



August 2014

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Newsletter



Look out for Fringe Myrtle (*Calytrix longiflora*) flowering now. This one was on a red sand hill down the Old South Road. Photo by Barb Gilfedder

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.

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

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Web site:

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

Email: contact@alicefieldnaturalists.org.au

NEXT NEWSLETTER

The deadline for the next newsletter is **Friday 22 August 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

Sun 10 Aug **Desert Smart ECOfair** at Olive Pink Botanic Gardens from 9am – 3pm. Morgan Flint is organizing an Alice Springs Field Naturalists stall advertising what we do. If you are able to assist by helping to set up or dismantle the marquee and display, or man the stall for a couple of hours, please contact Morgan on 89532286 or 0437422494

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.

Sun 17 Aug **Planning Meeting** 2.00pm at Barb's place - 33 Battarbee Street. The Committee needs all your ideas for interesting speakers and places to walk or drive to. All members welcome.

Sun 7 Sept **Threatened Species Day** – Activity with Biodiversity matters Program, ALEC . **Bird watching at the Alice Springs Sewage Ponds with ASFNC** . 7.00- 9.00am. Meet at the gate at 6.50am.

Wed 10 Sept **General Meeting** 7.00pm at Charles Darwin University Higher Education Building lecture theatre. Speaker: **Michelle Rodrigo** – “The special values of the Lake Eyre Basin and the work we do under the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement. (This includes the waterhole monitoring that Angus Duguid leads in the NT)

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY

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

Sun 3rd Aug Meet in the Gazebo to the right of the visitors centre/gallery at 11 am) **Come for a walk and talk through Olive Pink Botanic Garden** where Dave Price will talk about particular examples of plant life having cultural meanings as well as supplying food and other resources from traditional Warlpiri culture. Karlee Foster (Grounds Manager at OPBG) will accompany the walk.

Sun 14 Sept Starting at 10am Local Australian native plant enthusiast Geoff Kenna invites us for a walk and talk through his extensive garden at his property at Illparpa, featuring local natives alongside many other Australian natives. Come and see the stunning environment Geoff has created through a labour of love. (Please email Karlee.foster@opbg.com.au or call 0488 104 490, expressing your interest in coming along to this APS AS meeting, Karlee will let you know where to go.)

BIRDLIFE CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

Contact: birdlifeca@gmail.com

Sat 9 Aug **Social Birding** at the Alice Springs Telegraph Station @ 8:30am. Gold coin donation for non-BirdLife members, members free. Join some local birders to check out the amazing diversity of birds found in this area. Beginning birders or advanced twitchers, all are welcome. Look for the BirdLife Central Australia Banner!

Wed 27 Aug **Monthly Branch Meeting** – speaker Pamela Keil: “Photographing Wildlife – Capturing the essence of birds” Alice Springs Desert Park meeting room for a **7pm start** (note – earlier time!)

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Committee Members

President	Barbara Gilfedder	8955 5452;	Public Officer	Rhonda 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

Editor's Note: Article on the Peter Latz presentation on Buffel Grass will be in the next newsletter.

Ooramina Rockhole – 21 June 2014

Connie Spencer



My last trip to Ooramina Rockhole was in September 2011 and my memory of that trip is of being very impressed with the plant life. I was even more impressed on this occasion – the time of year and the April rains having something to do with that.

Long Pussetails (*Ptilotus polystachyus*) was by far the dominant understorey species on the plains. I was saddened to pass through a burnt-out stand of Mulgas although the understorey of Wild Tomato (*Solanum quadriloculatum*) on steroids (left) and a Native Tobacco Bush was pleasing to see.

As on our previous trip we stopped at an outcrop of interesting silcrete rock formations where there was an abundance of plants to admire, the prettiest and my favourite, being Hairy Mulla Mulla (*Ptilotus helipteroides*). Although not in flower there were numerous plants of Sturts Hibiscus (*Hibiscus sturtii* var. *grandiflora*). Once again the Rock Isotome (*Isotoma petraea*) was happily growing in little rock crevices. Purple Fuchsia Bush (*Eremophila goodwinii*) was healthy and flowering sporadically.

Continuing on to the Rockhole we passed the Paper Foxtail (*Ptilotus gaudichaudii*) (right), fast becoming my second favourite Ptilotus. Its greeny-yellow papery flower heads with tiny red flecks is most attractive. It has a sparse growing habit and does not grow en masse as do many of the other Ptilotus species.

After a bite to eat we had a look at the rock hole which had considerably more water in it than on my previous visit. In fact it was overflowing and there were pools of water here and there as we followed the creek.



I was keen to show the first timers to the area some very large Bean Trees (*Erythrina vespertilio*) which I had been very impressed with on our previous visit and I kept saying, “ they are just up ahead” but as we continued down the creek and across a open plain only to pick up the creek again with no Bean Trees in sight most of my troops gave up on me! I was beginning to doubt myself too as the scenery looked so different this time, being so much greener with all sorts of flowering annuals on the open ground. Nevertheless, three of us continued on across the next open plain

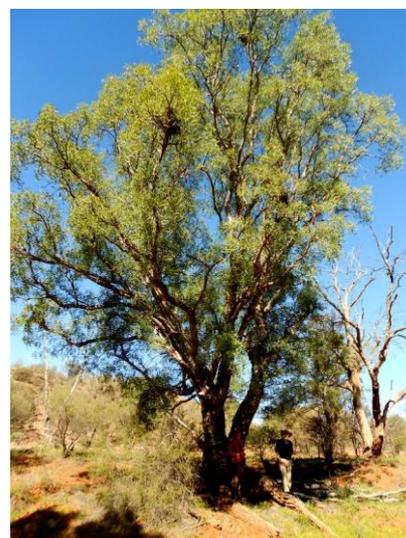
and sure enough those magnificent Bean Trees were there in all their glory (right). They are in a sheltered location and obviously haven't suffered a fire or from frost. The Mulgas (*Acacia aneura*) and the Coolabahs (*Eucalyptus coolabah* subsp. *arida*) are also worth a mention due to their size, age and vigor.

There were many many more plants worthy of mention, especially along the creek but as I have procrastinated with the writing of this report my memory is now failing me! Thank you to Jim Lawrence for leading the trip and to Rhondda for allowing me to be her passenger.

Lisa Nunn Ooramina Bird List

Yellow-throated Miner
 Black-faced Woodswallow
 Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
 Zebra Finch
 Budgerigar
 Crested Bellbird
 Singing Honeyeater
 Horsefield's Bronze-cuckoo
 Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater
 Rufous Whistler
 Mulga Parrot
 Brown Falcon

Slaty-backed Thornbill
 Yellow-rumped Thornbill
 Splendid Fairy-wren
 Red-capped Robin
 Diamond Dove
 White-plumed Honeyeater
 Willie Wagtail
 Mistletoebird
 Crested Pigeon
 Bourke's Parrot
 White-winged Triller
 Grey-headed Honeyeater



Grey Shrike-thrush
 Rainbow Bee-eater
 White-browed Babbler
 Grey-crowned Babbler
 Western Gerygone
 Australian Magpie
 Black-shouldered kite
 Red-tailed Black Cockatoos

Meg Mooney Little water animals

Brian Timms used a dip net to collect some little water animals from a relatively unpolluted pool of water below the small dam wall pastoralists built many years ago on the edge of the Ooraminna rockhole. The main rockhole was obviously moderately polluted by cow dung.

There were a surprising variety of animals: caddisfly larvae, less than a centimeter long, in their homes made of tiny sticks; slim damselfly larvae; squat bee-like dragonfly larvae; moving dots of ostracods or seed shrimps, which are enclosed in tiny shells; spinning whirligig and other beetles; chironomids or non-biting midge fly larvae, like short, red threads of worms; and the common water boatmen and backswimmers, both with legs like tiny oars, the latter swimming upside-down.



As you can see from the table I adapted from Waterwatch resources when I was writing 'The Water Book' for Greening Australia, the presence of both damselfly and dragonfly larvae and the variety of species indicate that the water is quite clean. Caddisfly larva are also a sign of very healthy water. In my experience collecting animals with school groups from a range of waterholes around the Centre, damselfly and caddisfly larvae aren't that common.

For the record, I asked Brian to list the species he could see. His list was:

- Water boatmen – Agraptocorixa sp.;
- Backswimmers – Anisops sp.;
- Beetles – Whirligig beetles, Sternopriscus sp. (minute), Antiporus sp. 4 mm, beetle larvae;
- Damselfly larvae, not certain of species;
- Caddisfly larvae – Triplectides australis;
- Dragonfly larvae – Hemicordulia tau and Hemianax papuensis;
- Chironomid – Chironomus sp.;
- Ostracods; Sandfly – Dasyhelea.

Drawings from national Waterwatch Reference Manual and NT Waterwatch Education Kit

<p>Very clean water - many different kinds of animals, including mayfly or damselfly larvae</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">       </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> Water boatman Dragonfly larva Damselfly larva Mayfly larva Water beetles Seed shrimp </div>
<p>Reasonably clean water - fewer kinds of animals</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">      </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> Dragonfly larva Water beetles Backswimmer Water mite Water snails </div>
<p>Less clean water - often less than 5 kinds of animal</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">     </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> Backswimmer Water boatman Water beetle Water scorpion </div>
<p>Not very clean water - only 2 or 3 kinds of animals, worms are common</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center; margin-top: 20px;">   </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> Fly larva Mosquito larva </div>
<p>Not at all clean - no sign of animals, water is stagnant</p>

Red Range Walk – 28 June 2014

Report by Rosalie Breen; photos by Rosalie and Rhondda Tomlinson



First restaurant

This place has always intrigued me. Through the gap, Mother-in-law Gap, is a secret land. If you follow the river past high and rocky slopes, and then cross the river, the land opens out to reveal the secrets of a past venture – a restaurant with a magnificent view of the ranges – rock-paved terraces, a cellar underneath, a tank stand, an old wire bed (more recent). Jim Lawrence remembers driving people out here to dine in the 60s.

Then we followed a car track through the trees and shrubs to cross the neck of land between a meander bend in the river, before thicker scrub forced us to walk in the sandy riverbed. A clearer slope around the next bend had us bush walking again on a dolomite hill with a different set of plants. The dolomite rock was originally laid down above the quartzite, earth movements leaving it as the rock of the lower hills south of the main range and

creating some jagged cliff heights. For morning tea we sat in the sand or on rocks, sharing goodies. Jill amazed, as she had all the makings of high tea and biscuits including one litre box of milk. (She did not bring the kitchen sink!) The river was now a maze of sand trails among the tea tree. We passed through a wide gap where the east/west running quartzite Red Range, now to the south and north east, had been broken, bent and displaced, moving along a fault line towards the east. Have a look at the Google Earth map:



Morning tea with Jill



Further on is a big River Red Gum, wide shade obviously enjoyed by cattle. It has a couple of dead branches 'carved' with intricate patterns.

The next secret, remnants of another restaurant, was high on a rise above a curve of the river. 4WD vehicles would have taken patrons to this retreat. Here was a paved floor in different rock colours next to a round structure, a rusty fridge and the old toilet with the broken throne still sitting in top of the septic system. Having visited this site in 2005, I found it different, much overgrown with buffel and spinifex. But still there is the magnificent view of the river meanders and the spectacular, virtually perpendicular wall of the range on the east.





Paving at the second restaurant

Returning, we walked over a clear gravel area, salty from runoff from the range and from the dolomite, through the trees again and back into the river. We stopped for lunch on a rock slope in the sun. On the way back our party got split for a while, the first group missing the turn out of the river, but we all joined up again, both parties wondering where the others were.

At the cars, John a visitor from Tasmania showed us his van, all setup for independent living. It was very impressive. We (Connie, Bob, Jill, Rhondda, Gavan, Cec, Meg, Kate, John and Rosalie) had a good day, returning to town about 3.30. Thanks to Undoolya Station for permission to roam on their land.



Stunning Flowers and Food - Desert Park Sand Country walk and end-of-year party - Barb Gilfedder



of the original plan when the Desert Park was created. A range of interesting and often rare Acacias and Eucalypts formed the backdrop.

Some like *Acacia ligula* and *Ac. Ramulosa* were flowering, while others like the *Ac. cyperophylla* were laden with seed pods and creating a magnet for Ring-neck Parrots. Rarer Eucalypts included *Eucalyptus sparsa*, *E. gongylocarpa* and *E. odontocarpa*.

Steven Priestley, ASDP Nursery Manager, led a group of about 20 Field Naturalist Members around the Sand Country at the Desert Park on July 20. The day started cool, but the sunshine was beautiful and it wasn't long before layers of clothing were being shed.

Steve had done his homework and was able to point out the different sub-habitats based on real places out bush such as Yulara, Simpson Desert, Lake Amadeus and so on. This was part





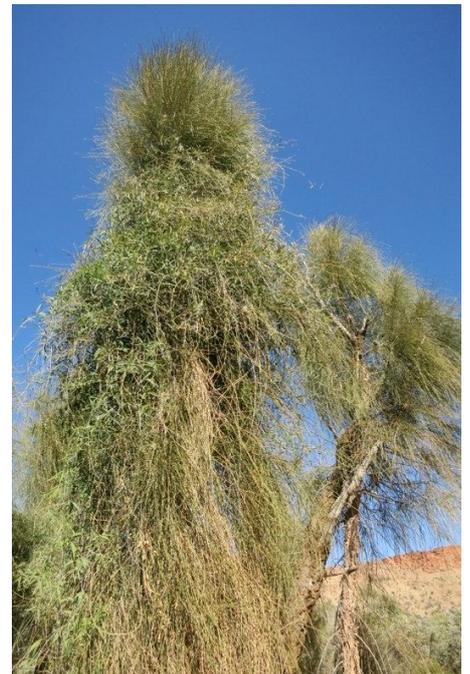
But it was the flowering annuals that really drew the eye. The Pink Everlastings, *Schoenia cassiniana* stretched out in vast carpets along the sides of the path, sometimes mixed with Poached Egg Daisies, *Polycalymma Stuartii* and Sand Sunray, *Rhodanthe tietkensisii*, and the occasional self sown mauve daisy, *Brachyscome ciliaris*.

The seed of most species had been sown (by the pillowcase load) straight into the red sand. The ground was already moist and was then raked to bury the seed. Regular irrigation and applications of fertilizer did the rest.



The Desert Park, although it tries to copy areas in the bush as accurately as possible, runs into problems like any garden. "It's a lot of work making it look natural." The two main rogue plants that are being troublesome to the horticulturists this year, are Silky Glycine, *Glycine canescens* and Rat-tailed Fescue Grass *Vulpia myuros*. The Glycine is a local native which we often see in wooded areas, such as the Intertexta Forest. In the sand country it is draping its twisting stems over all sorts of plants (usually it seems the most interesting or rare) (below) and completely smothering them. It is difficult to remove, having very strong stems that can also strip the leaves from its host, if pulled while still fresh. Steve suggested cutting the main stem at

the root and leaving the removal until the creeper was dead and dried. The grass is a different problem. Before the annual wild flower seeds are sown, the sand is irrigated and then any weeds sprayed and killed. However this grass, which is a widespread feral, native to the Mediterranean countries, won't germinate until the weather warms and then comes up thickly with the flowers. It cannot then be sprayed, and if they try to manually pull it out it brings the young desirable plants out with it. Steve thought that it would probably be necessary to completely replace the top layer of sand in some areas, to remove the weed seeds.



After the walk, we all retired to the picnic area and shared some wonderful food and lots of chatter. Morgan had even barbequed some sausage, bacon and guerkin delicacies for us to share. No one was in a hurry to move on, it was so pleasant.

Thanks to all who contributed.



Reminder: August Meeting is the AGM & Membership Fees are due...

Membership fees are due as from the Annual General Meeting in August.

Prompt payment would be appreciated, paid at meeting nights or posted to the Treasurer (P.O. Box 8663) or direct into the club account at Westpac BSB No.035-303 and Account No 100981

Be sure to put your name in the payment details

If personal details have changed please indicate, especially email address.

New members to fill in complete form.

The AGM will be followed by a brief monthly meeting and then member's night. Bring something interesting to share!



Field Naturalists in their natural habitat.
Photo by Rosalie Breen; Red Range Trip

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Inc
PO Box 8663, Alice Springs NT 0871

Name(s)
.....

Address:.....
.....
.....

Phone contact

(home)
.....

(work)
.....

(mobile)
.....

Email (print carefully)
.....

Renewal/new membership

Payment enclosed \$

Please circle relevant membership

Fees: Family \$30. Concession \$25

Individual \$20 Concession \$15

Life member 10 times annual fee

Interstate past member. Newsletter only \$10

Subscription year begins at August AGM.

ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INCORPORATED

Minutes of general meeting at Higher Education Building,

Charles Darwin University - Wednesday 9 July 2014

Following presentation by Peter Latz on

“Buffel Grass-the botanical cane toad of the fifth of Australia- only worse”

(Thanks to Jackie and Graeme Shaughnessy for supper and Michael Laflamme as scribe)

Present: 19 Members, 4 visitors and 6 apologies as per attendance book.

Previous minutes – accepted.

Business arising from the minutes: Nil

Correspondence:

- Advertisement for Bird Week on Norfolk Island in December.
- Email from Kidney Foundation with suggestions for fundraising walk.
- Conversations and publicity generated from our entry in ASTC Events Calendar.
- Thank you to Brian Timms, speaker in June
- Thank you to Pam Keil and Michael Laflamme, speakers in June

Treasurer's Report:

Balance at 11/7/14 \$3227

Subs: \$15

Debit pending: \$100 Australian Natural History Medallion Trust

General business:

- Meg Mooney suggested advertising our Meetings by submitting a short article to The Advocate. She will trial this.
- **DesertSMART EcoFair** on Sunday 10 August. Morgan has done some preliminary organisation. He has arranged to borrow marquee from Sue Fraser at Hookers.
An Email will be sent to members to get a 2 hourly roster for 9-3pm.
Rosalie will arrange name tags.
The club will buy display boards from Rosalie for \$20.
Neil and Leigh will provide some of their award winning photos.
Barb will provide 20 membership forms and a photo display.
- External Hard Drive to be purchased by Cecily to back up club records.

Past Activities/Trips discussed:

- Ooraminna Rockhole. It was interesting watching Dr Timms at work in dusty claypans and wet rockholes. Lisa has a birdlist from the trip. Connie is writing about plants and Meg will write a short piece on the macroinvertebrates.
- Red Range walk. Participants have been encouraged to write an article for the newsletter.

Future activities:

- 11-12 July. Mount Sonder - Connie is the contact for this.
- Sunday 20 July. End of Year Celebration at Alice Springs Desert Park. Wildflower walk with Steve Priestley followed by shared lunch. (ASFNC to provide cold drinks and disposable cups and plates)
- Sunday 27 July 8am. Shorebird Count at sewage ponds. Scribes needed.
- August 2-4. Horseshoe Bend. Leader Jim Lawrence is endeavouring to contact Station.

Next meeting: August 13. Members' Night and AGM

Scribe: Barb Gilfedder

Supper : Cecily Sutton