



Understanding
Our Natural World
Est. 1880

Field Nats News No 352



Newsletter of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc.

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June 2024

From the President

It has been a very busy month. There was a successful SEANA gathering at Phillip Island, enjoyed by over 100 participants. I thank all of those who worked so hard to make a success of the weekend. Wallabies and Cape Barren Geese were in abundance. The scenery was as expected, beautiful and serene. (Photos 1-5)

The due date for FNN 353 will be, as always, 10 am on the first Tuesday in the month, **June 4th**. Please use

joan.broadberry@gmail.com

1.



The AGM was held on Sunday May 5th with a remarkably good turnout. Tom May was presented with his 40 years membership award and kindly agreed to run the election of office bearers.

He then gave an interesting presentation titled "Four decades of fungus hunting – from hand lens to smart foray".

2.



3.



Congratulations to the new Council members who will keep FNCV running smoothly for yet another busy and productive year. The election results and a summary of the AGM minutes can be found on pages 14 and 15.

continued page 4

4.



Photos:

1. Pyramid Rock excursion
2. Cape Barron Goose at the Nobbies.
3. Wallaby foraging at the Nobbies
4. Kitty Miller Bay
5. Kitty Miller Bay excursion

5.



Photos:
Faye
Campbell

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

All meetings are held at the FNCV Hall, 1 Gardenia St. Blackburn at 8 pm., unless otherwise indicated. On days of extreme weather conditions, excursions may be cancelled. Please check with leader.

June 2024

Sunday 2nd Juniors Group: Excursion— *Plenty Gorge*

Bushwalk, bird watching, possibly reptiles Prior registration essential
<https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/places-to-see/parks/plenty-gorge-parklands>
 Meet at 10.30am - meeting place TBC on registration
 Contact: Adam Hosken adamhosken@gmail.com or 0434500619

Monday 3rd - Fungi Group Meeting: *Fungi Microscopy Session* See the amazing world of fungi in detail. Contact: Tobi May tobi.fungi@gmail.com

Tuesday 4th - Fauna Survey Group: Meeting—*A visit to Botswana: wildlife of the Central Kalahari Desert, Okavango Delta and Chobe National Park.*

Speaker: Sally Bewsher, Field Naturalists Club of Victoria.
 Contact: Ray Gibson 0417 861 651 rgibson@melbpc.org.au

Friday 7th to Monday 10th - Fauna Survey Group: Survey— *King's Birthday weekend Deep Lead, camping at Stawell.* Prior bookings essential.

Contact: Robin Drury 0417 195 148 robindrury6@gmail.com

Friday 7th - Monday 10th – Fungi Group: Foray: *Mali Dunes*—Join us over the King's Birthday long weekend at the FNCV property Mali Dunes for three nights.

Accommodation is on site, BYO all camping gear, water and food, or at Nhill.

Prior registration essential and due by 31st May.

Contact: Hamish Beshara 0428 219 273; hamishbeshara96@gmail.com

Wednesday 12th - Invertebrates Study Group: Zoom meeting—An informal meeting to share sightings, photos and information.

Contact: Wendy Clark wendy.empathy@oprtusnet.com.au

Wednesday 19th - Microscopy Group: Practical meeting—*Compound, dissecting/zoom microscopes set up for members use.* This month we will be focusing on all specimens collected from the FNCV/SEANA weekend in April. These specimens were collected using a permit issued by Phillip Island Nature Parks. Many specimens were collected at Rhyll Swamp and Inlet, Woollamai Peninsula, Conservation Reserves, Kitty Miller Bay, Swan Lake and Churchill Island. Slide preparation equipment will be available for these and freshwater pond samples. Members are encouraged to bring along interesting specimens.
 Contact: Philippa Burgess 0409 866 389

Thursday 20th – Botany Group Meeting—*A microscopic examination of leaves.*

We will examine a variety of leaves and look at how their surface and internal structures adapt them to their environment.

Speaker: Dr Mary Gibson. Contact: Sue Bendel botany@fncv.org.au

Sunday 23rd – Fungi Group: Foray—*Wanderslore Sanctuary*—Meet at 10:30 am . Register for details..

Contact: Hamish Beshara 0428 219 273; hamishbeshara96@gmail.com

Monday 24th - FNCV Council Meeting 7.30 pm. Apologies and agenda items to Wendy Gare admin@fncv.org.au

Tuesday 25th – Day Group: Meeting 10.30 am coffee and a chat, speaker 11 am—*A visit to Botswana: wildlife of the Central Kalahari Desert, Okavango Delta and Chobe National Park.* Speaker: Sally Bewsher, FNCV member.

Contact: Joan Broadberry joan.broadberry@gmail.com

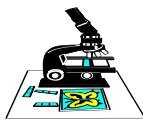
Wednesday 26th – Geology Group: No meeting, winter break.

IMPORTANT

Those wanting to attend any FNCV excursion or camp **MUST** register with the leader at least two full days before the date of the activity. Some leaders may ask for registration to be even earlier. After registering they will receive details of exact locations, meeting places and times.

There are several reasons for this. Attendees can be contacted if the activity is cancelled or arrangements change. It is also essential for insurance purposes.

Non-members are welcome to register and attend FNCV excursions. Club policy is that non-members pay \$5 per excursion.



The policy of the FNCV is that non-members pay \$5 per excursion and \$3 per meeting, to contribute towards Club overheads. Junior non-member families, \$4 per excursion and \$2 per meeting.

Members' news, photos & observations

We always have space for member photos and natural history observations. Please share with us what you have noted in your daily life, travels or garden. Email: joan.broadberry@gmail.com by the first Monday in the month.

Welcome
Welcome

Warmest greetings to these new members who were welcomed into our club at the last Council meeting:

Les Ryan, Ingrid Makowski, Jaryd Smith, Euan Ogawa, Kian Ogawa, Ai Ogawa, Adrian Watson, Dianne Young, Chloe Langlet, Soo Lee Tan, Grace Alsop, Mandela Russell, Arlo Russell, Anna O'Choi, Penny O'Choi and Cath Laurie.

From the President, *continued from page 1.*

Fungi are now appearing in significant numbers, so it is time to go out with your cameras and get some good macro shots. Better still, sign up for the Fungi Group excursions and join your fellow naturalists in the field. My own garden is virtually bristling with fungi which have all popped up in the last two days. (Photos 6-10).

Max Campbell



Photos: M. Campbell

- 6. Fungi from an old eucalyptus tree stump.
- 7. Emerging from the mulch.
- 8. Yellow Stainers in the lawn.
- 9. Emerging from between the bricks and an old sleeper.
- 10. Emerging from an old wattle stump amongst the *Kennidia prostrata*.



Fauna Survey Group

Fauna Survey Group Survey Wednesday 24th—Sunday 28th Red Bluff Conservation Reserve on the edge of the Big Desert.

Leader: David De Angelis

Over the Anzac Day 'long weekend', the Fauna Survey Group, under the leadership of David De Angelis, camped and surveyed in the area around Red Bluff Conservation Reserve. This little-known Victorian reserve is adjacent to the South Australian border, directly south of the Big Desert. There are few records of its fauna. There are in fact two Red Bluffs, encircling a camping ground. Only one has a track to the top. About a dozen people participated in the survey.

Advice from Parks Vic suggested that AWD vehicles should be able to access the camping ground, but this proved not to be the case. The track in was of soft sand with many bumps and a few steep sandhills. There were however, sufficient 4WDs to transport the camping gear, food and water for those whose cars could not get in. The weather was amazing: fine and sunny by day with almost no wind over the five days of the camp. The nights, however, were very cold.

Continued on page 5

1.



2.



3.



4.



Photos:

1. Red Bluff
2. Setting out Elliott traps on Red Bluff
3. Digging pitlines

1-3 J. Broadberry

4. Exploring the Red Bluff which had no access track.
5. Cleaning a 4WD after heavy bouncing on the access track had done its work on fragile food boxes.

4-5 Jaryd Smith

5.



Continued from page 4

Six Elliott trap lines were put in close to the camping area and two pit lines of 10 buckets each were put in further down the access track. Different EVCs were chosen for the survey sites. These included: rocky escarpment, banksia woodland and heathland. The pit lines and Elliott traps were all open for two nights. Two Mitchell’s Hopping Mice were caught in the Elliott traps. Two more were sighted, one in the campsite and the other on the sandy track. Eleven Silky Mice were caught in the pit traps. Two Painted Dragons were sighted around the campground.

All data will be entered into the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas as required by the FSG permit.

Joan Broadberry and Sally Bewsher

Photos:

- 6. Silky Mouse
- 7. Mitchell’s Hopping Mouse
- 8. Mitchell’s Hopping Mouse showing its back legs.

Photos: J. Broadberry



The capture and handling of all animals on FNCV field trips is done strictly in accordance with the Club’s research permits.

**FSG Meeting,
Tuesday 9th April 2024**

The Murray Hardyhead in Victoria. ‘Monitoring and Recovery of a Threatened Small-bodied Fish’ presented by Gabriel Cornell, Waterway Health, DEECA.

The Murray Hardyhead, is a small fish, maximum 8cm inhabiting floodplain waterways and wetlands and is able to tolerate high salinity. It is a boom-bust short lived species breeding in spring and summer. It was historically more widespread than the current distribution, which is now mostly restricted to parts of the southern basin. The decline has been caused by altered water regimes, habitat loss, salinity changes, loss of flooding, and invasive species such as Gambusia.



Murray Hardyhead. *Photo: Gunther Schmida*

Salinity experiments were conducted to test the salt tolerance of adults, eggs and larva. Adult Murray Hardyhead are more tolerant to salt than eggs or larva, and survive in water much saltier than sea water. A management strategy is to add freshwater to lakes to help in the spring breeding season and then allow it to get saltier during summer. Lake Elizabeth near Mildura is used for dumping saline water and has high numbers of Murray Hardyhead, and low numbers of Gambusia.

Raymond Gibson

Extracts from SIG reports given at the last FNCV Council Meeting

Geology Group: Meeting Wednesday 27 March 2024

Professor Ray Cas offered the title: *How different was our planet Earth during its early history (4.5 to 2.5 Ga) compared to the present day, and how do we know?* Below is a brief summary of his presentation.

- From the Hadean to the Archean era, bombardment had meant the surface was molten rock, but a crust developed, heavy elements gravitated to the core and rock with higher silicon content formed the cratons which became the first land continents.
- The 4.4 Ga zircons from Jack Hills in Western Australia formed in an ocean environment. So we know how old at least the early seas were.
- Convection in the Earth's mantle became the engine of spreading sea floor ridges, and subduction of tectonic plates began quite early: about 2.6 Ga.
- Continents grow from cratons by accretion of sediments associated with lithospheric plate subduction and mountain building episodes.
- By contrast, cratons are remarkably stable. Usually very flat: an eroded peneplain. Instance: the Yilgarn, near Perth and including Kalgoorlie. It shows no tectonic deformation. Drill cores confirm it. But pillow lavas evidence ancient seas.
- From the graded beds of turbidite deposits a geo footprint of the past can be recognised.
- The gases emitted from today's volcanoes include no oxygen. Although photosynthesis started about 3 Ga, it was anoxic at first.
- To conclude: mantle plume activity was evident in Kalgoorlie sequences at 2700 Ma. An atectonic setting, deep water, large igneous province volcanism. Land was below the sea. After 2658 Ma, there was a transition toward plate tectonics. Before that, the Archean ocean crust was sheet basalt. Granitoid pluton activity was widespread.

Attendance was 33.

Meeting: Wednesday 24 April 2024

Dr Ashleigh Hood spoke on: *Reefs, redox and the Earth's evolution*. Below is a brief summary of her presentation.

- We have not always had the same air. There was no atmospheric oxygen, yet microbes evolved in an anoxic environment. From the great oxygen event at 2.5 Ga to 800 Ma, the in-between is not well understood. About 1 Ga green algae and multi celled eukaryotes evolved. The Tonian, Cryogenian and Ediacaran periods in the Neoproterozoic, from 1 Ga to 554 Ma, led up to the Paleozoic.
- We can learn about the past from former under-sea carbonate reefs. At Arkaroola in South Australia a Cryogenian reef that grew between two ice ages is 20 km long and would have been 1 km high under the water. Such reefs are of Dolomite and are widespread, eg in Namibia and in China, but did not develop later, by the Cainozoic. Organisms like coral and others unknown built the reefs. Then the calcite transformed to dolomite. From CaCO_3 to $\text{CaMg}(\text{CO}_3)_2$.
- But the natural conditions of heat and anoxia and more cannot be reproduced today.
- The dolomite made cements which can be studied to reveal palaeo-chemistry of sea water.
- From the study of marine carbonate tomography it seems the rise of land plants in the Palaeozoic is the key to the increase of oxygen to today's level of 20%. There were small fish in the Silurian, but massive fish in the Devonian.
- Finally, these days, from spectrographs of their light using the James Webb telescope, the some 4 000 exo-planets in outer space can potentially be probed for their atmospheric gases.

Attendance was 18

Ken Griffiths

Invertebrates Study Group: April Meeting via Zoom – Wednesday 10th April

This meeting was cancelled due to too few registrations (1).

April Field Trip - Sun 14th to Toorong Falls - Full report pages

Wendy Clark

Microscopy Group:

Wednesday's microscope group meeting was attended by three people new to microscopy. One visitor brought their newly purchased microscope with them for some tips and instruction.

The zoom microscopes were popular, set up with many specimens.

We had pond water samples available and attendees learnt to make slides for viewing under the compound microscopes. It was a productive evening with members and visitors very interested in the activities provided. 10 people attended.

Philippa Burgess



Invertebrates Study Group

Field Trip Report Toorong Falls, April 2024 by Wendy Clark

Photos: Wendy Clark, Andrew McCutcheon and David Davies

Toorong Falls 14th April 2024

A small number of members arrived at the magnificent Toorong Falls on a fine and sunny day. The week before had around 70mm of rain after a long dry spell so we were looking forward to seeing how many invertebrates we could find. We started along the track to the falls, following along the side of the creek which was flowing rapidly. We walked along this track to the falls and then returned to the carpark for lunch. After lunch we walked alongside the creek in the opposite direction toward the camping ground.

A Predominance of Flies

There were many types of flies including Brachyceran Flies, Ametopocetus Stilt –legged flies, various bristle flies (Caliphora), Soldier Flies, several types of Muscidae flies including some with interestingly patterned wings, and more. A fly that was extremely camouflaged on the trunk of a tree, was also observed. Question - was the camouflage to avoid predation or to facilitate it to catch its prey?



Brachyceran Fly



Helina collessi



Camouflaged Fly



Blowfly Subfamily Calliphorinae



Bluebottle Fly



Stilt-legged Fly
Genus *Metopochetus*



Soldier Fly
Family Stratiomyidae

Other Invertebrates

Stone flies were also recorded, as well as leeches, a variety of fungi, Bank's Brown and Striped Xenica Butterflies, two species of jumping spiders and several tiny orb weavers. Winged Camponotus ants were seen and Anonychomyrma ants were observed moving up and down the tree trunks.

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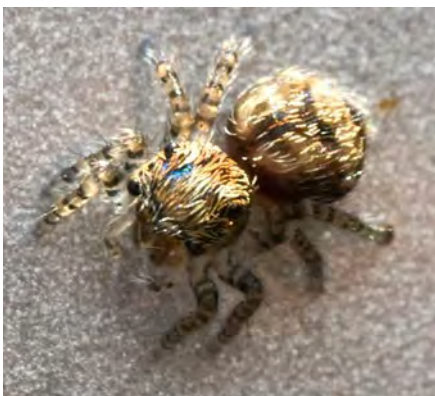
Striped Xenica
Oreixenica kershawi



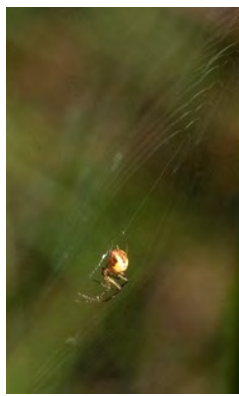
Bank's Brown
Heteronympha banksii



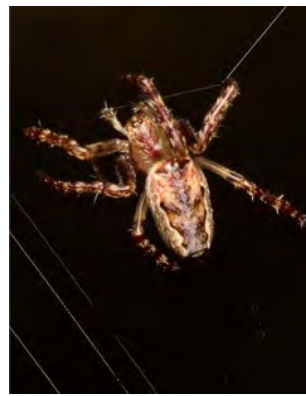
Camponotus Ant



Peacock Spider Genus Maratus



Orb Weaver Spider



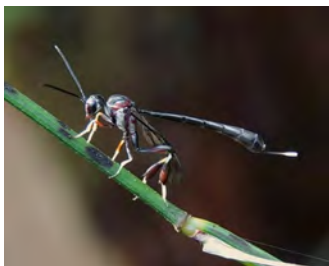
Eastern Bush Orb Weaver
Plebs Eburnus



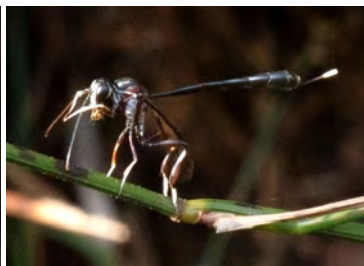
Jumping Spider
Family Salticadae

A Fascinating Wasp

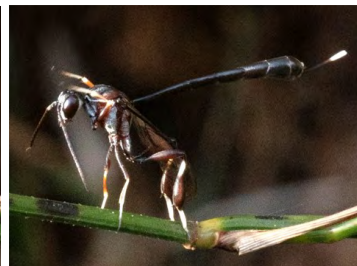
We also saw several wasps including a rather beautiful gasteruptid wasp which had stopped to clean itself. These are usually seen hovering and searching, and they look like a long thin stick with two legs hanging down whilst flying.



Gasteruption brachyurum



Gasteruption brachyurum cleaning itself



Limitations of Camera Gear

What became obvious as the day progressed was the limitations of one's camera gear. A macro lens was sometimes useful when the subject sat still, and definitely needed if the subjects were really small.

What one really needed, was a close focussing telephoto lens to capture photos of the flies and butterflies that were very reactive and would fly off as one approached. You can add a macro filter to the end of the lens to be able to focus closer or add extension tubes between the lens and camera body. However, you still need to make sure your closer proximity does not scare away your subject.

For the full species list and photos see the link below.

<https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/projects/fncv-2024-tig-toorong-falls?tab=observations>

FNCV Facebook report:
42,746 followers.

The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the FNCV.

South Eastern Australian Naturalists Association (SEANA) get-together on Phillip Island 19-22 April 2024 hosted by Field Naturalists Club of Victoria

This was a very successful whole club event. Mega thanks must go to Philippa Burgess, in fact it was suggested Phillip Island might be renamed ‘Philippa Island’ in her honour. Many others contributed a great deal of their time and expertise to the get-together. In particular a huge thank you to Barbara Burns and Wendy Gare.

Nicky Zanen sent a card which sums the event up so well I will quote it in full.

5/5/24 “*Philippa and the A Team! My first SEANA and it was by far the best. If I had known how terrific these get-togethers are I would have come before. Thank you for all the organising of the tours and the talks. I’ve been to Phillip Island often, but never explored it as much as we had the opportunity to do. Thank you all for arranging this SEANA, a job well done.*” Nicky

Each facilitators was asked to write a short report on their activity. Several appear below.

SEANA: Swan Lake, Phillip Island 21-4-24

Swan Lake is a freshwater lake, located in the south west corner of Phillip Island, close to the Penguin Parade and The Nobbies. The surrounding area was used for stock grazing over many years following European settlement, but overuse and erosion became an issue. In the 1960s, moves were made to protect the area and re-establish indigenous vegetation, particularly because Short-tailed Shearwaters nest there.

A haven for many bird species and other wildlife, a leisurely stroll along the gravel pathway and boardwalk to the bird hides, is well worthwhile. A memorial plaque to Roy Wheeler and an information board are found in the welcoming grassy picnic areas by the carpark. Roy was a keen ornithologist and was awarded the Australian Natural History Medallion in 1965.

Banksias, hakeas, eucalypts, she-oaks, tea-trees, *Tetragonia impexicoma* (bower spinach) climbing over the *Lepidosperma* (coast sword sedge), native grasses, Kangaroo Apple and Lomandras line different sections of the track.

Little and Red Wattlebirds were noisily feeding on the flowering banksias. Common Brown Butterflies were plentiful, crickets were chirping and numerous fungi and wallabies were observed along the way. Two bird hides are located beside the lake where we observed a range of waterbirds.

Highlights of the walk were a male Flame Robin, a Shearwater chick in a burrow, Black-fronted Dotterels, White-fronted Chats, Australasian Shovellers and Musk Ducks. Almost the same species were seen on both walks.

Total species seen: Sunday morning 35. Sunday afternoon 38.

Sally Bewsher



SEANA: Phillip Island— A walk at The Nobbies

Saturday afternoon 20/4/2024. 16 degrees, mostly cloudy. After meeting in the car park at the Nobbies 23 people led by Gil Smith and Sue Wooley from Birdlife Bass Coast walked slowly along the boardwalk between the visitor centre and the rocky coastline. Birds were observed on the rocks, in the air and water and we were fortunate to spot from the boardwalk, a Little Penguin who had decided to stay in its burrow for the day.

An echidna provided entertainment as it scratched its way up a steep slope. A dead fur seal was also seen on the rocks. The 17 different species seen are listed in the table below. The first number in the bracket is the number of adult birds seen and the second number is the number of juveniles observed.

| | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Cape Barren Goose (2, None) | Australasian Gannet (2, None) |
| Black-faced Cormorant (1, None) | Black-shouldered Kite (1, None) |
| Sooty Oystercatcher (1, None) | Nankeen Kestrel (1, None) |
| Little Pied Cormorant (1, None) | Little Penguin (1, None) |
| Australian Magpie (1, None) | Shy Albatross (1, None) |
| Kelp Gull (2, None) | Welcome Swallow (1, None) |
| White-faced Heron (2, None) | Silver Gull (9, None) |
| Pacific Gull (4, Recently fledged young) | Little Raven (1, None) |
| Flame Robin (1, None) | |

Binoculars and Gil’s scope greatly helped the identification, especially of the Gannets and the Shy Albatross which were at a distance out to sea. Thanks to Sue and Philip Hopley for recording the birds and sending the list to Birdlife.

Many thanks to Gil and Sue for their expertise and the use of binoculars and Gil’s scope.

Dianne Young (Walk facilitator)

**SEANA—A walk in Oswin Roberts Reserve— Leader: John Eichler
Facilitators: June Anton and Anna Burley**



The Oswin Roberts Reserve is the largest remaining eucalypt woodland on Phillip Island, being 150 acres, including wetlands. This land was donated to the people of Victoria in the early 1900s by Florence Oswin Roberts, a passionate conservationist and wildlife carer, looking after koalas in particular.

Plants identified included: *Rhagodia sp.* Coastal Saltbush, *Banksia ericifolia*, Melaleuca, Spiny-headed Mat-Rush, Bower Spinach (climbing up a tree), Sweet Bursaria, Wonga Vine, Poa, Nodding Rush, Sheoak, Native Cypress, Kangaroo Apple, White Elderberry, Swamp Gum, Wild Cherry, Weeping Grass (*Microlaena*), Dodder Laurel, *Lepidosperma sp.*, Sedge, Kidney-weed, Hop Goodenia, native daisy, Small leaf Clematis, Coastal Beardheath, Blue Gum, Narrow-leaved Peppermint, Broad-leaved Peppermint, Black Wattle, Kangaroo Grass, Coastal Banksia, *Monotoca glauca*, Coastal Teatree, Manna Gum, Creeping Mistletoe, Bridle Creeper, puffballs, *Gymnopilus*, and bracket fungi.

Animals identified were: Kookaburra, Wren, Bull Ants, Click Beetles, Wallaby, Masked Lapwings, Wood Cockroach (under a log), Magpie, Native Centipede, Golden Whistler, Bracken Moths, Portuguese Millipede, Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike, frog, thrush, Pardalote, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Fantail, orange and black wasp, small spider with eggs, Welcome Swallow, Striated Thornbill, White-eared Honeyeater, Galahs, Little Raven, Butcherbird, Brown Goshawk and Passalid Beetle.

June Anton and Anna Burley
Photos: Julie Murray
continued next page



John Eichler (kneeling)



SEANA
Oswin Roberts Reserve
continued from page 10

All photos: Julie Murray

“The Oswin Roberts Reserve was really interesting. Amazing changes in vegetation communities in such a short distance. John was a great guide, drawing attention to things large and small.”

Julie



SEANA: Saturday morning’s adventure to Pyramid Rock and Redcliff Head Lookout. Saturday afternoon’s adventure to Rhyll Inlet
Leader: Graham Patterson, Facilitator: Judith Sise

At around 9 o’clock, sixteen naturalists set off in cars gaily displaying purple ribbons behind Graham with Judith bringing up the rear. Our destination was an easy introduction to the geology of Phillip Island – a pyramid of volcanic basalt, (hence the name Pyramid Rock), on a granitic base. Redcliff Head was the site of an earlier mine for the red pigment from volcanic tuff. An unidentified bird of prey circled above and a pied cormorant sat on the sea-swept rocks below. Coastal flora grew on both sides of the board walk, all named by the walkers or Graham!

The Saturday afternoon excursion to Rhyll Inlet involved carpooling so there was no retracing of the route. The SEANA President and delegates reminded us that the SEANA AGM being held at 5 pm required punctuality.

Graham drew our attention to Rhyll’s historic visitors: George Bass (who named Phillip Island, Snapper Island), Lieutenants James Grant and John Murray (who renamed Snapper Island to Phillip Island) and Captains Baudin and d’Urville, French explorers, whose visit prompted an English settlement to be established just in case the French had colonial intentions.

We then walked through the mangroves and beyond to the mud flats where Egrets, Royal Spoonbills, Ibis, Sooty Oystercatchers, Black Swans, and Terns were seen. Traversing the Swamp Melaleuca/banksia forest, Swamp Wallabies and small fungi were photographed. The Diamond Dolly Quarry, the only cretaceous outcrop on the Island, was found and admired. We arrived in time for the AGM!

Sunday morning’s stroll along the Nobbies Boardwalk. Sunday afternoon’s visit to Forest Caves and Scenic Reserve
Leader: Graham Patterson, Facilitator: Judith Sise

Sunday morning’s stroll was along the boardwalks at the Nobbies to the underwhelming blowhole! As always, a chilly wind searched for loose hats. A penguin conveniently posed at its small hole amongst the newly named Ecological Vegetation Class, (Bird colony succulent herb-land) and Cape Barren Geese and Silver Gulls landed on the verdant hillocks. Graham suggested a further walk along Cat Bay but the smell of coffee from the Nobbies Centre Café was too alluring!

Sunday afternoon’s trip was to Forest Caves then to the Scenic Reserve, close by. Being low tide, many other tourists made the short climb over the sand dunes and along the beach to an outcrop of basalt where the sea has worn away tunnels (caves). The Scenic Reserve was evidence that nature can resurrect itself after human intervention (farming and suburban development and “Hooping”). A lovely sunny afternoon.

Thank you to Graham Patterson, a knowledgeable, calm leader.

Judith Sise

SEANA: Report on a walk at Rhyll Inlet Phillip Island 21/4/2024

Leaders: Gil Smith and Sue Woolley from Birdlife Bass Coast

The morning was still and overcast as 20 people and Gil and Sue set off from the car park at Rhyll Inlet. The vegetation varied from farmland to mixed banksia habitat to mangroves close to the water. The following 50 bird species were recorded. The first number in the bracket is the number of adults that were recorded and the second is the number of young recorded.

| | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Black Swan (50, None) | Rainbow Lorikeet (2, None) |
| Greater Crested Tern (200, None) | Australian Raven (1, None) |
| Bar-tailed Godwit (31, None) | Purple Swamphen (20, None) |
| Australian Pied Oystercatcher (20, None) | Red-browed Finch (3, None) |
| Australian White Ibis (22, None) | Grey Butcherbird (1, None) |
| Masked Lapwing (40, None) | Small grebe spp (2, None) |
| Yellow-billed Spoonbill (14, None) | Fan-tailed Cuckoo (1, None) |
| White-faced Heron (2, None) | Grey Teal (1, None) |
| Little Pied Cormorant (3, None) | Pacific Black Duck (6, None) |
| Great Pied Cormorant (2, None) | Grey Fantail (5, None) |
| Laughing Kookaburra (4, None) | Australian Wood Duck (20, None) |
| Welcome Swallow (4, None) | Royal Spoonbill (2, None) |
| Whistling Kite (1, None) | Brown Thornbill (3, None) |
| Caspian Tern (1, None) | Red Wattlebird (3, None) |
| Willie Wagtail (3, None) | Wedge-tailed Eagle (2, None) |
| Grey Shrike-thrush (4, None) | Eastern Rosella (2, None) |
| Little Wattlebird (10, None) | Grey Currawong (1, None) |
| White-eared Honeyeater (1, None) | New Holland Honeyeater (2, None) |
| Australian Pelican (20, None) | Magpie-lark (4, None) |
| Pacific Gull (2, None) | Australian Magpie (4, None) |
| Common Starling (20, None) | Spotted Pardalote (2, None) |
| Cape Barren Goose (4, None) | White-plumed Honeyeater (1, None) |
| Great Egret (3, None) | Common Blackbird (1, None) |
| Superb Fairy-wren (5, None) | Golden Whistler (1, None) |
| Galah (5, None) | Little Egret (1, None) |

Numerous wallabies grazed in the farming paddocks.

The above-listed birds were all seen in the first kilometre of the walk. Most of the group then returned to the car park. People who did not have their own binoculars were very pleased to use the binoculars supplied by Sue. It was also beneficial to view species on the inlet with the scope that Gil provided. Numerous wallabies grazed in the farming paddocks.

Thanks to Sue and Philip Hopley for recording the bird list and forwarding it to Birdlife. Many thanks to Gil and Sue for their expertise and equipment.

Dianne Young (Walk facilitator)

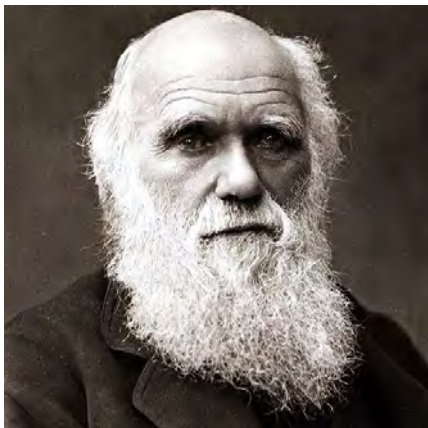


Photo left: Charles Darwin: Remind you of anyone?

(Clue: see page 15)

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If you don't have access to email, the FNCV office will pass on your message. Kathy will then be in contact with you.

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Thank you to those who helped produce FNN 352
Wendy Gare, Joan Broadberry and Sally Bewsher



Day Group

The habitats of Victoria's Faunal Emblems; the Helmeted Honeyeater and Leadbeater's Possum. Speaker: Sue Bendel

Leadbeater's Possum (*Gymnobelideus leadbeateri*) was declared extinct in 1960, as no live specimen had been seen for 51 years, since 1909. Then in 1961, the possum was sighted by naturalist and geology student Eric Wilkinson near Marysville, at Cambarville, 90 to 120 minutes north-east of Melbourne – far from its original known habitat in the swamp forests of Western Gippsland around the Bass River region, towards Western Port Bay and Phillip Island. In 1971 Leadbeater's Possum was declared the official faunal emblem of Victoria, as it is found only in this state.

Leadbeater's Possum is a small (approx. 30cm), agile, nocturnal marsupial. It is distinguished from the related Sugar Glider by the absence of a gliding membrane and has a club-shaped tail, broader near the tip than at the base. The possums require old growth eucalypt trees with established large hollows in which they can nest. Each colony requires several suitable nest trees. Paperbark, Acacias and Teatree contribute to a suitable understorey in which they can move around and feed. Highland possums are now located in small pockets of Mountain Ash forest and sub-alpine woodlands in Victoria's Central Highlands from Toolangi, to Matlock and Mt Baw Baw. A small lowland breeding population is found to the east of Melbourne at Yellingbo. A third small group known as Snow Possums has been discovered at Lake Mountain.

The population of Leadbeater's Possum has experienced a decline in numbers and range since the mid-1980s and are now listed as critically endangered under the EPBC Act and under Victorian legislation. Sue's presentation concentrated on factors which have contributed to this. The Black Saturday bushfires of 2009 burned around 45% of Leadbeater's Possum's reserved habitat. Extensive logging, destruction of nesting trees, access roads and firebreaks, have increased the flammability and led to the fragmentation of old growth forests.

Conservation measures include: providing nest boxes, a planting program and importantly taking action against the destruction of habitat, as in the Friends of Leadbeater's Possum's case in the High Court Case. At Yellingbo, young possums are captured before they seek their own territories, taken to Healesville Sanctuary, mated and released back into the wild when they are older and more able to survive. A future conservation goal is the establishment of the Great Forest National Park.

The Helmeted Honeyeater *Lichenostomus melanops cassidex* is considered to be the largest and most colourful of the four subspecies of the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater *Lichenostomus melanops*. It was chosen as Victoria's bird emblem in 1971. Numbers declined to a low of 50 birds in 1990. In March 2022 there were only approximately 200 birds. They are listed as critically endangered under the EPBC Act.

The Helmeted Honeyeater's habitat, overlaps with that of Leadbeater's Possum. The Helmeted Honeyeater prefers riparian and swamp forests dominated by Manna Gum, (*Eucalyptus viminalis*), Swamp Gum (*Eucalyptus ovata*) and Mountain Swamp Gum (*Eucalyptus camphora*). Both faunal emblems are found at Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve. Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater was formed in 1989 and operate an indigenous plant nursery which raises funds and assists in planting programs. Young birds bred in captivity are released into reintroduction sites, some provided with supplementary feeding. The 10 year Millennium drought wiped out colonies in the Bunyip State Park. In 2021 a new reintroduction site in the O'Shannassy catchment was established.

On behalf of the Day Group I would like to extend our thanks to Sue for her informative presentation.

Please consider joining, getting involved in and donating to:

Joan Broadberry

www.leadbeaters.org.au



www.helmetedhoneyeater.org.au



Extracts from minutes FNCV Annual General Meeting 1st May 2024



1. Welcome: Meeting commenced at 2.05 pm. Max Campbell welcomed 42 members and four visitors with two proxy votes registered
2. Apologies: seven apologies were received
3. Minutes of the 2023 AGM were accepted.
4. President's Report: See Annual Report—https://www.fncv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/publications/annual_reports/annual-report-2023.pdf
5. Treasurer's Report and 6. Appointment of Auditor. See Annual Report.
7. New FNCV membership fees to commence 1st July 2024 approved:

| Fee Type | Rate |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Single | \$91 |
| Family | \$118 |
| Single Country/Concession | \$68 |
| Family Country/ Concession | \$91 |
| Student | \$41 |
| Junior Family | \$55 |
| Junior additional | \$18 |
| Schools/ Clubs | \$105 |
| Instituti onal | \$182 |
| Institutional overseas | \$196 |



Photo: Colin Gare

| 8. FNCV Environment Fund. List of Successful Grants, April 2024 | | |
|---|---|-----------------|
| 1. Adam Muyt, an Invasive weed specialist. | Funding to assist with a unique project to follow up, 30 years later, on his own, prior research on vegetation changes in inner Melbourne's remnant landscapes. Findings to be published in the <i>Victorian Naturalist</i> . | \$1,250 |
| 2. Suzi Duncan. Landowner Whittlesea. Supported, but not funded, by the City of Whittlesea. | Funding to help with the preparation and publishing of a booklet on the Non-Egg and Bacon Pea Plants of Whittlesea (2 nd in the series) | \$1,100 |
| 3. Maxwell Campbell, FNCV President. | \$1,250 to purchase a Microscope Camera, plus adaptors and lenses. To be used in teaching and demonstration sessions to train groups in the photography of micro-organisms. | \$1,250 |
| 4. Kinglake Friends of the Forest. | Grant to fund more equipment so volunteers can collect extra data to feed into the Frame Model, which is used to help predict the level of fire threat in the surrounding forests. | \$1,030 |
| 5. Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group. Non-government, advisory group. Not-for profit, charity status. | Grant to fund the purchase of trail cameras to be used in remote monitoring of Wetlands in the Goulburn, Murray and Loddon catchments. Current monitoring is done quarterly, by onsite visits. | \$1,250 |
| 6. Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater. | Funds to purchase 4 bespoke wire mesh benches for their native plant nursery to fit crates to hold forestry tube stock. | \$1,200 |
| 7. Mali Dunes FNCV Property. Merinda Thorpe contractor. | 18.2 work hours, track clearing/maintenance at Mali Dunes. | \$1,250 |
| 8. Mali Dunes FNCV Property. Iestyn Hosking contractor. | 18.2 work hours weed clearing at Mali Dunes. | \$1,250 |
| 9. St Arnaud Field Naturalists Club. | Funds to employ an IT professional to complete the upgrading of the Club's website and provide website management training to volunteers | \$1,250 |
| | | <u>\$10,830</u> |

9. Presentation of Long Term Member's Certificates

Four members have been awarded certificates of Long-term Membership in recognition of being a member of the FNCV for a continuous period of 40 years.

Murray Haby has been a member since 1984. He regrets that he is unable to attend due to illness.

Russell Ward has been a member since 1984. He is interstate and unable to attend, much to his regret.

Bertram Lobert is currently in the Strathbogie Ranges. John Harris read out a statement from him, in which he said he was sorry not to be able to attend. He was studying at Monash University when he was encouraged to join the FNCV. He enjoyed working with the Club until 1990 when he moved to North East Victoria. Since then he has not been able to attend many meetings, but still enjoys reading our publications. He is still active in environmental issues.

Dr Tom May was present to accept his award with thanks.

Continued next page

Continued from previous page

10. Election of 2024 Council:

Maxwell Campbell declared all positions vacant. Dr Tom May took over as Acting Chair for elections. There was one nomination for each specific position so all were duly declared elected. There were seven nominations for the remaining six Councillor positions, so a vote was held. Maryse Hermence and Bill McInnes both spoke before the vote and both were elected. Deb Colville also nominated but was not present and was not elected.

| <i>Position on Council</i> | <i>Name</i> |
|---|------------------|
| President | Maxwell Campbell |
| Vice President | Philippa Burgess |
| Secretary | Barbara Burns |
| Treasurer | Barbara Burns |
| Councillor representing Botany Group | Sue Bendel |
| Councillor representing Day Group | Joan Broadberry |
| Councillor representing Fauna Survey Group | Raymond Gibson |
| Councillor representing Fungi Group Councillor | Melvin Xu |
| Councillor representing Geology Group | Ken Griffiths |
| Councillor representing Invertebrates Study Group | Wendy Clark |
| Councillor representing Juniors Group | Adam Hosken |
| Councillor representing Marine Research Group | Leon Altoff |
| Councillor representing Microscopy Group | Philippa Burgess |
| Councillor | Susan Dempsey |
| Councillor | John Harris |
| Councillor | Maryse Hermence |
| Councillor | Andrej Hohmann |
| Councillor | William McInnes |
| Councillor | Judith Sise |

11. Guest Speaker: Dr Tom May was introduced by Max Campbell, who advised that Tom has had a long and illustrious connection with the FNCV after becoming a member in 1984. In 1995 Tom joined the Council; in 1996-7 he became the Botany Representative; he became Vice President in 1997-98 and went on to be President from 1998 to 2001.

Tom provided various reports for the Field Nats News from 1995 to 2002, and published 13 articles in *The Victorian Naturalist* between 1989 and 2011. He was the Fungimap originator and convenor in the early 2000s when the FNCV was instrumental in setting it up with the Royal Botanic Gardens.

In 2014 Tom was awarded the Australian Natural History Medallion for Mycology. He is one of Australia's most renowned experts on fungi, and the author of several celebrated books on the topic. Tom is currently the Principal Research Scientist (Mycology), at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria.

Tom May spoke on *Four decades of fungus hunting - from hand lens to smart foray*, giving the audience a fascinating insight in methods of researching fungi pre and post the age of artificial intelligence.

Meeting closed 4.25 pm and was followed by afternoon tea.



Dr Tom May receiving his long term member certificate from President, Max Campbell.

Photo: J. Broadberry



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Western Explorer Expedition

**12-Day Easy Camping Tour – Departs Broome 17 July 2024
- Max 12 participants**

On this tour we travel from Broome to Perth through Western Australia's outback country. Rugged ancient landscapes including Karijini National Park, Mt Augustus and the Kennedy Ranges are not easy locations to get to, but are well worth the journey. This 12-day tour is an ideal way to explore all three in one go, and to top it off, the trip has been timed to coincide with WA's spectacular northern wildflower season. Also enjoy the ease and relaxed pace of *Easy Camping* – no more setting up tents at the end of the day, instead they will be ready and waiting so all you have to do is relax, explore or freshen up!



Borneo Wildlife Adventure

**14-Day Accommodated Tour – Departs Kuching 15
October 2024 - Max 12 participants**

On our jungle adventure, we travel to the Malay Archipelago in Southeast Asia to the world's third-largest island, Borneo, where jungles and rainforests dominate the landscape and life flourishes beneath the forest canopy. This rugged island is extremely rich in biodiversity; some 222 mammals, 420 birds, 150 reptiles, 100 amphibians and over 15,000 plants call the island home. Bird watchers, botany enthusiasts and general wildlife viewers alike will be delighted by the sheer variety of fauna and flora. We hope you will join us as we explore the wildlife of Borneo!



South West National Parks

**13-Day Accommodated Tour – Departs Perth 12 October
2024 - Max 12 participants**

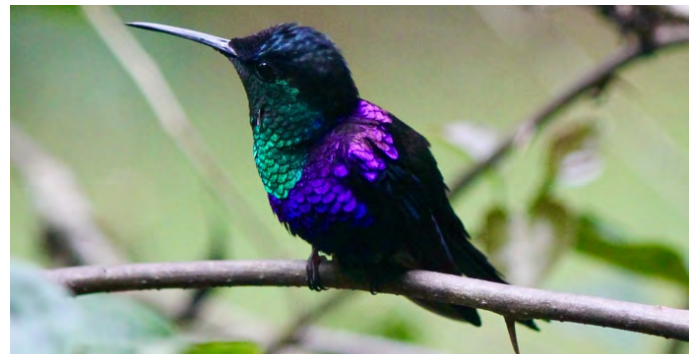
Western Australia's beautiful South West region is one of the world's 34 recognised biodiversity hotspots. Nearly 80% of the plant species in the SW are not found anywhere else on earth, making the area extremely unique. Our visit is also during the southern wildflower season - come and experience the colourful varieties for yourself! Tour highlights include National Parks (Dryandra Woodland, Fitzgerald River, Stirling Range, Cape Le Grande and Waychinicup), and other natural wonders like Wave Rock, Woody Island, Pink Lake and the Valley of the Giants' Tree Top Walk.



Costa Rica Wildlife Safari

**17-Day Accommodated Tour – Departs San Jose 25
October 2024 - Maximum of 12 participants**

Costa Rica is world-renowned for its biodiversity and exotic wildlife, from sloths and jaguars to toucans and hummingbirds. On this 17-day tour we will explore mangroves, riverways and rainforests, starting in the tropical coastal lowlands. Moving further inland, the landscape becomes more temperate with different birds, plants and other wildlife. We then visit Costa Rica's volcanic highlands and experience the country's spectacular cloud forests. With over 500,000 species of flora and fauna, this small country counts for 4% of all species on Earth.



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