



Field Nats News No.230

Newsletter of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc.
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Understanding Our Natural World
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May 2013

From the President

Welcome members to the May edition of the FNN. I hope that you had the opportunity over Easter to get out in the bush and appreciate the beauty of our country.

Volunteers NEEDED

The FNCV runs on members volunteering to undertake various activities such as organise SIG's, give presentations, cook sausages, attend festivals, write articles for newsletters, prepare financial statements etc. For those that do or have, **I thank you.** That said, some of the Club's flagship activities, namely "The Biodiversity Symposium" urgently need people to volunteer to help organise. Sue Bendel and I have done this for the last four symposiums, with the help of June Anton last year. June has agreed to organise the catering for this year's symposium, but we need others!! If volunteers are not forthcoming, the Biodiversity Symposium will not happen. Please contact me directly on 0409090955 or wildlifeexperiences@gmail.com to discuss what's needed. In fact there is a whole page of requests for help on p5 of this FNN.

Juniors' Easter Camp

Kathy and I had the opportunity to share Easter with the Juniors at their Easter Camp at Little Desert. It was truly fantastic to see the Junior Council running the camp, with Claire Ferguson

and Robyn Goode in the background. The Juniors had many competitions throughout the camp – Best Jaffle, Best Toasted Marshmallow, Longest Leaf etc. They also had show and tell around the campfire each night, with the kids showing things they had found that day.

There were over 60 parents and kids at the camp, so they split into two groups and travelled to places like Lake Hindmarsh, Pink Lakes near Dimboola (photo below) and Glenlee Flora Reserve. On Sunday, we all went to the Little Desert Lodge to see the Malleefowl breeding program, then on to Nhill to see Clive Crouch's collection of native mammals and grasslands.

Under the FSG permit, we also did some trapping around the camp-ground, catching two species of frogs (Pobblebonk and Spade-footed Toad), two bat species (Little Forest Bat and Lesser Long-eared Bat), three species of reptiles (Delicate Skink, Boulenger's Skink and *Cryptoblepharus pannosus*). Numerous species of birds were seen including a Malleefowl walking through the camp-ground. The Easter Bilby paid each family a visit on Saturday night and stayed around on Sunday morning for the traditional Easter Egg Hunt. It was great to see so many enthusiastic Juniors being involved. All in all it was a great trip.

Annual General Meeting

Just a reminder that the AGM is on Sunday 5 May at 2 pm. We are very fortunate to have as our guest speaker the new CEO of Earthwatch, David McInnes. His topic is "Citizen Science". *Invitation p6*

A reminder, especially to SIG groups, that all nominations for Council are due at the FNCV office no later than 2 pm on Friday 3rd of May.

John Harris

Due date for the next FNN will be Monday 6th May with FNN 231 going to the printer on Tuesday 14th May. Collation is on the 21st in the morning.

TO REPEAT, THE DUE DATE IS MON. 6th MAY FOR ALL COPY.

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Pink Lakes



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

All meetings are held at the FNCV Hall, 1 Gardenia St. Blackburn at 8 pm., unless otherwise indicated. On days of extreme weather conditions, excursions may be cancelled. Please check with leader.

MAY

Saturday 4th—FNCV Garden Working Bee– 10 am until 2 pm. See p5 for details.

Sunday 5th – FNCV Annual General Meeting– The annual general meeting starts at 2.00 pm. We are very privileged to have as our guest speaker David McInnes, the new CEO of Earthwatch. His topic will be “*Citizen Science*”.
Also please be aware of the need for a quorum **Invitation p6.**

Sunday 5th – Fungi Group. Fungal Foray - 10.30 am Cathedral Range State Park (Melway edn. 37 Map X910 T9). Meet at Ned’s Gully car park. Contact Virgil Hubregtse 9560 7775

Monday 6th – Fungi Group. Meeting - Fungi in the Wombat State Forest. Speaker: John Walter. John describes himself as a ‘Mycetophile’. Contact Virgil Hubregtse 9560 7775

Tuesday 7th - Fauna Survey Group. Meeting - 'Working with the Web-based Biodiversity atlas'. Speaker: Mel Hardie, Senior Biodiversity Curator Information Services Branch, D S E. Contact Robin Drury 0417 195 148; robin-drury@hotmail.com

Sunday 12th – Fungi Group. Fungal Foray - 10.30 am Noojee – Toorong Falls circuit. (Melway edn. 37 map X928 B5) (VIC ROADS 81 B7). Meet at Toorong Falls car park ,Toorong Falls Road (turn off 2.5km. east of Noojee). Contact Virgil Hubregtse 9560 7775

Monday 13th – Marine Research Group. Meeting - Annual Field Trip Round-up. Come and join us as we look at some of the interesting animals we have found and places we have been over our field work season. Contact Leon Altoff 9530 4180; 0428 669 773.

Wednesday 15th – Terrestrial Invertebrates Group. Meeting - Describing the unseen windmills of the Victorian Alps. Speaker: Michael Nash. Contact Alan Yen 0409 194 788.

Thursday 16th – Botany Group. Meeting - Western Grasslands Reserves: DSE's vision for their management. Speaker: Steve Sinclair. Contact Sue Bendel 0427 055 071.

Saturday 18th—Juniors’ Group. Excursion. Time: 4:45 pm (half an hour prior to sunset). **Where:** Mount Rothwell Discovery Centre in Little River (45 km SW of Melbourne) in the foothills of the You Yangs. **Cost:** \$25 Adults, \$15 Children under 17, under 5’s are free **Bring:** Torches, sturdy shoes, cameras **Contact:** Claire Ferguson 8060 2474; to-clairef@gmail.com

Saturday 18th—Botany Group. Excursion. Meet at 10.30 am Truganina Cemetery, Woods Rd, Truganina Melway 360 C11 This will be a grassland tour led by Steve Sinclair. Contact Sue Bendel 0427 055 071.

Saturday 18th – Sunday 19th - Fauna Survey Group. Survey. Rushworth Forest camp and nest-box survey. Contact Ray Gibson 0417 861 651.

Tuesday 21st—Collate FNN 231. Starting about 10.00 am. All welcome. Contact Joan Broadberry 9846 1218

Wednesday 22th—Grey-headed Flying Fox Survey. Meet at Yarra Bend Golf Course carpark, Melway 2D G7 at 5.15 pm. More information from Rod Van Der Ree (rvdr@unimelb.edu.au), Jo Ainley (j.ainley@unimelb.edu.au) or Ian Kitchen (iankitchen@optusnet.com.au)



The policy of the FNCV is that non-members pay \$5 per excursion and \$2 per meeting, to cover insurance costs. Junior non-member families, \$2 per excursion only.

(Continued from page 2)

Thursday 23rd – Monday 27th – Fungi Group. *Fungimap Conference at Rawson.* Contact Blanche Higgins 9252 2374; blanche.higgins@rbg.vic.gov.au or Fungimap website at fungimap.org.au

Monday 27th - FNCV Council Meeting, 7.30 pm sharp. Agenda items and apologies to Hali, 98779860 or admin@fncv.org.au

Tuesday 28th – Day Group. Meeting. *Naturalising on Cape York Peninsula.* Speaker: Anne Morton.
Contact Gary Presland 9890 9288

Wednesday 29th – Geology Meeting. *Fossil Marine Birds in Australia.* Speaker: Travis Park, Museum Victoria, School of Life and Environmental Sciences, Deakin University. Contact Ruth Hoskin 9878 5911; rrajh@optusnet.com.au

Friday 31st – Juniors' Group. Meeting, 7.30 pm. Lisa Nink (FNCV geology, volunteer at Melbourne museum) will be speaking on 'Fossils'. Contact: Claire Ferguson 8060 2474; toclairf@gmail.com

Members' news, photos & observations

We always have space for member photos and natural history observations. Please share with us what you have noted in your daily life, travels or garden. Email: fnnews@fncv.org.au by the first Monday in the month.

Welcome
Welcome

Warmest greetings to these new members who were welcomed into our club at the last Council meeting:

Gabrielle Stokes, Kate George, Anne Payne, Jeff Dickinson.



Yes, I found this Redback Spider (left) in a toilet located in a picnic ground in the bush!! A nice sheltered site, warm enough for breeding. She was brooding six egg sacs. This seemed to be a great many and I was intrigued. It appears that once the female Redback Spider has mated, she can store sperm and use it over a period of up to two years to lay several batches of eggs. She can produce up to ten round, white egg sacs (1cm diameter), weathering to orange over time. Each egg sac contains approximately 250 eggs and only one to three weeks need to pass before more eggs can be laid. These sacs are suspended within the web just as I observed them.

As I read I found out more about the Redback. The male is tiny and is found on the edge of the female's web. He is in great danger of being mistaken for prey, as he makes overtures to the female and few survive. Just as well she can store sperm! Insects are the usual prey of Redback Spiders, but they are capable of capturing larger animals in their tangled webs such as crickets and even small lizards. The bite of a female is very dangerous to humans, but is uncommon, as she seldom leaves her spiderweb home.

Joan Broadberry

From Ken & Michele Hancock

We are not members, but thought you might be interested in this. Late in February a Dingy Swallowtail Butterfly was observed laying eggs in our lemon tree, not for the first time. On March 6th, a 1 cm long caterpillar was seen and the next day two more. Over the next few days they were seen feeding and shedding their skins. They were 2 cm in length on the 8th. There were only two on the 18th when they were both observed and photographed pupating. The position of the pupas have been marked, so that they do not become prunings. A few years ago we were lucky to see an egg hatch and observed the progress of the caterpillar which did not become a successful butterfly. Photos (right) - Adult & Caterpillar





NEW DATES

Wendy's Back to Basics Photography Course



Learn to use the features of your digital camera so that you are in control. Learn to be able to get the photo you 'see' in the camera as you want it.

*Rave reviews
from students*

*"Every lesson is two
steps forward"*

Group 3 Saturdays 1.30-3.30pm **Starts:** Sat 4th May
Ends: 22nd June

Group 4 Tuesdays 1-3pm **Starts:** Thurs 7th May
Ends: 25th June

Topics covered:

Menu Setup, Exposure, Focus & Depth of Field, ISO & Camera Shake, White Balance, Seeing the Light, Adding Light, Composition & Cropping

Where: *Empathy Photographics* 97 Pakenham St Blackburn
More Info: Wendy Clark email: wendy@empathyphotos.com.au
www.empathyphotos.com.au ph 9877 9266 mob 0407 352 148

Many thanks to those who helped collate and label FNN 228 & 229

- Ray Power
- Margaret Corrick
- Keith Marshall
- Andy Brentnall
- Hazel & Edward Brentnall
- Margaret Brewster
- Sheina Nichols
- Joan Broadberry
- Cecily Falkingham
- Emily Noble
- Margaret Brewster
- Russell Green
- Bob Rowlands

*Apologies for omitting the list of
helpers for FNN 228 from the
previous newsletter.*

*This newsletter is printed on
recycled paper.*

SOLAR PANEL REPORT—GREAT NEWS



Since the solar panels were turned on in mid-October 2012, up to the 8th April 2013 we have generated a total of 5467 kilowatts of electricity. Our average daily usage for this period was 4.86

kw. Therefore, on average we have been generating 26.6 kw above our needs. This is put back into the grid.

Our last bill from AGL covering the period October 2012 to February 2013 showed us to be \$513 in credit.

**Thanks to the FNN
editorial team:** Joan Broadberry,
Sally Bewsher, Hali Ferguson &
Platon Vafiadis.

The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the FNCV.

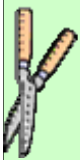
\$\$\$\$ FUND RAISER SAUSAGE SIZZLE —AWSOME RE- SULT \$\$\$\$



A HUGE thank you to those who came and helped fund-raise for the club in February. In total we raised about \$650 from selling drinks and sausages and believe it or not we had fun as well.

- Heather Eadon
- John Harris
- Andy Brentnall
- Sue Bendel
- Hazel Brentnall
- Edward Brentnall
- Joan Broadberry
- Sally Bewsher
- Claire Ferguson
- Scott Ferguson
- Caleb Ferguson
- Daniel Ferguson
- Bri Fitzgerald

Special thanks to Barbara Burns & Hali who made it all happen!!



FNCV Garden Working Bee

Saturday 4th May
10 am—2 pm All Welcome



BYO tools, gloves, hats, boots, mulcher and nibbles. Please come and help for an hour or two to continue to tidy and prepare the FNCV garden for spring planting. Photo right is from the April working bee where a good start was made on clearing the Club entrance area.

More information
Heather 9894 1236 Sally 9752 1418



Help requested at Yarran Dheran

The Yarran Dheran Information Centre in Ashburton Drive Mitcham (Melway 49 B6) is open on Sunday afternoons, subject to volunteer availability. .



You may be interested in becoming a volunteer for this activity in 2013 if you

- Can spare **one** Sunday afternoon, from **2 pm – 4.30 pm, in 2013**
- Have an interest in the Yarran Dheran Nature Reserve and enjoy friendly contact with members of the public

The task is not onerous. You will enjoy the lovely peaceful bushland setting of the Information Centre. Volunteers are not expected to have expert environmental knowledge, but their role is to assist members of the public in finding the information they want. The Information Centre is well stocked with informational and display materials – it just needs a volunteer every week to ensure it is open to the public.

Contact: Cecily Falkingham, Information Centre Roster Convener, Yarran Dheran Advisory Committee Phone 03 9874 1227 or email cecilyfalkingham@bigpond.com

Volunteer needed for a Communications Role within the FNCV



The Club receives a great deal of information about events and activities of an environmental or conservation nature through our relationships with a range of organizations.

We would really love to publicize many of these activities so that FNCV members could have the opportunity of supporting them. This could be done in several ways, including through the website, email or monthly newsletter.

We are looking for someone whose role it would be to regularly collate and summarize what is happening and then pass it on to members for example to update the website or to be included in the newsletter.

Important features of this role would be keeping up-to-date and working with others. Some computer skills would be required such as internet and email. If you could do this or would like to talk about what is involved, please contact Hali Ferguson in the FNCV office.

VOLUNTEER(S) URENTLY NEEDED TO HELP ORGANISE THE FNCV BIODIVERSITY SYMPOSIUM



(Date yet to be decided)

2013 is the *International Year of Water Co-operation.*



This year's program for the Biodiversity Symposium will be based on the concept of co-operation in sharing water.

The work of volunteers would be mainly organisational and ideally would be undertaken by a small group with the help of the FNCV Council. Members of the Council will set the program and arrange speakers. However, there will also be advertising, follow up contacts, catering and a variety of general tasks to be carried out.

Please contact Hali in the FNCV office if you can help. We promise you a fulfilling experience.



FNCV AGM Sunday 5th May 2 pm

You are invited to attend the FNCV AGM, FNCV hall, 1 Gardenia St. Blackburn.

Agenda: Minutes of previous AGM; Annual Report; Financial Statements; Election of Council; Environment Fund; Other Business

Guest Speaker: David McInnes, the new CEO of Earthwatch
The topic of his talk will be "*Citizen Science*".

Afternoon tea served, all welcome

Nominations must reach the registered office of the Club no later than 48 hours before the AGM, i.e. Friday 3rd May by 2 pm.

See p12 for Council nomination form



Fauna Survey /Juniors' Groups



Plenty Gorge Park

The FSG and Juniors' Groups had a joint "camp" at Plenty Gorge Park on the last weekend of February. It wasn't really a camp in the traditional sense of tents, although one member and grandkids did camp in a tent until a spider was seen in the kids tent. The rest of us slept in bunks, as Parks Victoria kindly allowed us to use the Nioka Camp facilities. A huge thanks to Mick Francis, (far left of photo) who cooked BBQ lunches for all. We had around 30 members on each day, with some coming and going depending on their other activities. On Saturday and Sunday we were joined by members of the "Friends of the Gorge".

Cameras had been set up in different areas of the Park a couple of weeks previously and these were collected on the Friday evening. Our aim was to survey areas that may still contain threatened fauna like Brush-tailed Phascogales. A range of traps (Elliott, cage and harp) were set in a couple of likely areas, hoping to record as many fauna species as possible. Along with the traps, the group checked nestboxes that had been installed in the Park over a number of years. In last month's FNN, Joan Broadberry wrote a small piece on checking the nestboxes

with pole-mounted endoscopes, accompanied with photos.

The cameras revealed the usual suspects – Sugar Gliders, Brushtail and Ringtail



S. Bewsher

Possoms, along with Australian Magpies and White-winged Choughs. The most interesting photos were of an Echidna (inside a rabbit-proof compound). It is not certain whether the Echidna is permanently inside the compound or able to get out?

The Elliott and cage traps didn't yield any mammals, but did catch a Pobblebonk

Frog and a Tiger Snake (photo below) on the first night. There was a slight rise in adrenalin, trying to get the snake out of the trap and once achieved, there was a sigh of relief. The snake was retained to show the rest of the group and Friends before being released later in the afternoon.

The bat traps were spread across the southern area of the Park, catching four bat species (Chocolate and Gould's Wattle Bats, Little and Southern Forest Bats). Apart from the Pobblebonk Frog, another five species of frogs were recorded. Brown and Whistling Tree Frog, Striped and Spotted Marsh Frog were found in two small dams in the bush and Common Toadlet near the

camp-ground. Quite a good list of birds

(Continued on page 7)



S. Bewsher

Extracts from SIG reports given at the last FNCV Council Meeting

Fauna Survey Group



On 5 March, we had a presentation from Keith Johnson of the Desert Discovery Group. He spoke of the projects the group undertook in the desert regions of Australia and their work with the traditional owners.

On the weekend of March 9 to 11, we commenced our fauna survey work with Parks Victoria in the Parks of eastern Melbourne. This weekend focused on bat trapping and spotlighting in the Berwick area parklands, in particular Cardinia Reservoir, Cardinia Creek, Selby and Critchley Junior Reserve. The weekend was attended by our own members as well as members of various Friends and Landcare Groups, some 23 attendees in all. Bat species were recorded in all areas. Of interest was the fact that there were observations of Powerful Owls in 3 of the parks.

On Saturday 23rd March FSG participated in the ladder training day. This day was funded by Port Phillip and Western Port CMA and attended by several groups outside of the FNCV.

The capture and handling of all animals on FNCV field trips is done strictly in accordance with the club's research permits.

Fungi Group



At our March meeting, Dr Tom May, senior mycologist at the National Herbarium of Victoria, Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne (RBG), gave a presentation titled '*Towards a checklist of Victorian macrofungi*'.

There have been very few lists of Australian fungi. The first was produced in 1895, and the second about 1940. A list of Victorian gilled fungi and chanterelles was produced in 1976. The Catalogue and Bibliography of Australian Fungi 2 was published in 2003 and, with some updated details, is also on the RBG web site as the 'Interactive Catalogue of Aust Fungi.'

Even this most recent list is not up to date, and many changes need to be made. In particular, many dubious records need to be removed. For example, 17 species of *Lentinus* are listed, but only 3 actually occur here. Also, the names of numerous species need to be updated. Sources of species records for an updated list include specimen databases in herbaria, sight records (e.g. Fungimap), DNA sequence databases (e.g. Genbank), publications such as field guides and foray lists, and voucher collections.

Tom stressed that many more voucher specimens are needed for the RBG collection. Some of the older specimens are inadequately documented and have deteriorated badly over time. For many species, only one voucher specimen has been lodged.

Geology Group



Our last Geology meeting was held on 25th February, where Sasha Wilson from Monash University gave us an understanding of how evidence of water and perhaps life could be deduced on Mars through examining minerals collected by 'Curiosity'. Her explanations were succinct and understandable to all, and she also used examples of previous life on earth to clarify the Martian exploration. She even showed us some chemical experiments to demonstrate her talk!

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was also recorded in the various trapping and camera locations.

Finally, a Platypus and Water Rat were recorded from the Plenty River, just near the campground while spotlighting in the evenings.

It was a good field trip, although we didn't find any of the species that were hoped for. Probably the most rewarding part of the trip was getting the FSG, Juniors and Friends groups together to share experiences. I must thank the Parks Victoria staff, especially Mick Francis, for their hospitality and allowing us to stay at Nioka. Mick provided a bbq lunch on each day which was greatly appreciated by all. Another trip to look at the northern areas might be on the cards one day.

John Harris

From the Office...



Photographic Competition:

Our 2013 Photographic Competition has now started, so get your entries in. There have been several changes to the timing and format of the Competition. These changes are the direct result of feedback from members, so keep the feedback coming. We have reduced entry fees and prize amounts to make it more affordable for everyone. **We have extended the range of photographs from only in Victoria to the whole of Australia, for all you Field Nats with wander lust.** We are having an "Official Opening" on Friday 12th July from 8.00 pm to 10.00 pm. Then we are open to the public on Saturday 9.00 am to 3.00 pm and Sunday 1.00 pm to 4.00 pm. Prizes will be awarded on Sunday at 2.00 pm. It is hoped that this will become an annual, whole Club event. This can only happen with your support.



Donations for Hall:

This month we need:

Biscuits (always needed), Paper Towel, Peppermint Tea, Toilet Paper, Gift cards from Coles, Safeway or Officeworks.

Thanks, Hali

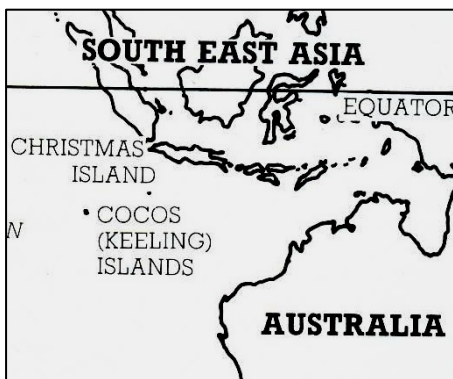


Day Group

COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS

In December 2009, I was on a bird-watching trip which included four nights on Cocos (Keeling) Islands and eight nights on Christmas Island. Both are Australian territories in the Indian Ocean and birds seen can be added to an Australian bird list. Flights to Cocos leave from Perth, via Christmas Island.

The Cocos (Keeling) islands were discovered



ered in 1609 by Captain William Keeling. He called them the Cocos, or Coconut, Islands. To distinguish them from other islands in the world also known as Cocos, they were renamed in 1805 as the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, after their discoverer. They lie in the Indian Ocean approximately 2750k NE of Perth and 900k SE of Christmas Island. The Cocos (Keeling) Islands are in two parts. North Keeling Island is a tiny, uninhabited atoll, 24 k north of the main islands, but, very importantly is a feral predator free, seabird breeding sanctuary. It was declared a national park (Pulu Keeling) in 1995. South Cocos is an incomplete atoll ring consisting of 26 islands with two main entrances into the lagoon. The lagoon is about 13k at its widest point with the total land area of the islands being approximately 14 square kilometres. Only two, Home and West Islands,

are populated. Home Island has about 500 Cocos Malays; mainly Muslim, descendants of indentured labourers brought from Indonesia and Malaysia. West Island has about 150 Europeans, mostly government contractors. This may seem like a form of apartheid but the inhabitants are comfortable with it and they mix freely. A low cost ferry runs regularly between the two islands

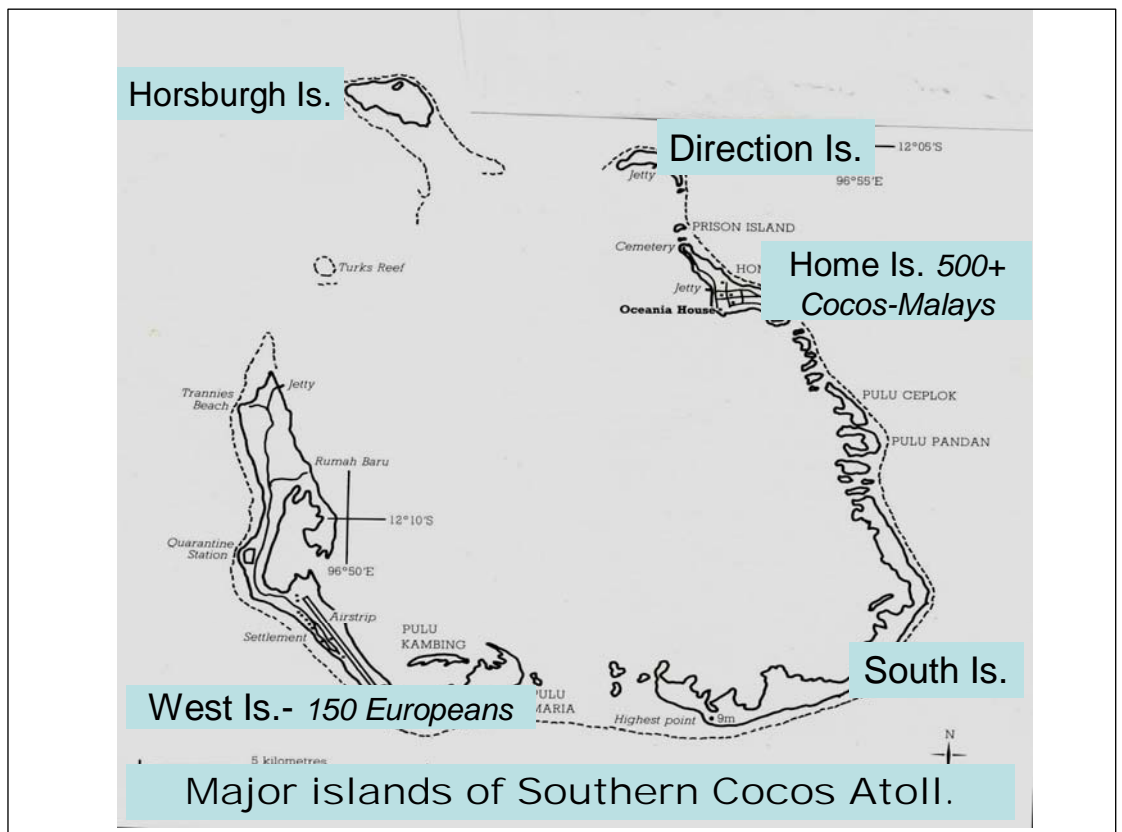
The climate of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands is pleasantly tropical, moderated by trade winds. From October to March they are vulnerable to cyclones. From 1952 to 2005 there have been 27 tropical cyclones of varying intensity. There are no fresh water creeks, but some underground water. Exists. Drinking water is collected in tanks. South Cocos has been almost totally cleared for the planting of coconut palms. North Keeling has retained much of its original flora. The Cocos Islands, both North and South are traditional coral atolls with a central lagoon and fringing coral reefs. The islands are the only coral atolls ever visited by Charles Darwin aboard the *Beagle* in 1836 and his acute observations there were instrumental in developing his theory of atoll formation.

The Cocos (Keeling) Islands were not settled until 1826 and have a fascinat-

ing history. In summary, they were ruled for 150 years by six dynasties of the Clunies-Ross family, with the blessing of the British Crown. In 1886 Queen Victoria granted the islands to George Clunies-Ross and his descendants in perpetuity. The family brought in groups of indentured workers, mostly Malays, to harvest and process coconuts. For many years all resources and workers were devoted to the coconut industry. At times severe disruptions were caused by cyclone damage. The copra industry ceased in 1987 through lack of demand. The Eastern Extension Telegraph Company established a relay station on Direction Island for their underwater cable network in 1901, so an obscure atoll became a vital link in world communication. In 1914 a fierce battle raged between the HMAS *Sydney* I and the SMS *Emden*. Being totally outgunned by the *Sydney*, the captain of the *Emden* finally ran his vessel aground on North Keeling.

In March 1942 the telegraph station on Direction Island was shelled by a Japanese warship. Regular Japanese air raids onto Home Island kept the community under great pressure. In early 1945, a large number of army units arrived by ship and commenced the hurried construction of a 2000 yard

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metallic airstrip on West Island. Thousands of coconut palms were cut down. The strip was in operation for only a short time before the war ended. In this period a peak of 8300 military personnel were on the islands. Through decades of rule by the Clunies-Ross dynasty, most island inhabitants had little freedom or contact with the outside world and existed in a very insular society. All that changed after WW2. In 1952, the airport at Cocos Islands was rebuilt and became an essential refueling stop for Qantas and South African airlines. The arrival of long range jet aircraft ended this need in 1967. The administration of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands was transferred from Britain to Australia in November 1955.

In the 1970s conditions on the islands became a human rights issue under Gough Whitlam who galvanised a UN mission into visiting the atolls. It denounced relations between the Clunies-Ross family and their employees as anachronistic and feudal. While charges of slavery appear to be unfounded, there seems little doubt that the family ran the islands like a personal fiefdom. For example, indentured workers were paid in plastic money, redeemable only at the company store. The family insisted on naming every child born and those who quit Cocos were never allowed to return. In 1978, under threat of compulsory purchase by Australia, John Cunies-Ross, 6th generation, sold the islands for \$6.25 million, except for his family home, Oceania House. The people of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands voted overwhelmingly to become part of Australia in 1984. Western Australian law applies.

Approximately 60 species of birds have been recorded on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands North and South. Strong winds, cyclones and navigation errors by migratory birds means rarities can turn up almost anywhere. There are also birds that have colonised the islands. The Cocos Buff-banded Rail (*Gallirallus philippensis andrewsi*), found on North Keeling, is the only endemic sub-species of bird. In our short stay we recorded seven rarities. These were White-breasted Waterhen, Barn Swallow, Common Moorhen, Grey Wagtail, Western Reef Egret, Saunders Tern and Java Pond Heron. The Common Moorhen was the first ever record for Australia and I also added Pin-tailed Snipe and Oriental Pratincole to my list. The five acre garden of Oceania House on Home Island is a wonderful place to bird,



Seeking Saunders Terns, on South Island Photo: J. Broadberry

with many large trees remaining. Several of the islands including West and Horsburgh, contain small brackish swamps. Tiny Pulu Keeling National Park (1.1 square kilometers) is one of the most significant breeding colonies for the Red-footed Booby and also hosts breeding colonies of Masked and Brown Boobies, Frigate Birds, Tropic Birds and Noddies.

Our birding group visited five of the islands. West, Home, South, Direction and Horsburgh in motorized canoes or small boats. We were scheduled to travel to North Keeling, but due to rough weather the trip was cancelled. There were several opportunities to snorkel or dive in fabulously clear water and also to observe the reef from a glass bottomed boat. Watching the antics of many species of hermit crabs and beachcombing on remote ocean beaches were other great pastimes. West Island is a surfing mecca and Direction island a popular anchorage for round-the-world yachts. And have I mentioned the delicious Malay cuisine? Probably my most lasting impression of the islands was their sheer physical beauty. They are truly the photographer's holy grail. Cocos (Keeling) offers its visitors natural history in abundance and has a simple but sufficient infrastructure to make the experience comfortable. It's probably one of our best kept secrets.

Joan Broadberry

Library News



Recent acquisitions:

The latest issue of *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Queensland* is a larger-than-usual number. It is almost 500 pages in length and devoted entirely to papers on a single theme. Although it is technically a periodical, this issue, titled *A place of sandhills: ecology, hydrogeomorphology and management of Queensland's Dune Islands* will be accessioned and shelved, at the appropriate point, in the Library's monographs.

Recent periodicals:

The two latest issues of *Records of the Australian Museum* have articles on various groups of flies, a revision of the native bee genus *Trichocolletes* and some southern Australian amphipods.

Articles in *Emu* 113(1) look at foraging behaviour of the peaceful dove and silvereyes.

Australian field ornithology 30(1) includes a study of the powerful owl in East Gippsland.

The latest periodicals are displayed in a rack in the library. You can borrow periodicals in the rack, as well as previous issues. Don't forget to fill in the borrowing book.

Gary Presland
Honorary Librarian



Marine Research Group News

Report on the MRG extended field trip to Port Fairy, 3-6 March, 2013.

Sunday 3 March, 2013—Griffiths Island, Port Fairy (also re-surveyed Thursday 7 March, 2013). This location comprises rocky reef adjacent to a shallow sandy embayment and provides a variety of habitats to explore. Highlights that we are not used to in central Victoria included an abundance of the trochid *Stomatella impertusa* and multiple living examples of the volutomitrid *Waimatea obscura* under rocks, the turrid *Marita compta* and the olive shell *Alocospira fusiformis* (both very rare intertidally), the attractive green echinuran worm *Metabonellia haswelli* in sandy pockets under boulders and numbers of the seastars *Meridiastra medius* and *Meridiastra oriens* in a seemingly infinite variety of colours.



Metabonellia haswelli, Griffiths Island, Port Fairy, Thurs. 7 March, 2013.
Photo: P. Vafiadis



Meridiastra medius, Griffiths Island, Port Fairy, Thurs. 7 March, 2013.
Photo: P. Vafiadis

Several *Haliotis scalaris emmae* were very pleasing to see under rocks. Other relatively uncommon sights included the chitons *Callochiton crocinus*, *Rhysso-plax calliozona* and *Rhysso-plax diaphora*. The area was also notable for the abundance of crinoids (or feather stars), the relatively large spaces between and under the large rocks and boulders proving suitable habitat for them. *Comanthus trichoptera*, *Comanthus tasmaniae* and *Antedon* sp. were recorded.



Comanthus tasmaniae, Griffiths Island, Port Fairy, Thurs. 7 March, 2013.
Photo: P. Vafiadis

John Eichler found an unusual commensal worm-like animal on the oral disc of *C. tasmaniae*. We were not at all sure what it was or to which group it belonged, but Robert Burn had seen creatures like this on feather stars in the past and informed us that they belonged to the group Myzostomida. The first southern Australian species was described from the Francis Island group, South Australia in 2002.

Other molluscan records included *Nassarius compactus*, *Nassarius nigellus*, *Syrnola bifasciata*, *Retusa atkinsoni*, *Clanculus undatus* and *Guralius alucianus*.

Monday 4 March, 2013: Dutton Way, Portland. We had initially planned to re-visit Anderson's Point, Portland, since it was such a productive area on our last trip in 2007 (see FNN 164, page 11). Disappointingly, however, the reef was mostly covered by sand, possibly from dredging operations at the mouth of the harbour, leaving little scope for a useful survey. As a result, the survey was conducted at Dutton Way, a suburb a few kilometres north of Portland. The habitat was sandy beach with *Zostera* and algal beds, and proved quite interesting.

Notable records included the sacoglossan *Oxynoe viridis*, the plakobranchid *Elysia furvacauda* and the nudibranchs *Scyllaea pelagica*, *Phyllodesmium macphersonae* (2 animals recorded) and an undescribed brown *Hallaxa*. Beautiful and clean specimens of *Cantharidus ramburi* (the flamed forms sometimes known as *Cantharidus lehmanni*) were present on the seagrass and *Haminoea maugeansis* and the prosobranch gastropods *Alaba phasianella* and *Eatoniella galbinia* were sieved off algae.

Tuesday 5 March, 2013: Killarney Beach, approx. 10km east of Port Fairy. This was a rocky reef and we focussed on a large protected pool with sandy bottom interspersed with rock and pockets of algal growth and *Amphibolis antarctica* seagrass. Interesting highlights included two large specimens of the sacoglossan *Stiliger smaragdinus* on *Caulerpa cactioides* algae, the larger specimen easily 100 mm long, the largest that Robert Burn had seen.

Other sea-slug allies included *Ilbia ilbi*, *Runcina australis* and two bivalved gastropods, *Edentellina typica* and also *Midorigai australis* on their food algae. The pyramidellid *Turbonilla beddomei* was recorded from coralline algae and an adult *Haliotis laevigata* and subadult *Haliotis scalaris emmae* were pleasing records. A fairly large eel, caught by the low tide, was also seen amongst shallow water on the rock platform, wedging itself under and between rocks.

The microfissurellid *Puncturella harrissoni* later crawled out of *Amphibolis antarctica* samples and was a most interesting record, most of us not having previously seen it alive.

Wednesday 6 March, 2013 a few kilometres west of Port Fairy. This rocky reef with many surrounding sandy pools was directly adjacent to the abalone farm. Interesting finds included the rare heterobranch *Diaphana tasmanica* that was not uncommon amongst *Caulerpa brownii* algae, the olive shell *Alocospira fusiformis* sieved from the sand adjacent to the reef edge, very large *Haliotis rubra* and adult *Haliotis scalaris emmae* on the undersurfaces of rocks, the nudibranchs *Chromodoris epicuria* and an undescribed spotted *Jorunna*, a single cowry *Notocypraea comptoni*, the turrid *Austrodrillia beraudiana* and the micro-mollusca *Gabrielona nepeanensis*, *Cystiscus obesulus* and *Eulima tensioni*.

Overall it was a most enjoyable excursion in a beautiful part of Victoria. The township was preparing for the Port Fairy Music Festival the following weekend, so the fieldwork timing during the usual tranquil period had been very good.

P. Vafiadis



Welcome to The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc

Natural History Photographic Competition 2013

This competition is open to all interested, non-professional, nature photographers.

Two categories:

Nature up-close-and-personal
Nature from a distance

Great Prizes:

- ◆ **Open:** First prize \$100; Second prize \$50
- ◆ **Junior:** First Prize \$25; Second Prize \$10
- ◆ **People's Choice:** Prize \$50 (x 4)

Costs per entry:

- Open:** Non-Members \$7.50; Members \$5
Junior: (14 Yrs and under on 8th April)
 Non-Members \$5; Members \$2.50



Entries Open - **Monday 8th April, 2013.**
 Entries Close - **4 pm Monday 3rd June, 2013.**

An exhibition of the best photographs will be held on Friday 12th 8.00 pm to 10.00 pm, Saturday 13th 9.00 am - 3.00pm and Sunday 14th July 1.00 pm - 4.00 pm at the FNCV hall, 1 Gardenia Street, Blackburn.

Prizes will be awarded at 2 pm on Sunday 14th July at the photographic exhibition

- ◆ Terms and conditions & entry forms are available from the FNCV website www.fncv.org.au or at the FNCV office 1 Gardenia Street, Blackburn, or phone 9877 9860.
- ◆ All entries must have an appropriate label (see terms and conditions) and be accompanied by an entry form with correct payment.
- ◆ A maximum of four entries can be submitted by each entrant (two per category).





Understanding Our Natural World
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NOMINATION FORM FOR FNCV COUNCIL 2013/14

The FNCV AGM will be held on Sunday 5th May,
2 pm FNCV Hall, 1 Gardenia Street, Blackburn 3130

Name of Member Nominated

Position Nominated *

Signature of Member Nominated

TWO MEMBERS SUPPORTING NOMINATION

Name Signature Date.....

Name Signature Date.....

*Elected members of the FNCV Council are President, two Vice-Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer and six Councillors. Councillors must be FNCV members. (Council also consists of Immediate Past President and a representative nominated by each Special Interest Group.)

**Please return this form to the FNCV office
Locked Bag 3, Blackburn 3130
Phone 9877 9860; Fax 9877 9862
E-mail: admin@fncv.org.au**

*Nominations must reach the registered office of the Club no later than 48 hours before the AGM,
i.e. Friday 4th May by 2 pm.*

Field Nats News 230



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