



November 2015

## Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Newsletter



A great view of Ormiston water hole by Rhondda Tomlinson

**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 next newsletter will be February 2016, unless we have so many contributions that we decide to publish a December edition. The deadline for the next newsletter will be 23<sup>rd</sup> of the preceding month.

Please send your contributions to Pamela Keil [pamelakeil@yahoo.com](mailto:pamelakeil@yahoo.com)

Please **send photos and text separately** as combining them causes formatting issues.

- Friday 30 Oct**      **6:15 am** Eastside track to Quartz Hill. Meet at eastern end of Eagle Court (just beyond eastern end of golf course). Organiser: Cec Sutton 0412 501 396 [cecsutton@gmail.com](mailto:cecsutton@gmail.com)
- Thursday 5 Nov**      **6:15 am** Walk to waterhole (might not be any water) upper Todd north of Telegraph Station. Maybe continue and come back on other channel or return same way. Can decide on the day depending on temperature. Meet at Telegraph Station gate.      Organiser: Connie Spencer 0429 966 592 [constans@bigpond.net.au](mailto:constans@bigpond.net.au)
- Saturday 7 Nov**      **Early morning walk.** A couple of hours in the hills behind the Scout Hall. Meet 6:30 am at the Scout Hall off Larapinta Drive. Leader Connie details as above.
- Wednesday 11 Nov**      **Meeting** 7.00pm at Charles Darwin University Higher Education Building lecture theatre. Talk by **Bruce Pascoe** from the Alice Springs Desert Park talking about “**Community Ecology of birds in Acacia Shrubland in Central Australia**”.
- Friday 13 Nov**      **6:15 am** Northside tracks west of the railway line. Meet at Corkwood tree beyond Territory Metal at west end of Smith St. Organiser: Cec Sutton details above.
- Saturday 14 Nov**      **Standley Chasm.** Walk into the Chasm to check on the Cycads and Flannel flowers. Breakfast available at kiosk afterwards. Meet at Flynn's grave at 7.30am. Leader: Barb Gilfedder.      (Owen Springs Drive postponed until cooler weather next year.)
- Thursday 26 Nov**      **Sunset/Moonrise** from **Spencer Hill** on Thursday evening of 26 November. Meet Gosse Street Playground at 6.15pm, with tea or snack to eat while watching the sky from the top of the hill. Torch could be useful for going down again. Ring Rosalie 89523409
- Sunday 14 Feb**      Advance notice of Bird Count at Alice Springs Sewage Ponds.

### AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY

**Contact: APS Secretary** [jude.pringle@nt.gov.au](mailto:jude.pringle@nt.gov.au)

- Wednesday 4 Nov**      APS Meeting 7.30pm at OPBG. **Jenny Purdie** will show her pictures of the stunning wildflowers she recently encountered along the Canning Stock Route in WA.

### BIRDLIFE CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

**Contact:** [birdlifeca@gmail.com](mailto:birdlifeca@gmail.com)

- Wednesday 25 Nov**      Social Meeting at Simpsons Gap barbeque area. 6.00pm start. Group to provide sausages and bread. Bring a plate of salad and everything else you need. Also bring ideas for future speakers and excursions.

### 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	Committee Member	Claire Meney	0448341795
Website and Newsletter	Pamela Keil	8955 0496.			



## Short Notice Member's Night – 14 October

It doesn't happen often, but the day prior to the last meeting, Andy Vinter told me he was sick and would not be able to talk at our October meeting. I have rebooked him to talk in March 2016. Meanwhile the troops rallied and came forward with a really interesting evening of items.

Rhondda Tomlinson brought display books that she had put together after her last trip, this time to the Undara Lava Tubes, see her report below; Rosalie Breen showed photos of a visit to White Island off the New Zealand coast; Les Gilliland and Pam Windle showed pictures from a Madagascar trip; Michael LaFlamme and Pam Keil showed some of their extensive library of reference books; and Barb Gilfedder showed some Insect photos including a sequence of an adult Cicada emerging from its juvenile exo-skeleton. Many thanks to everyone.

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### **TUNNELS, ROCKS & RAIL CARRIAGES - July 2015 - Rhondda Tomlinson**

For the past 8 years I have worked for the Northern Territory Geological Survey as a Cartographer/GIS person. To me geology is a series of lines, coloured polygons, symbols and text and a chance to see real geology up close and personal was an amazing experience. In July 2015 I went on an International Parks Tour in Queensland and part of the tour was to Undara and the Lava Tubes. As we neared Undara my thoughts wondered as to what we would find at this place which has become famous not only in the tourist industry but as an unique geological scientific area.

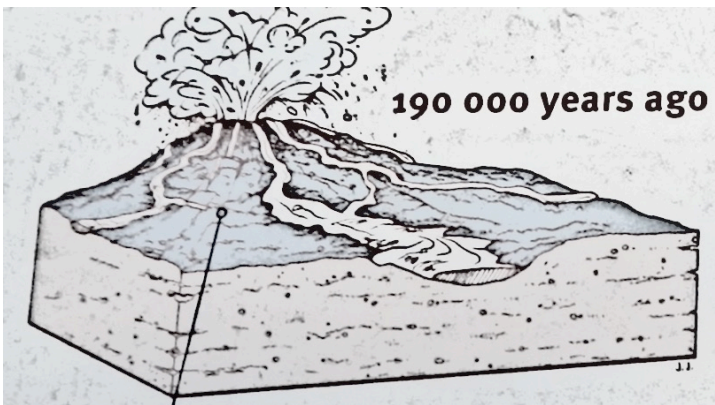
Before embarking on this adventure to the Lava Tubes I tried to compare them to what I knew and having lived in Sydney I tried to compare them with the Sydney Rail Underground system (no, that was man made); the Jenolan Caves (no that was limestone, not basalt and formed in a different way).

These thoughts aside as we were pulling into the driveway of the Undara Lodge we were soon to discover that our accommodation was in the railway carriages and even our evening meal was in the dining car of a train. Now my thoughts were again connecting to the railway tunnels.



Next morning we were given a rundown on the history of Undara and the Volcano and how the lava tubes were formed. As we walked along the path with our assigned guide we passed rubble areas of basalt rock and it was pointed out where some lava tubes had over the centuries collapsed.

The entrance to the first Lava Tube was a huge cavern that we had to climb down into. I did not imagine it to be near the size it was. There were various tunnels leading off the main areas which were exposed due to collapsed roof areas. The patterning on the ceilings in the torch light was spectacular due to seepage, vegetation roots and minerals. The floor surfaces were uneven in parts due to the water dripping from the ceiling for centuries as well as bat droppings. No doubt many animals had taken refuge in these caves.

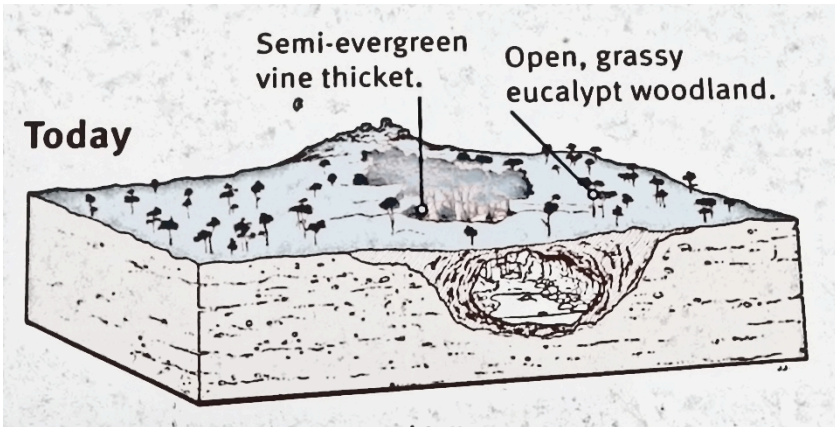


The best explanation of the formation of these Lava Tubes was from the signage that was along the track.

1. A huge volume of treacle-like lava flowed from the Undara Volcano, some following watercourses and other natural depressions.



2. As the lava flowed, the surface gradually cooled, forming solid rock. The lava below, insulated from the cool air, remained molten and continued to flow. Eventually the lava stopped, leaving a long, hollow rock tube behind.



3. Now functioning like huge storm water drains, the tube collects and carries much of the summer rain and, where the ceiling has collapsed, semi-evergreen vine thicket flourishes in the damp interior. Over the years the tube ceiling has collapsed in places, providing entrances to tunnels and caves, many of which remain unexplored.

This not the only geological area we visited but this was an insight to some of the wonders of this world that man has not had a hand in creating but does have the opportunity to study and to visit.

## WHITE ISLAND – Rosalie Breen



White island, Whakaari, is 40 km out to sea from Whakatane on the North Island of New Zealand, and is the most recent volcano in a line stretching from Mt Rhuapehu. In fact it is still active. A submarine volcano, 70% of its cone is under water, the highest peak around the crater rim is 321 m. The crater is breached in two areas on north east side affording possible landing areas. We walked in the crater area across an “out of this world” landscape, desolate ever changing terrain, various coloured and textured cliffs towering around us, white, grey, red-brown, predominately yellow from the sulphur dioxide gases coming from the underground lava, and forming chimneys of crystals.

The place seemed to be ‘smoking’ everywhere. Steam comes from holes in the ground, gas bubbles up through pools of mud. We were warned to follow the guide closely and not to stray from that path, understandably so. In the centre of the island is the actual crater, a pool of green very acidic liquid, and erratically billowing steam and other gases which rise white high into the air. Here the atmosphere was heavy and very sulphurous. Our gasmasks were welcome.







Sulphur was mined here for some years and the ruins of the mining works create an eerie, sad picture. But a special experience.



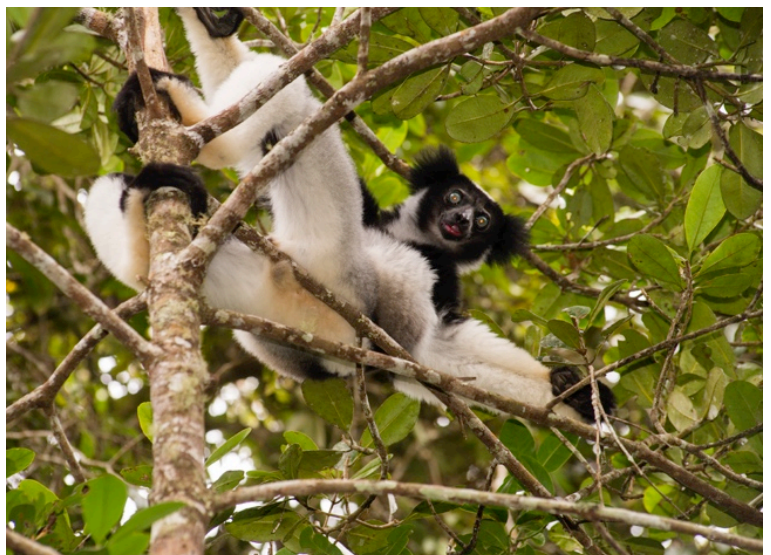
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## Madagascar

— *Les Gilliland and Pamela Windle*

Baobab is the common name for each of the nine species of tree in the genus *Adansonia*. Six of these are native to Madagascar, two to Africa and one to Australia.

Madagascar is also home to all the world's Lemur species. The Ring-tailed Lemur (right) is endangered due to disappearing habitat. Below is the Indri, the largest species of the living Lemur.





# Hat Hill Saddle

- Sat 10 October

Report by Beth Hansen

Photos by Beth and Rhondda

While I was in the Centre for my regular yearly visit, I was able to join an early morning walk to Hat Hill Saddle. We started the walk – part of Section 1 of Larapinta Trail – from near the car parking area at Simpson Gap and headed east over the sandy creek bed and through the mulga woodland. The track is well-maintained with an easy climb up and around Hat Hill. We all remarked on the beautiful patterns made by the rocks beside a stepped section of the track. (See right)

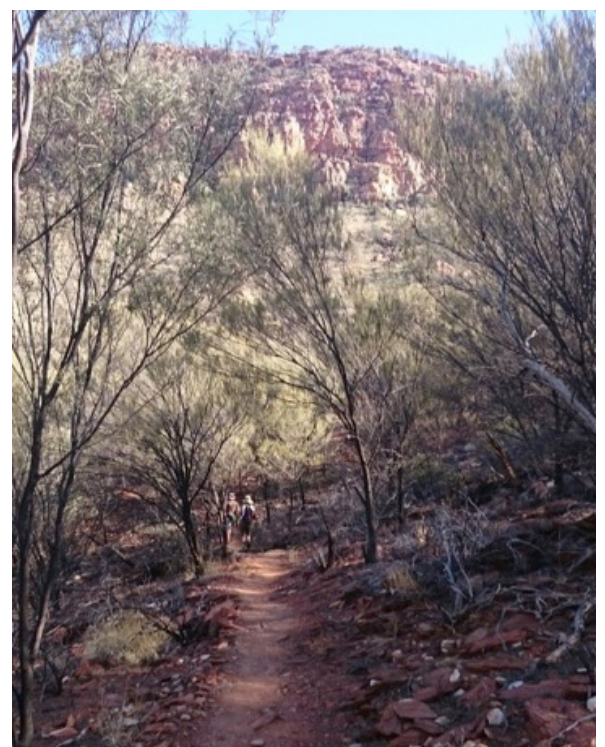


At the Hat Hill Saddle itself, the rewards are wonderful views on the northern side up to Rungatjirba Ridge, eastward towards Heavitree Range & Mt Gillen and westward along the West Macs.

There was still water in Simpsons Gap – Rosalie filled her collection bottles. One Black-footed Rock-wallaby was sheltering on the side slopes, providing a point of interest for the German tourists

while we watched several Dusky Grasswrens hopping around quite close to us resting on the sand.

The return trip to Hat Hill Saddle is less than 5km. It's a delightful walk to do before brunch back at the Olive Pink Botanic Gardens. Thanks Rhondda, Rosalie, Cec and Connie. (below)





# Ormiston Gorge day trip – 17 October 2015

Report and photos by Charissa Allan

Due to the increasingly warm days, it was decided to postpone the weekend Arltunga Trip and spend a leisurely day at Ormiston Gorge. Five of us willing to brave the heat, set out to Ormiston Gorge, meeting at Flynn's Grave at 8am.

Breaking up the trip, we stopped at a lookout overlooking the West MacDonnell National Park for a photo opportunity and for those more technically inclined, to show those a little less inclined, some tricks for taking panoramic photos on their phones. After about 15 minutes, we were on our way.



At Ormiston Gorge, Connie, Rhondda and Charissa took a stroll up to the look out on the Ghost Gum walk. Charissa took the opportunity to try out her new camera and attempted to capture some of the view and the local wildlife. Claire and Adam opted for the less energetic option and found a shady spot out of the wind by the water hole and a swim. The sweaty adventurers also enjoyed a dip in the cool water on their return.

After a few hours, it was decided that an ice cream would go down rather well. We stopped at Mount Sonder lookout before travelling to Glen Helen. Charissa and Adam took a short stroll to look at the water in the Gorge. There was much more water than at Ormiston. Connie, Rhondda and Claire found a comfortable seat and a local musician to have a chat to whilst waiting.

We decided to stop at Standley Chasm for one last stroll. All five of us wandered up to the Chasm, noticing the changes occurring in the area. Connie and Rhondda commented on the flowers growing on the Chasm walls. (*Flannel Flowers, Actinotus schwarzii*, and in the background *Cliffside Daisy, Cremnothamnus thomsonii*, Ed.)

Another ice cream was needed, before heading home.



## Au revoir to Alice. Cecily Sutton

We have done a few trips down the Stuart Highway in the last five years.

There are two interesting natural landmarks that I have always wanted to explore. So on my penultimate trip to the "other Territory", I was determined to do the deed. The walks only took 45 minutes so it was a good break from driving.

The first was a red sand dune about 2 km north of the Desert Oak rest stop (about 30 km north of Eraldunda). There is a rocky ridge running east-west. On the north side of this, a beautiful red sand drift nearly reaches the top of the ridge. A short rocky scramble gives a great view in all directions. The purple flowers of the Parakeelya contrast so beautifully with the red sand.

The other spot was about 6 km north of Kulgera. The first of a series of round granite inselbergs is a great little climb. There are many bigger ones to the south. To my delight there were quite a few flowering plants on the flat plain, as I walked to the rocky outcrop. It was great to be able to know a little about the vegetation, and enjoy the scenery.

Thanks to Alice Springs Field Nats for teaching me about Eremophila and stuff!!



*Dear Cec, You will be greatly missed. You have been a terrific Member of Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club, serving on the Committee, leading walks and finding and suggesting new, interesting places to go. We wish you all the best and hope you find another similar group to share your interests and to walk with. Do hope it is only 'Au revoir' and that you often revisit the Centre and us. Many thanks – Barb and all the Field Nats.*

*How many of the flowers in that little bunch can you name?*

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## Cicada

A series of photos showing a Cicada emerging from its juvenile case. It had been underground for several years – What a transformation!

Barb Gilfedder





**ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INCORPORATED**  
**Minutes of the general meeting held at the Higher Education Building**  
**Charles Darwin University – Wednesday 14 October 2015**

Following a presentation by various members on a *variety of trips and relevant topics*.  
Thanks to Pam and Michael for supper.

**Meeting opened** at 7:00pm

**Present/Apologies:** as per attendance book (14 Members and 2 visitors). Apologies from 3 members.

**Previous minutes** accepted by the meeting.

**Business arising from the minutes**

- No business arising from minutes.

**Correspondence In/Out**

- Thank you card has been sent to Kirsti Abbott, re: School of Ants talk.
- Thank you card to be sent to Ben Beaton, via Desert Park, re: August talk.
- Letter received from Australian Natural History Medallion re: Peter Latz's nomination. Unfortunately, he was not successful this round. Michael LaFlamme will update and resend the nomination letter for next year;
- Email received from Kirsti Abbott, re: finding Honey Ants. Thanks to Neil and Leigh for replying – Kirsti was advised that the best time would be after rain. She will return.
- Email from John Gregurke, re: death of Dick Southcombe, Australian Naturalists network.
- Email from Charissa, re: NT Flora online published by NT Herbarium.
- Letter from AU Host4u re: Domain renewal of website – 2 years (no charge)
- Email from Fiona Walsh re: Nomination of Peter Latz for Australian Government Individual Land carer. Peter Latz and Bill Low have both been named finalists. Gala dinner held 11 November in Darwin when winners announced.
- Email from Nicole Pietsch, ALEC re: Invitation to submit article to final newsletter of the year. Barb to send copy of the recent Intertexta Forest visit and include short paragraph about ASFNC.

**Treasurer's Report – September 2015**

Balance of all funds 31 August 2015		\$1,378.17
Income for September 2015		\$130.00
Bank interest		\$0.24
Expenditure for September 2015		Nil
(Petty cash balance end August and September 2015	<b>\$8.10)</b>	
Total funds 30 September 2015		<b>\$1,508.41</b>

**General Business**

- Thank you to Rhondda for her diligence in displaying the monthly newsletter at Olive Pink Botanic Gardens.
- Master's Games will have foot orienteering for the first time in 2016.
- Cec showed some local mountain bike trail maps that have been upgraded recently. These detailed maps can be sourced from local bike shops and the Telegraph Station.
- Peter and Lisa Nunn have produced a photographic calendar for 2016. Calendar available at Kangaroo Books.

**Past Trips**

- 25 Sept Walk/pedal to the Knoll – write up in September newsletter.

**Future Trips**

- Oct Various early morning walks organized by Cecily or Connie.
- Oct 17 Ormiston Gorge and Glen Helen Gorge day trip – Contact Charissa or Rhondda for information.  
Arltunga trip postponed until April next year

**Sightings**

- Silvereye at the Desert Park (Pam) – First sighting in Central Australia.
- Unconfirmed Osprey at the Sewage Ponds.
- Dusky Grasswrens at Simpson's Gap (Connie).
- Rock Wallabies at Simpson's Gap.
- Many snake sightings across area.

**Next meeting** – Wednesday 11 November. Speaker is Bruce Pascoe, Head of Zookeeping at ASDP, to talk on Community Ecology of Birds in Acacia Shrubland in Central Australia. Lee Ryall will scribe, and Barb Gilfedder will provide supper.

**Meeting closed:** 9:00pm