



March 2017

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Newsletter



*Wonderful reflections in this photo taken at Ormiston Gorge by Anne Pye.
We had to have a watery cover photo after our wet Summer.*

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 April 2017.
The deadline for the next newsletter will be 23 March 2017.
Please send your contributions to Barb Gilfedder: bjfedders@gmail.com

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

- Saturday 25 Feb** **ASFNC Walk through Coolibah Swamp with Jude Prichard**, who with others, has for several years been removing Buffel grass and other weeds and doing other Landcare work in the swamp. See what plants are coming back now and the Landcare methods Jude is using. Meet near East Side Club at 7.00am. Leader: Meg Mooney. Email: moon3@iinet.net.au
- Thursday 2 March** **ASFNC Spider hunt with Robbie Henderson**. Meet at Olive Pink Botanic Garden at 7.00pm. Session finishes at 9.00pm. Wear closed shoes and bring a head torch. Leader Meg Mooney. Email: moon3@iinet.net.au
- Wednesday 15 March** **ASFNC GENERAL MEETING** at the Lecture Theatre in Higher Education Building at CDU at 7.00pm. Speaker: **Dr. Margaret Friedel** "Where did they come from and how did they get here? Examining the evidence for some familiar weeds of arid central Australia". (This was postponed from the February meeting and also the date changed due to CDU lecture theatre upgrades.)
- Sunday 19 March** **Slot Gorges walk** –meet at 730am at the information bay opposite the Old Timers. Contact Colleen O'Malley on 0420719778 if you want to car pool or want a seat in a vehicle. The trip (around 3-4 hours duration including travel) can cater for different abilities including those who would rather potter on the flatter ground and those that might want venture up into the slot gorges themselves (requires basic rock scrambling ability). Note the trip will be postponed if the temperature is forecast to be 38 degrees or higher.
- Wednesday 13 April** **Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club GENERAL MEETING** at the Lecture Theatre in Higher Education Building at CDU at 7.00pm. Speaker - **Ben Kaethner** "Fire management on Aboriginal lands in Central Australia."

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY ALICE SPRINGS

Contact: apsalicesprings@yahoo.com.au

Wednesday 1 March

APS AS Meeting at Olive Pink Botanic at 7.30pm. AGM
Speaker: Jennifer Noble on her trip across the Simpson Desert.

Wednesday 6 April

APS AS Meeting at Olive Pink Botanic at 7.30pm.
Speaker: Leon Jones "The flora of Gulf Savannah"

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	



Embroidered badges are available from Hip Pocket Workwear

Hip Pocket in Railway Terrace has a large range of shirts, hats, etc.
Prices for embroidery pocket size on items bought from the store are:-
1 to 3 items - minimum charge \$33.
4 or more items \$8.80 each. (4 x \$8.80 is \$35.20)
Badges would be \$12 each, with Minimum charge \$33
Embroidery on your own items of clothing would cost a bit more.

These prices indicate a need to cooperate with each other to get several items embroidered at one time.

Members' Night February 2017

It was decided to hold a Members' night at the February meeting, as the University thought that the lecture theatre would be unavailable. However at the last minute they decided that we could use it – but plans had already been changed. It meant the photos brought by Colleen O'Malley, Rhondda Tomlinson, Anne Pye and Barb Gilfedder were seen at their best. Many thanks to these Members who took the time to find interesting photos! It certainly made an entertaining evening.

Colleen O'Malley - Noticing the sometimes overlooked

Those of you that didn't race out of town to escape the heat this Summer will have delighted in the many rainy overcast (and relatively cool) days we had over December and January.

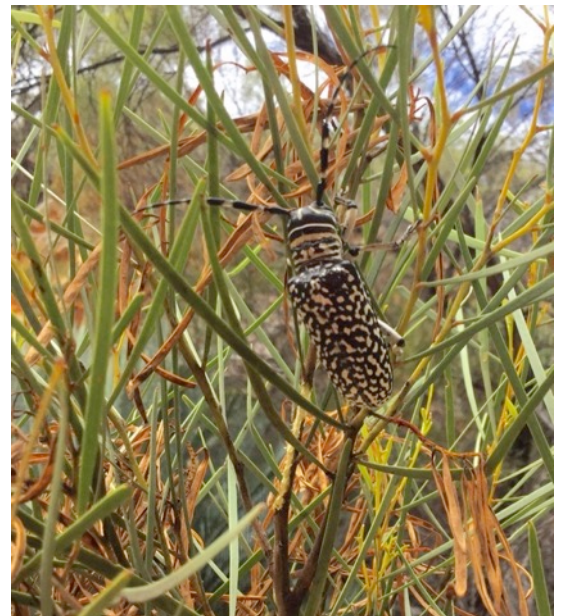
After each deluge I usually managed to get out into it - to bodysurf rapids (Hugh River), watch frothy icebergs come down with the first floodwaters (Roe Creek), do extended walks through flowing creeks with spa-sized waterholes (Jay Creek tributary and Chain of Ponds walk) or ramble along range tops on misty days (Mt Gillen to Honeymoon Gap). On each of these trips I was delighted by odd and unusual insects that were out and about and by the variety of shades, textures and shapes sported by the burgeoning plant life.

These images capture a few of those things that we tend to overlook or which only come to life after big rain events.



Left: One of the many lichens seen after recent rainfall. This is one of the leprose group of lichens that grow on vertical surfaces. Lichens are their own wee ecosystem comprising both algae and fungi that live together symbiotically – one provides energy through photosynthesis (algae) while the fungi consumes the energy and produces the form we see, particularly in the more subdued light after rains.

Right: One of the many spectacular insects that emerged after the rains and started devouring various plants. This is a longhorn or Cerambycidae beetle that bores into living plant tissue. Some species can be serious agroforestry pests, but this beauty was merely munching through tips of *Acacia macdonnellensis*. Check out the Cerambycidae gallery at <http://www.ento.csiro.au/biology/cerambycidae/cerambycidae.html#>



Below: A bit of a bee's eye view of the private parts of two different *Hibiscus sturtii* varieties– compare the five stigma (pink blobs on top – the female part that receives the pollen) and the lines of anthers (pollen receptacles) on the left-hand image with the arrangement in the right-hand flower. More obvious differences also exist in the petals, leaves and form of the two plants. The taxonomy of this species is currently being revised.





Rhondda Tomlinson – Port Hedland reef walks

November 2016, I visited my friend Doris Köehler-Teüfel in Port Hedland. Doris for the last 10 years has been conducting reef walks and transect surveys in the area. I was lucky enough to be able to go on 3 reef walks with her and some local people as well as one private walk with a scientist that was passing through on holidays.

Some of the most interesting characters that I saw were:

Hairy shore crabs (family pilumnidae) [two pictured below](#)

- they can usually be distinguished by having numerous long hairs on the carapace and legs.
(They were quite abundant but difficult to see because they are so well camouflaged)



Feather stars (Class Crinoidea)

[\(one pictured below and two on top of the next page\)](#)

- they have long branched arms with a regular arrangement of small side appendages, producing a feather-like effect.
- on the under surface of the body is a ring of slender, jointed, calcareous appendages known as "cirri", which are used for locomotion and to allow the animal to anchor to the substrate.
- they feed by trapping small planktonic organisms using modified tube feet that lack suckers.





Giant Clam (family Tridacnidae)
(pictured right)

- they are tropical, shallow water bivalves.
- they have fleshy, brightly coloured mantles in which are embedded symbiotic, photo-synthesising algae (zooxanthellae).
- there are also simple eyes in the mantle lobes.
- adult giant clams live a sessile existence on the sea floor in shallow water where there is ample light for the zooxanthellae.
- there are six species in Australian waters and they are all completely protected.



***Tritoniopsis elegans* – White Lace Elegant Nudibranch.** (Pictured below)

On the internet, there are many complaints about the Nudibranch eating and killing corals in home aquariums. (They may be beautiful but!!!!).

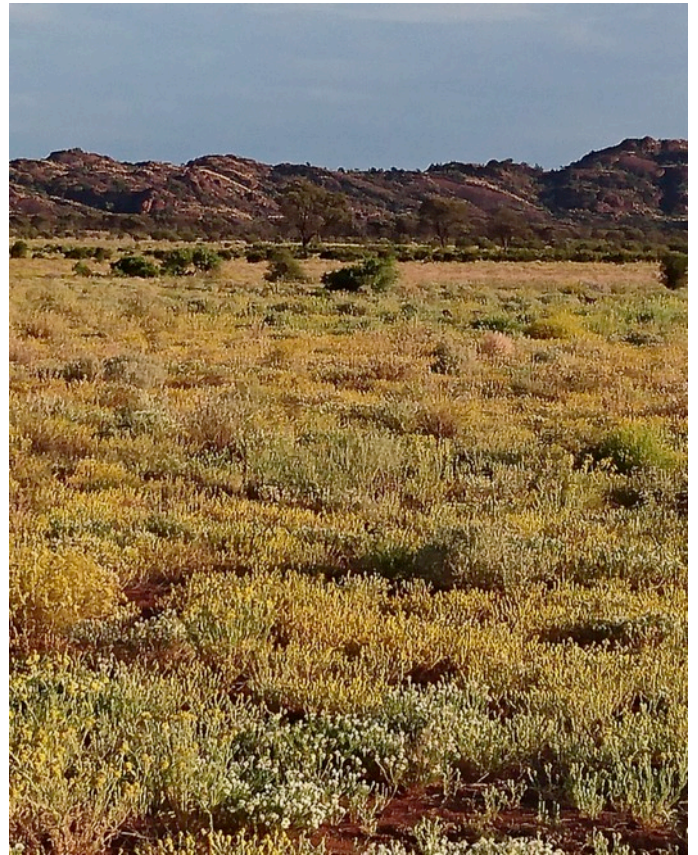
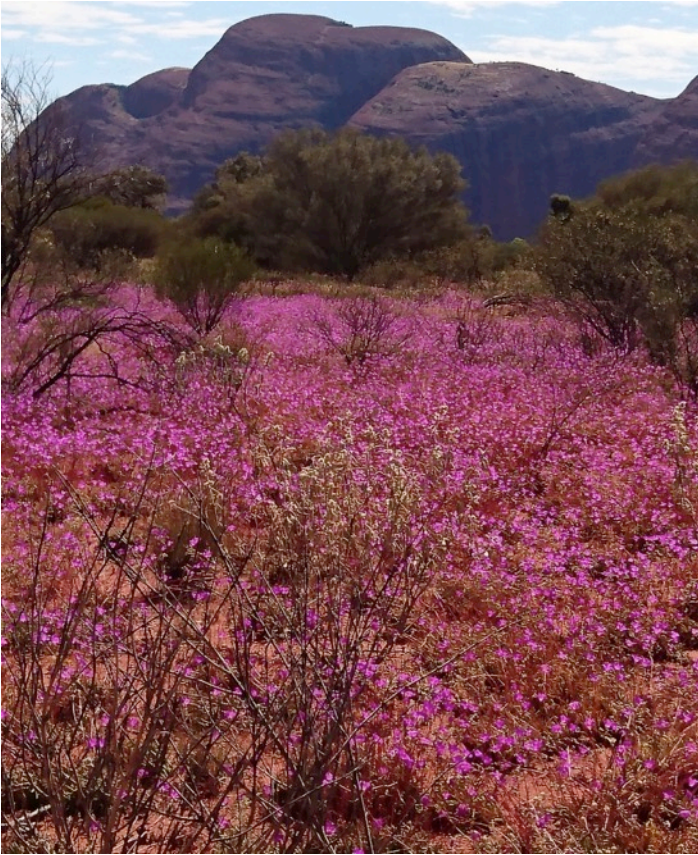


Order Nudibranchia

- some are among the most brightly coloured of marine animals, others are well camouflaged.
- the name “nudibranch” derives from the naked gills which are usually arranged in a cluster on the back of the animal.
- Some families have lost these gills and developed secondary gills.
- they are the largest group of opisthobranchs and are found in a variety of shapes and sizes ranging from a few mm to 30 cm.
- the greatest diversity is found in the tropics.
- they do not have a shell, except in their larval stage.
- their life cycle is short, one year or often much less.
- they are carnivorous.

Information from Doris Köehler-Teüfel

Anne Pye - Wonderful central Australian views



Anne showed us some great photos taken recently. Here are three of her favourites:-
Parakeelya near Kata Tjuta, yellow wildflowers near Duffield Rocks and Nature's own garden.





Barb and Jim Gilfedder went out to Rainbow Valley on Christmas Eve. Strangely Rainbow Valley itself was quite dry, although the *Tecticornia verrucosa* in the claypan was looking very healthy. (left)



There was plenty of evidence that there had been good rain, on the roadsides on the approach road. *Newcastelia spodiotricha* pictured on the right; and below *Crotalaria novae-hollandiae*, *Cullen patens* and *Brunonia australis*.



But the best was finding *Eremophila prostrata* flowering. This is one of the smallest and rarest Eremophilas.



Lepidoptera at the Intertexta Forest

Barb Gilfedder

The Intertexta Forest was more of a jungle than ever on Saturday 11 February. The undergrowth was thick, the vines were treacherous, the creek still had water and the shade was dense in places. Thirty people fought their way in, with Connie in the lead, on this APS AS trip.

One of the first exciting things I found was a beautiful, very spotted caterpillar munching happily on a long-leaved Emu-bush, *Eremophila longifolia*.

Fiona Walsh brought it into context. She hadn't seen it before but knew of its existence, being one of the four sacred Yeperenye Hawk Moth caterpillars. She called it the Emu-bush caterpillar, and interestingly its scientific name is *Coenotes eremophila*. See Fiona's story about them at:-

<http://www.alicespringsnews.com.au/2017/01/17/caterpillars-as-big-as-a-mountain-are-starving/>

I asked Don Herbison-Evans at Coffs Harbour, Lepidoptera Butterfly House about it and sent him some photos. He put one of my photos on his excellent website and commented that the caterpillar was an interesting colour variant.

<http://lepidoptera.butterflyhouse.com.au/sphi/eremoph.html>

The Hawk Moths, which like many moths fly at night, are all in the sphingidae family. This means sphinx-like referring to the way the caterpillars raise the front of their bodies away from the leaf or stem, when they feel threatened.



The air was alive with White Caper butterflies, *Belenois java*. They love the Wild Passionfruit bushes, *Capparis spinosa* subsp. *nummalaria*. I'm sure I could hear the caterpillars munching, while some butterflies were just emerged from their chrysalids and pumping up their wings to full size, [right](#), while older ones were flying, mating or searching for the yummiest, safest leaves to lay their eggs on. Strange that some of the Caper Bushes were completely stripped bare by the caterpillars, while others were hardly touched. I am confident that even the ones that look completely dead now, will regrow, often from the base.



Other butterflies we saw were the Small Grass Yellow, *Eurema smilax*, these seem to flutter very fast and seem to rarely land: Common Grass-blue, *Zizina labradus*, [pictured below](#): the beautiful velvety black Common Eggfly, *Hypolimnas bolina*; the Chequered Swallowtail, *Papilio demoleus*; and the Lesser Wanderer, *Danaus chrysippus*.

On the way out, after many fun discussions and discoveries, the day was heating up, someone noticed this tiny pink pupa, [left](#), hanging from a Silkyhead Grass, *Cymbopogon obtectus*, flower. Its ring of gold spots caught the sunlight. With later research, I found it was the pupa of the Lesser Wanderer.





ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INCORPORATED
Minutes of the planning meeting held at OPBG –
Sunday 12 February 2017 at 2:00pm

Present: Barbara Gilfedder, Doug McDougall, Pauline Walsh, Rosalie Breen, Connie Spencer, Rhondda Tomlinson, Lee Ryall, Robyn Grey-Gardiner, Meg Mooney, Colleen O'Malley, Wendy and Ian Mann

Apologies: Neil Woolcock, Pam Keil

Minutes of previous meeting (September 2016) were read and accepted by members.

Business arising from the minutes

- Thank you cards – At present Pamela Keil is printing additional thank you cards., which Rosalie Breen agreed to continue sending out to speakers ectc
- Lee Ryall agreed to print out the 3 print versions of the newsletter required for Members without internet access, and Doug McDougall will continue to print and display the newsletter at OPBG.
- Advertising – there was some discussion about how to promote upcoming meetings and events and whether to continue listing these in the ASTC Community Calendar. Advertising through Facebook attracted large numbers of non-members to the recent APS AS Intertexta walk Connie ran and so the meeting decided it might be useful to have a Facebook page for the group where all meetings were advertised and general information about upcoming trips was provided, but no details about logistics so that interested people needed to contact the trip leader so that numbers could be managed. Colleen offered to set up a Facebook page and post information about meetings and trips and other posts about interesting sightings. Colleen will discuss this with Pam to get her insights from helping to manage the Birdlife Facebook page.

Colleen will also list meetings on the ASTC Community Calendar.

- Constitution - Barb previously sent out copies of the 2003 document to the committee members, asking for help to coordinate the changes needed to make the group compliant with new legislation. Lee Ryall will work with Rhondda to update the document to meet the new requirements and they will then circulate a draft for comment. There will be no substantive changes to the vision etc, but the meeting agreed to change the section relating to the number of signatories required for transactions to two people, given the ease with which it is now possible to do banking transactions on line with signatories logging in separately.
- Embroidered Badges and clothing – Rosalie reported that the group's embroidered logo was now available from Hip Pocket. Rosalie to check on pricing. It was expected that it would be cheaper to try to do orders in bulk, and that this was something the Facebook page could be used to let others know when an order was going to be placed.
(See page 2 of March newsletter)

Any Other Business

- Parks and Wildlife market at OTS 23 April 9.30 -1.00 – the meeting agreed that the group would have a similar shared stall with APS like last year.

The rest of the meeting was spent organizing the talks, trips and activities program for 2017.

Meeting finished: 3.45pm

Minutes written by Colleen O'Malley – Many thanks, Barb.



ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INCORPORATED
Minutes of the general meeting held at the Higher Education Building
Charles Darwin University – Wednesday 8 February 2017 at 8.20pm

Meeting following members' night presentations by Colleen O'Malley, Rhondda Tomlinson, Anne Pye, and Barb Gilfedder. Thank you to Wendy and Ian Mann for supper.

Present: 16 Members and 1 Visitor as per attendance book. (Visitor joined as a member at the end of the evening.)

Apologies: 5 Members and one intending member.

Minutes of November 2016 meeting were on back of February 2017 newsletter – accepted by meeting.

Treasurer's Report.

Balance of all funds end of October	\$ 3441.27
<u>Income received</u>	
Membership	\$ 105.00
Bank interest	\$ 0.78
<u>Withdrawals</u>	
Christmas Breakfast at Standley Chasm	\$ 150.00
(Petty cash balance end December \$19.65)	
Total of all funds end December	\$ 3397.05

Correspondence in/out

- CDU – booking lecture theatre for monthly meetings 2017
- Correspondence with Austcover for replacement Certificate of Currency because CDU wanted it, and we couldn't find current one – all sorted now.
- CDU – various emails and visits re availability of lecture theatre for February meeting.
- Marg Friedel re suitability of alternative classroom and postponement of her presentation.
- Complimentary email from Ray Prunty re newsletter and Standley Chasm event.
- Interest in club from Kay Kessing and Johannes Ammerschlaeger

General Business

- Susan Krauss from Ballarat Field Nats looking for information on other field naturalists clubs, Barb to send link to newsletters and see if Bob Read is interested in contacting her with more information.
- Pam to deliver 10 cards to Rosalie Breen to be used as thank you notes through the year. Three delivered so far.
- Sewage ponds: restricted access to some areas due to extensive road works. Obey all signage if attending.
(Sewage Ponds now closed due to heavy machinery in the area. Hopefully reopen end of April.)

Past Trips

- Sat 12 Nov – Simpsons Gap evening BBQ and spotlighting with Pam Keil.
- Sat 19/Sun 20 Nov End-of-year at Standley Chasm - Choose your own adventure including club subsidized brunch.
- Sun 4 Dec - Bird Survey at sewage ponds Birdlife and ASFNC combined.

Future Activities/Trips

- Planning Meeting Sunday 12 February 2.00pm OPBG.

Next meeting Wed 8 March 2017 (Now 15 March) – Speaker: **Margaret Friedel** – "Where did they come from and how did they get here? Examining the evidence for some familiar weeds of arid central Australia"

Scribe: Rosalie Breen **Supper:** Margaret Lawrence

Sightings

- Rainbow Bee-eaters in flocks along side the roads (on the ground) – Colleen
- Crows mobbing juvenile White-faced Herons in East side
- Lots of insects and fungi around at the moment.

Meeting finished 8.55pm.

Minutes written by Pam Keil, Secretary. Thank you.