



November 2016

## Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Newsletter



"*Goodenia ramelii* is a distinctive species, readily distinguished from other *Goodenia* by its comparatively large leaves being mostly in a basal rosette, the blue to purple corolla ... and unwinged seeds' -NT Flora website.

Photographed on Mount Gillen by Neil Woolcock.

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**

**Web site:**

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

**Email:** [contact@alicefieldnaturalists.org.au](mailto:contact@alicefieldnaturalists.org.au)

### CONTENTS

*Meetings, Trips/Activities, Contacts...p2;*  
*Wildflowers in Ayers Rock area...p3; Owen Springs Reserve trip...p4;*  
*Landsdale Farm School Nursery...p6; Ross Highway Drive...p7*  
*Wildflower Wander...p8; Acacia sessiliceps...p9.*

## NEWSLETTER

The next newsletter will be February 2017.  
The deadline for the next newsletter will be 23 January 2017.  
Please send your contributions to Barb Gilfedder: [bjfedders@gmail.com](mailto:bjfedders@gmail.com)

### Editor's Note:

The next newsletter will come out in February 2017. There are a few events to wind up this year, and then a bit of a break over the holidays. Any additional events between now and February that are not in this newsletter will be emailed out directly to members. Sorry you will have to wait until the next newsletter for the report on Ken Johnson's talk.

There may be a special edition in December with some reports on the ANN get-together that several of our Members travelled to Western Australia to attend.

This edition is full of flowers. I hope you have been getting out bush and enjoying the wonderful display that central Australia has been putting on this Spring.

**Wed 9 Nov** Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club **GENERAL MEETING** at the Lecture Theatre in Higher Education Building at CDU at 7.00pm. Speakers: Jenny Purdie and Steve Sinclair showing pictures from their latest trip to Africa.

Please contact leaders if you intend going on any of these field trips.

**Sat 29 Oct** Early morning walk on new Telegraph Station tracks. Leader: Rosalie Breen. [rosalie.breen@email.com](mailto:rosalie.breen@email.com)  
Meet at the Telegraph Station gates for 6.00am start.

**Sat 12 Nov** Evening picnic/ barbeque at Simpsons Gap followed by **Spotlight walk** with Pam Keil. [pamelakeil@yahoo.com](mailto:pamelakeil@yahoo.com)

**Sat 19/20 Nov** **End-of-year celebration. Standley Chasm - Choose your own adventure.**  
Weekend walk, camp, walk, brunch at kiosk - all optional. The main plan is to have breakfast together at the kiosk. Make your own way to Standley Chasm. Camp Saturday night at the Standley Chasm camp ground, self-catering, Enjoy a moonlight walk into the Chasm. On Saturday morning campers and people driving out early can enjoy a sunlight walk into the Chasm or another short walk. Walk starting at 7.30am. The main event - catered breakfast/brunch at Standley Chasm Kiosk 9.00am.  
**BOOKINGS FOR THE MEAL ARE ESSENTIAL BY SATURDAY 12 NOVEMBER.**  
Barb Gilfedder [bjfedders@gmail.com](mailto:bjfedders@gmail.com)

**Dec 4 Dec** **Bird Survey at sewage ponds** Birdlife and ASFNC combined. Meet at the birdwatchers gate at 7.00am. Contact Barb Gilfedder [bjfedders@gmail.com](mailto:bjfedders@gmail.com) It is essential that all participants, counters and scribes have completed the Power and Water induction course. This has to be done online and can take a few days as you have to get a password first, you then read what the rules are and answer a few simple questions. A licence is then issued. You can however only enter with a person who holds a key who has gone through a special induction/safety course. [https://www.powerwater.com.au/community\\_and\\_education/birdwatching\\_ilparpa\\_swamp](https://www.powerwater.com.au/community_and_education/birdwatching_ilparpa_swamp)

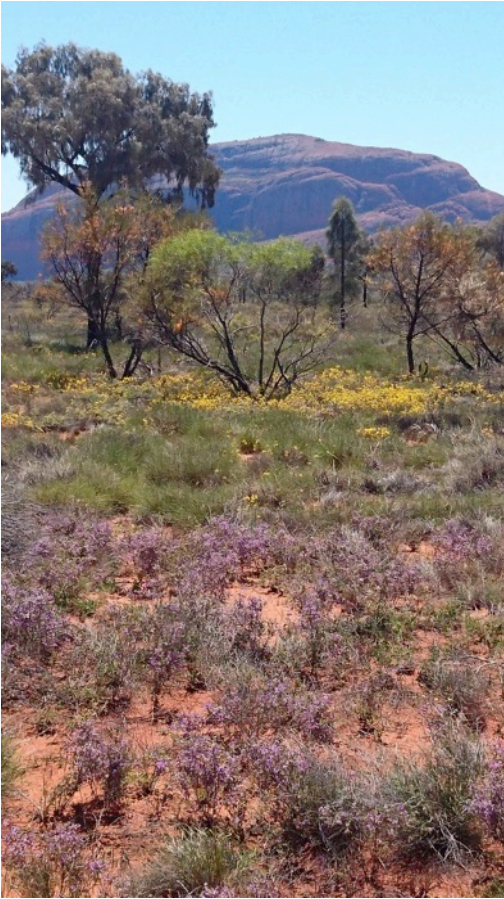
### AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY ALICE SPRINGS

**Contact:** [apsalicesprings@yahoo.com.au](mailto:apsalicesprings@yahoo.com.au)

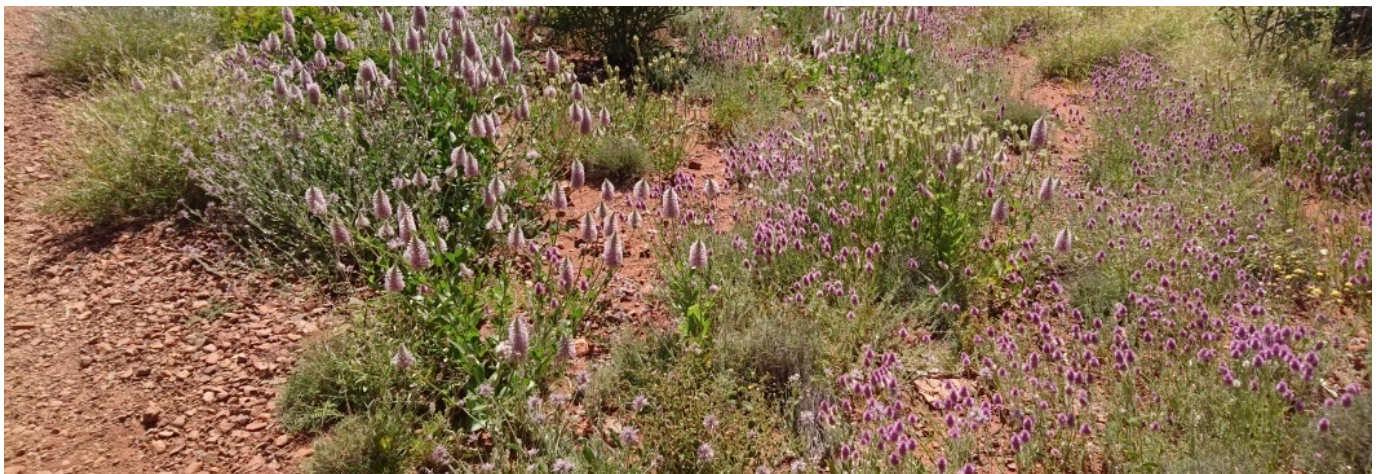
**Wed 2 Nov** **APS AS Meeting** at Olive Pink Botanic at 7.30pm.  
Speaker: **Connie Spencer: Vancouver Island – a very different environment from central Australia**

### Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Committee Members

President	Barbara Gilfedder	8955 5452	Public Officer	Rhonda Tomlinson	8953 1280
Vice-President	Lee Ryall	8953 6394	Property Officer	Rosalie Breen	8952 3409
Secretary	Pamela Keil	8955 0496.	Committee Member	Pauline Walsh	0416 094 910
Treasurer	Neil Woolcock	8955 1021	Committee Member	Robin Grey-Gardner	8952 2207
Website	Pamela Keil	8955 0496	Newsletter	Pamela Keil / Barbara Gilfedder	



Ayers Rock bathed in natural colour by Anne Pye



# Owen Springs Reserve - 8 October 2016

By Connie Spencer. Photos of *Ptilotus sessilifolia* and track through *Polycalyamma stuartii* patch by Connie, others by Barb.

We gathered at the Homestead and after discussions with Sheridan Martin, Senior Ranger at the Reserve, a route to the James Range was chosen and what a treat we were in for.



There were swathes of yellow, white and pink wildflowers. The yellow for the most part was *Calocephalus platycephalus* (Yellow Billybuttons) and *Leucochrysum stipitatum* (Saltspoon Daisy) (above) with an assortment of the many other yellow flowering daisies. The white was mostly *Rhodanthe floribunda* (White Paper Daisy) and *Polycalyamma stuartii* (Poached Egg Daisy) and the pink mostly *Schoenia cassiniana* (Pink Everlasting) and *Ptilotus helipteroides* (Hairy Mulla Mulla). There was even a small patch of blue representing *Brunonia australis* (Blue Pincushion).



Several stops were made along the way to look more closely at these mass displays.

At one stop a perfectly shaped *Minuria leptohylla* (Minnie Daisy) was photographed by Barb. (left)

On another, a single *Thysanotus exiliflorus* (Desert Fringe Lily) caused quite a bit of excitement. (right)



A hue of pale pink proved to be *Ptilotus sessilifolius* (Crimson Foxtail). Up close the tepals (part of the flower head) are crimson in colour hence the common name. (left)

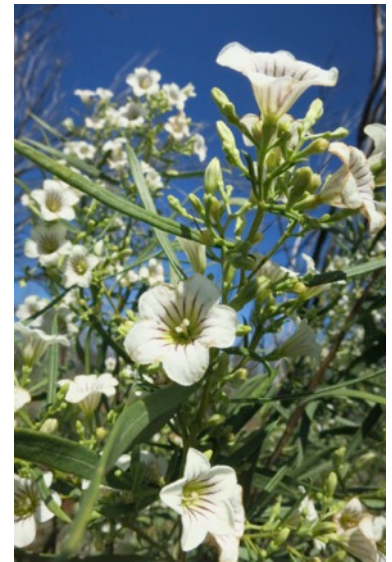


Heading south towards the James Range, we left the Mulga and entered red sand hill country with the best display of flowering *Grevillea juncifolia* (Desert Grevillea) I have ever seen. (right)



By mid afternoon the temperature had climbed to the mid 30's.

It was the hottest day so far this season and stops were less frequent although a profusely flowering *Duboisia hopwoodii* (Pituri Bush) was enough to apply the brakes. Although this plant occurs throughout central Australia in spinifex sandplains and sandhills, it is not common. A very interesting shrub in that it is highly toxic and used by Aboriginal people to poison emus and other game. For further information see *Bushfires & Bushtucker* by Peter Latz. (picture right)



I was taken with how the little used, two-wheeled red sandy track had flowers on both sides and down the centre.

We continued on our way to the Stuart Highway, said our goodbyes and thank yous to Sheridan and headed for home – tired but happy or should I say ecstatic in Michael’s case.

For the record, participants were: Barb & Jim Gilfedder, Bob Read, Anne Pye, MeggKelham, Pam Keil, Michael Laflamme, Sheridan Martin and yours truly.



*Sheridan was keen to share with us some of the aspects of Rangers’ duties on Owen Springs Reserve, which included fire management, weed management and care of heritage and cultural sites. It seemed a lot of work considering how few staff there are and how big the area is.*

Whilst having smoko in a creek bed near Haunted Tree Bore, Sheridan gave us an insight into their weed management program. Quite a daunting task and as we were about to leave we noticed a patch of the nasty *Cenchrus echinatus* (Mossman River Grass). As we helped Sheridan grub it out and place in a plastic bag, we found that the burrs will stick to almost anything they come in contact with. Unintentionally, Megg found that her shawl was particularly useful in gathering up escaped burrs from the sand!



*Sheridan also talked about the old homestead ruins. We didn’t visit it this time, perhaps being too stunned by all the wonderful flowers, but Sheridan talked about the history of Owen Springs when it was a station and had photos of the old ruin in its prime. (picture left taken in 1939) She explained the necessity for its thick coat of white preservative and said without it, the whole place would have become just a pile of rubble very quickly. I wish I had taken notes of more of what Sheridan said but I am hopeful that she will be able to come and speak at one of our meetings next year.*

## Owen Springs Trip Bird and insect lists –Bob Read

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Magpie Lark	Striated Pardalote
Black-faced Woodswallow	Rainbow Bee-eater	Weebill
Budgerigar	Red-backed Kingfisher	Western Gerygone
Cockatiel	Red-browed Pardalote	White-plumed Honeyeater
Crested Pigeon	Rufous Songlark	Willie Wagtail
Galah	Rufous Whistler	Yellow-throated Miner
Grey-crowned Babbler	Southern Whiteface	Zebra Finch
Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	

### Orthoptera, not much

Spur-throated Locust  
Common Urnisa  
Common Bandwing

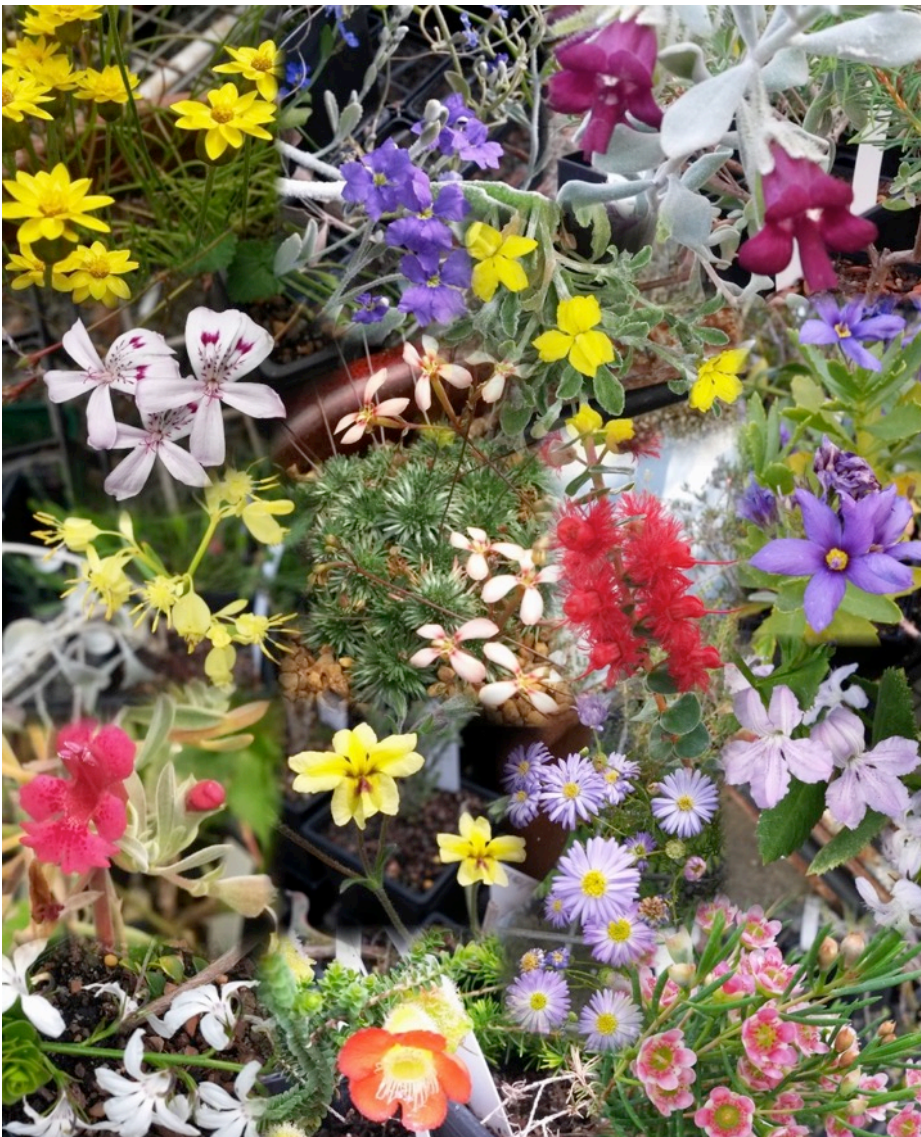
### Lepidoptera, just the usual

Lesser Wanderer  
Caper White  
Small Grass Yellow

---

## Landsdale Farm School Nursery - A place to see if you are visiting Perth, W.A.

Joan Powling was in Alice Springs last month and is a Member of our club, although she lives Melbourne. She likes to visit the Centre and some of you may remember her giving a talk to ASFNC in 2012 (was it really that long ago?) about Freshwater Algae in the arid zone. After her recent visit here, she travelled to family and friends in Western Australia. She put together this great collage of the flowers she saw at Landsdale.



“As the weather was pretty cold and wet I didn’t get out and about much but had a lovely day with a wildflower friend, Mary Gray, at the Landsdale Farm School <http://www.landsdale-farm-school.com.au>.

Mary took me to meet Hazel Dempster, a retired horticulturalist and a very knowledgeable woman with amazing skills for propagating native plants. She volunteers two days a week in the native plant nursery attached to the farm.

Mary, who is President of the Perth Urban Bushland Council [http://www.bushlandperth.org.au/](http://www.bushlandperth.org.au) volunteered at the Farm 30 years ago and the trees she planted then are now fully grown and giving wonderful shade. <http://www.communitynews.com.au/wanner-oo-times/news/wild-about-wa-flora/>

Landsdale Farm School at 80 Landsdale Road, Landsdale in the northern suburbs of Perth, was developed for students with disabilities. The nursery, open on Thursdays and Saturdays, has unique WA flora not available elsewhere. Plants are propagated and trialled there for their suitability and versatility in gardens. For more pictures, visit <http://www.wildflowersocietywa.org.au/> or search ‘The Wildflower Society of Western Australia’ on Facebook.”



**Wildflower Wander** by Sue O'Callaghan

It was a lovely morning for a wander among the wildflowers in Rosalie's special area at the base of Spencer Hill. So close to town and so easily accessible, I feel sad that I don't take the time and opportunity to do this more often! And for me, it was so nice to wander with friends who know about these flowers, their names both common and botanical, families, habitats, life cycles and eccentricities.

We saw carpets of yellow Billybuttons, *Calocephalus knappii* and *Calocephalus platycephalus* (I looked in our Central Australian Flora brochures for the botanical names) and dotted amongst these many other interesting plants - most I had seen before but just enjoyed for their colour and beauty! Perhaps the most interesting for me were the Storkbill, *Erodium cygnorum*, and the Corkwood tree, *Hakea divaricata* (above) covered in blossoms.

I am looking forward to another wander with brochures in hand so I can identify and then learn a little more about our beautiful central Australian Flora.

Thank you Neil and Leigh for an informative and enjoyable morning.

Below: Rosalie removing a feral cactus. Top two photos by Sue, others by Neil. How many flowers can you identify from the photos?





## Ross Highway Drive – Ptilotus everywhere – 23 October 2016

by Barb Gilfedder

Just four of us met up outside Pitchi-richi sanctuary, so we agreed to all share the comforts of Connie's new Subaru.

Our first stop along the way was a small limestone hill that Rosalie has decided to call Barb's Hill. It is probably too small to have a gazetted name. Being limestone there is very little Buffel Grass on it, so we could admire the *Eremophila christophori* (Dolomite Fuschia Bush) flowering beautifully, the *Acacia bivenosa* (Hill Umbrella Bush) producing lots of seedpods as well as lush new growth and at the top, lovely clumps of *Anemocarpa saxitilis* (Hill Sunray). Quite large *Hybanthus aurianticus* (Orange Spade Flower) plants were there too but weren't flowering. It was only a little effort to reach the summit, it only being small hill, but worth it for the 360 degree views.

Next stop was Corroboree Rock. We were greeted in the car park by a beautifully flowering *Gossypium sturtianum* (Sturts Desert Rose). We walked around the monolith,



remembering Michael Green telling us that it had been originally formed horizontally in layers but somewhere way back in its history had been moved to the vertical position it maintains now. We admired the seedheads of Spinifex swaying in the breeze like waves on water. This area has been burnt in recent years but with good rains all the *Eucalyptus eucentrica* (Limestone Mallee) had new shoots from the base a metre or more high; a few *Petalostylis cassioides* (Butterfly bush) shrubs were flowering; the and the *Ptilotus clementii* were living up to their name of Nodding Mulla-mulla. This was the start of a Ptilotus rich day. The picnic area under the lovely old *Ventilago verinalis* (Supplejack) trees was, unfortunately, already being used by others but the trees were flowering and fruiting well.



The reason Neil had chosen this route was because he had seen whole areas covered with big clumps of *Ptilotus obovatus* (Smoke Bush) looking like flocks of sheep feeding among the Chenopods. He thought they might have been past their best but they were lovely. In other places we saw *P. helipteroides* (Hairy Mulla Mulla), *P. sessilifolius* (Crimson Foxtail), *P. whitei* (previously *P. parvifolius* (Perennial Ptilotus) and *P. macrocephalus* (Large Green Pusstails). Whenever we saw interesting plants we stopped to inspect closer.

We were disappointed that lovely grassy plain we drove through and often admired, was in fact almost exclusively Couch Grass. Further along between the Trephina Gorge turnoff and Ross River



there is a stunning stand of old *Acacia georginae* (Gidgee) trees. The ground under them is almost bare and the dark twisted trunks stood out well against the paler hill behind.

Past Ross River, Rosalie and wanted to show Connie the small, floating water fern, *Azolla filiculoides* (Red Azolla) in the creek. It was a bit disappointing because the water level in the creek had dropped since we were last there, and left swathes of dried and blackened fern on the edges. Neil told stories of what a pest it was where he used to live and extremely difficult to get rid of from dams and lakes.

It was a good day, fantastic weather and the views of flowers and hills, as well as the big bowls of chips at Ross River Homestead, which were excellent and enjoyed by all four of us.

Thanks Neil for leading and Connie for driving!

From the top - *Ptilotus helipteroides*, *P. clementii*, *P. obovatus*, *P. whitei*





**Acacia sessiliceps (Curly Pod Wattle) flowering in the Intertexta Forest – Barb Gilfedder**

This is quite an uncommon species that I haven't seen flowering before. I knew there was one tree of this species in the Intertexta Forest but I was unaware of this one, until the flowers called my attention to it. It is the small tree in the centre of the picture below, dwarfed by the big *Eucalyptus Intertexta* behind it. Sessiliceps means "stalkless". Peter Latz says it is the camel's second favourite food plant after the Quandong tree, *Santalum acuminatum*.

I looked it up on the new [NTFlora](#) website, which is a mine of information about native plants and seems relatively easy to use. This is what it says on the factsheet about *A. sessiliceps*, as well as showing 3 photos and giving access to herbarium collection details. So there is good information in simple language with not too many words to look up.

**“Diagnostic Characters:** *Acacia sessiliceps* is a shrub or small tree to about 7 m high, with dark persistent fissured bark. The branchlets have short hairs and the phyllodes are glabrous or have appressed hairs. The phyllodes are terete to flat, linear, green to grey-green, mostly 40-90 mm long and 0.8-1.8 mm wide, with 1 marginal gland near the base, and several parallel main nerves and additional slightly less prominent parallel veins between. The flowers are in pale yellow globular heads arranged singly on hairy peduncles 0-2 mm long. The pods are linear-oblong, mostly 52-250 mm long, 5-12 mm wide, distinctly curved to twisted or coiled, and the seeds have a yellow or orange aril. *Acacia sessiliceps* is sometimes synonymised under *A. oswaldii*, but is here treated as a distinct taxon. A similar taxon with broader phyllodes and a slightly different habit occurs in arid NT near salt lakes to the south of the MacDonnell Ranges bioregion. That taxon is tentatively placed under *Acacia oswaldii*, however it is not a particularly good match for the type of the species, which was collected on the Murray River in South Australia...”



Photos: a close-up of the flowers (right) and the pods (left). Pods photo taken in Rainbow Valley in 2013.





**ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INCORPORATED**  
**Minutes of the general meeting held at the Higher Education Building**  
**Charles Darwin University – Wednesday 12 October 2016 at 8.20pm**

Meeting, chaired By Vice President Lee Ryall, following a presentation by Ken Johnson.  
Thank you to scribe Michael Laflamme and to Sue O'Callaghan for supper.

**Present:** 17 members and 2 visitors as per attendance book.

**Apologies:** 7 apologies

**Minutes** of September 2016 meeting sent to the membership. Spelling of "Sturts Desert Pea" corrected.  
Minutes accepted by meeting.

**Business arising**

- Sewage Ponds – Colleen O'Malley and Rosalie Breen have been inducted by Martin O'Neill and have keys.
- Rosalie has returned old key to Power Water. \$50 deposit refunded.

**Treasurer's Report**

Balance of all funds end of August 2016	\$1,751.23
Income	
Australian Plants Society plant brochure refund	\$1,300.00
Membership	185.00
Bank interest	.35
<b>Withdrawals</b>	
Sue Fraser bereavement notice	245.36
Petty Cash	
Opening Balance	\$4.60
Add from membership fees	20.00
<b>Less receipt book</b>	<b>4.95</b>
Balance end of September 2016	19.65
Total of all funds end of September 2016	<u>\$2,986.62</u>

**Correspondence In/Out**

- Invitation to book launch from Stuart Traynor. 3 November 5.30-6.30pm at the Alice Springs Telegraph Station. Barb will forward invitation to members.
- Exchange of emails with John Tyne re Rainbow Lorikeets survey.
- Birdlife Australia - appeal

**Past Trips**

- Tilmouth Well/Lake Lewis postponed again due to rain.
- Owen Springs Reserve day trip – wonderful wildflower display. Senior Ranger, Sheridan Martin, accompanied us and talked about some of the Ranger duties, the old homestead, weed control and fire management.

**Future Activities/Trips**

- Sat 15 October – walk from Standley Chasm to Reveal Saddle cancelled due to hot weather. It was decided to go for a stroll in Spencer Valley meeting at Gosse Street playground at 8:30 am. Leader Neil Woolcock.
- Sun 23 October – travel along Ross Highway to Ross River Resort stopping along the way to look at wildflowers. Morning tea or lunch at Ross River Resort depending on arrival time.
- Sat 29 October – follow mountain bike tracks in Telegraph Station. Leader Rosalie Breen

**Next meeting:**

Wed 9 November 2016.

Speakers: Jenny Purdie and Steve Sinclair on their latest trip to Africa.

Scribe: Lee Ryall. Supper: Jill Brew.

**Sightings**

- Helen Miller – *Keraudrinia* sp along Tanami Highway
- Neil Woolcock – *Goodenia ramelii* flowering on top of Mt Gillen
- Neil also spotted a Western Brown snake.

**Meeting finished** 8.40pm