



**MEETING THURSDAY 7th October**  
**7:30 pm Australian National University**  
Meeting details back page

# Annual General Meeting and Members' Night

Short Member Talks. Topics and Speakers include:

Volcanos	Kevin McCue
East Timor	Dierk von Behrens
Lake Eyre and surrounds	Alan Ford
Peru	Kaye Hahn
Black Ridge	Rosemary von Behrens
Nature by Numbers	Margaret Kalms

Next meeting: **Mountain Pygmy Possums and Climate Change.**

Speaker: **Linda Broome**, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, NSW.

Linda Broome will talk about possible ways to conserve the possum in a warmer world. She is raising money for a captive breeding programme. For more information visit;  
[http://www.fnpw.org.au/OurProjects/Plants\\_Wildlife/Mountain\\_Pygmy\\_Possum.htm](http://www.fnpw.org.au/OurProjects/Plants_Wildlife/Mountain_Pygmy_Possum.htm)

7:30pm Thursday 4th November

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## Spring Outings in October

During spring many groups organise walks to see the wildflowers. Field Natters might like to try some or all of them. Note that some walks (such as the Orchid Walks on 10 October) require booking. In view of all this activity, we will not be organising a walk of our own, unless Tony Lawson can be persuaded to show us some of the orchids on Black Mountain that he learns about on 10 October - this would be in the afternoon at 2:00 pm on Sunday 17 October.

### Black Mountain Wildflower Ramble

**Saturday 9 October, 9:30 - noon**

Organised by the Friends of the ANBG. Meet at the Belconnen Way entry, just before Caswell Drive turnoff (look for the balloons). Join wildflower lovers for the 39th annual Burbidge/Chippendale ramble around Black Mountain to enjoy the spring diversity. This will be an easy guided walk. Our leaders this year will be Laurie Adams, Isobel Crawford and Jean Geue. All are welcome - it's a great way to celebrate the spring and find out how to look for our sometimes cryptic wildflowers. Bring your friends, especially those who are new to plant identification.

Bring morning tea, hat, sunblock, water and stout shoes. Contact Jean Geue on 6251 1601.

### Orchids Walks on Black Mountain

**Sunday 10 October, 10am and 1pm**

Organised by the Friends of the ANBG. Meet at the carpark on Caswell Drive (head south towards Glenloch interchange) to discover and learn about spring flowering native terrestrial orchids. Wear sturdy shoes, bring a hand lens if you have one. Numbers limited to 15 for each walk, so booking is essential. Phone 6250 9540 and indicate which walk you would prefer (afternoon walk is a repeat of the morning walk.)

### The Pinnacle Nature Reserve Monthly Walk

**Sunday 17 October, 9:30 am**

Rosemary Blemings organises a walk on the Pinnacle Nature Reserve on the 3rd Saturday of each month. Please contact her for further details of where to meet etc. ( [rosemary@blemings.org](mailto:rosemary@blemings.org) or 6258 4724 ).

Photos taken near Calvary Hospital Margaret Kalms

## Open Garden – Andy & Janet Russell, Aranda

(10:00 - 4:00 pm, Sat & Sun, 2 & 3 Oct)

Two members of the Field Nats, Andy and Janet Russell will open their Garden at 6 Gidabal Street, Aranda to display a woodland terrace garden and a number of linked courtyard gardens.

Their garden is 10 years old and contains only Australian native plants. In recent years, they have focussed on increasing the number of Southern Tablelands plants in the garden with particular emphasis on small grassland and woodland plants. They have also worked on improving water retention in the garden by building a system of swales and terracing.

A variety of both local provenance plants and native plants from other regions will be featured. The Russells will be there to explain the mysteries and excitement of their garden. Andy and Janet have grown much of their garden plants from seed themselves. They will be delighted to chat with visitors about the plants and their horticulture.

Tea and coffee will be available with delicious home baked goodies. Why not come along and enjoy a morning or an afternoon in the sunshine. Entry six dollars. The Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park, which the Field Nats supports, will be a beneficiary from the proceeds.

## BRUCE RIDGE WALK - 5TH SEPTEMBER 2010

It was one of those days when it felt essential to be outside but the gusty, strong winds and squally showers were hardly springlike. On the way to Purdie Street I checked Ginninderra Creek at several points. After 75ml of rain it was flooding well over its plain bringing down sediment as rivers should. Quite a different sight from our August creek-side outing. I then walked over to Gossan Hill for a quick look. It was very damp as the rains have flowed off the already re-constituted soil. One *Caladenia*, "Pink Fingers" my memory announced. There were many Sundews in damp, bare spaces between areas of leaf-litter.

Jean was unable to participate but brought over a June 2010, ANPS Wednesday Walkers species list for Bruce Ridge. It proved very useful; we were able to mark off the plants we recognised. George and Phyl had arrived and then two cyclists turned up. They'd heard about the walk "on the web". As we introduced ourselves we realised we touched almost every continent. Jorge was originally from South America, Rosanna's Australian born, George is from North America and Phyl & I could claim connections to Europe I suppose. Africa? When discussing the merits of Rosie, Rosemary and Rosanna we remembered the evocative Toto song "Rosanna" from their "Africa" album.

There are many flourishing *Hardenbergia* flowering along Purdie Street in full sun and between the road & the partly parallel cycle/walking path that runs through the forest between CIT's and Calvary's campuses. There was no brilliant purple deeper in the forest where conditions don't suit *Hardenbergia*. Alongside the path and deeper-in the blue pea-flowers of *Hovea linearis* were quite common once we realised their stems often grow rather cryptically over other vegetation.

We found orchids almost as soon as we began strolling along the path and began peering at the leaf-litter. They're no longer *Caladenia* the Field Guide\* tells us but Dusky fingers *Petalochilus fuscatus* and Blue fingers, *Cyanicula caerulea*. The prickly Acacia *Acacia genistifolia* is common here, bringing pale creamy-yellow blooms to the bush in contrast to the "traditional" wattle-yellow of *A. baileyana* and *A. dealbata*.

The hand lens came out for the heath-like flowers of *Cryptandra*. These attractive bushes were quite common, an almost bridal display. A few pale-yellow Urn heath were found deeper-in amongst the trees. They've probably been flowering all winter.

Fortunately Jorge seemed fascinated by names and he'll enjoy *Wildflowers of the Bush Capital* \*\* where *Hardenbergia*, *Hovea*,

*Goodenia* and *Cassinia* are explained as names honouring eminent people in the early days of Australian plants becoming known in Europe. Jorge also mused on *Exocarpus cupressiformis*, *Hydrocotyle*, orchid, and *genistifolia* suspecting links to Latin, Greek or medical terms. Rosanna took photos with the aim of "going on the web" for accurate names and even tried the "cherries" still, surprisingly, present on the iconic trees.

Windy conditions weren't conducive to bird-sightings but Phyl was always alert when calls reached us. There was discussion about Pardalotes' calls. We saw and heard a White throated tree creeper briefly. Ravens, Rosellas and Galahs were about.

Towards the end we discovered a strange green ball which we took to be the remains of a child's bouncy ball. George brought his knowledge of fungi to the fore declaring the green object to be a young puff-ball. By this time we'd learnt to pick out the shapes, colours, patterns and textures in the leaf-litter or on the ground. Tiny orange fungi (perhaps a slime mould) protruded from cracks in the length of a long-fallen branch. The wood cells were gradually being broken down into nutrients for other plants. A tradesman's mirror from Bunnings helped us check the gills of tiny yellow toadstools without a (more expensive) dentist's mirror and without pushing over the delicate forms.

A bright red mite (?) moved round and up a eucalyptus trunk where we'd stopped to ponder over the scribbles. Foliose lichens adorned bare ground seeming almost lush after the rains. Their greens were delicate and pastel compared to the strong leafy greens from cushions of mosses.

The dusty khaki of a spent earthstar was almost invisible amongst the many other browns, greys and beiges on the ground. Elegant, black tessellated patterns showed where a "controlled-burn" had burnt branches and trunks to charcoal. Some unburnt barks were even more beautifully marked by the patterns natural to each species. Rustic colours and textures would require great skill from an interpreting artist.

As you'll have gathered we didn't achieve great distances but we did find plenty to observe, discuss and query. There'll be more to see as spring advances and maybe other orchid species to respond to the burning-off near Haydon Drive.

\* Jones, David et al. *Field Guide to the Orchids of the Australian Capital Territory*. NPA, 2008.

\*\* Fraser, Ian and McJannett, Margaret *Wildflowers of the Bush Capital: a field guide to Canberra Nature Park*. Verteigo Press 1993.

## Bats Set New Records in Nation's Capital

Photo from: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/37577693@N04/sets/72157624845057080/>



A colony of Grey-headed Flying foxes residing in Canberra's Commonwealth Park this winter have set new records and completely overturned previous understandings about the species according to bat experts.

"This is the first time on record that grey-headed flying foxes have spent an entire winter in Canberra making this Australia's coldest flying fox camp used all year round and it's in the centre of the nation's capital," said local bat expert, Michael Pennay who is President of the Australasian Bat Society.

"The Grey-headed flying fox is normally a coastal species that spends its winters in much milder climates. Historically it has been an occasional visitor to Canberra but over the last five years or so the bats have set up a temporary camp in Commonwealth Park during summer and autumn.

"This year there has been a big change, the bats have decided to stay over winter for the first time in a very cold climate where they've had to endure temperatures as low as -5 degrees and more than 40 frosty nights this winter.

"Until now bat scientists have believed they could not tolerate such low temperatures so they'd return to the

coast for winter but this year they have totally demolished that theory. It could be related to climate or food. We really don't know" he said.

"What we do know is that there have been huge movements recently in the distribution of flying foxes across eastern Australia. Earlier this year Black flying foxes, a tropical species, were found for the first time ever in Melbourne so something unusual is happening in the bat world.

Mr Pennay is seeking help from Canberra residents in gathering information that might help explain just why the bats have stayed.

"I would really like to hear from people in the Canberra region who have seen what the flying foxes are feeding on at night so we can work out what's kept them here over winter," Mr Pennay said.

"Normally they feed on flowering eucalypts and occasionally on fruit and we're assuming this to be the case but we'd love to find out more details."

The colony at Commonwealth Park has grown over the past five years from less than one hundred to several thousand at its peak in February this year, about 500 have stayed over winter.

"In some areas the bats have been seen as a bit of a nuisance because of the noise, smell and perceived disease risks" said Mr Pennay

"But Canberrans, to their credit, have been very welcoming and tolerant of the bats, which is great because the bats actually fill a very important pollination and seed dispersal role in our native forests.

"It's a new thing for us, but there are a few small things Canberrans can do to adjust to living with flying foxes, like being careful in the way we net fruit trees so we don't injure bats, preventing horses from browsing under trees the bats are feeding in to minimise the risk of Hendra transmission.

"If you do come across an injured bat don't try and handle it, call a wildlife rescue organisation such as the RSPCA," Mr Pennay said.

Contact Mr Pennay at: [president@ausbats.org.au](mailto:president@ausbats.org.au)

*Stuart Cohen*

*Senior Public Affairs Officer*

*Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW)*

# Listing Threatened Species, Ecological Communities & Threatening Processes

The November Field Natter will publish the list. This is how the list is created, based on the ACT Government's TAMS website.

A species or ecological community is threatened if it is likely to become extinct in the foreseeable future. A process is threatening if it has the potential to threaten the continuing survival of a species or community in the ACT region.

[The Nature Conservation Act 1980](#) establishes a formal process for the identification and protection of threatened species and ecological communities.

It requires the [Flora and Fauna Committee](#) to advise the Minister of native species and ecological communities that are threatened in the ACT and ecologically significant threatening processes and recommend that they be declared accordingly. A species may be declared as vulnerable or endangered, as an indication of the degree of threat to its continued existence. An ecological community may be declared as endangered, a process may be declared as threatening. Declaration is formal recognition of a conservation threat.

The Conservator of Flora and Fauna is required to prepare a management response to each declaration by way of a conservation [Action Plan](#). A draft of each Action Plan must be released for public comment. A summary of each completed Action Plan is available as a [Threatened Species Information Sheet](#).

The species and ecological communities in the Table have been declared in accordance with the provisions of the Nature Conservation Act. No threatening processes have been declared as at 27 August 2010. There is also a list of species which are being watched to see if they may become threatened.

Any person or organisation may make a nomination to the Flora and Fauna Committee requesting that the Committee

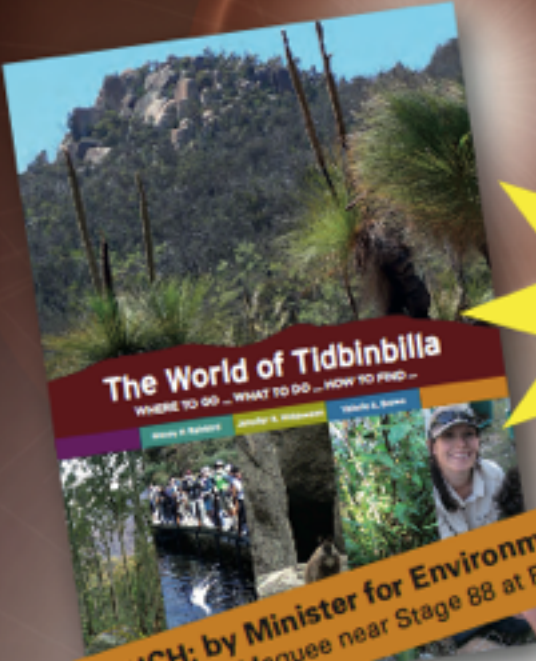
recommend declaration of a species, ecological community or threatening process. A paper setting out guidelines for making a nomination and the criteria specified by the Committee for recommending declaration is available here for download.

For further information about making a nomination contact Canberra Connect on 13 22 81 or write to:

Secretariat - ACT Flora and Fauna Committee, Research and Planning, Parks Conservation and Lands,  
GPO Box 158, Canberra, ACT 2601.

(See [http://www.tams.act.gov.au/play/pcl/conservation\\_and\\_ecological\\_communities/listing\\_of\\_threatened\\_species\\_ecological\\_communities\\_and\\_threatening\\_processes](http://www.tams.act.gov.au/play/pcl/conservation_and_ecological_communities/listing_of_threatened_species_ecological_communities_and_threatening_processes) )

## Also from TAMS, "The World of Tidbinbilla"



**\$25**

**LAUNCH: by Minister for Environment Simon Corbell**  
in the Corporate Maquee near Stage 88 at Floriade, 11am, October 9.

### The World of Tidbinbilla

The World of Tidbinbilla is a user-friendly guide to the beauty, the riches and the history of Tidbinbilla.



There are 5 sections:

1. Where to go: maps;
2. What to do: walks and activities;
3. How to find: the animals;
4. How to find: the plants and rocks;
5. People: the stories of Tidbinbilla.

The book allows you to enter the worlds of experts on plants, animals and rocks; bushwalkers and rangers; artists and map makers; pioneers and volunteers; the Ngunnawal people; and educators and managers who work at Tidbinbilla.

The World of Tidbinbilla can be purchased at the Southern ACT Catchment Group email: [info@sactg.org.au](mailto:info@sactg.org.au); phone 02 6296 6400, the Tidbinbilla Visitor Centre, the ACT Visitor Centre Northbourne Avenue, and the Botanical Bookshop at the National Botanic Gardens.

Assisted by funds from ACT Heritage

# EXTINCTION CRISIS IN NORTHERN AUSTRALIA



**Northern Quoll**

Photo provided courtesy of the Australian Wildlife Conservancy - W.Lawler

A version of this article was originally published in *The Canberra Times* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* on 2 Sept. Although I know that Australia's biodiversity is in danger, I found the extent of our northern extinction crisis extremely shocking. National parks and reserves are not protecting our wildlife - but something must be done urgently to stem this wave of extinction.

The Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) is doing an amazing job addressing this issue by breeding endangered species within safe feral-free private sanctuaries. This article is a summary of their work taken from their newsletter *Winter 2010 Wildlife Matters*. You can download it on;

<http://www.australianwildlife.org/News-and-Publications/Wildlife-Matters-Newsletter.aspx>

A team of AWC ecologists was carrying out a fauna inventory survey at a prospective property in the Northern Territory, to assess its conservation value for possible acquisition. Over two weeks, AWC set traps at a range of remote locations, accessible only by helicopter. The survey sites were positioned in combinations of topography and vegetation.

**Night after night, the traps were empty.** Amongst complex sandstone formations that should have been choked with Rock Rats and Northern Quolls, the team found sand swept clean by the dry season winds, with no mammal tracks at all. In lush paperbark forests, the rich loamy soil should have been pockmarked with the characteristic diggings of Bandicoots, but the survey team saw and caught nothing. Long-tailed Planigales were absent from the blacksoil plains, and native rodents absent from the savanna woodlands and the creek banks.

In over 1050 trap-nights, we caught only two species of native small mammal - a demoralising experience.

To illustrate the scale of this extinction crisis, several species are now extinct, or nearly so, from the mainland of the Northern Territory. This list includes Northern Quolls, Golden Bandicoots, Golden-backed Tree-rats and Brush-tailed Rabbit-rats.

The seriousness of the situation is demonstrated by the results from a long-term monitoring program in the world heritage-listed Kakadu National Park, the largest and most famous protected area in northern Australia. Kakadu's iconic status - and its substantial budget (more than \$18 million for operating costs in 2008/09) - has not protected its native mammals. In the past 15 years, the abundance of small mammals in Kakadu has declined by three-quarters, and the number of species recorded has declined by two-thirds.

There is a desperate need for an urgent and comprehensive re-evaluation of the approach to conservation in northern Australia. The example of Kakadu suggests that funding is not the key issue: we need new strategies and more effective implementation.

## Why are our Northern Mammals Disappearing?

Superficially, the tropical savannas of northern Australia appear intact. There has been very little clearing of vegetation. However, there are several factors which we know are having a profound influence on the ecological health and functioning of our northern savannas. We are confident that the primary causes of the mammal decline are:

- Altered fire regimes (especially an increase in extensive and intense wildfires).
- Grazing by feral herbivores (especially feral cattle, buffalo, donkeys and horses).
- Predation by feral cats.

Weeds, disease and cane toads probably interact with, and compound the pressures from, altered fire and introduced species but, at this stage, there is no evidence to suggest they are the primary culprits.

## AWC's Northern Mammal Recovery Project

AWC's active land management can deliver an increase in small mammal diversity and abundance. Mornington Wildlife Sanctuary has recorded an encouraging recovery in mammal populations.

AWC's Northern Australia Project will seek to understand the relationship between fire, cats and feral herbivores. The scale of the Northern Mammal Project is groundbreaking. The Project weaves together AWC's commitment to science and land management by integrating immediate on-ground management activities with research projects designed to inform future land management decisions.



**Who are the Field Naturalists?**

The Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra (FNAC) was formed in 1981. Our aim is to foster interest in natural history by means of meetings and regular field outings. Meetings are usually held on the first Thursday of each month. Outings range from weekend rambles to long weekends away. Activities are advertised in our monthly newsletter. We emphasise informality and the enjoyment of nature. New members are always welcome. If you wish to join FNAC, please fill the member application below and send it with your subscription to the FNAC Treasurer, GPO Box 249 Canberra, ACT 2601:

**President:** Benj Whitworth, Ph: 02 6272 3192 W  
Mob: 0400250230

**Secretary:** Tony Lawson, Ph: 02 6161 9430  
[fieldnaturalist@yahoo.com.au](mailto:fieldnaturalist@yahoo.com.au)

**Website:** <http://www.fieldnatscanberra.com>

**Newsletter editor:** Margaret Kalms [margaret@ecospirit.com.au](mailto:margaret@ecospirit.com.au)  
Mob: 0414 652 567

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**Monthly meeting venue:** Division of Botany and Zoology, Building 116, Daley Rd, Australian National University Park (occasionally at the adjacent Building 44).

Meetings start at 7:30 pm and are followed by refreshments.

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL**

Family name: ..... First name: .....

If a family membership, please include the first names of other members of the family:

.....

Postal address: .....

Suburb: ..... State: ..... Postcode: ..... Home phone: .....

Work phone: ..... Email address: .....

Subscription enclosed: \$.....(Single/Family \$25) Donation: \$.....

How did you hear about FNAC? Please circle: FRIEND? OTHER? Please specify: