



July 2020

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Newsletter



Johannes Ammerschlaeger found this beautiful *Acacia spondylophylla*, Curry Wattle, flowering profusely above John Hayes Rockhole. More photos of his trip on page 2 and 3.

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM. They are usually held at the Olive Pink Botanic Garden Visitors Centre. However the **July presentation will be at the theatre at Alice Springs Desert Park**. See page 2.

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CONTENTS

Meetings, Trips/Activities, Contacts...p2;
Photos from John Hayes Rockhole...p2;
Radios and first aid kit...p4; More Tasmanian fungi photos...p5;
Wedge-tailed Eagle...p6; Standley Chasm revisited...p7
Not the big 5 –part 3...p8; Treasurer's May report...p10;
Lycaenidae caterpillar...p10.

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NEWSLETTER

The next newsletter will be August 2020

The deadline for the August newsletter will be 23rd July.

Please send your contributions to Barb Gilfedder: bjfedders@gmail.com

ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Presentation – Wednesday 8 July, 7.00pm.



Carly Humphrys of Alice Springs Desert Park will be presenting a talk on:

Handraising a puggle; the challenges and the learning curve.

Kystra Simms will be assisting.

VENUE: Alice Springs Desert Park theatre. This is to allow some social distancing, so please space yourselves out in the theatre.

There will be no drinks or refreshments, so bring your own water if necessary.

There will be no General Meeting on this night. Visitors welcome at a distance.

Many thanks to Alice Springs Desert Park for allowing us to use this excellent venue!

We do not yet have any other activities or trips on the calendar. If any member is keen to organize a walk, drive or talk, please let Barb Gilfedder know. We are hoping the AGM can go ahead in August and will confirm by email.

PHOTOS from JOHN HAYES ROCKHOLE

Recently Johannes Ammerschlaeger visited John Hayes Rockhole. It is 85 km East of Alice Springs near Trepkina Gorge. The road in is a 4 wheel drive track so he had to walk the last four kilometres there and back, which he said was not very exciting. However the gorge itself was stunning. There were lots of Zebra Finches who always gather near any water, especially when everywhere is currently so dry. Climbing up to the lookout he found a couple of plants flowering and took some superb photos. Below is the main rockhole. There are several other good walks in the area, including a four hour trek to Trepkina Gorge.

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club **Committee Members**

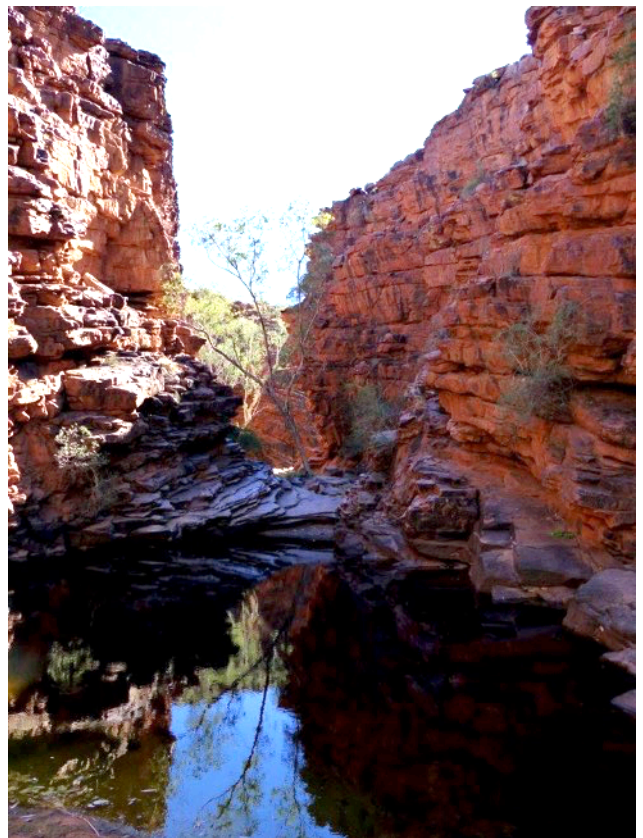
President	Barb Gilfedder	8955 5452
Vice-President	Lee Ryall	0417 401 237
Secretary	Kimberley Morgan	0402 527 195
Treasurer	Neil Woolcock	0428 521 598
Property Officer	Rosalie Breen	8952 3409
Public Officer	Anne Pye	0438 388 012

Committee Members:

Anne Pye	0438 388 012
Margaret Friedel	0417 849 743

Other Club Responsibilities:

Newsletter – Barb Gilfedder	bjfedders@gmail.com
Facebook Organiser – Meg Mooney	moon3@iinet.net.au
Website - Robyn Grey-Gardner	8952 2207





Zebra Finches often gather in quite large groups near water.



This brave *Senna glutinosa* is producing masses of shiny leaves and golden flowers in spite of a blackened fire-damaged trunk.



The view from the lookout.



A Caper White butterfly feeding at a Cattlebush flower, *Tricodesma zeylandicum*.



The *Acacia spondylophylla* makes a low, neat bush.



Rings of Spinifex stand out against the red ground.



A panoramic view of the Chain of Ponds Walk.

Thanks for all Johannes!

Alice Springs Town Council 2020 Community Grants UHF CB radios and first aid kit Neil Woolcock

In 2019 the Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club investigated the possibility of submitting an application to the Alice Springs Town Council for a community grant to purchase UHF radios. Unfortunately we didn't complete our application before the cut-off date, but our chance came again in 2020.

This time we did get it in on time. Our application was for 2 twin packs of GME UHF CB radios (4 radios in total) from Central Comms for \$1078, plus a first aid kit from St. John Ambulance for \$77 - a total of \$1055.



The application was written by Neil Woolcock, Barb Gilfedder and Marg Friedel and was submitted in time to meet the 24th February cut-off date, and was successful.

Justification

Improving the safety of club members and guests on field trips was the justification given for our application. The club has had hand held radios in the past but these were not very effective. The club also had a first aid kit, but this had become largely out of date and obsolete.

Radios

The new radios are more powerful than the old ones and work quite well when used inside a vehicle, so whenever field trip participants are travelling in a vehicle convoy, communication will be possible over several kilometres. It is anticipated that the main use for the radios when in vehicles would be when the group is travelling down tracks or off road, where vehicles would normally not be separated by more than about 500m.

There are 4 radios so these can be split up between the vehicles in the convoy, with one in the lead vehicle and one in the last vehicle. Each radio can be fitted with a microphone for convenience. The radios can be charged using the cigarette lighter coupling.

Take them with you when you go for a walk.

The radios will also improve safety when some participants elect to separate from the main party and go for a short bushwalk.

First aid kit

The first aid kit will be taken in the activity leader's vehicle on every field trip.

Responsibility of activity leaders

Activity leaders should familiarise themselves with the operation (and limitations) of the radios, and of the contents of the first aid kit.

On most activities it would be likely that someone would have a current first aid certificate.

This should be ascertained at the start of the activity, and that person be put in charge of the kit.

Training workshop

The club stated in our application that we would hold a workshop to provide training in the operation of the radios, and to provide awareness of the contents of the first aid kit.

We will advise a date for this workshop.

Thank you Neil. We used the radios on the Roma Gorge trip, which meant each of the six vehicles had contact with the others (two vehicles had their own installed radios). They certainly worked well when we were fairly close driving along the river bed.

Also thank you to the Alice Springs Town Council. I'm sure they will be great assets to our club. Barb

More Fungi photos from Rhondda Tomlinson in Tasmania

This time from Gowrie Park, O'Neils Creek about 14 km from Sheffield going towards Cradle Mountain. Due to lock down I missed the early and probably the best part of these fungi but still many amazing colours and forms. I didn't attempt to name them as it is so confusing.

I was messing around with trying to take photos with a mirror to see the underside. Some worked and some were impossible.

Cheers Rhondda





Wedge-tailed Eagle not welcomed to town

Johannes Ammerschlaeger

One morning in early June I made an interesting observation at my place, which is the former Hotel Alice in the Territory (near the Convention Centre). Living right at the edge of town with no other buildings between me and Mount Johns, there are always birds around, but that day was the first time I that I saw a Wedge-tailed Eagle so close to town. Recently I have seen many Wedgies along Colonel Rose Drive on my way to work, so maybe the bird flew across from there for a visit.

He (or she) was sitting in a gum tree and caused a bit of excitement among other birds. There were several Whistling Kites - they always hang around my place on their preferred stump - then a Crow joined in, and eventually a Magpie. All of them were circling and dive-bombing the Wedgie, but he seemed fairly unimpressed by all the commotion.

I don't know how the story ended, because I had to go to work, but when I came back in the afternoon he was gone and I haven't seen him since.



A long stroll into the Chasm - Barb Gilfedder

For most people, to walk from the café at Standley Chasm to the chasm itself doesn't take very long at all. The path is smooth, flat and firm as it follows the narrow creek bed past the spring. However if you are wandering with Connie, Rosalie and Barb, this little walk there and back can take two hours or more. There are so many plants to look at and discuss at length. The *Indigoferas* are currently flowering and the large bushy one, *Indigofera basedowii*, is looking stunning. *Indigofera helmsii* is there too (pictured right). The flower spikes are smaller and the leaves are greener and more spaced out than those on its bigger cousin.



We have been watching the shoots on the beautiful arching Red River Gum (left), since they first started shooting after the main trunk, which partially collapsed during the January 2019 fires. The tree fell over the path at just the right height to walk under. The shoots came from epicormic buds, which lie dormant beneath the bark. Their growth is normally suppressed by hormones from active shoots higher up the plant. They develop into shoots when damage occurs to higher parts of the plant.

Last year, the manager Nova Pomare, got the correctional services people to remove much of the invasive grass, *Paspalum conjugatum* from around the spring area, and many native plants took advantage of the space and are growing well in the damp conditions. The grass is returning, as it will, but she will book these excellent weeders for another working visit soon.

In 2018, when the Field Naturalists visited Roma Gorge, I was introduced to a small groundcover, *Ptilotus decipiens*. Once you know a plant's name it seems to appear everywhere. It is superficially similar to the introduced Khaki Weed, *Alternanthera pungens*. We saw both at Standley Chasm (See photos below) The *Ptilotus* on the left and the *Alternanthera* on the right. To tell the difference, you only need to stroke them, this *Ptilotus* being soft and the *Alternanthera* very spiky.



After our long stroll, we enjoyed tasty snacks at the refurbished café. What a difference Nova and her team have made to this place, taking full advantage of the Covid19 closed period. The floor has been replaced and is now smooth and the steps greatly improved and safer. They are also extending the eating area, putting the roof on it while we were there. I know it is being deservedly, well-patronised by the locals, especially at weekends.

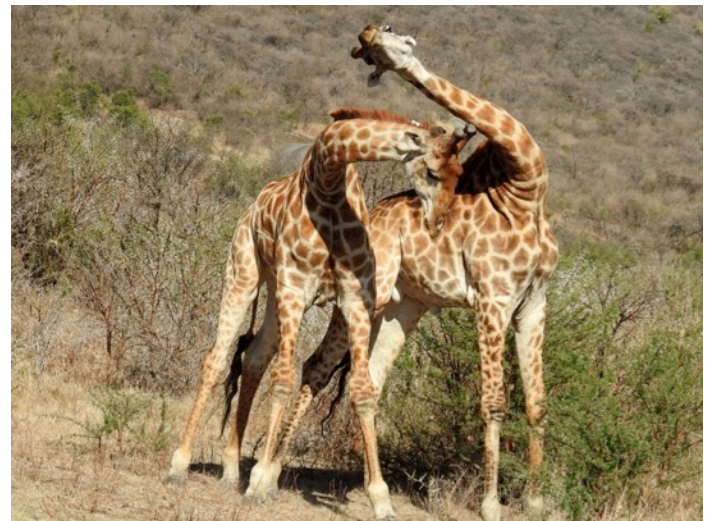
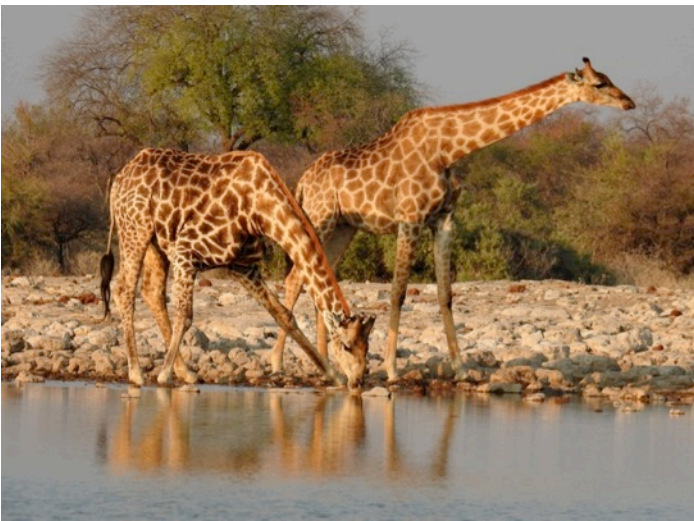
NOT “THE BIG FIVE” African Animals by Jenny Purdie ... Part 3

The “Big Five” animals (Lion, Leopard, Black Rhinoceros, Elephant and African Buffalo) are certainly wonderful to see and watch however there are many lesser known species that are also fascinating.

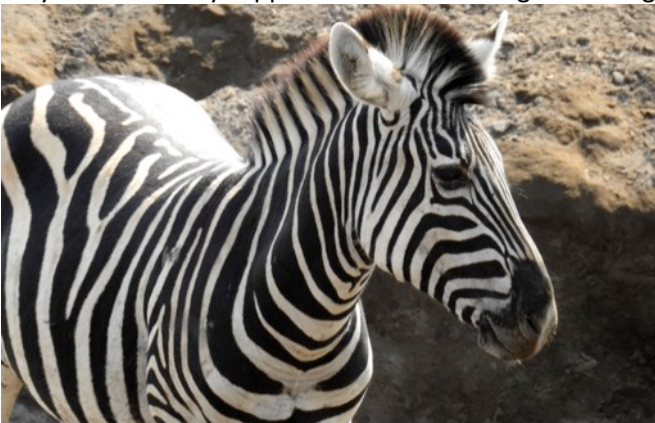
GIRAFFES: There are 9 subspecies of Giraffe; the Thornicroft Giraffe is endemic to the South Luangwa Valley in Zambia; the Angolan Giraffe occurs in Namibia and the Southern Giraffe in South Africa. Giraffe have skin-covered horns with a tuft of dark hair but the males rub the hair off while necking – fighting by bashing their necks together. Male giraffes darken with age.



From the top: Headshot of female Southern Giraffe chewing a bone; the Thornicroft Giraffe; Angolan Giraffe at the water; male Southern Giraffes necking.
Below: Two Plains Zebra, the one on the right with shadow stripes.



ZEBRA Three species of zebra exist with the Plains - Burchells Zebra being the most common and with 6 subspecies. Some zebras have a brown shadow stripe in the middle of the white stripe while others have black and white stripes only. Zebras always appear fat due to their gaseous digestive process and when sick their manes flop.



RHINO The White Rhino ([below left](#)) gets its name from the Afrikaans word “whyte” (wide), a reference to the broad mouth these grazers have; the Black Rhino, which is a browser with a prehensile upper lip, became the Black Rhino but in fact both species are grey in colour. The White Rhino is the larger species, is gregarious and quite docile unlike its smaller, solitary, short-tempered cousin. Several times I have been on foot (with a guide) and within 6 metres of White Rhino and have virtually been ignored by them, but I would be very nervous to be that close to a Black Rhino.

HIPPO ([right](#)) Hippos walk on the bottom of rivers and waterholes rather than swim and can stay submerged for 5-6 minutes; females give birth underwater and calves suckle underwater. During cool weather Hippos will bask in the sun; they have very sensitive skin, which dehydrates easily and if exposed to excessive heat their skin produces a red fluid from mucous glands on the skin which acts as a sunscreen. Hippos leave the water at night to forage but seldom stray more than 2kms from the water. Hippos are pseudo-ruminants having 3 stomachs with foregut fermentation; they do not chew the cud.



WARTHOG ([below left](#)) Warthogs get their name from their facial warts made up of thick skin and cartilage; females have a single pair just below their eyes while males have an extra pair just above their tusks. When they run from danger they hold their tails in the air like an aerial. They take up residence in burrows made by other animals, modifying them to suit. They enter their burrows in reverse so that their tusks are facing any potential danger.

BABOONS AND MONKEYS Chacma Baboons ([middle](#)) live in troops with a social structure. They are omnivorous, though most of their diet consists of plant material; they will however hunt small mammals and birds. Vervet Monkeys ([right](#)) also occur in troops with a strict social structure and are herbivores. Both Baboons and Monkeys sleep in trees at night.



ROCK HYRAX

Rock Hyraxes, ([left](#)) also known as Dassies, are the Elephant’s closest living relatives. Physical traits they have in common include tusks that grow from incisor teeth (most mammals with tusks develop them from canine teeth), flattened nails on the tips of their digits and several similarities in their reproductive organs.

RABBITS I still can’t get excited when I see a Hare or Rabbit in Africa; one species of Rabbit (Riverine) is critically endangered - hard to believe!

PORCUPINE African Porcupines weigh up to 30kg and are twice the length of an Echidna; they rattle their quills when alarmed and you often come across discarded quills.

SQUIRREL I have to admit I was surprised when I saw my first African Squirrel, as I only associated them with North America and Europe; there are two Squirrel species in southern Africa – the Ground Squirrel ([left](#)) and the Tree Squirrel ([right](#)).



FUR SEALS Cape Fur Seals occur on the Namibia coast and are actually a species of sea lion. The male seals, weighing up to 360kg, have a harem of 5-25 much smaller females. Young seals are born in November/December and are hunted by jackals and hyenas while the females go back to the sea to feed. *Thanks Jenny, an interesting collection!*

ASFNC Treasurer’s Report for May 2020

Balance of all funds (inc. petty cash) end of April **\$2,034.18**

Activity in May

Income received

Membership	\$20.00
Council 2020 Community Assistance Grant	\$1,155.00
Bank interest	\$0.15

Expenses

St. John Ambulance first aid kit	\$77.00
UHF radios from Central Comms	\$1,078.00

[Petty cash

Petty cash opening balance \$21.85 Expenses Nil
 Petty cash balance end May \$21.85]

Total of all funds (inc. petty cash) end May **\$2,054.33**

Lycaenidae Caterpillar

I found this tiny caterpillar (about 5mm long) munching flowers on my *Acacia ramulosa* shrub. I researched as well as I could and thought it might be the larva of the Two-spotted Line Blue Butterfly, *Nacuduba biocellata* which we commonly see fluttering under Acacia trees in our garden.

The expert I sometimes refer to, Don Herbison-Evans said *“I agree it is Lycaenidae, and I can tell you a lot of species it isn’t, but there are several that it could be, including of course, Nacuduba biocellata. I think the only way to get a convincing determination of the species will be to rear it in captivity, and see what the adult looks like.”* Don also sent notes on how to do that.



By this time of course, it had vanished. I hope he fell in the mulch and pupated but maybe a bird took him for a tiny snack.

Barb Gilfedder

