



July 2018

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Newsletter



Galapagos Prickly Pear (Opuntia echios), taller than a person, as seen during Caragh Heenan's and Candice Appleby's South American adventures. (See page 3 for write-up of their presentation.)

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.

CONTENTS

Meetings, Trips/Activities/Contacts... p2;
Caragh and Candice trip to South America...p3;
Camping trip along the Finke River...p6;
Animal lists from Finke River trip...p6;
In search of Running Waters...p7; Harlequin Mistletoe...p9

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NEWSLETTER

The next newsletter will be August 2018.

The deadline for the next newsletter will be 23 July 2018

Please send your contributions to Barb Gilfedder - bjfedders@gmail.com

TRIPS AND ACTIVITIES

ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Wed 11 July **General Meeting** at the lecture theatre in CDU higher education building at 7.00pm. **Sheridan Martin**, Senior Ranger at Owen Springs Reserve will talk about Owen Springs from a Ranger's perspective.

Watch for this one later in July **Serpentine Chalet** – camp and walk with Wendy and Ian Mann. A separate email will be sent out with more information and the date, when it is decided.

Wed 8 August **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** of the **Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club** will be held at the lecture theatre in CDU higher education building at 7.00pm. All Committee positions will be declared vacant and new elections conducted. Please think seriously about whether you can help the club in this capacity. If you are happy to stand for any position please let a current Committee Member know, or come along and volunteer on the night. It would be good to have some new enthusiastic people on the Committee. None of the positions are arduous.

The AGM will be followed by our annual **Members' Night**. Please bring along something interesting to share. Maybe some photos on a USB stick or in an album, a natural history item, a relevant book or magazine article – the list is endless.

August 4,5,6 We are planning a trip to **Newhaven Wildlife Sanctuary** - 2 or 3 nights camping, unpowered sites, toilets, hot showers, firewood and drinking water available. (\$10 per person per night) extended either way by personal choice. The plan is to make your own way out there or join up with others who wish to travel the same time. Clear directions available. There are excellent self-guided tours that can be followed when you are there. We usually do a round trip of about 900km, including travelling around Newhaven. Fuel is available at Tilmouth Well but not at Newhaven. Leader: Barb Gilfedder bjfedders@gmail.com

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY ALICE SPRINGS

Contact: apsalicesprings@yahoo.com.au

Friday 6th and Saturday 7th July 2018 Alice Spring Show at Blatherskite Park

Come and see the APS stand at the show for native plant sales, native plant seed sales, local gardening advice, plant identification and to discover what's new with the Australian Plants Society in Alice Springs. Contact: above email if you can volunteer a little bit or a lot of your time in setting up, manning the stand or packing up.

BIRDLIFE CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

Contact: birdlifeca@gmail.com

Sun 15 July Winter Shorebird Count starting at 8am. Birdlife would appreciate help in the form of counters and scribes. It is necessary for all participants to have completed the Power and Water on-line induction course.



Thursday 5 July 3-5pm UNCOVER THE MYSTERY OF ALCOOTA.

Celebrate the opening of **Megafauna Central** at 21 Todd Street, Alice Springs. The barking Spider Visual Theatre will present stories of the ancient megafauna that once roamed throughout central Australia over six million years ago.

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Committee Members:-

President	Barbara Gilfedder	8955 5452	Committee Member	Pamela Keil	8955 0496
Vice-President	Lee Ryall	0417 401 237	Committee Member	Robyn Grey-Gardner	8952 2207
Secretary	Anne Pye	0438 388 012	Some other Club Responsibilities:-		
Treasurer	Neil Woolcock	8955 1021	Newsletter	Barbara Gilfedder	
Property Officer	Rosalie Breen	8952 3409	Website	Pamela Keil	
Public Officer	Anne Pye	0438 388 012	Minutes Secretary	Connie Spencer	0429 966 592
			Facebook organiser	Colleen O'Malley	

Caragh Heenan and Candice Appleby in South America

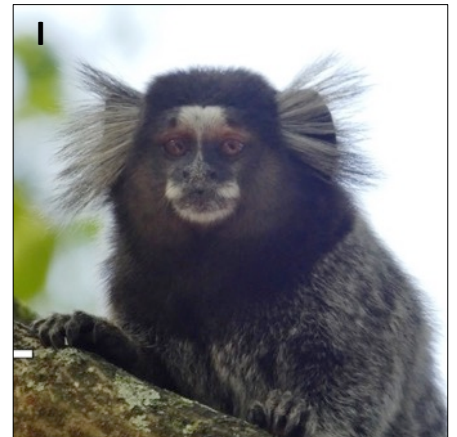
Caragh and Candice covered a lot of ground (and air) during their 6 weeks in South America earlier this year. Not surprisingly their wonderful photos and travelogue presented to ASFNC on 13th June 2018 delighted the audience. This article is based on their summary for the Land for Wildlife Newsletter, with minimal editing from Marg Friedel.

Our travels took us to Patagonia where we saw a host of wildflowers in a cool landscape reminiscent of central Australia. Flat tussocky plains surrounded by jagged mountain ranges, just a little more extreme and capped with snow compared to what we are used to around here. We spotted an Austral Pygmy Owl (*Glaucidium nana*) [B] by the path to Perito Moreno Glacier [A] where we trekked on the ice. The invasive Bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*) [C] was observed in hoards searching out nectar from the flowers around El Calafate (named after a berry that can grow in the area). Several Chimango Caracara (*Milvago chimango*) [D] were spied at the Reserva Municipal Laguna Nimez, a bird reserve on the Lago (Lake) Argentino that was also home to many other aquatic species and was the site of our first Chilean Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus chilensis*) sighting.

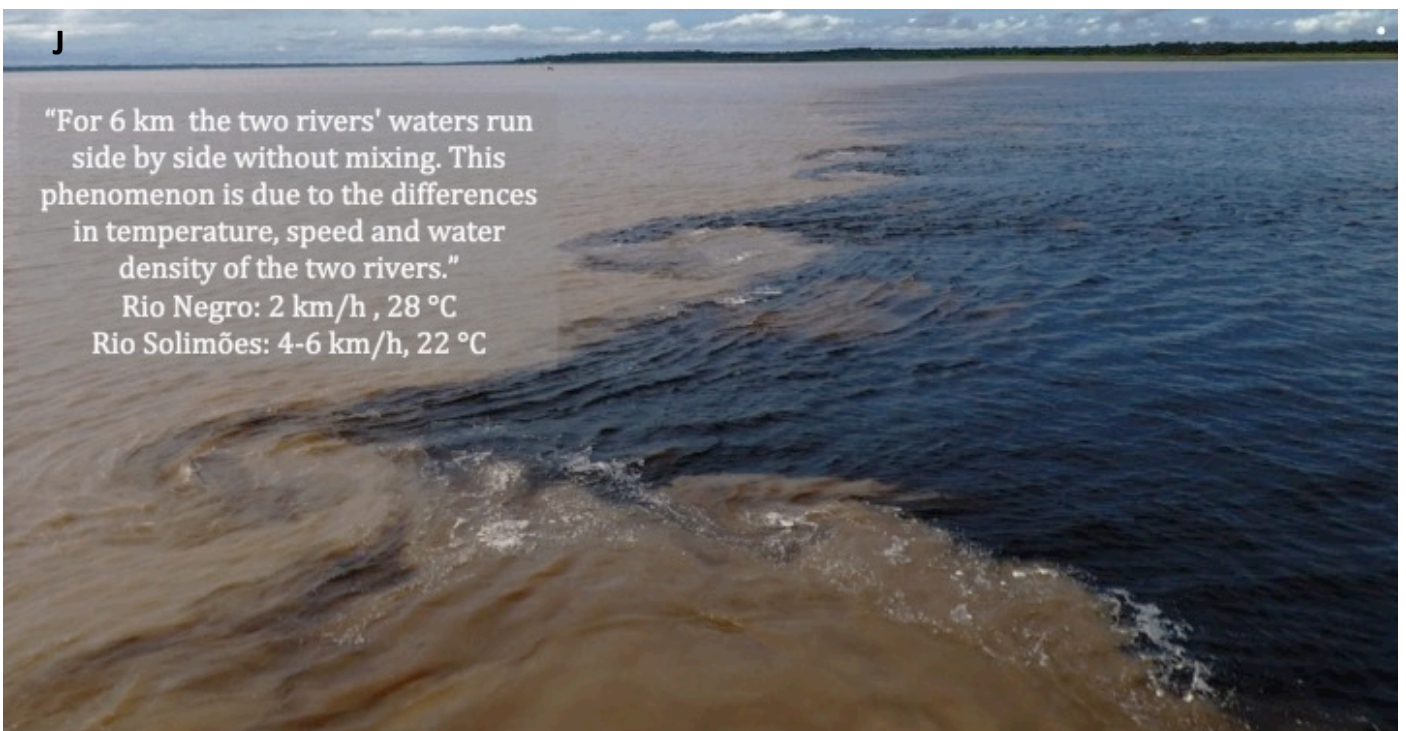




We then took off to see Iguazú / Iguazu Falls [F] on the Argentina and Brazil border, where we were mobbed by butterflies [E] and naughty Coati (*Nasua nasua*) [H] looking to steal a snack from visitors. The nearby Parque das Aves was a haven of avian life and well worth the visit.



Our adventures continued as we went to Rio de Janeiro in time for Carnival, however wildlife could still be seen in the form of Hummingbirds (Family: Trochillidae) [G] and the Common Marmoset (*Callithrix jacchus*) [I] a species whose range has expanded from northern Brazil to the southern regions and is now considered invasive.

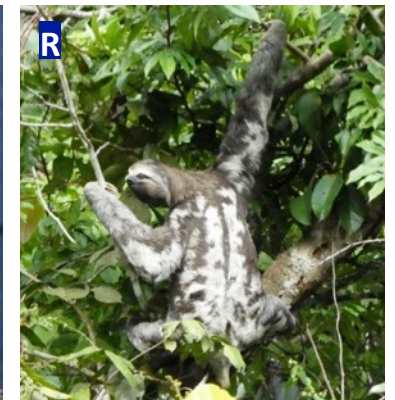
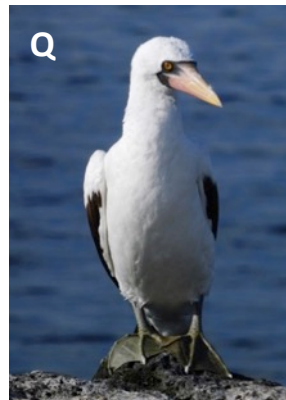


The next stop in Brazil was the Amazon, where we cruised the Rio Negro and Rio Solimões [J], seeing birds such as the Scarlet Macaw (*Ara macao*), White-throated Toucan (*Ramphastos tucanus*), and Yellow-rumped Cacique (*Cacicus Cela*) [O] with their hanging bag-shaped nests. We were able to get up close and personal with a family of Common Squirrel Monkeys (*Saimiri sciureus*) [L] and saw a slowly moving Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth (*Bradypus variegatus*) [R].

We spent some time in Machu Picchu, where several Llama (*Lama glama*) [P] could be seen grazing near the Incan ruins and a hike up Montana Machu Picchu enabled us to see several Rufous-collared Sparrow (*Zonotrichia capensis*) [N] and a very brief encounter (sadly not photographed) with a Sword-billed Hummingbird (*Ensifera ensifera*).

We left the mountains for the coast when the Galápagos started calling our name. It was a feast for the senses, with different species in all directions and generally sitting calmly with only a few predators. The highlight was being able to see the Galápagos Giant Tortoise (*Chelonoidis nigra*) at the Charles Darwin Research Station. Close behind in the race for favourites was the Galápagos Sea Lion (*Zalophus wollebaeki*) [K], three species of Iguana (Galápagos Land Iguana *Conolophus subcristatus*, the Santa Fe Land Iguana *Conolophus pallidus* [S], and the Marine Iguana *Amblyrhynchus cristatus* [T]) and two species of Booby (Nazca Booby *Sula granti* [Q] and the Blue-footed Booby *Sula nebouxii* [M]. We were also able to see the Galápagos Flamingo (*Phoenicopaterus ruber*), Galápagos Green Turtle (*Chelonia agassizii*), several species of Darwin's Finch (Family: Thraupidae) and the large Galápagos Prickly Pear (*Opuntia echios*) [Newsletter Cover Picture]. Snorkeling in the clear blue waters enabled us to swim with the Sea Lions and see a range of fish and Whitetip Reef Sharks (*Triaenodon obesus*).

Following the Galápagos, we moved to dry land in Mexico City to explore the pyramids of Teotihuacan where we sighted a Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus obscurus*) before heading home. What a whirlwind and unforgettable trip!



And what an unforgettable presentation! Thank you Caragh and Candice!

Camping trip along the Finke River with Jim Lawrence – 9-11 June 2018

The weather was certainly kind to us for this trip. It was milder than it had been the week before and the week after – perfect camping weather. I hadn't been along there since 2012, and that year we had had considerably more rain. This time there was less water, fewer water crossings, a rougher track, fewer flowers and less animal activity.

One place that I thought had improved was Illamurta Springs Conservation Reserve. In 2012 there had been a fire though, the fence was down and there was lots of evidence of cattle and feral animals having fun in there. This year the fence had obviously been mended a while ago, and with the protection, plant life had grown particularly *Eucalyptussocialis* subsp. *eucentrica* and *Acacia ligulata* which formed dense thickets. Other plants like a range of Sennas and native grasses were thriving in spite of Buffel Grass.



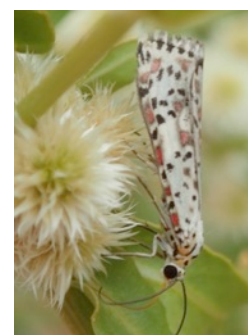
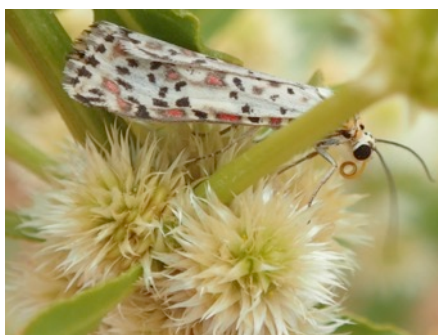
Animal Lists for the Finke River trip compiled by Bob Read - 2018

BIRDS

Galah	Willie Wagtail	Australian Owlet Nightjar	Australian White Ibis
Torresian Crow	White-backed Swallow	Little Pied Cormorant	Pink-eared Duck
Magpie Lark	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Black-fronted Dotterel	Little Grassbird
Australian Magpie	Weebill	Australian Reed Warbler	Tree Martin
Zebra Finch	Yellow-throated Miner	Spinifex Pigeon	Little Black Cormorant
Crested Bellbird	Budgerigar	Crested Pigeon	Peregrine Falcon
Red-tailed Black Cockatoo	Black-faced Woodswallow	Black Swan	Australian Grebe
Australian Ringneck	Pied Butcherbird	Australian Darter	Wood Duck
White-plumed Honeyeater	Major Mitchell Cockatoo	Hardhead	
Black Kite	Eurasian Coot	Grey Teal	
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Little Corella	Peaceful Dove	

LEPIDOPTERA - Day Flying Moths

A large number of day flying moths, *Utetheisa pulchelloides* or (Heliotrope Moth) were seen around an *Amaranthus* sp. bush. In the first photo the moth's proboscis is coiled, in the second the proboscis is extended down to a flower, showing that the moths were feeding on nectar.



Lepidoptera (Butterflies)

Meadow Argus	<i>Junonia villida</i>
Caper White	<i>Belenois java</i>
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa kershawii</i>
Heliotrope Moth	<i>Utetheisa pulchelloides</i>

Odonata (Dragonflies)

Blue Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum caledonicum</i>
Scarlet Percher	<i>Diplacodes haematodes</i>
Aurora Bluetail	<i>Ischnura aurora</i>



Above: Meadow Argus and Painted Lady Butterflies feeding on *Eucalyptus socialis* subsp. *eucentrica*; Below: Common Bandwing Grasshopper.

Orthoptera (Grasshoppers)

Adults except where otherwise noted. A lot of nymphs around, but hard to identify.

Spur-throated Locust	<i>Austacris guttulosa</i>	At Illamurta
Common Red-leg	<i>Azelota ochraceae</i>	In the Finke.
Eastern Oedaleus	<i>Oedaleus australis</i>	In the Finke - adult and nymph
Common Bandwing	<i>Pycnosticus seriatus</i>	In the Finke
Australian Sphingonotus	<i>Sphingonotus erythropterus</i>	In the Finke
Gumleaf Grasshopper	<i>Goniaea australasiae</i>	In the Finke - nymph



In Search of Running Waters by Joan Powling

They say it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive, or words to that effect and, as a Melbourne member of the Alice Springs Field Naturalists, I was hopeful of finding water during our excursion to the Finke River Gorge and Illamurta Springs over the June long weekend. My particular interest is freshwater algae of the arid region of Australia including the group known as Charophytes. These are submerged aquatic plants which appear to resemble land plants as they grow anchored in mud and are clearly visible to the collector, unlike the algae which need a microscope for identification and to reveal their beauty.

Aided and abetted by a team of old hands, Jim and Margaret, Rosalie, Colleen, Barb and Jim, Bob Read from Tasmania and Yogita, we headed for a camping spot at Running Waters. We camped for two nights on the Finke River above the river crossing near a solitary *Livistona* palm. Rosalie, Colleen and Joan immediately headed for the water with buckets and nets [A] only to be confronted by evidence of animal access along sections of the river bank.

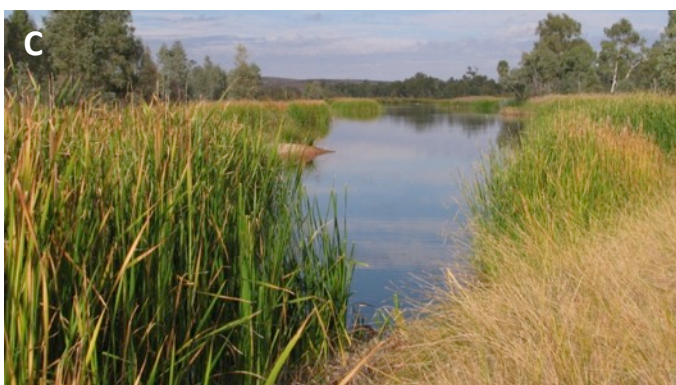


Rosalie and Colleen managed to sample successfully for invertebrates among the emergent reeds and had the joy of uncovering a blue mite among several other aquatic animals. Joan could only see masses of the green filamentous alga *Spirogyra* blanketing the river bed and found euglenids and epiphytic diatoms in her net. We saw fish, which was a good sign, and we will consult with Jayne Brim Box and her team to find what these might be. The presence of the fish might explain the absence of zooplankton in the sample.

Hope springs eternal, but not at Illamurta Springs. The trek into the Springs next day was full of interest but we did not stumble on any water although we could see where it had been. We examined lichen-covered rocks and Colleen found some spring water gurgling away in a covered pit along the track, which she sampled valiantly but unsuccessfully.



On our way back we turned right along a track on the opposite bank of the river to our campsite and found a pool with a pronounced yellow-green appearance [B]. The sample revealed masses of a needle-shaped alga, *Ankistrodesmus*, and very little else. This sample provided the clearest indication of “organic” contamination at this particular site as this and other minute green algae are most commonly found in small, highly eutrophic water bodies, including late stage sewage ponds.



Algae and invertebrates are reliable indicators of physico-chemical conditions in a body of water. Salinity, nutrient levels, oxygen status, turbidity, flow and turbulence all combine to determine the type of algae present. The presence of a so far elusive charophyte would indicate clean water. And we were about to find one.

On our last day we headed off upstream and visited one more Running Waters site [C]. Here Joan sampled a green hoof print puddle but, to her great regret, collected no trawl as the water was pretty foul looking near the shore. The hoof print sample contained euglenids [D], the green flagellate algae also indicative of organic contamination. Meanwhile Colleen, having wandered further downstream in search of waterbirds, found a charophyte [E] in a cut off section of the river which appeared to be clean by comparison. Great rejoicing!

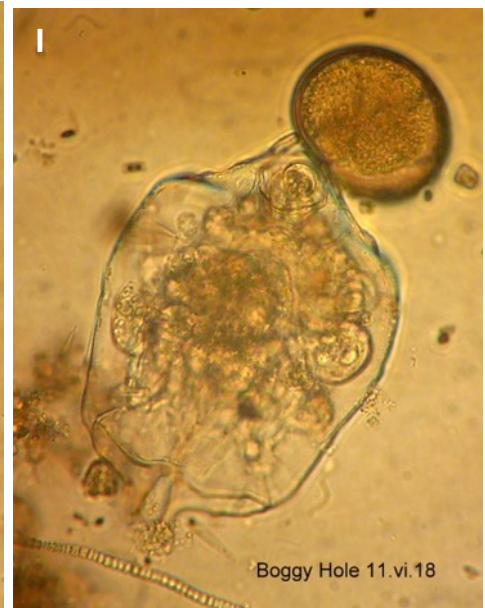


Further upstream in an impressive rockpool in the Gorge [F], there was a quantity of the emergent aquatic plant *Myriophyllum* and a more diverse collection of algae in the pool than in sites downstream. Rotifers and copepods were also present.



Boggy Hole [G] was the last site sampled on the Finke and amongst the waterbird activity and black anoxic mud, there were blue-green algae (*Spirulina subsalsa*), diatoms and small flagellates, all of which indicated an elevated salinity level. There were two rotifers [H and I], both of which had been collected by Jenny Davis and Jayne Brim Box in January 2012.

So, the lesson from this exercise is that, unlike other rivers, because of the intermittent flow, the inflow from ground water and its tendency to form water holes unconnected to each other, no two sections of the Finke River at Running Waters were alike in their biota. Although there was visible evidence of animal access in certain sections, only the hoof prints with their green soup and the yellow-green waterhole near the campsite were able to demonstrate, by virtue of the algae present, a deleterious effect on water quality. There will be other sites and it is to be hoped that the long term study by DENR will continue.



Harlequin Mistletoe *Lysiana exocarpi* subsp. *exocarpi* – Barb Gilfedder

The flowers of this parasitic species are more frequently red and green. However around Kunoth Well, the yellow-flowering form was more common. The host plants were Dead Finish, *Acacia tetragonophylla*. I couldn't find any berries at that stage, but returning a few weeks later, much of the mistletoe had been eaten, presumably by cattle and there were green berries and even some that had been through a Mistletoe Bird and were attaching themselves to a branch, ready to grow into new plants.





Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Minutes— general meeting – 13 June 2018

Open: Meeting opened at 8.40 after a presentation by Caragh Heenan and Candice Appleby “Highlights of their trip through South America” Thank you to Margaret Lawrence for supper, at very short notice. Thank you to Margaret Friedel for taking notes for newsletter.

Present: 26 Members, one visitor and 8 apologies as per attendance book

Minutes of the May 2018 General Meeting as displayed in the June 2018 newsletter were accepted by the meeting.

Business arising:

- Website and display of newsletters on it. Robyn Grey-Gardner and Pamela Keil to have a meeting next weekend.
- Certificate of Currency received from insurers Austcover. Barb also paid an additional \$156.20 for additional cover for 4 longer-than-one-day trips. Neil will reimburse when he returns from holiday.

Treasurer's Report:

Balance of funds (including petty cash) end of April 2018 **\$889.35**

Activity in May

Income

Membership \$40.00

Expenses

Club Banner from Vistaprint (pay Barb Gilfedder) **\$49.97**

(Petty Cash

Opening balance \$32.65

Expenditure Lee Ryall – stationery, stamps **\$30.80**

Closing Balance \$1.85)

Total of all funds (including petty cash) end May **\$848.58**

Correspondence: (all have been forwarded to membership)

- Deb Clarke exhibition opening 3pm, 23 June, runs till 6 July OPBG
- Bill Low seminar was this afternoon
- Katherine Flora brochure by Jenny Purdie now available
- Junior Ranger enrolments – Jen Kreusser
- Marcus Goater request for help with Watarrka plants

Any other business:

- After the stall at Heritage market, several members discussed buying new display panels for such events. Members will look at some at the Alice Springs Show, also look on internet.

Past Events:

- 9-11 June Running Waters and Finke Gorge with Jim Lawrence – 4 vehicles and 9 Members – a good trip. Some concerns expressed about cattle and horse damage at Running Waters, which is outside the Park and on Henbury Station. It was noted that when Henbury Station was sold, there was mention that sensitive areas along the Finke River would be protected. Bob Read suggested a letter to the Minister would be a good idea. I thought maybe if I asked Members for their ideas in an email, Club Secretary, Anne Pye might be able to draft an official letter, when she returns from holidays.

Future Events:

- Saturday 30 June Roma Gorge Neil Woolcock. Details will be sent out later.
- Sometime in July - Overnight Serpentine Chalet Site with Wendy and Ian Mann
- Thursday 5 July Opening of Megafauna Central 2.30 to 4.30pm. All welcome.
- 6/7 July Alice Springs SHOW – APS Stall

Next Meeting:

11 July - Sheridan Martin, Owen Springs from a Ranger's perspective.

Scribe: offer by Pam Keil, providing she is not away on holiday. **Supper:** Kimberley Morgan

Sightings: Bev Gray - Grey Butcherbird in town area.

Minutes compiled by Barb Gilfedder