



July 2022

# Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Newsletter



Only a couple of days left to see Deborah Clarke's stunning exhibition, "Flora and Eros" at Olive Pink Botanic Garden. The paintings are all close-up centres of native flowers. Deb says, "The beauty I have created is about increase too, increasing awareness, mine and yours too hopefully. And it is about survival: survival of nature's easily overlooked relationships. Deb also created the felted budgies.

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month (except December and January) at 7:00pm at the Olive Pink Botanic Garden.

## CONTENTS

Meetings, trips and contacts...p2; A couple of local waterholes...p3; A wander through Spencer Valley...p4; Restoration extraordinaire! – Todd river bank...p6; Any idea about this ant hole...p8; Goodeniaceae family...p9.

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## NEWSLETTER

The next newsletter will be August 2022.  
The deadline for that newsletter will be 23 July 2022.

Please send your contributions to Barb Gilfedder: [bjfedders@gmail.com](mailto:bjfedders@gmail.com)

### ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

**Saturday 9 July**, Walk along part of Larapinta Trail west of Standley Chasm along the creek bed, a little rocky but there will be interesting plants and birds. Meet at 9.00 at the lay-by area between the gates and the Standley Chasm entrance. Leader and for more information: Meg Mooney [moon3@inet.net.au](mailto:moon3@inet.net.au) 0404 564 840

**Wednesday 13 July, Speaker Night at Olive Pink Botanic Garden at 7.00pm.**

**John Gaynor**, Regional Director Southern of the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security will talk about the the *Lhere Mparntwe Management Strategy Implementation Advisory Committee*. John Gaynor will be able to tell us more about the management of the Todd and Charles Rivers and their banks in our town area and beyond. This is such an important part of our town. Visitors welcome.

**Saturday 23 July**, Day trip, drive out to N'Dhala Gorge. Leader Neil Woolcock [neilwool48@gmail.com](mailto:neilwool48@gmail.com) 0428 521 598

**Saturday 6 August**, Very low key walk at Standley Chasm. Meet out there at 10.00am, wander to and from the chasm looking at all the interesting vegetation, stay and buy your own lunch at the kiosk. Barb Gilfedder

**Wednesday 10 August, Annual General Meeting of Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club** at 7.00pm at Olive Pink Botanic Garden. The Treasurer and President will present their annual reports. All committee positions will be declared vacant and there will be elections for a new committee. Please think seriously about helping your club. This will be followed by a **Members' Night**, with any member welcome to share anything that may be of interest to other field naturalists. Bring a few photos on a USB of a local or interstate trip or interesting plants or animals, a book or a natural history item.

**Sunday 17 July, Alcoota Scientific Reserve Discovery Day 2022.** This bus-tour, day trip provides members of the public with a rare opportunity to visit a palaeontological site while a dig is in process. 8.00am – 5.30pm. [Museum of Central Australia](http://www.museumofcentralaustralia.com.au) and [Megafauna Central](http://www.megafauna.com.au). 08 8999 8264. Tickets and bookings essential.

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/alcoota-scientific-reserve-discovery-day-2022-tickets-347761091787>

### Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club

#### Committee Members

<b>President</b>	Barb Gilfedder	0407 6688 68
<b>Vice-President</b>	Marg Friedel	0417 849 743
<b>Secretary</b>	Connie Spencer	0429 966 592
<b>Treasurer</b>	Neil Woolcock	0428 521 598
<b>Property Officer</b>	Claire Norman	0448 341 795
<b>Members</b>	Rosalie Breen	0458 155 141
	Peter Bannister	0448 600 106
	Clare Pearce	0457 035 472
<b>Public Officer</b>	Anne Pye	0438 388 012

#### Other Club Responsibilities:

Newsletter – Barb Gilfedder

[bjfedders@gmail.com](mailto:bjfedders@gmail.com)

Facebook Organiser – Meg Mooney [moon3@inet.net.au](mailto:moon3@inet.net.au)

Website controller – position vacant

### AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY - ALICE SPRINGS

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

**Friday and Saturday 1 - 2 July 2022,**

#### **Alice Springs Show**

Australian Plants Society Alice Springs will have a stall at the Show with a great display of local native flowers, providing information on native plants and selling plants to support Olive Pink Botanic Garden and other merchandise. There will be no APS AS evening meeting in July.

**July 30 – August 2** Long weekend camping at Newhaven. See separate forwarded email.

**Wednesday, 3 August, at 7.00pm**

#### **APS AS Meeting at OPBG**

Share a wonderful visit to Patagonia with Kirsten Smith. Visitors welcome.



## A few local waterholes have changed. Barb Gilfedder

I really don't get out bush much at the moment but here are a few photos I thought might be worth sharing.

The first three were taken at Honeymoon Gap. It is named for Vicki and Bob Darken who spent their honeymoon camping here. Roe Creek runs through. I wonder if the Darkens had water to swim in. They used to own Simpsons Gap Station but it was too small to be viable and was sold to NT Parks and Wildlife, with Bob staying on as a ranger and them continuing to live in the lovely old homestead out there. I remember visiting there in the early 1970s. Vicki had the fly-screened verandahs full of potted ferns.

Back to the photos – the first two was taken early in February this year just after those good rains. The creek was flowing well and had left a thick uneven layer of sand over the bitumen road.

The second, looking downstream shows the width of the creek. It was lovely to see those old stately gums getting a drink.



The third was taken early in March, the flow had stopped but there was still a sizeable waterhole, attractive enough and deep enough for some to swim in.



The two bottom photos were taken at Emily Gap at the end of May. I have not previously seen so much water in here. It was completely blocking off the entrance to the Gap. So the caterpillar paintings could not be viewed unless you fancied a swim.







## A wander through Spencer Valley with Sue Morrish – Sunday 12 June

Report by Barb Gilfedder

About twenty-five people, a baby strapped to one of them and a dog led by another, met up with Sue at the Gosse Street playground. It was a beautiful, mild,

Autumn afternoon. A few of the group were Field Naturalists; a few were Landcarers; all were interested locals, many not particularly aligned to either group, although they would be welcome to join either or both.

It is such a joy to wander through an area covered with local native grasses but that state has not come easily. Sue and her fellow Landcarers including Rosalie Breen, have put in many hours of hard labour to reach this state. The active project has been going since 2009 although much red tape and paperwork had to be completed before it could begin. The action was first initiated by then Landcare Coordinator, Tim Collins. The first work was to create firebreaks around the 'big triangle' and clearing Buffel from around big, slow-growing trees like the Ironwoods and Corkwoods. These areas were gradually linked and now most of the big triangle area is Buffel-free, although constant monitoring and maintaining is necessary.

Among the crowd on this walk was Blim. I was delighted to see that he was clutching a printed copy of the identification grasses sheet that I put together, as well as Anne Urban's 'Wildflowers and plants of inland Australia'. This is the book that Jenny Purdie, Peter Jobson and I are currently revising, updating names, descriptions and photographs. Even the old edition is a valuable, user-friendly resource. Watch for the revised edition sometime next year.

There were many things that caught our attention along the way.

As well as the dominant Oat-grasses, *Enneapogon polyphyllus* and *E. avenaceus*, we saw *E. oblongus*, *Digitaria*



The big triangle. Pink is the approved Landcare work area. Orange is Spencer Hill, a sacred site from where they cannot remove anything, even Buffel Grass.

*brownii*, *Themeda avenacea*, *Cymbopogon obtectus* and *Sporobolus blakei*. Look them up on the NT flora website. Sue also spotted one of the introduced *Eragrostis* species, which was destined for the bin; a group of Ironwoods, *Acacia estrophiolata*, some three metres high that were displaying both juvenile and mature foliage. Juvenile foliage has shorter more rigid phyllodes than those on mature trees, and the phyllodes also often tend to be arranged in clusters at the nodes; mature foliage has longer phyllodes which are graceful and weepy.

We saw Dead Finish, *Acacia tetragonophylla*, displaying its yellow, spherical flower clusters.





The *Cynanchum viminalis* continues to flourish under the shade and using the support of a Witchetty Bush, *Acacia kempeana*. (Pictured previous page)

Connie had to crawl under a healthy *Eremophila longifolia* to check on the climber at its base. It was, as she suspected, a young Bush Banana plant, *Marsdenia australis*. (photo top)

We admired the brightly flowering Mistletoe, *Lysiana subfalcata*, which still had fruit that birds had not yet found. A few of the group enjoyed the taste of the snotty-gobbles. (pictured right)

Not many plants were flowering although the elegant buds of the Cattle-bush, *Trichodesma zeylanicum* showed more to come. (photo bottom right)

Reaching the end of its flowering was *Crotalaria smithiana*, a low growing, yellow-flowering pea with inflated pods. (photo bottom left)

There were not many birds around, although I enjoyed watching the swooping Black-faced Woodswallows, in between perching on dead branches.

Thank you Sue for a lovely, interesting and informative afternoon, and thank you too, to your offsider, Rosalie Breen - both are self-confessed Buffel removal addicts. I'm sure all enjoyed the walk and the discussions.







At the beginning of the Field Nats walk. Ken in the pale shirt facing the camera explains the project.

## Restoration Extraordinaire! Ken Johnson and Peter Latz's Tour of the Todd

Friday 1 April 2022 at 5.00pm

Report by Ian Coleman



Near the causeway, native grasses, mainly *Enneapogon* species, have taken over from the removed Buffel Grass.

Ken Johnson AM and Peter Latz are key figures in the Alice Springs land care and restoration movement. Between them, they have helped found, inspire or inform much of the restoration activities across central Australia for more than 50 years.

Fourteen people attended a guided walk they led along the eastern Todd Riverbank from Wills Terrace to Stott Terrace. It is an area Ken has diligently been restoring, battling against buffel grass, *Cenchrus ciliaris*, which had become overwhelmingly dominant, crowding out native species.



Peter Latz checking for weeds along this narrow path to the riverbed. In the foreground are *Maireana scelopora* and other chenopods; on the other side healthy shrubs have regenerated. This is a much safer environment for the big old River Red Gums.

Peter Latz has been the botanical advisor on the project, and Alice Springs Landcare has run working bees in support of Ken's efforts. Whilst this assistance has been invaluable, Ken stressed that 'new blood' was needed to help with this section of the Riverbank, and gradually take over some of the work. Ken wants to pass on his knowledge and ensure the riverbank he has been working on is maintained beyond his efforts and lifetime.

Peter Latz and Ken emphasized that land restoration in central Australia involves primarily weed control, a critical activity and sometimes a thankless one. The regeneration along the riverbank however demonstrated how effective such efforts are; a veritable dry jungle of local natives has taken over from Buffel Grass, and big, old River Red Gums are thriving.



Ken said he chose this area, and this project, to act as a lever for others to become involved and to promote the River and the need for its restoration in Alice Springs. This approach – of leading from the front and by actions – has been very successful. Many others have been inspired by Ken’s work, and urged to action by both Ken and Peter Latz, including the Olive Pink Botanic Garden, which has taken up the task of extending the strip from Stott Terrace to Tuncks Road causeway.

The NT Government, to its credit and following at the community’s urging, established a consultation and planning process on the River, which has led to many players becoming involved, the development of a River restoration plan and the establishment of the *Lhere Mparntwe Management Strategy Implementation Advisory Committee*. It works to implement the plan and ensure coordination of resources and effort. Ken chairs this group, and guides the process.

The restoration process along the strip of the River that Ken has been working on started over 10 years ago with a first pass with the herbicide glyphosate, spraying from a 400 litre herbicide spray unit mounted on a trailer. The key however, was consistent follow-up, mainly with a mattock, especially after summer rains. Buffel does come back after summer rains, but with big reductions each time. Any seeding Buffel Grass was dug out and taken into the centre of the sandy riverbed.

There are secondary enemies like Couch Grass, *Cynodon Dactylon* and Smokegrass, introduced *Eragrostis* species that need to be dealt with.

It was a lovely, late afternoon walk looking at a wonderful example of how our beautiful riverbanks can be restored and become safer environments for the old trees. Thank you Ken and Peter.

John Gaynor will be talking at the July Field Naturalists speaker night on 13 July about the *Lhere Mparntwe Management Strategy Implementation Advisory Committee*.



Above; A dry jungle developing. Below: Local native plants including a fruiting Native Passionfruit protecting a real character Gum Tree.





## Any ideas, please?



by Barb Gilfedder

These photos were shown to me by Anne Scherer.

They were taken at the Telegraph Station. There was a suggestion that it might be a spider hole, but it wasn't completely round and there was no sign of spider web. It reminded me of the ant nest holes that I had seen near Simpsons Gap, see Feb 2022 newsletter. If you look closely at the square photo, you can see some *Sclerolaena* seed cases at the bottom right, but I have no idea what the larger cigar shaped bits might be.

Steve Morton agreed that it is an ant nest. *"As an educated guess, the ant genus Polyrhachis, known as spiny ants. The best known in central Australia is the mulga ant, Polyrhachis macropus - it shares with the species in the photograph the habits of a broad earthen opening to the nest and accumulation of plant items about the entrance. There are probably dozens of local species."*

Peter Jobson suggested that the cigar shapes may be *Triodia* seeds but the area that the photos came from shows no sign of Spinifex, see picture below which shows the general location of the hole.

Roisin Prunty, the ranger who took the photos, says *"the nest is located at ASTS - South of the picnic area, west of the concrete track, buffel floodplain before the rocky escarpment, approx 5m from any trees, scrawny gums. Little other vegetation."*





**Goodeniaceae** – Barb Gilfedder



Goodenias are notoriously hard to identify in the field, for me anyway. Here are a few photos that may help.

Clockwise from top left:  
*Goodenia armitiana*,  
*G. cycloptera*, *G. glabra*, *G. lunata*,  
*G. ramelii*, *G. vilmoriniae*,  
*G. grandiflora* and *G. heterochila*.







Scaevola and Brunonia are also in the Goodeniaceae family.

Clockwise from top left: *Scaevola amblyanthera*, *S. basedowii*, *S. ovalifolia*, *Brunonia australis*, *Scaevola spinescens* and *Scaevola glabrata*.

