

If not claimed within 14 days please return to the Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club
Inc. PO Box 8663, Alice Springs, NT 0871

August 2007



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Web site: www.geocities.com/alicenats

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club 2007

MEETINGS

7.30 pm on the second Wednesday of the month.

Venue: Olive Pink Botanic Garden, Tuncks Road

Wed. 8th August AGM. Surprise in store from Bob Read

Wed 12th Sept. Speaker geologist Mike Green.

TRIPS / ACTIVITIES

Sat 18th August. Day walk Larapinta Stage 10 – Ormiston Gorge to Glen Helen. Contact Connie Spencer on 8952 4694.

Sat 26 August. Bird Watch at AS Sewage Ponds. Might see some migrant waders. Contact Liz Carpenter on 8953 6750

Sat 15 Sept. Day walk from end of Stephens Road to Emily Gap on the north side of Heavitree Range. Contact Rosalie Breen on 8952 3409

NEW MEMBERS

No new members

GUEST SPEAKER REPORT

CONSERVATION IN EAST TIMOR

Peter Belbin
July 11 2007

by Rosalie Breen

Peter has spent four and a half years “on and off” in East Timor, being involved in education and action about conservation.

East Timor is called Timor Leste, or Rai Timor Lorosae in local language, meaning sunrise land

It was taken over by the Portuguese initially mainly for the exploitation of its natural resources of sandalwood, teak and minerals.

Indonesia then took over control 1975-1999, with harsh government and continued exploration with no involvement in natural resources management and no National Park areas declared, no inventory of natural resources.

In 1999 Independence was declared, the United Nations taking on transitional administration. Regulations for

Protected Wild Areas were drawn up, with prohibition of erection of buildings, road construction, hunting, pollution and agriculture. Traditional uses were acknowledged so that harvesting of non-forest products, selective grazing, and use of non-endangered local plants and animals for religious or cultural reasons could continue. The Protected Wild Areas included seven areas and the summits of six mountains.

When the East Timorese Government took over in 2002 they established a National Park system with two pilot areas. Jako Island and Lake Ira Labaro on the NW tip. And Tasi Tolu with three salt lakes and mountains NW of Dili. Partners to help in administration and advice were NSW Parks and Wildlife Service and Bird Life International

Problems in management issues of parks include

Poverty

Land disputes

Civil unrest

Physical and mental wellbeing of the people

Illiteracy

Land Management practices

Low skill base and poor understanding of a National Park concept

Peter showed a number of short videos. We saw the people at the Los Palmos hospital with mal-nourished children, the people working in the training nurseries, growing plants including sandalwood, saw how the Dili locals were cutting even the street trees to provide fuel, the difficulties of travelling around the area with flooding rivers and erosion, and a National Tree Planting day. This day was almost a political day with a couple of local ministers, traditional greetings, lots of kids, scout groups, speeches, traditional dress, and eventually tree plantings among the corn fields. Shade and fruit trees were a priority. Eventually not so successful as the area was burnt later, but it was all to do with raising awareness of the importance of re-establishment of vegetation.

Food security for the people is a priority, so that they have basic access to food plants. Fruit trees and staple crop plants of rice and corn are emphasized along with shade trees.

The future looks good. Portuguese political influence is waning and more Timorese input is expected. National Parks are being managed by the East Timorese themselves even though with poor resources and money. Much training is required. There are many PhD students working on identification of plants and animals.

Questions and discussion followed this interesting talk.

TRIP REPORT

MT SPENCER SUNRISE

WINTER SOLSTICE
23rd June 2007

By Jane Danne

Nine of us braved zero degrees on Saturday morning to climb Mt Spencer for a winter solstice sunrise. "Rosalie's surprise" greeted us at the top: Gavin and a white clothed table replete with candle flickering romantically in the dawn light. A beautiful champagne, chicken, cake, fruit and coffee breakfast unfolded quickly and we had our glasses charged and ready for 0617 AM sunrise, having already watched the changing colours on the western horizon and Mt Gillen.



Rosalie's sunrise

Photo: Jane Danne

Strangely, no one had much energy after all this, except for sitting there and enjoying, while the rock wallabies arose to warm themselves in the sun. Birds were scarce: a family of babblers could be heard in the bushes below the hill and as we headed back down, a Pied Butcherbird and a crow were heard calling from the River. A small flock of budgies flew overhead and we caught up with that Grey-crowned Babbler family. Finally, returning to the cars, we found some Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters and the trees full of Yellow-throated Miners.

Big thanks must go to Rosalie and Gavin for their idea and execution of it – no small amount of trouble. For me, having been away from Alice for 10 months, it was a lovely way to start my 4 weeks here in the Centre.

MOUNT EVERARD

Sat 16 June 2007

By Rosalie Breen

We drove to the left on a bush track soon after the turnoff on the Yuendumu road and headed towards the range, parking together at a turnaround clearing. Then after noting a flock of Budgerigars flitting and turning like whirligigs in the air and showing glints of green and yellow, we started up around the rocks of the hillside to gain the top of the ridge. Nick barged ahead. Gavan disappeared and then caught up. He had gone to climb one of the smaller peaks because it was there. Walking along the ridge, up one small rise, then another ahead, round the side of another then looking towards what must have been the top, but only to find another up bit for the summit. Of note were the many Whitewoods and Conkerberry bushes. Way ahead was Nick looking a little precarious on the climb to the actual summit, so we aimed towards him. As we rounded part of a hill to go up a steep exposed part, the wind bore down on us. I felt like an Antarctic explorer clinging to the ice.

We were well rewarded with views all round, the Tanami road going straight to the northwest, hills of Simpsons Gap and Heavitree Range to south. North were the vast Mulga woodlands with their distinctive lines and a clear yellow grassy flat which would be inundated with water in rain. A flat and pretty area with pine trees, a Fig and Sarcostemma, these being typical of the tops of rocky hills. A ridge of rocks on the north side gave shelter from the wind and a great place for morning tea. A bottle in the cairn had a message about a visitor book hidden in the rocks to south. Nick took on the job of finding it, which he did, finding it in a plastic cake box. The search also revealed a hibernating lizard which just fell over when disturbed but made photographing easier. The cairn itself was topped with a big cross.



The Walkers on Mt Everard Summit

Photo: Rosalie Breen

We descended after the main peak down to the flats below and an easy stroll through the grasses and saltbushes back to the cars which from the heights had looked so lonely huddled together.



Descending Mt Everard

Photo: Rosalie Breen

The members who took advantage of a new walk for the Field Nats were Rosalie Schultz who led the way, Nick, Bev D, Kaye, Rhondda, Rosalie B, Gavan, and visitor Jeremy, all pictured except the photographer (RB)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

From www.birdpedia.com (SA's birding information network)

BIRDSURVEY LEADER REQUIRED

SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITION GROUP is looking for a Birding Survey Leader on a biological survey of the little studied Scrubby Peak region within the Gawler Ranges National Park on Eyre Peninsula, SA, from Sunday 16th September to Saturday 29th September 2007.

No special scientific skills are required - just a love of the bush and its many inhabitants. Transport, food and participation in all activities are provided.

Please contact John Turner in the first instance, at turners@senet.com.au, or by phone at (08) 8295 4227 after Wed 25 July, for further details.

Newhaven Wildlife Sanctuary – Come Make your Mark!

Come and assist the Australian Wildlife Conservancy and Birds Australia to discover more about the amazing biodiversity values of Newhaven Wildlife Sanctuary.

Numerous threatened species have previously been recorded on Newhaven, however we are keen to discover the key to their persistence, with a view to ensuring their ongoing survival at Newhaven and improving management of populations elsewhere. These threatened species include Mulgara, Greater Bilby, Princess Parrot and Greater Desert Skink.

Volunteer Activities:

Volunteers will assist AWC Wildlife Ecologists to lay out monitoring sites in each of the major vegetation communities on Newhaven. These sites will be part of a long-term assessment of changes in biodiversity in response to altered management regimes, in particular the reduction of feral animal populations and changed fire regimes. Site installation will involve compass work to lay out sites and digging for pitfall traps. This is likely to be strenuous and involve use of crowbars at some sites. Volunteers will find the experience more enjoyable if they are walking and digging fit.

We need up to 3 volunteers throughout November. Volunteers may come for the entire month, or half the period. Those coming for only the half the expedition will be picked up and dropped off in Alice Springs. First preference will be given to those joining us for the entire 4 weeks.

What we offer:

- You will have the opportunity to visit a variety of Newhaven's spectacular landscapes, including remote areas that are rarely visited and to which access is not generally provided.
- Transport from Alice Springs to Newhaven Wildlife Sanctuary will be provided.
- Every day you are at Newhaven we will supply hearty simple meals.
- All tools are provided.

How to join in and find out more:

To find out more information or apply to join the expedition contact:

Michelle Brown: michelle@australianwildlife.org

Phone: 03-5027 1224

ABC DESERT GARDEN FAIR

Hallo Everyone

Well after such a springish day I can't help thinking ahead to the next ABC Desert Garden Fair at Olive Pink Botanic Garden scheduled during the last weekend of the Alice Desert Festival on Saturday 22nd September from 8.30 am till noon. The themes this year are sustainable

gardens and living sustainably, bushfoods and bush medicines, and local biodiversity.

We are hoping to get another great turnout of information stalls, interactive activities, kids games as well as a monster plant sale (Olive Pink BG, Greening Australia, and Tangentyere nursery), and a full program of demonstrations, talks and guided walks. ABC Radio will be broadcasting live for the first 2 hours – including announcing winners of the ABC Garden Competition. Hopefully your organisation will want to be involved in the Fair.

Drop me an email to let me know (please note I will be on leave between 30 July and 17 August) whether you are interested in being involved, and perhaps your group can start thinking about what you might like to have in the way of an interactive activity as part of your stall.

I will be in touch about set up logistics etc closer to the event, but want to make sure you mark the date in your diaries now! Please feel free to pass this email onto other community groups or agencies whom I may have overlooked.

Kind regards,

Colleen O'Malley
Curator
Olive Pink Botanic Garden
email: curatoropbg@internode.on.net

Creature Feature

**CRITTER WATCH
ALICE SPRINGS DESERT PARK
Wednesday 6th June 2007**

by Rhondda Tomlinson

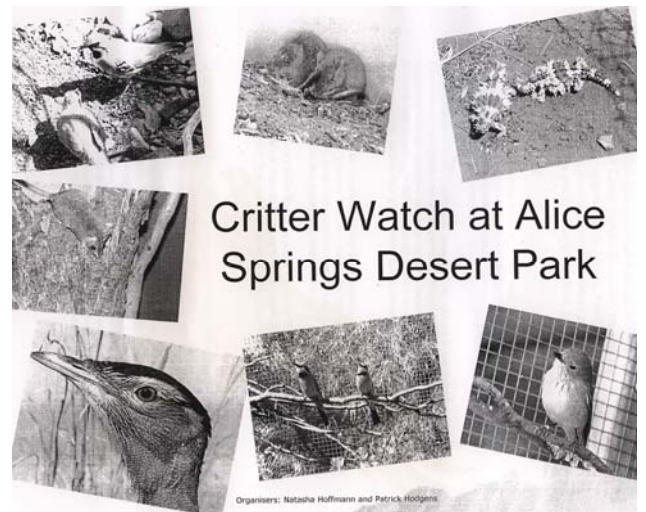
At the May Field Naturalists meeting Natasha handed out an invitation to come and take part in the first Critter Watch introductory/training session in the Education Room at the Desert Park.

I put my name down and went along to the Wednesday session. There were 4 participants all very keen to find out what it is going to be about.

Nat and Pat introduced themselves and jointly went on to explain that the first hour was a theory come discussion and question time and then off to see where and what the practical work is all about.

To begin the main focus is the birds in the aviaries at the Park and to see their behavior when the attendants are not around and to the reaction to each other and the wild birds that land on the cages. We were shown an Animal Watch Record Sheet with tick boxes and a comments column. It was explained that pre instructions would be given as to what each particular watch purpose was required to observe and also any unexpected happenings. I know I was very inspired after the talk and the walk around the aviaries and to see the birds and find out about some of their unique habits.

I am sure Nat and Pat would love to hear from anyone interested to come along to future Critter Watch Talks. (08) 89518719



Copy deadline for articles for the next newsletter.

Friday 31 August 2007

**PHOTOCOPYING
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ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INCORPORATED
Minutes of the General Meeting held at Olive Pink Botanic Garden
Wednesday 11th July 2007

Open: Bob Read welcomed members and visitors. Speaker: Peter Belbin talked on conservation work in East Timor. Business meeting chaired by Bob Read opened 9:07 pm.

Present: As per attendance book (14 members and 7 visitors).

Apologies: Leonie Read, Connie Spencer and Jez Hann.

Minutes: The meeting resolved to accept the minutes of the previous meeting held Wednesday, 13th June 2007 as a true and correct record of that meeting. Moved Rosalie Breen and 2nd Jenny Purdie

Correspondence In:

Celebrate Our Volunteers – Letter from Warren Snowden.

Newsletter from Northern Territory Field Naturalists (Darwin)

Newsletter from Western Australian Naturalists Club.

Correspondence Out:

Thank you card to Peter Belbin for his presentation on conservation work in East Timor.

Business arising from the correspondence:

None

Treasurer's Report:

Bank statement with closing balance \$2,683.43 + \$4.00 bank interest.

General Business:

- ❖ Names were taken for those interested in the up coming trips.
- ❖ August 12th is the next Committee meeting at 2.00pm at the Olive Pink Botanical Garden.
- ❖ Colleen said that 15th Sept is a book launch at 2.30pm; 22nd Sept is the ABC Garden Fair from 8.00am till noon and 26th Sept is a Craft Fair all to be held at the Olive Pink Botanical Garden.

Outings:

Wed 11 July 07	FNC monthly meeting 7:30pm OPBG – Peter Belbin on conservation work in East Timor
Thu 12 Jul to Sun 15 Jul 07	Kings Canyon and overnight Giles walk. Contact Bob Read on 89521935
Sat/Sun 28/29 Jul 07	Camp at Redbank Gorge to climb Mt. Sonder. Contact: Rosalie Breen on 89523409
Sat 4 Aug – Mon 06 Aug 07	Mordor Pound. Contact Bob Read on 89521935
Wed 8 Aug 07	FNC AGM
Sat 18 Aug 07	Day walk. Larapinta Trail Stage 10 – Ormiston Gorge to Glen Helen. Contact Connie Spencer on 8952 4694
Sat 26 Aug 07	Sewerage Ponds. Liz Carpenter to put invitation on birdpedia.com website. Contact Liz Carpenter on 8953 6750
Sat 15 Sept 07	Day walk from end of Stephens Road to Ellery Gap on north side of Heavitree Range. Contact: Rosalie Breen on 8952 3409.

Secretary: Rhondda Tomlinson will be doing the meeting minutes for June and July while Connie is away.

Gate Opener for August:

Connie Spencer

Supper for August:

Bob Read

Note taker for August:

Not required for AGM

Sightings:

- ❖ Liz saw about 100 Pink-eared Ducks at the Sewerage Ponds.
- ❖ Bob saw flocks of Pictorella Mannikins at Tennant Creek and Painted Finches and possibly a Grass Wren.
- ❖ Barb saw a flock of about 40 Budgies and a Night Heron.

Meeting closed: 9:29 pm.

Next Meeting: AGM 8th August 2007 at Olive Pink Botanical Garden.