



September 2020

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Newsletter



Ormiston Pound from the air. A few of our Members were lucky to go on a flight over the west Macdonnell Ranges as part of Seniors' Week. The loop around Ormiston Pound was a highlight. Ranger's residence at bottom centre. Mount Giles at top centre - Barb Gilfedder

Meetings are usually held on the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00pm at the Olive Pink Botanic Garden Visitors Centre. **There will no September 2020 meeting, although there is a lecture just for the Field Naturalists at Megafauna Central on Saturday 12 September – see page 2.**

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NEWSLETTER

The next newsletter will be October 2020

The deadline for the October newsletter will be 23rd September.

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

ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Saturday 12 September 2.00pm. Join Dr Adam Yates, MAGNT Senior Curator of Earth Sciences, for a special talk for Field Naturalists at Megafauna Central in Todd Street. He will discuss the Larapintine Sea and Australia's oldest 'Megafauna'. Dr Yates will talk about fossils of marine animals from the Ordovician period, approximately 450 million years ago when a warm shallow sea stretched across southern NT. You will get the chance to see fossils from this period, including recent donations from citizen scientists. One is a completely new kind of arthropod, a group of animals that includes insects and crustaceans. This fossil is unique and fills a big gap in the world's fossil record.

It is essential that you book your place as numbers are limited to 20. Email Lee Ryall ryall.lee8@gmail.com.

Saturday 19 September 8-00am. Short walk into Standley Chasm with Barb Gilfedder looking at the wonderful array of flowering plants along the way. They have regenerated since the devastating January 2019 bushfires. We can also weed out a few bits of Buffel Grass and Red Natal Grass so bring a plastic bag and maybe a small hand tool. If you still have energy left afterwards, Jill Brew will follow up with a short trek along the creek, at the beginning of Larapinta Trail Stage 4.

Weekend 26,27 September. Hale River Homestead. Wendy and Ian Mann are looking at leading an overnight camp here. To be confirmed.

Saturday 10 October, 9.00am, Olive Pink Botanic Garden. Planting Methods for Central Australian Native Plants by Ian Coleman . The Garden has planted 600 native plants this autumn using the Frank McEllister Planting Method. It involves using termites rather than worms to work the soil. The Garden will be opening up several deep planting holes to see if termites have been active and what the effects have been.

Saturday 28 November ASFNC end-of-year Breakfast at the Telegraph Station. Save the date!

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY - ALICE SPRINGS

apsalicesprings@yahoo.com.au

Wednesday 2 September 7.30pm - Meeting at Olive Pink Botanic Garden. Speaker - Hazel Davies. Hazel is in Alice Springs working on an education arts production centred around a proposal to raise the Desert Pea flower as a national floral emblem to make peace with our past. It promotes the concept of the Sturt Desert Pea sitting alongside the Poppy as our national remembrance flower.

Wednesday 7 October 7.30pm - Meeting at Olive Pink Botanic Garden. Speaker – Peter Jobson "Dead Tree Project".

Birdlife Central Australia presents

A Bird Festival

Birds After Work – Friday 4 September

Alice Springs Sewage Ponds off Commonage Road.
5.00pm registration for 5.15 start. Cost \$5.00.
If possible bring binoculars and a Hi-Vis vest.

Birding for Beginners - Saturday 5 September

Alice Springs Telegraph Station Café at 7.00am.
Cost: a gold coin donation.
New to birding? Come along for a beginner's guide to bird watching and discover local common species of birds.

Language of Birds - Saturday 5 September

Simpsons Gap at shelter beside Ranger Station
Cost: a gold coin donation
Learn about the calls and songs of our local birds.

Everybody Welcome!

birdlifeca@gmail.com or call 0417 833057

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club

Committee Members

President	Barb Gilfedder	8955 5452
Vice-President	Margaret Friedel	0417 849 743
Secretary	Connie Spencer	0429 966 592
Treasurer	Neil Woolcock	0428 521 598
Property Officer	Rosalie Breen	8952 3409
Public Officer	Anne Pye	0438 388 012

Committee Member:

Lee Ryall 0417 401 237

Other Club Responsibilities:

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

Life Membership for Barb Gilfedder

Marg Friedel

At the ASFNC Annual General Meeting on 16th August, the Committee and Members granted Life Membership to our President, Barb Gilfedder, with much pleasure and sincere thanks. As the citation on the award says:

“Barb, you have been an integral part of the Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club for many years, serving as Treasurer for three, as President for the past eleven years and more recently producing stunning monthly newsletters.

“You have coordinated and led exciting trips to various locations in central Australia and organised a host of monthly speakers on varied and stimulating topics.

“Your generosity in sharing your time and extensive knowledge plus your attention to detail are inspirational.

“We sincerely appreciate and are truly grateful for all that you have done for our Club.”

Connie Spencer made the presentation on behalf of the many members present and it met with much acclaim. Bob Read and Rhondda Tomlinson sent their heartfelt congratulations from afar, and individual members also spoke warmly of Barb’s contributions.

Neil Woolcock organised a Life Member badge for Barb, Bec Duncum put the certificate together and printed it, Rosalie and Connie supplied the photos and Connie came up with the words. It was a wonderful team effort, willingly done, for our warmly regarded President and newest Life Member. Congratulations, Barb!



2002 -2020
Clockwise from top left:-
Partying with Rosalie Breen Lyndal White, Kevin Boyle, Leoni and Bob Read, Connie Spencer, Jim and Barb Gilfedder, Elsa Corbet, Pat Gallagher and Sue Fraser - Christmas 2002; bone examining at the museum workshop; caving with Connie Spencer; Bird-watching at the sewage ponds; Standley Chasm with Rosalie Breen and Jean Mack; Davenport Creeking with Jocelyn Davies, Rosalie Breen and Heather Jensen; sand hill negotiating at Henbury; Bush-walking on Bridle Path.



Thank you everyone, Barb





To the head of the Finke River

Above: Kimberley points the way – Neil Woolcock

Kimberley Morgan - On a bright sun-soaked morning, members joined the Larapinta Trail between the grainy sands of the Finke River and Mt Sonder lookout. Plenty of chatter ensued. A White-plumed Honeyeater flew. But 10 minutes later, we were delighted by the birds paddling, ducking, basking on the cool, gently rippling water in the breeze - Little Pied Cormorant, Eurasian Coot. Binoculars quickly passed between hands.

Below: Two-mile waterhole edged with Phragmites australis – Anne Pye



Onward through an overarching stone gateway opening to semi-arid, seemingly parched dry expanse of earth, casually cleared by fire, sparse vegetation. A Red-capped Robin darted between bushes while a Nankeen Kestrel and a Black Kite soared above, against Central Australian blue. A relief to see a colony of tall, closely packed, slight trees within the tapering boundary of the Davenport Creek - a different perspective of the strong, wide-trunked River Red. A lush habitat bordered by arid, flat land and the sandy, stony creek of Ormiston. Upstream divided by a raised lump of grass-covered land, the Davenport and Ormiston Creeks wait, yet to meet. We found a short stretch of water by which to have hot perhaps 'lukish' warm tea and coffee. Jan's home baked fruit loaf was a definite treat on the sands of the Ormiston. The party discussed the convergence of the two creeks and at what point the mighty Finke River claimed its head, down-stream.

Below: Unmistakable view of Mount Sonder – Anne Pye



Connie Spencer - The wondrous Mt Sonder, the serene Finke River and the morning birdsong took your mind off the devastation of drought and fire on the landscape. What was once a magnificent River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) now burnt-out lay prostrate on the ground along with the blacken remains of many other trees and shrubs and an almost complete lack of ground cover.

Despite all this, there were pockets of gems. Pointed Twinleaf (*Zygophyllum apiculatum*) was flourishing in a sheltered site at the base of a rocky ridge. Other bits of greenery were Boobialla (*Myoporum montanum*) and Mimosa Bush (*Vachellia farnesiana*) growing closer to the river.

Of most interest to me, flora wise, was coming across a limestone/dolomite outcrop with a host of plant species. The first to catch my attention was Limestone Pussycats Tails (*Ptilotus clementii*) with its distinctive nodding flowerheads. Most of our trekkers thought the nodding head was due to the plant being past its best but, not so, as this is a distinctive feature of this species. Hill Sunray (*Anemocarpa saxatilis*), a small, round, woody, woolly perennial herb with daisy-like flowers, also thrives in this type of rocky ground. The species name *saxatilis* is latin for rocky, alluding to where it is found. Two other *Ptilotus* – Smoke Bush (*Ptilotus obovatus*) and Crimson Foxtail (*Ptilotus sessilifolius*) were also noted in the area with the latter just off the rocky outcrop. Further along but still on limestone was Hill Umbrella Bush (*Acacia bivenosa*) – a usual suspect in limestone. The species name refers to the two veins in the phyllodes (leaf adaptation) although this is not always distinguishable. My determination of the species (there are similar species) is because of where it is growing. A little further along the track was Dolomite Fuchsia (*Eremophila christophori*) in flower – my favourite *Eremophila*. Why – because of the history I have with this species. It was one of the first locally collected *Eremophilas* that I propagated and planted in my garden in the very early 80's.



Eremophila christophori - Liz Moore

It was disappointing to see Couch Grass (*Cynodon repens*) rampant in parts of the Finke River and Davenport Creek. However, some native plants were managing to beat the odds and make their way through, such as, *Glycine canescens*, a trailing shrub with tiny pink pea flowers, the largest Pink Mulla Mulla (*Ptilotus exaltatus*) I have ever seen and the very aromatic Sticky Blue-rod (*Stemodia viscosa*). Ormiston Creek did not seem so affected by Couch Grass, at least, not where we crossed it.

All in all, a great walk. My thanks to Kimberley and fellow walkers.



Zygophyllum apiculatum – Neil Woolcock



Stemodia viscosa – Leigh Woolcock



Ptilotus clementii – Leigh Woolcock



Ptilotus exaltatus – Leigh Woolcock



Anemocarpa saxatilis – Leigh Woolcock



Caterpillar Name Correction

By Barb Gilfedder

You will have seen this top photo previously on the front of the April 2020 ASFNC newsletter.

Last week I had an interesting email from Dr Peter McQuillan of the University of Tasmania. He says...

“I was very interested to see the picture of a caterpillar found on *Boerhavia* as published in the April 2020 issue of the Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Newsletter.

It is unlikely to be the larva of *Phalaenoides tristifica* as this species is mainly confined to southern Australia and associated with willow-herbs (*Epilobium* species).

I strongly suspect that it is the larva of a related moth *Ipanica cornigera* (Family Noctuidae, subfamily Agaristinae).

As far as I know, this is the first time the foodplant of this species has been discovered. Certainly it is the first image I have seen of the larva feeding on any plant. *Ipanica* moths are reasonably widespread across central and northern Australia but not particularly common. Unlike most Agaristinae which are day-flying *Ipanica* seems to be largely nocturnal as most specimens in collections have been collected at lights.”



As Peter said the distribution maps of the two species have quite different patterns. You can look them up on the ‘Atlas of Living Australia’. There are several sightings from central Australia, including one by Adam Yates with this photo ([left](#)) in 2016. I have also included a photo, taken from the Coffs Harbour Butterfly House Website, courtesy of Natalie Davey of Broome, Western Australia, because it shows the underwing and abdomen colour.



Peter also commented on another photo in the April Newsletter article ([below](#)) ...

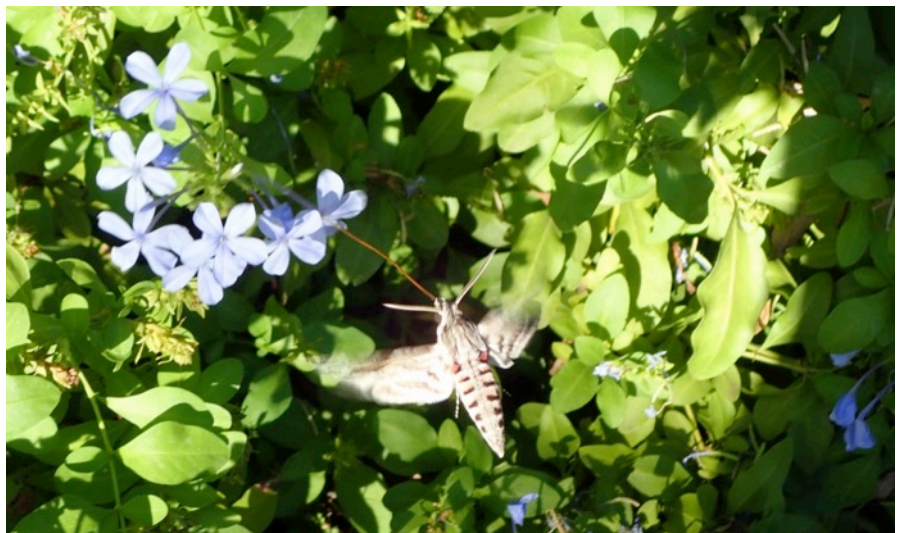
“The moth feeding on plumbago flowers is the Convolvulus Hawk Moth *Agrius convolvuli*, recognisable by the pink spots on the abdomen. Its larvae feed on sweet potato and *Convolvulus*.

Interestingly, there are very few observations of nectar feeding by adults of the Striped Hawk Moth, *Hyles livornicoides*. Given how abundant they can be, this seems rather curious. Flowers favoured by hawk moths are usually tubular shaped

with a narrow throat through which the moth inserts its extended proboscis. I am not sure how many Central Australian plants could be visited but a candidate might be *Nicotiana* species. Some hawk moth pollinated plants emit a fragrant odour at night.

Keep up the good work, there is much to be learned!”

Many thanks, Peter. That was interesting and very helpful. Barb



Time out trip to N'Dhala Gorge Nature Park

A few friends took the 70km trip out to N'Dhala Gorge a few days ago. The trip was mainly to see the *Commersonia magniflora*, previously called *Rulingia magniflora*, flowering. It was stunning and well worth the trip. The gorge was burnt a few years ago. There is lots of Buffel Grass, but lots of little native plants are hanging on in spite of it, as were a few young *Acacia undoolyana*.



Many bushes of *Acacia bivenosa* were displaying their golden flowers along the roadside on the trip out.



Tephrosia supina, one of the small native plants trying to grow through the Buffel Grass.



Euphorbia centralis, this tiny Euphorbia was surviving the Buffel by being right on the edge of the path into the gorge.



Ptilotus nobilis, made a beautiful candelabra display on a rocky area.



This beautifully shaped Mulga tree, was identified by Peter Jobson as *Acacia aneura* var. *major*.



The leaves of the *Acacia aneura* var. *major* are 18-53 mm long and 4.4-8 mm wide.



The *Commersonia magniflora* bushes were in a gully to the right of the main path opposite a cave.



The bushes, some up to 4m high, were covered in delicate pink flowers set off by the hairy grey-green leaves.



Leaving N'Dhala Gorge along the Binns Track, we saw several stands of *Acacia georginae* with *Ptilotus whitei* scattered beneath.



ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INCORPORATED
Minutes of the AGM held in the Gazebo
Olive Pink Botanic Garden – Wednesday 16 August 2020

Open: The President, Barb Gilfedder, welcomed members and declared the meeting open at 2:05 pm.

Present: 28 members and 2 apologies as per attendance book.

Minutes: The minutes of the previous AGM held Wednesday 14 August 2019 were accepted by the members.

President's Report: Presented by Barb Gilfedder and accepted by the members. Copy on file.

Treasurer's Report: Audited accounts for the year ended 30 June 2020 were presented by the Treasurer, Neil Woolcock. The meeting resolved that the report be accepted. Copy on file. Neil Woolcock moved that the membership fees remain the same for the year 2020-2021. Seconded by Barb Gilfedder. All in favour.

Election of Office Bearers

All positions were declared vacant. Ian Coleman presided over the election of office bearers for 2020/2021.

President: Barb Gilfedder nominated by Lee Ryall seconded by Marg Friedel. Nomination accepted. Elected unopposed.

Vice President: Marg Friedel nominated by Lee Ryall seconded by Max O'Callaghan. Nomination accepted. Elected unopposed.

Secretary: No nominations received.

Treasurer: Neil Woolcock nominated by Anne Pye seconded Barb Gilfedder. Nomination accepted. Elected unopposed.

Property Officer: Rosalie Breen nominated by Jane Bannister seconded by Pamela Keil. Nomination accepted. Elected unopposed.

Committee member: Lee Ryall nominated by Marg Friedel seconded by Barb Gilfedder. Nomination accepted. Elected unopposed.

Committee member: Connie Spencer nominated by Marg Friedel seconded by Max O'Callaghan. Nomination accepted. Elected unopposed.

Following the election, Barb Gilfedder returned to the chair and thanked Ian Coleman for presiding over the election. Elected committee members were congratulated and thanked.

Other positions appointed:

Public Officer: Anne Pye

Website Manager: Robyn Grey-Gardner

Newsletter Editor: Barb Gilfedder

Facebook Administration: Meg Mooney

Other Business:

Connie Spencer moved that Barb Gilfedder be granted Honorary Life Membership of the Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Inc. Seconded by Neil Woolcock. Unanimous approval.

Connie then presented Barb with a Life Membership certificate and brooch and read congratulatory notes from Robert Read and Rhondda Tomlinson.

There being no further business, the AGM closed at 2:45 pm.

Minutes compiled by Connie Spencer.

Addendum to the Minutes of the Alice Springs Field Naturalists Inc Annual General Meeting held Sunday 16 August 2020 in the Gazebo of the Olive Pink Botanic Garden

Following the AGM:

- Peter Jobson spoke about a series of "habitat, plant and garden" related workshops that are being planned for early next year.
- Neil Woolcock presented a short workshop on using the new club radios. Some discussion about new First Aid Kit.
- Kimberley Morgan offered a garden challenge, which members participated in enthusiastically.

President's Report 2020

Barb Gilfedder

Membership numbers have increased in the last 12 months. We retain a core of keen and interested members and it is always good to recruit new ones.

From July 2019 it was necessary to change our meeting venue as CDU decided they needed to charge us. We quickly settled into the Olive Pink Botanic Garden Visitors Centre, which seemed perfect, until Covid came along. Many thanks to Ian Coleman and Doug McDougall for making us feel very welcome. We continue to not look too far ahead and arrange meetings as we feel comfortable with them.

As usual we have had some excellent speakers at meetings. In September, before she left town, Colleen O'Malley talked about volunteering in New Zealand for the biggest Kakapo breeding season on record. In October Sue Morrish talked about Spencer Valley and the great work accomplished there with Buffel removal and the changes that that has brought to the site ([Rosalie and Sue pictured right](#)). In November Marg Friedel took us on an exciting trip to the Cocos/Keeling and Xmas Islands. In February this year Peter and Lisa Nunn updated us on their Letter-winged Kite research project. In March, I showed slides of Field Nats visits to Henbury Station during 2012 to 2014.



Then the Covid19 scare caught up with us and meetings were cancelled for a few months. During this period I was able to forward interesting photos and articles to the membership, that were sent to me. For a while it seemed I was sending out a new item every day and received many positive comments about them.

In July we managed a tentative restart with Carla Humphrys' and Krysta Simms' story about raising an Echidna puggle. This was held at the Desert Park theatre, which gave us more space for social distancing.

My thanks to all the speakers who have entertained and educated us, the members who were note takers and supper bringers at our general meetings and everyone who sent in interesting items to send out. Also thanks to Meg Mooney who placed many of the send-outs onto our FaceBook site.

We have also had some excellent Field Trips, not as many as the previous 12 months, again mainly due to the pandemic - only 7 as opposed to 10. Ian and Wendy Mann organised excellent local trips to the Community Garden on 11th October and the Joint Geological and Geophysical Centre on 24th October. Connie Spencer led a walk from the Old Ghan museum also in October (only Rosalie accompanied her) and a camp and morning walk from Serpentine Chalet in November, which she did on her own. Her walk along the Woodland Trail in March was better attended. Jill Brew led a walk along the beginning of stage 4 of the Larapinta Trail in March and Neil Woolcock led a trip into Roma Gorge in June. Kimberley led a walk to the headwaters of the Finke River last month. Many thanks to all the leaders. There has certainly been a lot to learn and lots of willing, sharing, knowledgeable people to learn from. The Committee is always open to suggestions of activities or interesting places to visit. It can be disappointing when trips have to be cancelled due to lack of participants. Please support organisers when you can by going on club events.

Most of these speakers and trips have been reported in our monthly newsletter. I frequently hear comments from people about how much they enjoy reading it and looking at the stunning photos our members take. Many past members continue their membership just to enjoy the newsletter. Well done to all the contributors!

Our recurring main Club expense is insurance. It is still a very good price for this type of cover. Our newsletter is mostly sent out by email so costs are low. Neil has mentioned applying and receiving a grant from the town council for the purchase of handheld radios and a first aid kit. Well done, Neil! Michael Laflamme updated a nomination for Peter Latz for the Natural History Medallion but I have not yet heard if he was successful or not.

Lastly, my thanks to the Committee, who have performed their duties efficiently and who are always willing to help and support the club and me in any way they can. Also all those others – Lee Ryall who prints and sends out the few hard copies of our newsletter, Connie Spencer who has minded and replenished the tea/coffee box; Meg Mooney who puts things on Facebook; Robyn Grey-Gardner who has been keeping the newsletters up-to-date on our website and continues to update the index of reports and articles appearing in our newsletter; Rosalie Breen who has sent out thank you cards to speakers and Anne Pye who has dealt with the officials as Public Officer.

I look forward to another year of interesting talks, walks and trips with as many members as possible organising and participating over the next twelve months. Let's hope Covid 19 stays away and we can get back to normal. Meanwhile we are only planning meetings and activities either outside or in places big enough to cope with numbers expected.