



Understanding  
Our Natural World  
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# Field Nats News No 355



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Reg. No. A0033611X

Office Hours: Monday and Tuesday 10 am - 4 pm

September 2024

## From the President

Even though it is still very cold and wintery, my *Kennedia prostrata* and *Hardenbergia violacea* have now been flowering prolifically for weeks so spring is well on the way. We will soon be undertaking some excursions to photograph invertebrates so keep checking the Calendar of Events for activities and updates.

In view of our future involvement with the Gardiners Creek Collaboration project, I decided to test some sampling methods by checking the diversity of micro-organisms in a part of Scotchmans Creek that has now been regenerated for some decades and seems to have a relatively stable pond system. The water was still turbid from recent rains and high stream flow, but the vegetation around the pond at Huntingdale Road, Oakleigh was relatively undisturbed. There were many diatoms, desmids, filamentous algae, blue-green algae, testate amoebae, flagellates, bacteria, gastrotrichs, small crustaceans and ciliates but, surprisingly, few gymnoamoebae in the samples taken. (Photos 1 -7 from Scotchmans Creek)

There is a small window of opportunity to assess such samples after collection since the BOD (Biological Oxygen Demand), pH, temperature and general chemical status begin to change quickly once the sample is taken. The nature of the container is also important since plastic may release organic compounds which can impact the living organisms. Glass containers are preferable and samples should never be diluted with tap water which contains fluorine, chlorine, plastic residues and metal ions, all of which affect the organisms in the sample. Triple distilled water is an option if samples require dilution. Soon after collection, the BOD increases and the number of bacteria increases exponentially effectively killing many of the protists and small invertebrates.

The due date for FNN 356 will now be the first MONDAY in the month, 2nd September 2024. Please use my email [joan.broadberry@gmail.com](mailto:joan.broadberry@gmail.com) A copy sent to [fnnews@fncv.org.au](mailto:fnnews@fncv.org.au) would be appreciated.



Diatom *Cymbella* sp.



Diatom *Pinnularia* sp.



*Uroleptus* sp. a ciliate protist.

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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.

### September 2024

**Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> - Fauna Survey Group Meeting: *Comparing traditional survey methods with camera traps and machine learning for detecting small fauna: a field study from the Mallee.*** Speaker: Ange Pestell, PhD Student, Deakin University.  
Contact: Sally Bewsher 03 9752 1418

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> - Invertebrates Study Group Meeting: *The Small Sap Suckers - Psyllids, Spittle Bugs and others***  
Speaker: Wendy Clark. Contact: Wendy Clark [inverts@fncv.org.au](mailto:inverts@fncv.org.au)

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> – Botany Group ZOOM Meeting: *COVRAM: A rapid assessment tool for vegetation condition.*** Speaker: Ian Davidson. Please register for zoom link.  
Contact: Sue Bendel [possum56@gmail.com](mailto:possum56@gmail.com)

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> - Invertebrates Study Group Excursion: *Baluk Willam Reserve***  
First flush of Insects, orchid pollinators, Peacock Spiders and more  
Contact: Wendy Clark [inverts@fncv.org.au](mailto:inverts@fncv.org.au)

**Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> - FNCV Council Meeting: 7.30 pm.** Apologies and agenda items to Wendy Gare [admin@fncv.org.au](mailto:admin@fncv.org.au)

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> – Day Group meeting 10.30 am** for coffee and a chat, speaker 11 am ***Archibald James Campbell – ornithologist, naturalist and photographer.*** John Gould's foremost successor in Australia  
Speaker: Dr Gary Presland, author, FNCV librarian, archivist, editor *The Victorian Naturalist*.  
Contact: Joan Broadberry [joan.broadberry@gmail.com](mailto:joan.broadberry@gmail.com)

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup>—Geology Group Excursion:** Various times during the day. ***Tour of the Victorian Tunnelling Centre training centre Chadstone which has replica tunnels and tunnelling equipment.*** It is important that Philippa Burgess [pgburgess18@gmail.com](mailto:pgburgess18@gmail.com) be contacted as soon as possible as our booking needs to be secured. **See also notice p8 FNN 354**

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> – Geology Group Meeting:** Speake: Dr Ross Digby, *Associate Director for the Centre of Energy and Infrastructure at Holmesglen Institute and the Victorian Tunnelling Centre.* Contact: Ken Griffiths [geology@fncv.org.au](mailto:geology@fncv.org.au)

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup>— Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> Fauna Survey Group working bee and survey** at our field station, Mali Dunes. Grand final holiday long weekend. (Exact dates to be confirmed). Prior registration essential.  
Contact: Andrej Hohmann 0410 934 779 or [andrej\\_hohmann@yahoo.com.au](mailto:andrej_hohmann@yahoo.com.au)

**Friday 27<sup>th</sup> – Juniors Group No Meeting: *Grand Final holiday.***

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

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](mailto: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:

*Dr Joy Whitton, Ruby Hastwell Dargaville and Emma Lennon.*



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

## Advertising in the Field Nats News

**VERY REASONABLE RATES**

Contact Wendy in the Field Nats Office

[admin@fncv.org.au](mailto:admin@fncv.org.au)

9877 9860

(Mon –Tues 10 am—4 pm)

A successful second-hand book-sale was held on Saturday 10th August. A full report will appear in the next issue of Field Nats News.

**FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS**  
44,300

**Thank you to all those who helped produce FNN 355**

Joan Broadberry, Wendy Gare and Sally Bewsher

[bookshop@fncv.org.au](mailto:bookshop@fncv.org.au)  
for any orders or bookshop queries.

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

### REMINDER: NEW BOOKSHOP BANK ACCOUNT

The FNCV Bookshop has a new bank account. If you have the details of the old account in your on-line banking, please amend them ☺  
The new details are:

**FNCV Bookshop**  
**Bendigo Bank BSB 633 000**  
**Account number 21838326**  
**Please use your name as the reference.**

All of our banking is now with Bendigo Bank, so please try not to muddle up the bookshop account with the FNCV account used to pay your membership fees or register for events etc.

Thank you!  
Kathy Himbeck  
Bookshop Manager





# Fungi Group

Foray to the Gurdies Sunday 7th July

The sun was shining on Sunday 7th of July for the fungi group as we went on our foray in The Gurdies.

We had a great turn out and were happy to see a variety of interesting fungal specimens. In particular Hamish was excited to find a gorgeous Hydnum, there were many little Marasius, and also lots of Cortinarius, in particular green skinheads (*Cortinarius austrovenetus*). We also found some interesting Black Cup Fungi that we think may be *Urnula campylospora*.

We were lucky to find a number of native orchids, including an Autumn Wasp Orchid (*Chiloglottis curviclavia*) and lots of Nodding Greenhoods (*Pterostylis nutans*). A Tiger Snake (*Notechis scutatus*) blessed us with its presence before it slowly slithered back into the scrub.

(Continued on page 5)



Photos: (anticlockwise)

- 1. *Cortinarius austrovenetus*
- 2. *Urnula campylospora* (?)
- 3. *Pterostylis nutans*
- 4. *Notechis scutatus*
- 5. *Chiloglottis curviclavia*







(Continued from page 4)

*Russula lenkunya*



Towards the end of the foray we stumbled upon a small hole that went very, very deep. We think this was from people taking a soil sample as there is a sand quarry near by. We had a lot of fun trying to work out just how deep it was—probably about five metres!

As the day went on, we grew a bit tired and spent about five minutes trying to work out whether we had found an ‘egg sack’ of a stinkhorn fungus (*Phallus impedicus*), only to realise that it was in fact a rock, (see 7, above right). Another fantastic foray for this year.

Georgia Beasley

(Continued from page 1) **From the President**



*Litonotus sp.* a ciliate protist.

Some organisms are more tolerant of pollution than others, so the diversity and nature of the microbiota is a good indicator of water quality and ecosystem health. It is important therefore that samples are processed quickly before they change.

I hope to train more people in microscopical methods so that FNCV can contribute meaningfully to the longer-term monitoring of aquatic biodiversity of the waterway itself. There will be more microscope training sessions coming up for those who are interested in becoming involved in the monitoring and its planning.



Active *Diffugia sp.* A testate amoeba with a test composed of sand granules.



*Arcella sp.* a testate amoeba with a chitinous test.



*Closterium sp.* A desmid.

Max Campbell (All images M. Campbell)



## A Beautifully Patterned Moth in Blackburn

by Wendy Clark

I found this tiny moth in my house in Blackburn. Unfortunately, it had died, but I still decided to photograph it for a record and to get it identified. Something with distinctive patterns like that should be easy to identify – shouldn't it?

One thing about a dead specimen, is it is easier to get more of the identifying features, like the underside and the face and the mouthparts. I then posted the results on iNaturalist.



The identification came back quite quickly, but I suppose it is winter and the volume of insects to ID would be much lower than in warmer seasons. It was a Timber Moth in the Genus *Lichenaula*. These are in a family Xyloryctidae. I knew nothing about these moths, so I did some further reading. The links in iNaturalist led me to Wikipedia for some basic information.

Most of the Genera of Xyloryctidae are found in the Indo-Australian region. Many of the moths are tiny, but some can be as large as 66mm, making them giants among the micromoths.

### But why were they called Timber Moths?

'The first recorded instance of a common name for these moths comes from Swainson's *On the History and Natural Arrangement of Insects*, 1840, where members of the genus *Cryptophasa* are described as hermit moths. This is an allusion to the caterpillar's habit of living alone in a purely residential burrow in a tree branch, to which it drags leaves at night, attaching them with silk to the entrance to the burrow and consuming the leaves as they dry out.

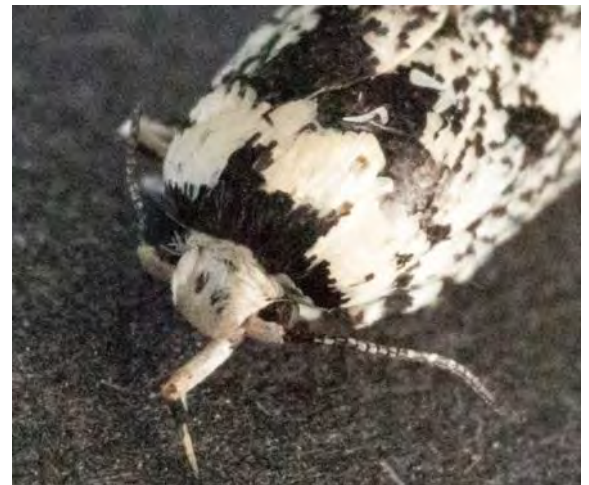
The name '**timber moths**' was coined by the Queensland naturalist Rowland Illidge in 1892, later published in 1895 and serves to distinguish these moths from other wood-boring Australian moths such as ghost moths (Hepialidae) and giant wood moths (Cossidae), which feed on sap or wood. It refers to the fact that the larvae of most members of this family are arboreal, whether they burrow into branches, bore into flower-heads, tunnel under bark, or feed on lichens. Moths of the genus *Maroga* are pests of wattles (Acacia) and have crossed over from their wild host plant to become serious pests of cultivated stone-fruit trees, particularly cherries.' (Extract from Wikipedia)

### So now, how do I get to a species name?

There were 103 Genera listed for Xyloryctidae and 32 species listed for the Genus *Lichenaula*

To get an accurate identification to species level, you would most likely need the specimen, not just photos, a microscope and all the published information on the species. Though location is a good start, one can't just rely on it as these moths can fly, travel with timber being moved, be blown in the wind etc.

With insects, it is very hard to get many of them down to species level, especially, just by looking at a photo!





## Botany Group July 2024 *Raising Rarity: Creating meaningful and sustainable conservation outcomes through community-based outreach.* Speaker: *Russell Larke*

Thank you to Russell Larke from the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne (RBGC) whose presentation was titled, *Raising Rarity: Creating meaningful and sustainable conservation outcomes through community-based outreach*. Sixteen participants enjoyed an informative and interesting evening learning about a program from the RBGC that involves the community in propagating and protecting threatened plants.

Russell began by describing the landscaped area, known as The Australian Garden within the larger property of RBGC. The Landscaped garden is composed of smaller gardens designed to inspire visitors to use Australian plants in their own gardens. Other portions of the garden are also given over to themes. For example, there is the Eucalypt Garden, which is further divided into Grampians, Iron bark Basin (Chiltern), Goldfields and Mt Pilot sections. All describe stories of Victorian forests and plants.

The story of fire in the landscape is illustrated through repetitive plantings of stringy-bark and heathlands. Montane and sub-alpine flora are exhibited, including alpine daisies, (which also have the issue of being browsed by Swamp Rats). There is a Gondwanian Garden, planted with some ancient species, including conifers and with plants from cool and warm temperate rainforests. Plants exhibited include some from the cloud forests above Cairns.

Another part of the Australian Garden contains many raised planting-beds to be used for research projects. This section previously held Megan Hirst's PhD project that involved growing alpine daisies. As part of the Raising Rarity project the beds now contain plants that are being grown to protect species that face possible extinction. The plants are measured regularly and monitored for health with documentation recording their suitability to be brought into cultivation. The most suitable plants can then be further tested and monitored and go on to be grown by partner organisations for general cultivation. Seeds are collected, tested for viability and stored in seed banks for future germination.

There are twenty-four species in the project along with their associated pollinators and mycorrhizae. This project integrates horticulture with the science of seed ecology and conservation genetics. Some of the species included are:

*Ficus coronata*, the Sandpaper Fig from the Howe Ranges near Mallacoota

*Grevillea confertifolia*, the Grampians Grevillea from the Major Mitchell Plateau in the Grampians (Photo below)

*Xerochrysum palustre*, Swamp Everlasting, from many wetlands, including one in Melbourne's outer south-eastern suburbs that members of the botany group monitored for many years with past president Karen Lester.

*Craspedia canens*, Grey Billy-buttons, from Wellington Shire

*Coronidium gunnianum*, Pale Swamp Everlasting, indigenous to many places including the Yarra Ranges

*Dianella amoena*, Matted Flax Lily, found in many places including one in Melbourne's outer south-eastern suburbs that members of the botany group monitored with Karen Lester for many years. We also planted some of these in this location using grant money to purchase the plants.

*Eucalyptus leucoxyloides* subsp. *connata*, Melbourne Yellow Gum from Studley Park in Kew and the Brisbane Ranges.

*Grevillea dimorpha*, Flame Grevillea endemic to the Grampians

*Prostanthera walteri*, the Blotchy Mint-bush from the Errinundra region

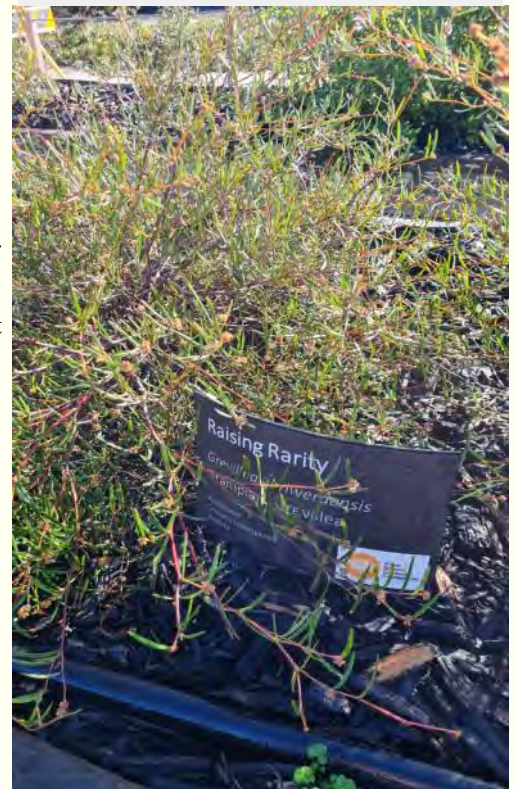
*Boronia latipinna*, Grampians Boronia from Mount Thackeray in the Grampians

The aim of the project is to get many people from various parts of the community to be involved in conservation projects for the protection of Victorian flora. These participants include schools, local government and other botanical gardens. Eventually it is hoped to make some of these rare and threatened plants available in nurseries for purchase by the public.

The Raising Rarity project has involved two schools, Penleigh Essendon Grammar at their Loch Sport property, and Rosedale Primary School. The students attend a Discovery Day where they are asked about threatened species. The usual response is normally an animal, often not even from Australia. They are surveyed again at the completion of their project. The students go on to grow rare and threatened species from their local areas. They monitor the plants during the various growth stages, for example recording how long the plants took to emerge and collect data on first leaves and pH etc. Seed is collected at the end of the season to return to RBGC's Victorian Conservation Seedbank.

Another partnership with the City of Melbourne and the University of Melbourne selected some threatened plants within the city for the purposes of plant conservation. The first planting of the project was the critically endangered *Grevillea jephcottii*, Pine Mountain Grevillea which was planted in Royal Park. These two organisations are now involved in further work to protect indigenous threatened species with many planted in a number of locations in the City of Melbourne.

Grampians Grevillea,  
*Grevillea confertifolia* in its research box  
at RBGC



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The Raising Rarity team has worked with other botanical gardens in Shepparton, Colac, Ballarat, the Dandenong Ranges, Sale conservation hub, WAMA in the Grampians, Mallacoota endemic garden and at Wilson Botanic Park in the City of Casey. The aim is to establish a collection of plants at several distinct sites and to support these gardens to protect rare plants found in their local areas.

Rare plants in the research beds on display at Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne, together with additional plants in the nursery have been used to trial 25 rare plants with the aim of making these available for purchase by the public in the future. Bringing these plants into cultivation will help prevent extinction of these species in case the wild populations become increasingly threatened through fire, floods, habitat loss, disease or predation. The seeds collected from the plants in the project are supplied to the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne seedbank.

Sue Bendel

## Extracts from SIG reports given at the last FNCV Council Meeting

### Botany Group: Meeting 18th July

The speaker, Russell Larke from the Royal Botanic Gardens, gave a very interesting presentation. Sixteen people attended. A detailed report appears on pages 7 and 8.

### Fauna Survey Group: Meeting 2nd July

Dr Toby Ross from Deakin University was the speaker: '*Are Pollutants and diseases endangering global flyways.*'

Many shorebirds are declining, such as the Curlew Sandpiper, Eastern Curlew, Red Knot and Bar-tailed Godwit. Two causes highly implicated in this decline are:

- loss of tidal feeding habitat
- climate change

Tidal flats such as in the Yellow Sea in China have been reclaimed for industry which has reduced feeding habitat. In the Arctic, earlier snow melt has meant less food for the chicks at the time they need it most.

Pollutants are also getting into the birds via the food chain and through polluted waterways. Some found were :

- persistent organic pollutants (POPs), Perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)
- other chemical residues like PCBs, DDT,
- Chlordane residues

The residues were found to be at trace levels of parts per billion in each of the species tested, and there wasn't a correlation with population decline.

### Equipment Day

There were no surveys in July but Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> was our equipment day and stocktake, followed by a committee meeting to plan future activities. (A short report appears on page 9 FNN 354.) Also in focus is the renewal of our research permit for the next three years.

Ray Gibson

### Invertebrates Study Group: Meeting 17<sup>th</sup> July

We had a good attendance at our July meeting where our main attraction was Max Campbell talking on an Introduction to Arthropod Anatomy. Max gave an excellent talk and it soon became evident how complex this subject was even though it was explained well with many diagrams. Despite a large amount of information being discussed, it was still only the beginning. We hope to have part 2 of this fascinating and useful subject at a later date.

Wendy showed some photos of recently emerged Native Slugs – *Cystopelta purpurea*. The recent rains seem to have initiated hatching and over several days in the early morning rain, slugs from 3 – 7 mm at full stretch were seen on Gahnia leaves.

Wendy Clark

### Juniors Group: Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> July

The Juniors had an excursion to Royal Park and the Trin Warren Tam-Boore Bellbird Waterhole. Around seven families and 20 people attended, and the children spotted a number of birds, including a Black-shouldered Kite.

We have had a number of new families join, and have new children in the 5-9 year old age group. Work is being done on the 2025 program..

Adam Hoskin

**Marine Research Group:** No club activity during colder months. Members are working on research commenced during our field work season.





## **FNCV Environment Fund: Call for Grant Applications, Due Date: Monday 7th October 2024.**

The FNCV Environment Fund has the following purposes:

- To support and finance environmental research, in particular research into the biodiversity of Victoria.
- To support and finance dissemination of information on the natural environment by any legitimate means, including public lectures, seminars, field trips, courses and publications.
- To support and finance practical projects aimed at preserving and enhancing the biodiversity of Victoria.

The FNCV Environment Fund is administered by a committee consisting of John Harris (Chair), Barbara Burns, (Secretary and Treasurer), Ian Moodie, Cathy Willis, Bruce McGregor, Ian Temby, Philippa Burgess.

**The committee calls for applications for the October round of funding for 2024.  
Requests for projects between \$200 and \$1,500 will be considered.**

Applications can be from organisations or individuals, but in the latter case must be supported by an organisation. Suitable organisations are established natural history or environmental organisations (Field Naturalist Clubs, Landcare Groups etc.), educational institutions or government departments. Multiple applications from one research group are not encouraged.

**Applications for funding close Monday 7th October 2024 at 3 pm.  
Late applications will not be accepted.**

All applications will be acknowledged and results of applications communicated within **2 weeks** from the 7th October.

Grant money is required to be spent within 12 months of notification of receiving a grant with a short report on the project supplied to the FNCV within 12 months of the same date. The report can be published by FNCV and successful applicants are encouraged to communicate the results of their project to the Club via articles, talks or field trips.

Additional information and application forms are available at <http://www.fncv.org.au/environment-fund/> or from the FNCV office, 98779860 or by email: [admin@fncv.org.au](mailto:admin@fncv.org.au)

**The following information is required by the application.**

- Project title.
- Project description (max 250 words).
- How the project meets the aims of the Fund.
- Budget (include GST on all relevant items). Also indicate other sources of funding.
- Indicate if the application is from an individual or organisation and give the name and contact details of the individual and/or organisation.
- Applicant name and contact details, including mailing address/phone/email.
- Signature of applicant.

Applications should be sent to:

**Secretary FNCV Environment Fund,  
Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc.,  
1 Gardenia Street, Blackburn Vic 3130.**

or emailed to [admin@fncv.org.au](mailto:admin@fncv.org.au)

*Your support is much appreciated.*

**Donations to the FNCV Environment Fund are tax deductible.**

Donation forms can be down-loaded from the website [www.fncv.org.au/donate-to-the-club/](http://www.fncv.org.au/donate-to-the-club/) or are available on request from the FNCV Office: ph 9877 9860 or [admin@fncv.org.au](mailto:admin@fncv.org.au)



## Day Group

*Cranbourne Friends, Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria Inc.*  
*Far north Queensland Botanical Adventure Tour, June 2022*  
**Speaker: Nicky Zanen**

The Far North Queensland Botanical Adventure Tour commenced with a two night stay in Port Douglas. Exploration of the World Heritage listed Daintree Rainforest began with a cruise on the Daintree River, one of the most biodiverse mangrove estuaries in the world including rainforest plants, estuarine crocodiles and birds. From there, members were transported to the Murrumbidgee Botanical Boardwalk located south of Cape Tribulation. Signposts along the path explain the evolution of many ancient plant species including cycads, ferns and mosses. Sightings were also made of reptiles, birds, butterflies and insects; one example being *Phricta spinosa*, the Prickly Katydid, beautifully camouflaged against the bark and lichen on tree trunks.

The next day the tour headed for Cooktown, first stopping at Mossman Gorge, one of the oldest continuously surviving rainforests on earth. Just one hectare of the 120,000 hectare forest can contain over 30,000 species of plants and animals. Mossman Gorge is considered by many to be the evolutionary cradle for much of Australia's plant and wildlife species. Continuing north through Lakeland a stop was made at the Palmer River Roadhouse. Its museum records the history of the gold rush of 1878.

Three nights in the Cooktown area allowed visits to its many tourist attractions:

- James Cook Historical Museum. Set in a stunning 19th century convent, one of its highlights is an old switchboard.
- Cooktown Botanic Gardens. Contains five major plant collections: species traditionally used by local Aboriginal people; species collected by Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander in 1770; specimens provided by the Queensland Acclimatisation Society in the 19th century; species painted by local artist Scarth-Johnson and rare and threatened plants of the Shire.
- The beach where the Endeavour lay for seven weeks being repaired and careened.
- A walk to the Grassy Hill Lookout.
- Quinkin Country. A guided tour of world-famous rock art sites identified to be at least 15,000 to 30,000 years old.
- Laura-Quinkin Cultural Centre. A world-class interpretive display of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage.

During the long drive south to Cairns on day five, stops were made for breakfast at the Lion's Den Hotel, famous for its quirky decorations and later at the viewing platform which overlooks mysterious Black Mountain, home to Aboriginal myths, geology, botany and fauna.

Highlights of the next day spent in Cairns were:

- The Flecker Botanic Gardens. Established 1886, a botanical paradise renowned for one of the best collections of tropical plants in Australia.
- Heritage Listed St Monica's Cathedral which houses the magnificent Peace Windows, stained-glass windows depicting the creation.
- Rusty's Markets

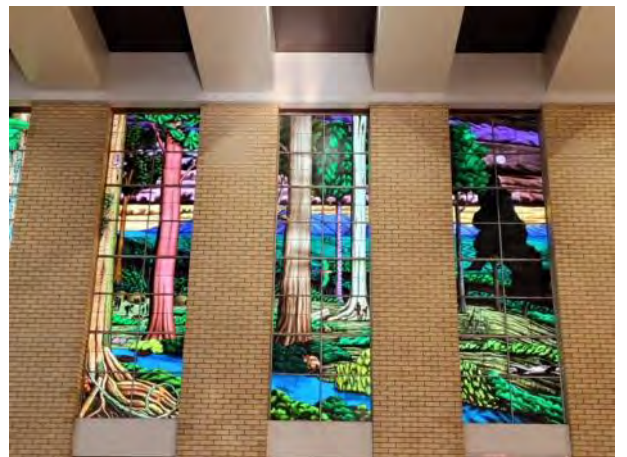
The next destination was the Atherton Tableland, with a three night stay at Mareeba, its largest town. On the way, the tour visited the Crystal Cascades, a series of stunningly beautiful waterfalls. The Kuranda Skyrail went from Smithfield to Kuranda, stopping at Red Peak Station which offers a short rainforest walk and Barron Falls Station to view the falls and visit the interpretative centre.

Excursions from Mareeba included:

- The Nerada Tea Plantation - unfortunately no Tree Kangaroos were seen.
- A visit to a private garden in Tolga
- Hastie Swamp with hundreds of Whistling Ducks
- Lake Eacham, Lake Barrine and the Curtain Fig Tree



*Phricta spinosa*, Prickly Katydid



St Monica's Cathedral leadlight window: The Creation



Hastie Swamp

(Continued on page 11)



(Continued from page 10)

The group then returned to Cairns.

While they were exploring the North Queensland environment, parks, gardens and towns, the focus of the Botanical Adventure Tour was, of course, plants. Their botanical guide was Stuart Worboys. His fields of expertise include: taxonomy of plants, field botany and ecology. Nicky's presentation contained many beautiful images of tropical plants including botanical paintings by Sydney Parkinson (1745- 1771) of the Endeavour and local artist Vera Scarth-Johnson (1912-1999).

A few examples were:

- *Hibiscus tiliaceus* Coastal Cottonwood. A tree growing to 4-10 metres with a world-wide tropical distribution. The flowers are bright yellow with a deep red centre when they first open, later in the day changing to a rosy colour.
- *Heptapletrum actinophyllum*, (renamed from *Schefflera antinophylla*) Umbrella Tree. An evergreen shrub up to 4 metres tall, its leaves made up of 7-10 leaflets clustered together in the shape of an umbrella. Weed potential as its roots invade brickwork, pipes etc.
- *Rhaphidophora australasica*. A vigorous climber endemic to Queensland in the arum family Araceae, related to philodendron and monstera. All parts are poisonous if eaten.
- *Drynaria rigidul* Basket Fern. An epiphyte, lithophyte or terrestrial with two frond types. The lower fronds are papery-brown, with the oak-leaf shaped, erect, upper fronds being green.
- *Acacia polystacha*. In drought, contains high levels of the toxin hydrogen cyanide in its foliage. Dangerous for herbivores.
- *Scaevola taccada* Beach Cabbage. Can float on seawater, so is propagated by ocean currents. Pioneer plant on new sand-banks in tropical areas.
- *Wodyetia bifurcate* Foxtail Palm. Is endemic to the Cape Melville Range. Brought to world attention in 1978 when introduced to botanists by aboriginals. Illegal collection of seeds decimated its population, but it is now common in cultivation
- *Myrmecodia beccarii* Ant Plant, attached to *Melaleuca leucandendra*. Lives in mutualistic association with an ant colony providing them with food and shelter.
- *Dendrocnide morioides* Stinging Tree. Belongs to the nettle family Urticaceae. Neurotoxin inserted via needle-like, fine silica hairs.
- *Cerbera floribunda* Cassowary Plum . A large blue-grey fruit poisonous to most animals but a favourite food of the Cassowary.

The pull of north Queensland is always strong, particularly during Melbourne's winter months. It was a great pleasure to visit its major tourist destinations with the Friends Group.

However, it was Nicky's focus on botany, illustrated with her lovely photos, much detail and many interesting asides, which gave us, as naturalists, much to learn and enjoy.



*Hibiscus tiliaceus* Coastal Cottonwood



*Wodyetia bifurcate* Foxtail Palm



*Myrmecodia beccarii* Ant Plant



On behalf of everyone I would like to thank Nicky for her continuing support of the Day Group program.

Joan Broadberry

*Cerbera floribunda* Cassowary Plum

All images: N. Zanen



## Esther Schouten, FNCV member—Art Exhibition *Aurora Arborealus*

*“I have an exhibition on at the moment, it (ends on September 6th). It is open Monday to Friday 9 am—4 pm at the Maroondah Federation Estate Gallery, 32 Greenwood Avenue Ringwood, 3113.*

*The centre piece (and it hangs in the centre) is a large wrap-around panorama painting 9 meters long by 1.5 meters high of the bush in North Warrandyte, down by the Yarra. You step into it and it feels like a hug from the bush. I have bird calls playing in the space (which I recorded too). Very immersive. Many FNCV would appreciate it I think.”*

<https://www.maroondah.vic.gov.au/Explore/Things-to-see-and-do-in-Maroondah/Events-calendar/Aurora-Arborealus-Esther-Schouten>

*Aurora Arborealus* is an exhibition of two parts. **Aurora** is a series of paintings exploring atmospheric effects of sky and light before the sun rises. **Arborealus** is a curved panoramic painting immersing viewers in the depiction of the bushland of the vista along the banks of the Birrarung (Yarra) river in North Warrandyte.

Both are inspired by subject matter that Esther Schouten encounters during morning walks with her dog Timi, whom she considers a covert collaborator. To complement the visual works the space is augmented with multi-sensory inputs: sound in the form of bird song recorded by Schouten beside the Birrarung and bush fragrances dispersed through the gallery space via wax tablets. These tablets are engraved with verse reflecting upon the experience of their morning walks.

The **Aurora** paintings, named for the Greek Goddess of Dawn, explore the soft lucent quality of this time of day when mist veiled objects emerge as tentative, delicate shapes. As the sky lightens, a gentle layering of natural forms occurs, with trees taking on zoomorphic shapes, reaching into the daylight. This gradual transformation of light and atmosphere, tranquil and dreamlike, is a bridge from night to day, from sleep to consciousness. The sky becomes grey, tinted with greens, purples and blues and the quiet of night is punctuated by early morning bird-call.

**Arborealus** was conceived over 10 years ago in answer to a self-imposed question: what would a dystopian future without the bush look like? We'd have to resort to paintings, sounds and scents to give us the feeling of being in the bush. While on its deepest level the work takes aim at climate change and its impact on the natural world, it also serves as a homage and a tender call for preservation. The work depicts a number of Manna Gum trees (*Eucalyptus Viminalis*), each different in poise and state of growth, resembling characters in a complex scenography. Schouten feels a deep connection to her local bushland, in particular to Manna Gum trees and the Birrarung River, a connection which continues to inspire her art practice. This title derives from the Latin word “Arboreal” meaning “of trees”. It is finished with a playful homage to the artist's Dutch linguistic heritage, where names or words frequently end with “us”.

Manna Gum trees are important to the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people of Warrandyte. They are a source of “witchetty” grubs (larvae from beetles and moths) that are found in the trunks and near the base of the trees. These trees called ‘wurun’ in Woiwurrung language and the grubs that live within them called ‘djeri’ form the name of the First Nations language group that lives along the stretch of the Birrarung (Yarra River) that has inspired this exhibition.\*

*“I invite visitors to step into and become part of a painting in the hope that they may share an appreciation for the traditional land of the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people and be inspired to immerse themselves in their own local bushland.” Esther*

\*Source: [Ancestors & Past-Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation](#)







# Discover the world around you

Keen to connect with nature and meet other like-minded friends?  
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Nature Stewards is a multi-week course that connects curious people with their local and wider habitats. It's a great way to gain knowledge, learn practical skills and meet like-minded others in the local community. You'll discover all sorts of ways to help nature at home and through local volunteering.

Courses run at various locations throughout the state. In autumn 2024, Nature Stewards courses ran in the Macedon, Mitchell and Hepburn regions, in Merri-bek and Moonee Valley, Ballarat, Bendigo, Knox, and on the Mornington Peninsula.

Applications for Nature Stewards courses for spring 2024 are now open! See below for dates and to apply.

#### **Whittlesea**

Dates: Saturdays, 7 Sept to 23 Nov 2024 (excluding 28 Sept and 2 Nov)

Location: South Morang

Cost: City of Whittlesea residents - \$175 full/\$45 concession\* | Non-residents: \$350/\$90 concession\*

\*full time students, health care card & pensioner card holders

Apply at [www.vnpa.org.au/naturestewards](http://www.vnpa.org.au/naturestewards)

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Dates: Saturdays, 14 Sept to 30 Nov 2024 (excluding 28 Sept and 2 Nov)

Locations: Wheeler's Hill, Hawthorn, Glen Iris

Cost: Monash, Boroondara and Stonnington residents - \$175 full/\$45 concession\* | Non-residents: \$350/\$90 concession\*

\*full time students, health care card & pensioner card holders

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Dates: Saturdays, 31 Aug to 16 Nov 2024 (excluding 28 Sept and 2 Nov)

Locations: Leopold and Portarlington

Cost: City of Greater Geelong residents - \$140/\$70 concession\* | Non-residents: \$350/\$90 concession\*

\*full time students, health care card & pensioner card holders

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#### **Ballarat**

Dates: Saturdays, 7 Sept to 23 Nov 2024 (excluding 28 Sept and 2 Nov)

Location: Mt Clear, Ballarat

Cost: City of Ballarat residents - \$90 | Non-residents: \$350/\$90 concession\*

\*full time students, health care card & pensioner card holders

Apply at [www.vnpa.org.au/naturestewards](http://www.vnpa.org.au/naturestewards)

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## 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 biodiversity hotspots. Nearly 80% of the plant species in the SW are found nowhere else on Earth, making the area exceptionally unique. Our visit coincides with WA's 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), as well as other natural wonders like Wave Rock, Woody Island, Pink Lake, and the Valley of the Giants' Tree Top Walk.



## New Zealand South Island Wildlife & Wilderness

**15-Day Accommodated Tour – Departs Nelson 7 January 2025 - Max 12 participants**

Discover Te Wai Pounamu (NZ's South Island), as we take you away from the population centres and tourist 'honey pots' to lesser known but equally spectacular destinations. One day you're high in a majestic mountain valley, viewing giant buttercups and 'vegetable sheep', and the next, you're hiking in sub-Antarctic rainforest, or viewing Dusky Dolphins and Sperm Whales at sea. Accommodation is in hotels and motor lodges with private facilities, and travel is by comfortable small coach, including an on-board botanical and nature reference library. A local NZ Naturalist will also transform your experience!



## Sri Lankan Wildlife, History & Culture Tour

**16-Day Accommodated Tour – Departs Colombo 3 March 2025 - Max 12 participants**

Join Saman VeEDIYABANDARA, one of Sri Lanka's leading birding/naturalist guides, and Tom Grove, Managing Director of Coates Wildlife Tours, as they discover the natural and ancient history, as well as the fascinating culture, of Sri Lanka. Together they will show you the wonders of the island, including the diverse plant and animal life, from whales to elephants to birds, as well as the delicious local food, delightful culture, magnificent scenery and historic fortresses and temples that abound this beautiful country.



## South Australian Lake Eyre & Flinders Range Tour

**10-Day Camping/Accommodated Tour - Departs Alice Springs 12 June 2025 - Max 10 participants**

This adventure is a must for all who long to experience the Australian outback, from the massive expanse of Lake Eyre to the striking Flinders Range, this tour is not to be missed. We will travel on the Oodnadatta Track, steeped in history, and visit iconic outback towns, including Coober Pedy (the opal capital of Australia, if not the world). We also visit Wilpena Pound, a natural wonder and amphitheatre of mountains covering 8000 hectares. Join us on this outback adventure showcasing South Australia's spectacular outback scenery and unique wildlife!



Contact us for further information on these tours and for details of our full natural history expedition program.

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