence In/Out

- Thank you letters sent to Ian Coleman and Peter Latz.
- Information received on Norfolk Island Bird Week
- CSIRO publication received advising of books for sale
- Cheque sent to APS for our contribution to Flora of central Australia brochure

Treasurer's Report

Balance of all funds 31 January 2015		\$3,654.21
Income for February 2015		140.00
(Withheld from banking for petty cash	\$10.00)	
Expenditure for February 2015		0.00
Petty Cash		
Opening balance	\$15.60	
Funds Added	10.00	
Expenditure		17.50
Petty cash balance end February 2015	\$8.10	
Total funds 28 February 2015		<u>\$3,776.71</u>

Treasurer's report accepted by the meeting.

General Business

- Discussion on when to hold the AGM as we have visiting speaker for August meeting.
It was decided to hold the AGM at 7.00pm and ask speaker to start at 7.30pm.

Past Outings/Activities

- Fri 13 Feb 2015 – late afternoon stroll around Olive Pink Botanic Garden with curator Ian Coleman and Peter Latz. 21 in attendance. Report in March newsletter.
- Wed 18 Feb 2015 – Cec Sutton organised a late afternoon visit to Pitchi Richi Sanctuary with dinner afterwards at Heavitree Tavern. \$125 raised for Alice Springs Heritage. 18 in attendance with 10 staying on for dinner. Site seemed very run down but sculptures surviving. Barb has some photos.
- Fri 20 Feb 2015 – Cec Sutton led an early morning walk from eastern end of Eagle Court to Sunset Hill.
- Sun 8 Mar 2015 – Barb Gilfedder led an early morning walk in the Intertexta Forest with breakfast by the claypans afterwards. 9 participants with 5 for breakfast. Well worth a visit for anyone who missed out.

Future Outings/Activities

- Thurs 26 Mar 2015 late afternoon outing to Conlons Lagoon. Meet information bay opposite Old Timers Home 4:30pm.
- Sat 28 Mar 2015 – Meet 7am at the sewage ponds. Learn to identify shorebirds with Pam Keil and Barb Gilfedder.
- 2,3, and 4 May 2015 – Newhaven Reserve. Contact: Jim Lawrence jim.lawrence.asp@gmail.com
- Sat 9 May 2015 – Old Timers Museum with Megg Kelham. 2-4pm. Donation required.
- Sat & Sun 25 & 26 July 2015 – Ian and Wendy Mann end-of-FNC year function to be held at Old Hamilton Downs. Cost will be \$25 per head. (later changed to 18 & 19 July)

Sightings

- Strollers saw a selection of parrots at the Intertexta Forest – a flock of 20 Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, Red-tailed Black Cockatoos and Ringnecks. Pam and Michael saw Mulga Parrots. Barb advised there were also Budgies and Cockatiels at the claypans.
- Neil advised that he had caught his 90th Spotted Dove in two and a half years.
- Bev Gray saw a Spinifex Pigeon by the Art Shed.
- Rhonda saw an Excitable Delma at AZRI.
- Charissa had a Western Brown Snake in her kitchen.
- Pam also reported Firetail Lizards in her garden.

Next Meeting – Wed 8 April 2015. Speaker: Pam Keil on *Shorebirds leaving the ponds*. Neil Woolcock will chair the meeting. Pam will write report for the newsletter. Supper – plate from Bev Gray with other small contributions welcome.

Meeting closed – 8:50 pm