



August 2022

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Newsletter



On a recent trip home from Adelaide I was lucky to have a left window seat and this stunning view of the Finke River. The tributary coming off from the centre of the picture to bottom right is the Hugh River. It reminded me of two wonderful trips along the Finke with Jim Lawrence. Check June 2010 and September 2012 newsletters. Great memories! Barb Gilfedder.

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;
Field trip - creek walk - start of Larapinta, stage 4...p3;
Day trip to N'Dhala Gorge...p5;
John Gaynor - *Lhere Mparntwe Management Strategy*...p7

**Postal Address: P.O. Box 8663
Alice Springs, Northern Territory
0871**

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

Email:
contact@alicefieldnaturalists.org.au

Follow us on Facebook!

**Annual subscriptions are due at the Annual General Meeting
of the Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club
on Wednesday 10 August at 7pm at Olive Pink Botanic Garden.
These can be paid in cash, by cheque or by direct debit
into our Westpac bank account - BSB No. 035303 - Account No.100981.**

ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

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, if you wish. 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 or overseas trip or interesting plants or animals or rocks, a book or a natural history item.

Saturday 20 August, Explore **Serpentine Chalet area** with leader Neil Woolcock

Saturday 10 September, Kuyunba Reserve, near the Space Base entrance with leader Neil Woolcock. Women are not permitted to walk around all of the 700m circuit, because it is an Aboriginal Men's sacred site, but still lots to see, including some beautiful Native Pine Trees and interesting rocks, if the Buffel Grass hasn't swallowed them all.



Wed 14 September, Speaker Night at 7.00pm at Olive Pink Botanic Garden - **Bill Low of Lowecol** will tell us how he goes about doing an ecological survey.

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club

Committee Members

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

Other Club Responsibilities:

Newsletter – Barb Gilfedder
bjfedders@gmail.com
Facebook Organiser – Meg Mooney moon3@inet.net.au
Website controller – position vacant

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY - ALICE SPRINGS

apsalicesprings@yahoo.com.au

Sunday 14 August 2022, leaving 8 am from Old Timers information bay.
(Max 60km return from airport roundabout)

Come for a ramble on a small dune on the Santa Teresa Road. It may be small, but there is a great diversity of plants to see.

Join our Chief Botanist, Peter Jobson, as he leads the walk. Not only will he be able to tell you what all the plants are, he is bound to have some other interesting facts about them too!

Some of you may have enjoyed the ramble on the Ooraminna side of the range last year, come and see if there are any differences on this side.

Bring morning tea and stay lunch if you wish to take your time.

Contact Suzanne Lollback, suzaloll2@bigpond.com

**Field Trip creek walk start of Stage 4
(Standley Chasm to Birthday Waterhole)
Larapinta Trail 9th July 2022
Leader: Meg Mooney**

Report by Heather Jensen, Photos by various photographers.

Eight of us met on a cold Saturday morning at the beginning of the Walk along part of Larapinta Trail west of Standley Chasm along the creek bed. We slowly walked along the rocky path. Some of us were a little challenged by the terrain but slow and steady meant we were able to see lots of interesting plants along the way. We were passed by some intrepid trekkers coming down from the trail, or heading towards the trail for a day walk.



Above: *Indigofera basedowii*



Left: a view up the slope showing lots of regenerating *Acacia cowleana*.

Some of us made it about 2km along the track and visited a small rock pool hidden further up the trail. A very tranquil and special place which we spent time enjoying. By then the temperature was much more pleasant.

The bush was looking happy after the recent rain, with good recovery from the bushfire a few years ago. Many plants were in flower with at least three *Indigofera* species looking particularly spectacular, including Showy *Indigofera basedowii*, and two others which after considerable discussion Connie decided were *Indigofera cornuligera subsp. cornuligera* and *Indigofera helmsii*.



Acacia cowleana



Myoporum montanum



Amyema gibberula var. gibberula

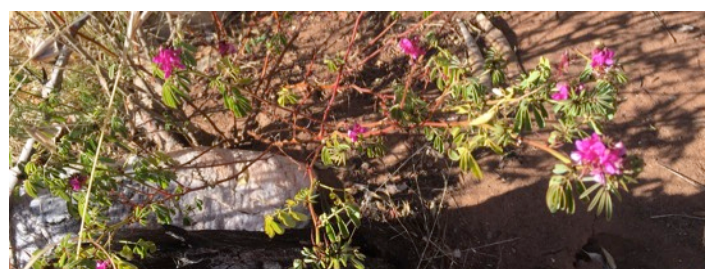
Other plants we saw in flower were Hall's Creek Wattle *Acacia cowleana*, the Holly Leaf Grevillea *Grevillea wickhamii*, Boobialla *Myoporum montanum*, Fruit-salad bush *Pterocaulon serrulatum*, *Senna glutinosa* subsp. *glutinosa* and *Ptilotus decipiens*. There were a number of daisies in flower including *Olearia ferresii*, Hill Everlasting *Leiocarpa semicalva* and the Bowl Daisy *Pluchea dentex*. There was also a mistletoe *Amyema gibberula* var. *gibberula* flowering in a Beefwood *Grevillea striata*, and a few early fruit on a Slender Cherry *Exocarpos sparteus*. A Graceful Cassia *Senna venusta*, seemed to be frosted. There were many other plants to be seen, including Native Pine *Callitris glaucophylla*, MacDonnell Ranges Cycads *Macrozamia macdonnellii*, other Acacias, Hill Sticky Hopbush *Dodonaea viscosa* subsp. *mucronata* and many native grasses.

We did not see many animals, although there was a flock of Zebra Finches where we had parked the cars, with one sadly having met its death, probably by hitting a car.

Thank you to Meg for showing us one of her favourite places.

**Plant list on creek walk start of Stage 4 (Standley Chasm to Birthday Waterhole) Larapinta Trail - Sat 9 July 2022
Connie Spencer**

| Botanical Name | Common Name | Comments |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Acacia cowleana</i> | Hall's Creek Wattle | In flower |
| <i>Acacia kempeana</i> | Witchetty Bush | Not in flower |
| <i>Acacia melleodora</i> | Waxy Wattle | Not in flower |
| <i>Acacia stronglylophylla</i> | Round-leaf Wattle | Not in flower |
| <i>Acacia tenuissima</i> | Broom Wattle | Not in flower |
| <i>Amyema gibberula</i> var. <i>gibberula</i> | Mistletoe | In flower in a <i>Grevillea striata</i> (Beefwood) |
| <i>Apowollastonia stirlingii</i> subsp. <i>fontalicensis</i> | | Not in flower |
| <i>Callitris glaucophylla</i> | Native Pine | |
| <i>Cymbopogon ambiguus</i> | Lemon-scented Grass | |
| <i>Dodonaea viscosa</i> subsp. <i>mucronata</i> | Hill Sticky Hopbush | |
| <i>Eremophila longifolia</i> | Weeping Emu Bush | Not in flower |
| <i>Eulalia aurea</i> | Silky Browntop | Grass |
| <i>Exocarpos sparteus</i> | Slender Cherry | |
| <i>Grevillea striata</i> | Beefwood | Not in flower |
| <i>Grevillea wickhamii</i> | Holly Leaf Grevillea | In flower |
| <i>Indigofera basedowii</i> | Showy Indigo | Full flower |
| <i>Indigofera</i> spp (2 different species) | | Possibly <i>I.cornuligera</i> subsp. <i>cornuligera</i> and <i>I.helmsii</i> |
| <i>Jasminum calcareum</i> | Poison Creeper | |
| <i>Leiocarpa semicalva</i> | Hill Everlasting | In flower but insignificant |
| <i>Macrozamia macdonnellii</i> | MacDonnell Ranges Cycad | |
| <i>Myoporum montanum</i> | Boobialla | In flower |
| <i>Olearia ferresii</i> | Olearia | Spent flowers |
| <i>Pluchea dentex</i> | Bowl Daisy | |
| <i>Pterocaulon serrulatum</i> | Fruit-salad Bush | In flower |
| <i>Ptilotus decipiens</i> | Ptilotus | In flower |
| <i>Santalum lanceolatum</i> | Plumbush | |
| <i>Senna glutinosa</i> subsp. <i>glutinosa</i> | Cassia | In flower |
| <i>Senna venusta</i> | Graceful Cassia | Looked frosted |
| <i>Trema tomentosa</i> | Peach-leaved Poison Bush | Not in flower |
| <i>Wahlenbergia gracilis</i> | Australian Bluebells | |



The much discussed *Indigofera* species

Day trip to N'Dhala Gorge. A Saturday in July 2022.

From Neil Woolcock

A group of twelve of us enjoyed a lovely day at N'Dhala Gorge. A few of us met outside Pitchi Richi Sanctuary in Palm Circuit at 8:00am. Anne Pye and Wendy MacTaggart headed off their own and met us at the N'Dhala Gorge turn-off from Ross Highway. In 3 vehicles we then headed down the N'Dhala Gorge track and met up with Heather Jensen and her friend Joy Taylor who had gone down the day before and had camped at N'Dhala Gorge.

The road in to the gorge is in quite good condition, albeit with a few sections with corrugations. The individual camp sites (only 2, and must be pre-booked on line) are in an attractive setting, with fire places for cooking. On arrival we decided to have a cuppa before heading down the track into

the gorge. Heather had a fire going to boil the billy. Very pleasant sitting on logs or rock seats under a Supplejack tree. We could have sat there a lot longer but we'd come all this way to walk into the gorge so off we went.

The Buffel Grass along the track is thick and dry and ready to burn. It's just something you have to try and look above, and with some marvellous cliff scenery you are well rewarded.

Lots of Tall Verbine, *Cullen australasicum* (top right) flowering beside the track, Sickle-leaf Wattles, *Acacia undoolyana* in full flower, some very large Rulingia, *Commersonia magniflora* bushes (probably 5m tall) and Holly Grevilleas, *Grevillea wickhamii* also flowering.

The main track leads up to the gorge and passes several groups of petroglyphs, and some smaller side tracks lead to some other impressive petroglyphs as well.

From Margaret Saville and Susan Conroy

The day trip to N'Dhala gorge nearly didn't happen for us, and after a stunning day trip, has left us with both happy hearts, and photos, and many questions too. It was more or less a stroke of luck Susan and myself got out there, thanks to Suzanne Lollback. After collecting Connie, we sailed out there with Suzanne, and coming from flood bound Lismore, and its ongoing grey skies, we were both thrilled to see the scenery and blue skies of the trip out and back. Stopping to meet the rest of the gang at the camp site we were further entranced with the sheer beauty of the place, as well as its rugged walls of rock, and trees hanging on for grim death. They are survivors. Everything has to be a survivor of sorts to be out in this place, in this country – people, plants and cultures.

We sure met an interesting bunch of people, who I will not attempt to name, suffice to say, great laughter erupted in the joke about the "revolting" women, on previous outings (reference to another trip fearless leader Neil had led where he again had been the sole male). There were no revolts this day. But there were avid photographers, bird watchers, plant studiers and great humorists. All in all a stunning bunch of people, doing their best to engage with the local topography, to notice all sorts of things about the plants, the





petroglyphs by the score, and to have fun. For Susan and I we marvelled at the tenacity and skills, the enduring presence of the Aboriginal people.

For us, it was a fabulous opportunity that glimpsed at the possibilities and potentials of plant life – the study and recognition and highlights of how vital the diversity of plant life really is. But somehow, more than that, something about nature, ways of looking at nature and ways of engaging with nature. We are now going to explore how we can find a group in our local area.

Our trip was much more than a trip to the bush. It was a highlight. Something to tell others about, and to reflect on – and to find ways to engage with our own natural and cultural environment in more considered ways.

True thanks to the mob, from Margaret and Susan.

From Connie Spencer

At the expense of sounding like a broken record, I was quite dismayed at how much thicker and taller the Buffel Grass was than on my previous visit in August 2020. There were areas I had wandered through previously but not game to this time.

Flowering wasn't what you would call prolific. Nevertheless, there is always something that catches your eye. This time the first plant that caught our attention was *Cullen australasicum* (Tall Verbena) – a bit past its best but couldn't miss it, as it was right along the path with pretty pink pea-shaped flowers on long stems rising above the Buffel. The next showy shrub was *Acacia bivenosa* (Hill Umbrella) (left) in full flower with its deep golden globular flowerheads. Of course, *Acacia undoolyana* (Sickle-leaf Wattle) was flowering but nowhere near as profusely as in my garden. N'Dhala Gorge is a good



place to become familiar with this beautiful rare wattle. *Pandorea doratoxylon* (Spearwood) with its cream-coloured flowers and maroon stripes was in flower although most were up too high to photograph.

I scrambled up a rocky slope, to get a photo of *Olearia stuartii* (bottom left), which doesn't have a common name, only to find there was a much better one a few metres away and not such a scramble! This small shrub has pretty, pale blue, daisy flowers and a whiff of the leaves will clear your sinuses! Another find was a flowering *Nicotiana* possibly *gossei* (Rock Pituri or Native Tobacco) (bottom centre) under a rocky outcrop along with an *Abutilon* species (a Lantern-bush) (bottom right). Not game to say which one!

Thank you Neil, for leading this wonderful day out. There was sunshine, blue sky, stunning scenery and best of all the people – a happy group, with lots of laughter and camaraderie. It was good for the soul.





July Speaker Night – John Gaynor Lhere Mparntwe Management Strategy Report written by Uta Grehn

On 13/7/2022, John Gaynor, Regional Director Southern, DEPWS, kindly introduced us to the Management Strategy for the Todd and Charles Rivers – Lhere Mparntwe – which has been in place since 2019.

The strategy brings together a range of Alice Springs individuals, groups and institutions with the aim of managing the waterways in a sustainable way. It aims to encourage us to embrace this iconic part of the landscape (yes, tree hugging is allowed), to visit and care for it in a respectful and appropriate manner.



Our iconic Todd River! This photo was taken in January 2015. The water is flowing beautifully south of Heavitree Gap, but the riverbank is covered exclusively with lush, invasive Buffel Grass and some remnants of burnt River Gums.

Chaired by Ken Johnson, the Lhere Mparntwe Management Working Group includes representatives of Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation, Alice Springs Landcare, Alice Springs Town Council, the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, Olive Pink Botanical Garden, Arid Lands Environment Centre, Correctional Services, NT Fire and Rescue, DIPL and NTG. Last but not least, there are also spots for unaffiliated community members; one of these spots is available at present, so get in quick!

For the purpose of the management strategy, the river system is divided into three zones which are managed slightly differently from each other, starting at the fence line of the Telegraph Station and Bond Springs, extending south to a boundary in line with Colonel Rose Drive (see details at <https://depws.nt.gov.au/programs-and-strategies/lhere-mparntwe-management-strategy-2019>).



This beautiful old, stately Gum has been protected from fire, by having the circle around its trunk cleared of Buffel Grass, probably the work of Landcare.

The overall priority is to protect our River Red Gums, which calls for urgent control of Buffel Grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) to reduce the fire risk. The trees also benefit from prevention of bank erosion and from careful management of the water table, so that it remains within reach of roots. The return of other native vegetation is also encouraged, particularly in connection with removal of Buffel Grass.

The crews from the Correctional Centre have been instrumental in controlling grass growth on a large scale. Some time ago, COVID as well as gaps in insurance liability had led to visible lagging in mowing efforts (we all remember the jungles on road verges some months ago) but the crews are back now and catching up rapidly. They will happily accept sponsorships of hearty lunches, with a certain international chicken cooking restaurant a favourite!

The slashing of collars around trees by the work crews, combined with opportunistic spraying of Buffel and Couch by the DEPWS Weeds Management Branch, has maintained low fuel levels for many kilometers along the River and reaching well into rural areas (Ross). This has greatly improved tree survival in fire. The effort has been enormous and with a clearly beneficial outcome. We all know the phenomenal efforts by Landcare and Olive Pink Botanical Garden in creating collars by spraying, mowing and pulling out Buffel Grass and in re-establishing native undergrowth along the town river banks.

Apart from Buffel Grass, weeds of concern are Mexican Poppy (*Argemone mexicana*), Cactus (*Opuntia/ Cylindropuntia* species) and Himalayan Raintree (*Dalbergia sissoo*). These are managed from upstream within the town area. The river section within the Telegraph Station is of course managed by Parks administration through a management plan.

The water table (Town Basin) is monitored and has improved after being very low two years ago. The Water Allocation Plan recommends that the standing water level in the basin should be no deeper than 8m below ground level. The water derived from the Town Basin is non-potable but used for irrigation, as for example by the golf course, which draws substantial amounts of water near Heavitree Gap, but is finding ways to reduce usage.



Mexican Prickly Poppy, *Argemone mexicana*, is one of the feral species that are invading many of central Australia's waterways. It is listed as a weed of concern. It produces a vast number of seeds which are quickly spread along the riverbeds with any water flow.



Vehicles indiscriminately trying to access the riverbed can cause serious damage both to the banks and the riverbed itself. This can lead to more damage in the form of erosion.

The river system also has its share of abandoned items. Enormous amounts of rubbish were removed from Charles Creek in successive truck loads. There are several bores in the Todd that are orphaned assets and which therefore may be removed at some stage.

Recommendations on signage, landscaping and redundant infrastructure also fall within the remit of the group. Erosion control calls for restriction of vehicle access in certain areas, for example at Tuncks Road Crossing and the sacred site at Gosse Street. More conversation needs to be had with the Town Council about the installation of bollards across a broader area at Gosse Street to limit vehicle access. A fire and vegetation management plan has been developed and is part of the evaluation framework.

Did you know that the Todd River in town has been a Sacred Site since 2020? – I didn't, but now I do. That means works require an appropriate consultation process with and approval by Traditional Owners through the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority.

Thank you John for a great talk – you were generously sharing your time on the exact day your family celebrated no less than two birthdays at once!



The area on the Eastern Bank of the Todd River between Wills Terrace and Stott Terrace, that Ken Johnson has been de-Buffeling for many years, now displays a wonderful diversity of native plants.