



June 2022

# Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Newsletter



Water always adds that sparkle. This photo of a little pool and the beautiful gums and rocks at Jessie Gap was taken by Rosalie Breen at the beginning of the Yeperenye Trail walk, which some Field Nats enjoyed on 7 May 2022.

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month (except December and January) at 7:00pm at the Olive Pink Botanic Garden.

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## NEWSLETTER

The next newsletter will be July 2022.  
The deadline for that newsletter will be 23 June 2022.  
Please send your contributions to Barb Gilfedder: [bjfedders@gmail.com](mailto:bjfedders@gmail.com)

## ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

**Wednesday 8 June** **ASFNC Monthly Speaker Night at 7.00pm** at Olive Pink Botanic Garden.  
Karlee Foster will give a presentation about Bio-security in central Australia.



Remember Citrus Canker? Myrtle Rust? Those pesky fruit flies? It all comes under the Plant Biosecurity umbrella... But what exactly is it? And why is it relevant to central Australia? Join Karlee Foster, Plant Biosecurity Officer to talk about the ins and outs of surveying for exotic plant pests and disease in central Australia and the NT. The Plant Biosecurity Branch administers and assesses plant import and export permits and works with Territory growers for Interstate Certification Assurance. Karlee monitors and maintains around 100 traps throughout central Australia for target pests such as exotic Fruit Flies, Fall Army Worm and American Serpentine Leafminer - though often she is personally more interested in her by-catches like Cuckoo wasps and Blue-banded Bees! Karlee also works on Honey Bee Biosecurity across the Territory and represents the NT on the national Bee Biosecurity Officer team.

## AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY - ALICE SPRINGS

[apsalicesprings@yahoo.com.au](mailto:apsalicesprings@yahoo.com.au)

**Wednesday 1 June 2022 ,7.00 pm at Olive Pink Botanic Garden "Introduction to plant nomenclature"**, Peter Jobson will talk about the scientific names of plants.

### Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club

#### Committee Members

<b>President</b>	Barb Gilfedder	0407 6688 68
<b>Vice-President</b>	Marg Friedel	0417 849 743
<b>Secretary</b>	Connie Spencer	0429 966 592
<b>Treasurer</b>	Neil Woolcock	0428 521 598
<b>Property Officer</b>	Claire Norman	0448 341 795
<b>Members</b>	Lee Ryll	0417 401 237
	Rosalie Breen	0458 155 141
	Peter Bannister	0448 600 106
	Clare Pearce	0457 035 472
<b>Public Officer</b>	Anne Pye	0438 388 012

#### Other Club Responsibilities:

Newsletter – Barb Gilfedder  
[bjfedders@gmail.com](mailto:bjfedders@gmail.com)  
Facebook Organiser – Meg Mooney [moon3@inet.net.au](mailto:moon3@inet.net.au)  
Website controller – position vacant

### Friday and Saturday 1 - 2 July 2022, Alice Springs Show

Australian Plants Society Alice Springs will have a stall at the Show with a great display of local native flowers, providing information on native plants and selling plants to support Olive Pink Botanic Garden. Please support the APS AS committee by helping at working bees and volunteering on the stall.

There will be no APS AS evening meeting in July.



## Journey to Birthday Waterhole: Hugh River floods January-February 2022

Presentation by Charlie Carter and Deb Clarke.

Summarised here by Marg Friedel.

Alice Springs readers will remember a very wet end to January and start to February this year when the Todd River ran. Charlie and Deb saw evidence of a much bigger flood on the Hugh River but had to wait until 30 April when the weather was kinder and they were free to investigate. They took the track (if you could call it that) in from Namatjira Drive to Birthday Waterhole.



Map excerpt from <https://nt.gov.au/parks/find-a-park/tjoritja-west-macdonnell-national-park/larapinta-trail>.

The first indicator of the scale of the flood was the state of the track in from Namatjira Drive, the route of which was identified by pink tags since the track itself had disappeared (below). If they weren't clambering over boulders, they were ploughing through deep sand deposits (right).



Along the way and at Birthday Waterhole they saw large uprooted trees and flood debris up to 5 m above ground level.



Charlie and Deb reported that the Birthday Waterhole area had been reshaped: “large mature River Red Gums were uprooted and washed downstream, large areas of the valley and creek banks were scoured bare of soil and sand, flood debris was several metres high in trees, and metres deep deposits of sand were dropped in previously flat areas, indicating a massive flow in Stuarts Creek, as well as the upper Hugh”.

This was also evident along Stuarts Creek upstream from Birthday Waterhole, where a waterhole in the previously shallow creek bed was about 2.0 metres deep.



Photos from the top - uprooted tree en route;  
Debris at Birthday Waterhole;  
Upstream waterhole with big deposit of sand;  
Hands show depth upstream.



Above: Flood debris was also evident for 5 km east of the Hugh River crossing, along Namatjira Drive.  
 Right: Charlie displaying depth measuring equipment

During the same trip, some depth surveys were undertaken in the greater Finke River system waterholes by Button, Button and O'Hare\*

Readings were taken with a stone on a string, lowered from a floaty. Depths were measured along transects across the pools, and an average taken for the deepest readings. Results were:

Glen Helen Gorge = 14.0 metres;      Finke 2 mile, N pool = 4.0 metres;  
 Ormiston Gorge = 10.0 metres;      Birthday Waterhole = 4.0 metres;  
 Stuarts Creek = ~2.0 metres.

\* Zeus Button, 12, Cassius Button, 10, and Henry O'Hare 13, with assistance from Tim and Linda O'Hare, and Charlie and Deb.

*River flows and rainfall*

Water Resources' data for the Hugh River hydrograph from 1975 to the present show that the recent event was the third highest on record:

12/02/2000 = 6.8m      1/03/1988 = 6.2m      02/02/2022 = 6.1m

However the gauging station is a long way downstream, being located near the Hugh River bridge over the Stuart Highway, and does not necessarily give an accurate picture of the flows in the upper Hugh and Stuarts Creek. Charlie and Deb were struck by the comparison with the Todd River, which had only modest flows in November '21 (just over 4 m) and January/February '22.



Rainfall data (mm) were difficult to get and very limited in scope, but enough to confirm that spatial variation in the rainfall was the likely cause of the difference.

	Nov. 2021	Jan/Feb 2022
Alice Springs Airport (BoM)	196	200
Bond Springs (Water Resources)	40	70
Hamilton Downs Homestead (pers. comm.)	210	180

The Water Resources data is from their gauging point in the headwaters of the Todd. Hamilton Downs Homestead is in the catchment area of the Upper Hugh.

Charlie and Deb have offered to take a group of ASFNC members into Birthday Waterhole when the track is in better repair.

Thankyou to Charlie and Deb for an impressively illustrated talk, and the lively discussion that followed!

## Yeperenye Trail - Jessie Gap to Emily Gap 07 May 2022

Leader: Jill Brew. Report: Connie Spencer.

Photos: [Connie Spencer](#), [Johannes Ammerschlaeger](#), [Rosalie Breen](#).

We gathered at Emily Gap, where Jill ensured we all sign-in. We then boarded Johannes' tour bus and drove to Jessie Gap to start the walk back to Emily with the sun on our backs.

I was disappointed how the Buffel Grass was so dominate for the first few kilometres with no attempt to keep the edge of the track clear or even around the first seat. On the other hand, I was impressed with *Dipteracanthus australasicus*, Desert Petunia (right) managing just fine on the hillsides amongst the Buffel Grass. All were past their best and in need of a drink as were *Eremophila freelingii*, Rock Fuchsia and *Senna*



*artemisisoides* subsp. *alicia*, middle storey plants. Often there was healthy regrowth along the edge of the path possibly from old rootstock.

About halfway along, plants seemed much less stressed and there were many good displays of native grasses mostly *Enneapogon polyphyllus*, Woolly Oat-grass and an *Aristida* spp., Three-awn Grasses. There were several species of *Ptilotus* but once again well past their use-by date. About the only plants that offered colour were *Solanum quadriloculatum*, Wild Tomato and *Trichodesma zeylanicum*, Cattle Bush.

We tried out all the seats (large rocks shaped like seats) along the way and had morning tea on one – much of it provided by Jill, and arrived back at Emily Gap 3.5 hours later, even though the sign at the beginning and the end suggested it was a two-hour walk! Nothing unusual about that for us Field Naturalists.

A few runners past us early on in the walk and a young couple we met along the way did both ways in less time than our one-way! Oh, to be young again! My Guru Maps app said we walked 8.57 km in 3:35 hours. Of that distance, we were on the move for 2:15 hours and idle for 1:19 hours!

Thank you Jill for organising and leading and to all the others for your company.

[Megg Kelham](#), [Rosalie Breen](#), [Wendy and Ian Mann](#), [Johannes Ammerschlaeger](#) and [Jill Brew](#) – [Connie](#) took the photo



## Yeperenye Trail – Report: Rosalie Breen

Having first met at Emily Gap, *the meeting place of all the caterpillars and the site of their fight with the stink beetles*, we had a special ride to Jessie Gap in a tour bus thanks to Johannes, here again for a while. Jessie Gap was almost unrecognisable from the massive river flows in January and February, re-arranging the sand and remnant pools. (take note of Charlie Carter's talk last meeting). The River Red Gums still remain in their magnificent age and beauty (right) and clinging to the southern rocky walls was a big sprawling Fig Tree, now probably called *Ficus desertorum*.



So off we went on our walk. The Heavitree Range towered beside us, steep, red, rocky and broken cliffs, some blackened from lichen growth. Plenty of trees and shrubs high up, especially Native Pines, *Callitris glaucophylla*, along the tops and in one part these stretched down almost to the track. Along the track were beautiful Bloodwoods and everywhere was *Eremophilla freelingii*, a favoured plant of Aboriginal people for medicinal purposes. It likes to live on limestone ground. For much of the way we twisted around slip slopes coming down from the range (left), with minor gullies in between,

mostly rock paved. Almost each slope had a different vegetation habitat - shrub lands, mulga, grasses, salt bushes, to almost bare ground. I felt this indicated the soil and rock type, mainly part of the Bitter Springs Formation which includes red shales and sandstones, siltstone and dolomite, limestone, in various shades of red brown to white. This showed up in the track colour as we walked over red and white sections. In a couple of places there were some odd blocks of a conglomerate, formed from alluvium washed downhill from the top of the range a few million years ago (<20 mya) and subsequently cemented together to form the rock. These were oxidised to red rust and covered with black lichen (right).

Constructed along the way were a few seats for resting or for admiring the views to the south, right down to the far blue lines of more ranges. Even the silver glow of umpteen aeroplanes parked at the airport! We chose a natural seating rock for a break, where our leader as well as providing tea and coffee shared her goodies among us, a passing walker and one ant (at least). Thanks Jill.





To the south are a number of small, isolated, flat-topped mesas, capped with erosion resistant silcrete. The track eventually climbed up to one, crossed the grass covered flat with some shade on the edges, and down through the bleached underlayer. At the base this had eroded to fine grains forming claylike soil and here the track builders had built a mosaic rock path to prevent erosion (and save getting bogged if wet). In fact the track was very well constructed. In particular we admired a beautiful arched bridge near Emily Gap.

Thanks to the traditional owners of the area who constructed the trail as a gift for Alice Springs people to enjoy. We certainly enjoyed it. Thanks for your sharing.





# Interesting flora on Limestone Hill Walk with Peter Bannister

Eight enthusiastic and interested walkers enjoyed Limestone Hill and beyond last Saturday morning. Many thanks to Suzanne Lollback, Patrick Nelson and Connie Spencer for sending in photos.



1. *Abutilon cryptopetalum*
2. *Scaevola glabrata* flowering
3. *Scaevola glabrata* close-up
4. *Solanum* sp.
5. Discarded land snail shell.





**Thank you Peter for the stroll through interesting country!**



1. *Eucalyptus socialis* ssp. *eucentrica*.
2. Pointed pink-tipped gumnuts of the above.
3. *Euphorbia tannensis* in foreground.
4. Borer debris on *Hakea lorea* and close-up.
5. *Eremophila christophori*.
6. *Euphorbia centralis*.