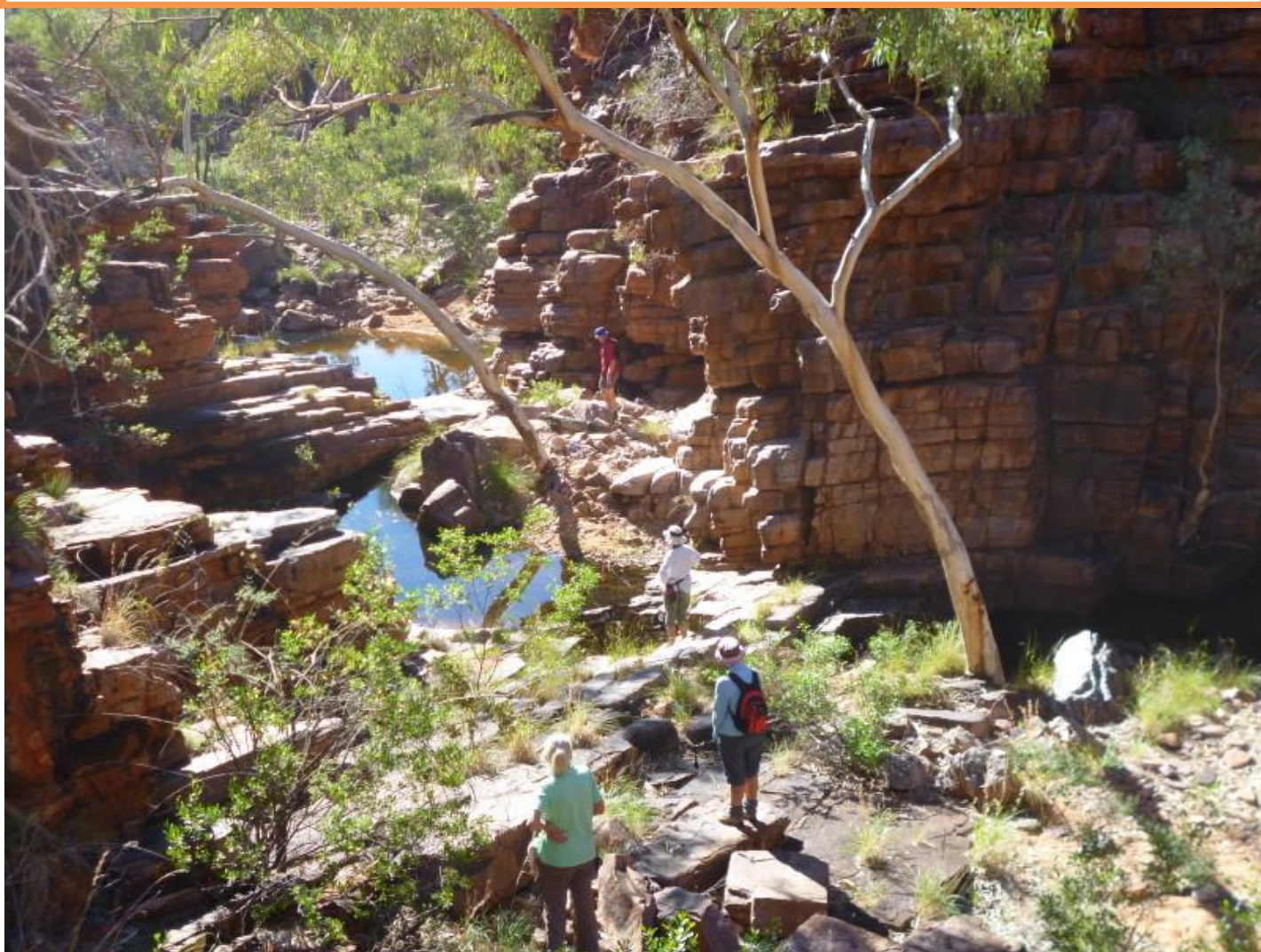




July 2014

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Newsletter



Chain of Ponds beyond John Hayes Rockhole at Trephina Nature Park – Rosalie Breen

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month (except December & January) at 7:00 PM at Higher Education Building at Charles Darwin University. Visitors are welcome.

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NEXT NEWSLETTER

The deadline for the next newsletter is **Friday 25 July 2014**.

Please send your contributions to the club email contact@alicefieldnaturalists.org.au

Please send photos and text separately as combining them causes formatting issues.

ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Contact: contact@alicefieldnaturalists.org.au

- Wed 9 July **Meeting** 7.00pm at Charles Darwin University Higher Education Building lecture theatre.
Speaker: **Peter Latz "Buffel Grass- the botanical cane toad of three fifths of Australia – only worse"**
- Fri, Sat
11,12 July Camp **Mount Sonder** and morning climb - Leader Connie Spencer. Ring or email her for meeting time
email: constans@bigpond.net.au phone: 8957 7038
- Sun 20 July **End of Field Naturalists' Year celebration.** Walk among the wild flowers in the ASDP sand country
with Steven Priestley. Pay entry or present your season ticket at the entry station and be ready to
walk at 10am. Bring a plate of yummys for a **shared lunch** in the Desert Park picnic area at 12 noon.
(This will replace Xmas breakfast) Leader: Barb Gilfedder
- Sun 27 July Winter **Shorebird Count** at Sewage Ponds. 8.00am start. Please let Barb know if you are coming and
whether you wish to be a counter or a scribe.
- Sat-Mon
2-4 August Long weekend **Horseshoe Bend** camping trip. Leader: Jim Lawrence 8952 5049 [or email](mailto:marg.lawrence.asp@gmail.com)
marg.lawrence.asp@gmail.com

Wednesday 13 August

Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Members Night

Our 2014 AGM is on the August meeting night. Officers and Committee Members will be elected and Club business discussed. We have a few spaces on the Committee which need to be filled. Please contact a Member of the Committee if you wish to nominate. The AGM will be followed by **Members' Night** – bring all your fun natural history items or photos for a bit of "show and tell" and enjoy learning about all of the fascinating stories everyone else has to offer. *A night not to be missed!* Also subscription fees for the 2014-5 year are due at this meeting.

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY **Contact:** APS Secretary karlee.foster@opbg.com.au

Fri 4 - Sat 5 July APS AS at the Alice Springs Show –

Come and see us at the Show! A great selection of local native plants for sale as well as displays and friendly information! A walk through the Kenna's garden will take place early in August.

BIRDLIFE CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

Contact: birdlifeca@gmail.com

Meetings are held on the 4th Wednesday of each month 7:30pm at the Alice Springs Desert Park meeting room. To get involved or hear about additional events, email us at the contact listed above.

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Committee Members

President	Barbara Gilfedder	8955 5452;	Public Officer	Rhondda Tomlinson	8953 1280;
Vice-President	Lee Ryall	8953 6394;	Property Officer	Rosalie Breen	8952 3409;
Secretary	Cecily Sutton	0412 501 396;	Committee Member	Connie Spencer	8952 4694;
Treasurer	Jill Brew	8953 0551;	Website and Newsletter	Pamela Keil	8955 0496.

email address: contact@alicefieldnaturalists.org.au

June Speakers: Pamela Keil and Michael Laflamme – Report by Cecily Sutton

A journey through Victoria, Field Naturalist Style: recording the sights and sounds of a region



Michael and Magpie – Phillip Island Mangrove Walk

Two enthusiastic Alice Springs Field Naturalists headed off to have their first look around Victoria.

The plan was to travel with minimal clothing and maximum equipment. Pam was the photographer with a 70 to 300 mm lens on her main “bird capturing” camera and a little Lumix for scenic shots. Michael was equipped with sophisticated sound recording equipment, including a parabolic microphone/recorder and headphones.

Luckily the plan was flexible. In February, it was hotter in Melbourne than Alice Springs and there were many fires burning inland. The double swag went in the hired 4WD, and they were off with valuable assistance from the Parks Victoria website for information and booking campsites.



Pam's Camera & Crimson Rosella
Wilson's Prom – Tidal River Campground

Pam has been focussing on her photography of Australian birds. This trip added 77 species of birds to her collection. She observed that birds seemed to be less shy of people than in Alice Springs. This produced excellent opportunities for photography and observation. Just standing still allowed the birds to come to you. (Although it was discovered fast that Michael was best to stand a distance from Pam otherwise he would get the click, click, click of her camera shutter in his recordings.)

In true Field Naturalist style, Coolart Wetlands, just out of Melbourne took much longer to explore than expected, due to the variety of birds and the extensive and impressive layout of the facility. There were many boardwalks and even 2-storey bird hides. It was engrossing to be surrounded by every variety of Cormorant.



Pied Cormorant – Coolart Wetlands



Pacific Gull – Victorian Limestone Coastline

Michael was busy recording different sounds. The sea, wind in the trees, different streams, as well as birds, including a breeding colony of Crested Terns.

It took a little longer than expected to reach Wilsons Promontory, because of the great places on the way. However it was really a significant highlight of the trip. A night walk to Lily Pilly went through about 10 different habitats. Just to stand still for half an hour and listen to the sounds and record them was exciting. The highlight was a chorus of five Mopokes (Southern Boobooks).



Silvereye – Heathland and Coastal Scrub



Pam & Crimson Rosella
Wilson's Prom – Tidal River Campground

This was a great account of a trip. Not knowing the region and discovering the birds as you go.

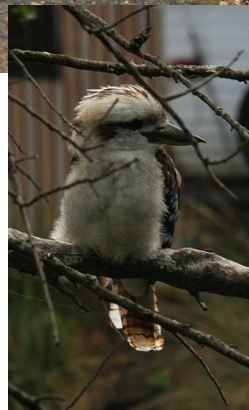
Thanks Pam and Michael. I loved your observations, the sights and the sounds, as well as your enthusiasm for common birds that are uncommon for those of us whose usual habitat is Central Australia.

There were birds everywhere so Pam achieved her goal of getting up close and personal to Victorian birds when a cheeky Crimson Rosella landed on her head and a Silver Gull poohed on her. Part of the excitement of the trip was discovering birds new to oneself, but because they were common in that region one could get good sightings. Even seeing seagulls is exciting for an Alice Springs resident (well maybe she is over them now after the above incident).

It was a rather rapid trip to Adelaide as time was running out. The Great Ocean Road did produce some more gems- first sighting of an Albatross, the iconic Kookaburra and Lyrebirds, very tame Rufous Fantails, Emus in unexpected places.



above: Swamp Wallaby – Phillip Island
top right: Superb Lyrebird – Terra Bulga National Park
centre: Laughing Kookaburra – Great Ocean Road
far right: Southern Emu-wren – Wilson's Prom
below: Hooded Plover – Wilson's Prom



John Hayes Rockhole Trip – 24 & 25 May 2014

Report by Connie Spencer (photos of plants by Connie, photos of Connie by Rosalie Breen)

Our convoy consisted of trip leaders, Ian and Wendy Mann, followed by Rhondra Tomlinson and yours truly as a passenger, with Gavan and Rosalie Breen and passenger Haydee Adel at the rear. We arrived at the small campsite in the late afternoon and luckily had it to ourselves.

After setting up camp we strolled back along the rocky track in, turned off into the creek bed and followed it back to the campsite. The late afternoon light makes almost any walk enchanting and this was no exception. Although there was a depressing amount of Buffel Grass in the area we did come across Silkyheads, Bottlewashers, Curly Windmill, Silky Browntop & Kangaroo Grass. Many stops were made to inspect the rocks in the creekbed some looking like man-made conglomerate. The creek was lined with majestic River Red Gums & Bloodwoods.

A pleasant evening was had around the campfire solving the problems of the world. More attire was donned as the temperature dropped except for Ian who was still in short sleeves. Wendy's pudding proved to be a great hit!



top: *Acacia melleodora*; bottom: *Datura* sp.



Sunday morning our trek for the day was the Chain of Ponds Walk and what an apt name for the walk. The first part of the walk is a gentle climb using the Ridgetop Trail. The trail meanders through Mulga woodland with an understorey of Mulga Ferns (*Cheilanthes sieberi*) due to recent rains. We then descended into the creek noting rock formations and plants. Spearwood had to be the standout plant as it was in full flower. Other noteworthy species were Caustic Vine (*Sarcostemma viminalis*), Native Currant (*Psyrax latifolium*) and Thornapple (*Datura* sp.).

Soon the relatively gentle creek bed walk started descending rather sharply and care had to be taken negotiating the various ponds and steep declines. Those of us with short legs were seriously challenged and polished the rocks with the seats of our pants.

The next part of the walk was a scramble out of the creek and up the other side of the steep sided gorge. Here we noted the tiny succulents, Pink Rock-wort (*Sedopis filsonii*) and *Grahamii australiana* plus flowering Curry Wattle (*Acacia spondylophylla*) and Waxy Wattle (*Acacia melleodora*).

The weather was warming up by now and with no shade on this part of the walk we made our way back to camp at a rather faster pace. The suggested time for the walk on the sign as we started was 90 minutes and in typical Field Naturalists fashion it took us two and a half hours and would have taken longer except that Ian had to be back in town by noon.

Thank you to all for another great weekend!



Rhondda Tomlinson

Saturday afternoon we met up and headed out along the Ross Highway to the John Hayes Rock Hole camping area. The ranger happened to be there, so we chose our camp spot and paid our dues in good time for Ian and Wendy to lead us up or down or along the creek bed on an amazing walk of discovery.

We saw some tortured and twisted trees that would have many stories to tell and the geology had us scratching amongst the stones in the creek bed. We came across some conglomerate lumps of rock that looked like they had been man made, cemented together but further along the creek we saw the bank where this had been eroded from.



Returning to camp we finished setting up and decided to end the daylight time sitting by the Rock Hole which did have some water. Some decided to explore a little further but it was good just to sit and appreciate our beautiful surroundings. Ian and Wendy brought some wood with them so we had tea and chatted around the camp fire.

Next morning we packed up and were keen to set off for our walk to the Chain of Ponds. Again we saw some amazing geology and a snake sunning itself but I was taken by the reflections in the pools.



The main trouble I had trying to write about this trip was the number of photos and the variety of things that we saw and to show a complete representation. All I can say is that those who were unable to go missed out on a great weekend.

Thank you Ian and Wendy for the research and time you put into preparing for this weekend trip.

Australian Plants Society meeting – 15 June 2014

A walk through the Desert Rivers Habitat with Bec Duncum and Jess Burdon

Report by Barb Gilfedder

Although this was an APS event, I thought it was of interest to Field Naturalist Club members, so have included it in this newsletter.

There was a group of about eighteen rugged up and beanied members of both associations who gathered at the entry station.

The Desert Rivers is one of the three habitats that were developed at the Alice Springs Desert Park from the beginning, the other two being Sand Country and Woodland. Three more habitats were planned, the Mulga Woodland which was planted and is now used for nocturnal tours, and the Gorge and Range habitats.

Bec looked after the Desert Rivers habitat some years ago, while Jess now has that responsibility, with advice and direction from senior staff.

In fact it is not just one habitat but a whole series of sub-habitats under that umbrella. Originally each of these was linked to an actual site around central Australia, such as Mount Benstead Creek and Hugh River. Species lists for each area were compiled and then as many of those plants as possible were propagated in the nursery and planted out in the appropriate area.



This original plan has become more flexible and the areas are now linked to habitat types rather than precise places, such as 'Alluvial Flats' and 'Drainage depressions with Coolabah' - see map next page.

Also the overall idea is now to make the area more garden-like and less closely following its bush counterparts. For example species appear in more concentrated groups rather than so spread out. This picture of a rocky hill shows the grouping from the back of *Callitris glaucophylla*, *Triodia* sp. and *Themeda triandra*.

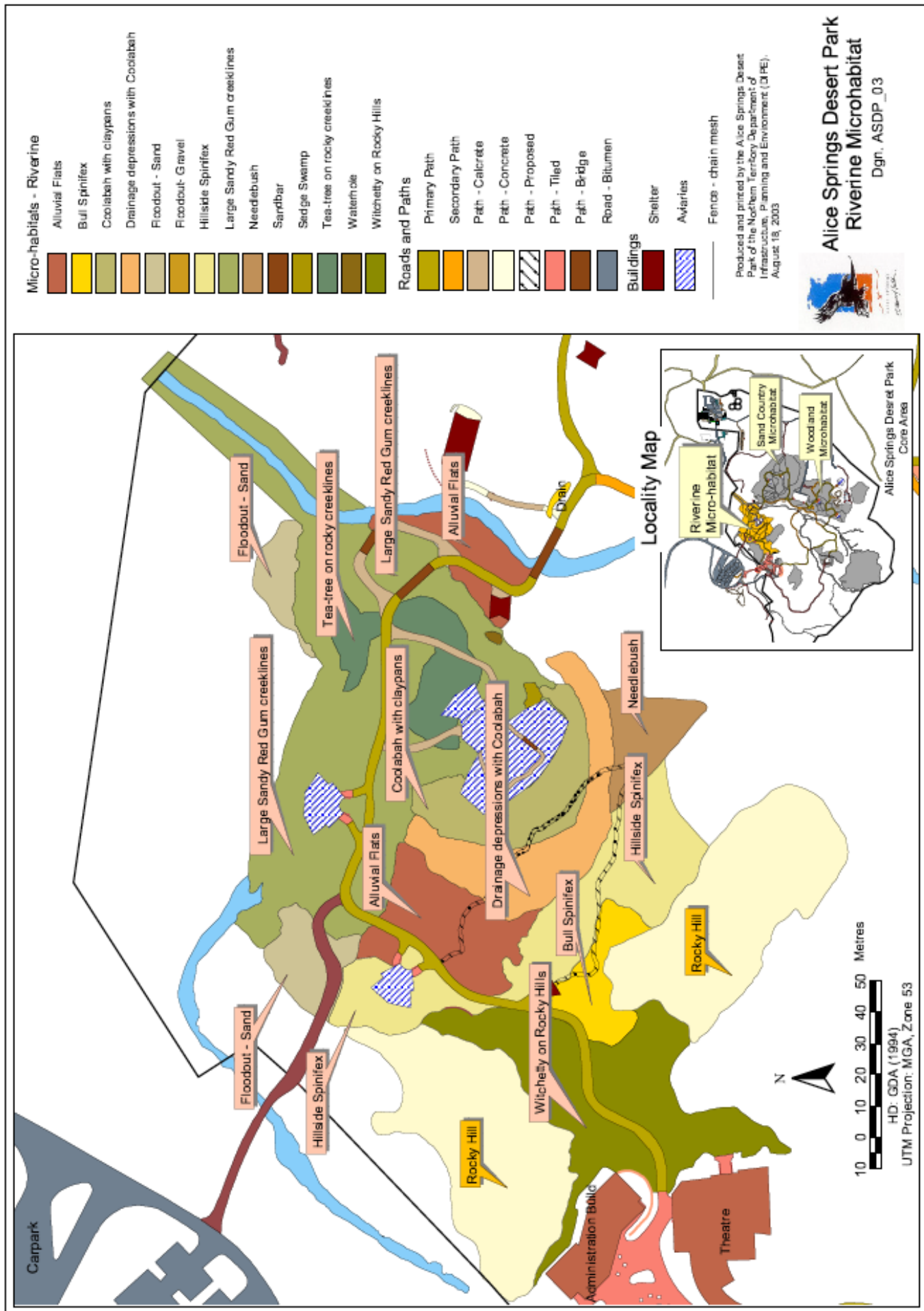
Aviaries within the habitat, show which birds make use of this area. They also contain appropriate species of plants and this type of planting needs to flow through to the other side of netting so that the building sits comfortably in the habitat and looks more natural. Also the large aviary contains beautiful aquaria with local native fish.

Bec and Jess had photos of various plantings at different times that showed their growth and development. It is amazing how fast Red River Gums grow, especially with irrigation.

After a pleasant stroll, the usual discussions about plant identifications, the group retired to the café for refreshments. On the way in we spotted this beautiful young Tabletop Wattle *Acacia hilliana* in full flower.



Thank you Bec and Jess. It was very enjoyable.



ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INCORPORATED
Minutes of general meeting at Higher Education Building,
Charles Darwin University - 11 June 2014

Following presentation by **Pamela Keil and Michael Laflamme**
"A journey through Victoria Field Naturalist style: recording the sights and sounds of a region"

(Thanks to Rhondda for supper and Cecily as scribe)

Present: 17 Members, 1 visitor and 5 apologies as per attendance book.

Previous minutes – accepted.

Business arising from the minutes: Nil

Correspondence:

- Desert Smart Ecofair at Olive Pink on 10 August. Morgan Flint will do an assessment of feasibility of ASFNC having a stall.
- Rangeland Biology and Ecology seminars on 13 and 27 June.
- Australian Ecological Conference in September – October.
- Email from Michelle Rodrigo, Lake Eyre Basin communications officer about publications available: including *"Rivers of Carbon and Rivers of Life"*.
- Pamphlets re Birding places in North Queensland.

Treasurer's Report:

Balance at June \$3209.20

No activity in May, or so far in June.

General business:

- Alice Moldovan from the ABC interviewed Michael about this evening's talk. She is an ABC Field Reporter, so we will send her our newsletter, to enable her to join us on a future excursion.

Past Activities/Trips discussed:

- 3 bike riders and 3 walkers went to the Knoll for an evening picnic.
- John Hayes Rock Hole trip had good company and good reflections in the Chain of Ponds.

Future activities:

- Sat 21 June - Ooraminna Rockhole. Leader: Jim Lawrence.
- Sat 28 June - Red Range Walk. Leader: Rosalie Breen.
- 4-6 July. APS display at Show. Contact Connie to offer help.
- Fri 11- Sat 12 July - Mt Sonder Walk. Leader required. Rosalie Breen to ask if Rosalie Schultz is available.
- Sun 20 July - Walk in Sand Country at Desert Park, guided by Steve Priestley - follow up to Steve's wildflower talk in April. Followed by end of year celebration shared lunch in Desert Park picnic area..
- 2-4 August - Horseshoe Bend. Leader: Jim Lawrence

Next EXTRA meeting: TUESDAY 24 June

Speaker: Visiting speaker: Brian Timms on Branchiopods

Scribe: Rosalie Breen

Supper: Pamela Keil

Meeting Wed 9 July

Speaker: Peter Latz on Buffel Grass

Scribe: Michael LaFlamme

Supper: Jackie Shaughnessy

AGM 13 August. Rhondda reminded us that it needs to be advertised to Members at least a month in advance. Pam to put in newsletter. AGM to be followed by Members' Night.