



September 2013

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Newsletter



Assassin Bug on a *Rutidosia helichrysoidea* waiting to catch a pollinator insect for its dinner. A *Stenopetalum* sp. is flowering nearby. Taken along the Santa Teresa road. Photo by Pamela Keil.

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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Web site:

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

NEXT NEWSLETTER

The deadline for the next newsletter is **Friday 20 September 2013**.

Please send your contributions to Barb Gilfedder at the email listed below. Please send photos and text separately.

ASFNC MEETINGS

- Wed 11 Sept **ASFNC** Meeting 7.00 pm at Lecture Theatre in Higher Education Building at the Charles Darwin University - Speaker – Lisa Nunn “Sri Lankan birds and other wildlife”.
REMINDER: membership fees are due.
- Wed 9 Oct **ASFNC** Meeting 7.00 pm at Lecture Theatre in Higher Education Building at the Charles Darwin University - Speaker – Peter Jobson, Botanist at Alice Spring Herbarium.

ASFNC FIELD TRIPS / ACTIVITIES

If you wish to take part in any of these trips or activities, it is advisable to ring or email the leader of that particular trip beforehand, as information can change.

- Tues 3 Sept Weekday afternoon drive and look along the Santa Teresa Road, before the wild flowers disappear. Meet at Information Bay opposite the Old Timers at **4.00pm**. Leaders Pamela Keil/ Michael Laflamme.
- Fri 6 Sept A weekday morning walk from Wiggleys Gorge to Telegraph Station. Half day walk along tracks. Meet at Telegraph Station Gate at **7:30am**. Leader: Cec Sutton 0412 501396 cecsutton@gmail.com
- Sat 14 Sept Walk into one of the Slot Gorges on South Side of Mount Gillen. Meet at Information Bay opposite the Old Timers at **7.30 am**. Leader Scott Pullyblank scott.pullyblank@nt.gov.au
- Sun 13 Oct Drive and leisurely stroll into Redbank Gorge. Leader Barb Gilfedder
- Sat 2 Nov Drive and look at the interesting plants around the claypan in Rainbow Valley. Leader- Barb Gilfedder

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY

Contact: Connie Spencer constans@bigpond.net.au

- Wed 4 Sept **Scott Pullyblank and Rebecca Duncum on Alice Springs Desert Park record keeping.** Meet 7:30pm Olive Pink Botanic Garden.
- Wed 2 Oct Meet 7.30 at Olive Pink Botanic Garden. Speaker- Petal from Petals Pruning Perfection & Tree Removals talking about “Pruning and Tree care”.

ARID LANDS ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

Contact: Nicole Pietsch, Phone: 08 8952 2497,

communications@alec.org.au

- Sat 7 Sept *Threatened Species Day Community BBQ – Meet at Turn off into Ilparpa claypans at 4pm.***
Join us at the Ilparpa Claypans where the Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club (Connie Spencer and Barb Gilfedder) will be hosting a guided walk through the Intertexta forest. This will be followed by picking up some rubbish and a family community BBQ. Please bring a salad to share, non-alcoholic drinks of your choice and a chair. Meat and vegetarian options provided.

BIRDING ACTIVITIES

- Sun 8 Sept Birdlife group formation meeting, Old Telegraph Station **4.30pm**. Contact Chris Watson comebirdwatching@gmail.com Mob - 0419 358 942
- 29 Sept to 6 Oct Red Centre Bird Festival at Alice Springs Desert Park

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Please delete the xxx when emailing – their placement is an attempt to stop some spam emails.

14 August – Members' Night report by Barb Gilfedder

After a very quick AGM (Thank you to Bob Read for overseeing the election.) and a short general meeting, we had a look at some of the things Members had brought in.

Cecily Sutton was first in line with a Treasure Trove of interesting items she had collected both locally and on a trip further north near Roper River and Mataranka. There was a bit of bark off a paperbark *Melaleuca*, a *Bauhinia* branch with the twin leaves, some giant leaves of the Leichhardt tree, a butterfly and some Eagle feathers.

Rosalie Breen brought in examples of Thread Petal, *Stenopetalum* flowers, some tiny "camelpoo" plants, *Actinobole uliginosum*, and the Blue Cranesbill *Erodium sp.* Those were the natives. She also exhibited samples of three different feral cacti, that Landcare are trying to eradicate - Boxing Glove cactus, Devil's Rope Cactus and Jumping Cholla. All seem to spread easily and like our climate. (Special report on Cactus weeds coming in the next newsletter.) She also brought in two special local books that have been reviewed in our newsletter recently. '**Common Plants of Central Australia**' by Dianne Napier, Jenny Purdie, Lesley Alford and Michael Barritt (reviewed April 2013) and '**Bush Regeneration Handbook**' by Andy Vinter (reviewed December 2012). The later she particularly liked because it showed plants including weeds at different stages of growth, making them easy to recognize when young.

Rhonda Tomlinson brought in two books she had put together on trips with Joel Fleming, one to Lindsay's Booker's camp on the Plenty Highway and one on the Hay River track. A highlight from one of these trips was visiting Goyder's Pillar (photo).



Bob Read had put together a collection of recent photographs, including a photo of an old Burrowing Bettong site, although the Bettongs were gone many years previously; Insectivorous *Drosera* plants from Potato Gorge on Newhaven, Painted Pygromorph grasshopper (photo), and flowering *Gastrolobium* plants. He also had a photo of a seeding lily plant. It reminded me of a flowering one I had taken also at Newhaven in 2005' and we think it is probably the same species of *Wurmbea deserticola* or Early Nancy (photos of flower and seed pod at top of next page). Thank you to Joe Schofield for confirming that identification.



Siri Omberg brought in some bird photographs on her camera that Bob was able to name for her.

Pam Keil had taken two short trips recently, one along the Tanami Road and one along the Santa Teresa Road, photographing wild flowers (and the Assassin Bug on the front cover), some of which we were able to identify, while others remained a mystery for the moment. She was planning on calling in to the herbarium and discussing them with Peter Jobson or Peter Latz. Pam also brought in a group of brown papery cases which she thought may have been wasp or sawfly nests, but was unsure.



Barb Gilfedder. I finished the evening with a photographic power point of 24 local *Eremophila* species, put together showing the shrub, and close-ups of flowers in the form of a quiz. Insect pollinated *Eremophila gilesii* proved tricky (photo on left), but Bob quickly recognized bird pollinated *Eremophila neglecta* (photo on right). Most other species were eventually recognized by members.



It was an interesting and enjoyable evening, although a bit disappointing that there weren't more members there to share it.

ANGKERLE ATWATYE WITH NANA JEAN; Report and photos by Cecily Sutton

(and Barb and Jim, Wendy and Ian, Bev G, Megg K, Rhondda, Rosalie and Gavan with visiting linguistic student Claire)

Barb Gilfedder had arranged this trip to Standley Chasm so that we could meet Jean Mack, one of the Traditional Owners. We stopped on the way in, to pay our respects to the "Little Man" (Mt Conway) who has great significance to Nana Jean. She was a very quiet spoken lady with lovely silvery hair. She was happy to let Megg Kelham record her conversation, so I am hoping to learn more about her, and her country.

At Standley Chasm, first stop was tea and coffee at the Kiosk, as Nana Jean was a little tired and needed to recharge. This worked a treat and we were soon heading up the path to the Chasm. There were a lot of flowering plants to admire and stories to hear about them and the natural features.



Barb, Rosalie, and Nana Jean



Round-leafed Wattle

Nana Jean wisely decided to wait at the end of the smooth path, so few of us went onto the Chasm with her grandson Steve. Binoculars were useful for determining that the Thomson's Daisy were flowering, but not the Flannel Flowers. We were there at noon and admired the orange glow of the rocks.

I loved the *Acacia strongylophylla*. The round leaf shape and the large yellow wattle blossom with a sweet fragrance, make it beautiful. The Spearbush, *Pandorea doratoxylon* had a profusion of large cream bell flowers. On close inspection inside the throat of the flower there were brown stripes and lots of hairs.



Spearbush



We headed back to the Kiosk and were presented with a lovely lunch of soup and scones by Manager Ray Prunty. I learnt more about Nana Jean's family, and that she and Rosalie have a (great) grandson in common.

I love the variety of Field Naturalists trips.

Birds, plants, rocks... social... and cultural.

Thanks

Cecily Sutton

Feral or native – Rain brings out the snails

I often see two different species of small native snails in our garden after rain, but this one was different. You can see the size in comparison to the 5 cent coin.

A single specimen turned up on my kitchen bench after I had brought in an arm full of silverbeet from the garden. I am not sure if he fell off it, or if he had been on some other, supermarket vegetable.

I sent the photos to snail-expert Mark Carter, who is back in Alice. This one is a feral, *Cochlicella acuta*. Mark told me that they had an invasion of them at Tangangere nursery some time ago, and it may have come from there. Jim disposed of it thoughtfully and we haven't found any more.



Barb Gilfedder

Rain also brings out the Flowers! – photos by Pamela Keil

Here is a small selection of the wildflowers spotted blooming recently along the Tanami Track (top half) and the Santa Teresa Road (bottom half). Can you name them? Answers in the next newsletter!



President's Report 2013

Membership numbers have increased this financial year with over 60 membership listings - the equivalent of about 80 individual members. This has also improved our financial position which was already healthy. Our main expense appears to be insurance and we are extremely lucky that the Charles Darwin University continue to let us use this excellent venue at no charge.

As usual we have had some excellent speakers at meetings. Half of our speakers were Club Members - Michael Green entertained us with information about gold and followed it with a great hands-on weekend out at Winnecke; Meg Mooney explained the importance of linking science to what the children already know in Aboriginal Schools; Lee Ryall led us into the fascinating world of Trilobites; Colleen O'Malley sorted out Chenopods for us and Chris Watson made us yearn to see the avian wonders of Ecuador. Other places we visited with power points presentations were Kangaroo Island with Rick Churchill, South Africa's newest Jurassic park with Adam Yates, Antarctica with Simon Ward and our own Simpsons Desert on foot with Michael Giacometti – My thanks to all of them and also to the note takers and supper bringers.

We have also had some excellent Field Trips. I am particularly pleased that we have had many of them organized and led by different club members. As already mentioned Michael Green took us to Winneke Goldfields; Neil and Leigh Woolcock climbed a party through the Fenn Gap cave, led a trip to Aileron for a walk and a meal and then a long drive to Old Andado and Dalhousie; Cec Sutton led some interesting trips to Standley Chasm, a camp and a swim and a walk at Glen Helen and a full moon picnic at Ilparpa; Jim and Marg Lawrence explored the historic area of "The Pinch" and also a wonderful long weekend along the Finke River; Colleen O'Malley led a walk in the Hugh Gorge area; Lee Ryall led the very popular NT Museum trip and organized our bit of the Alcoota weekend; Rosalie Breen, Meg Mooney, Pam Keil, Connie Spencer, and Wendy and Ian Mann have also all contributed. There has certainly been a lot to learn and lots of willing, sharing, knowledgeable people to learn from. Sometimes it is disappointing that club excursions are poorly attended and it is difficult to work out why this happens, when for others we have to limit numbers. Remember this club belongs to the members and each of you has the capacity to lead a walk, drive or excursion. The Committee is always open to suggestions of activities or interesting places to visit.

Regular shorebird surveys at the sewage ponds have continued. We have always managed to attract enough counters and scribes to conduct these and counts are always followed by interesting birding discussions. We are lucky that Power and Water allow us access to this great birding site.

All these things 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 and to Pam Keil for putting it all together.

Pam Keil also has the responsibility for our club website. She adds each newsletter to it and is gradually updating other information that is on it as well. Many Thanks, Pam! I am sure she would appreciate some feedback and offers of help with improving its content.



Lastly my thanks to the Committee, who have all performed their duties efficiently and who are always willing to help and support the club any way they can.

I look forward to another year of interesting talks, walks and trips with as many members as possible organizing and participating.

Barb Gilfedder

ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INCORPORATED
Minutes of general meeting at Higher Education Building,
Charles Darwin University 14 August 2013

Following AGM and followed by informal display of Members' slides and exhibits

Meeting opened at 7-25pm

Present: 12 Members and 8 apologies as per attendance book.

Previous minutes – accepted.

Business arising from the minutes: Nil

Correspondence in:

- Email from Assistant Director of Parks and Wildlife Commission about developing a Tourism and Recreation Master Plan for NT Parks Estate. This will be discussed further at Planning Meeting.
- Letter from Chris Watson about starting a Birdlife Branch in Central Australia. This will be forwarded to all members.
- WA Field Naturalist Newsletter via mail and Email.
- 2 letters from Australian Naturalist Network. These outlined history, gave contacts details of all clubs and announced 2014 ANN get-together in Hobart. The 2000 Inaugural ANN get-together was held at Alice Springs. A new website for Australian Naturalist Network is being developed at <http://australiannaturalistnetwork.wordpress.com>

Correspondence out:

- Thank you card to Chris Watson for his great talk on Ecuadorian birds.

General business:

- The renovated Aviary/Aquarium at ASDP has re-opened
- The Bush Food Festival will be organised for October, by Pam Keil and Michael Laflamme.
- Jill Brew volunteered on an Ausplots survey in Normanton/Karumba Region, and reported that it was a good experience.

Past Activities/Trips discussed:

- 16 ASFNC members along with many members of the public, attended an enjoyable and educational weekend at the Alcoota Fossil Dig.
- Shorebird Count was successfully completed.

Future activities:

- Sat 17- Standley Chasm with traditional owner, Jean Mack.
- Sun 25 Planning Meeting
- August 30/Sept 1 Duck Swamp, fully booked with 16 people, 7 cars.
- Saturday 7 September 4pm ALEC BBQ with walk in Intertexta Forest conducted by Connie and Barb

Sightings

- Pam Keil – small flocks of Budgerigars flying over Desert Park.
- Shorebird Count - 1 Freckled Duck, 8 Australasian Shovellers were special sightings

Next meeting: 11 September

Speaker: Lisa Nunn on Sri Lankan birds

Scribes: Lee Ryall

Supper : Jill Brew

Meeting closed 7.45pm