



Understanding Our Natural World
Est. 1880

Field Nats News No.252

Newsletter of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc.

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May 2015

From the President

Dear members, welcome to the May edition of the FNN. As this is my last President's piece, or blurb as I have come to call it, I'm not really sure what to say. Some of you may say, "That's a first, John Harris lost for words" but let me reassure you, there have been other times, but not many :-)

When I took over from Alan Yen in 2009, little did I realise that I would be still writing the front page as President 6 years later. Looking through the archives recently at all the Presidents over the 135 years that the FNCV has existed, I discovered that there had not been a predecessor who had stayed in the job for that length of time. Some have done a couple of stints in the job, most recently Wendy Clark. It was in fact Wendy who got me onto the Council in the first place, when my kids were in the Juniors about 12 years ago. I still remember her approach as we walked towards the creek at Werribee Gorge, on a Juniors' outing.

In 2009, that other president, Barak Obama was inaugurated as the 44th US President, Michael Jackson passed away and the world was gripped by the "Swine Flu" (H1N1) pandemic. A little closer to home, Kevin Rudd was PM for the first time, "Black Saturday" bushfires destroyed a significant proportion of Victoria and I turned 40...

There had been some very memorable moments like the unveiling of the library in Sheila Houghton's name, delivering the eulogy at Noel Schleiger's funeral, ringing recipients of the Australian Natural History Medallion, raising enough money from the President's Appeal to purchase the solar system so the club can 'walk the walk' environmentally, not just talk about environmental awareness and sustainability, as well as many other things...

That's enough nostalgia!

Can I take this opportunity to thank a number of people for making my time in the "top job" a lot easier. Firstly to Hali and Wendy, our admin ladies over this time, who have put up with much and given plenty... of advice, reminders and even cheek :-). To all

the members of council, past and present, for their continued help in making the club what it is today. It certainly makes a president look good having so many people working in the background to get things done, no matter what organisation!!

To the editors of FNN and *The Victorian Naturalist* and all of you who continue to be so, coming to meetings, going on outings, folding newsletters, managing websites and facebook pages and just supporting the club in whatever way you can. Finally, to my lovely wife, Kathy, who has been along for the ride the whole time, supporting and allowing me the time to do what I thought, and still think, is an important role and a significant honour in Victoria's natural history world.

To finish off, I would like to continue where I started last month, in New Zealand. After arriving in Christchurch and spending a couple of days there visiting some of the attractions, we headed to the west coast, stopping at Arthur's Pass to look for Keas (photo below). From Hokitika, we headed south through the glacier country stopping at Franz Josef Glacier. The next day, we travelled to Milford Sound (more correctly a fiord than a sound) for a cruise, before heading eastward towards the east coast and Dunedin. On arrival at Dunedin, we visited the Orokoni Ecosanctuary (well worth a visit to see the restoration



Kea

The deadline for the June issue of Field Nats News will be **10 am on Tuesday 5th May**. FNN will go to the printers on Tuesday 12th with collation on 19th.

works of an old dairy farm). We saw a number of species including a pair of Takahe, up close, Tuis, NZ Bellbirds and many other endemic birds and reptiles. We also visited the Otago museum which has an amazing display of extinct birds in particular, including full skeletons of Moas of all sizes. We wrapped up our visit with a wildlife tour of the Otago Peninsula including visiting the Northern Royal Albatross colony, a private beach to see Yellow-eyed Penguins and New Zealand Fur Seals and Sea-lions. From there we headed back to Christchurch and up to Kaikoura for dolphin and albatross encounters. The dolphin encounter to see

(Continued on page 5)

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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 2nd - Geology Excursion. *A geological Tour of Melbourne.* Leader: Dr Phil Bock. Hear about unexpected fossils and the sources of building materials. Meet at 10 am at the 8 hour Day Memorial. Mel 2B F12. The walk will finish at around noon at Federation Square. As numbers will be limited, please register with Ruth Hoskin well beforehand. 9878 5911, rrajh@optusnet.com.au

Sunday 3rd – Annual General Meeting. 2pm. Invitation p12

Sunday 3rd – Fungi Group Foray: Toorongo Falls circuit, Noojee Meet at 10.30am at Toorongo Falls car park Toorongo Falls Road (turn off 2.5km east of Noojee) The Juniors will be joining us. (Mel Ed 37 map X928 B5, VIC ROADS 81 B7). Contact: Virgil Hubregtse 9560 7775

Sunday 3rd – Juniors' Group Excursion: Foray with Fungi Group to Toorongo Falls circuit. Contact: Claire Ferguson 8060 2474; toclaireref@gmail.com

Monday 4th – Fungi Group Meeting: The Kingdom of Fungi. Speaker: Jurrie Hubregtse, co-ordinator of our group and the author and compiler of our excellent Fungi CDs. Contact: Virgil Hubregtse 9560 7775

Tuesday 5th - Fauna Survey Group Meeting: Kicking Goals for Wildlife in Northern Kenya Speaker: Brooke Squires, Conservation Officer at Zoos Victoria. Contact: Ray Gibson 0417 861 651

Sunday 10th – Fungi Group Foray: Mount Worth State Park. Seaview Meet at 10.30am at Moonlight Creek picnic area (Mel Ed 37 X912 U8, VIC ROADS 97 B6) Contact: Virgil Hubregtse 9560 7775

Monday 11th – Marine Research Group Meeting: For details, contact Leon Altoff 9530 4180 AH; 0428 669 773

Saturday 16th to Sunday 17th Fauna Survey Group Survey - Checking nest boxes in Rushworth State Forest. Contact: Ray Gibson 0417 861 651

Sunday 17th – Fungi Group Foray. Jack Cann Reserve, Blackwood. Meet at 10.30am at carpark, Garden of St Erth, Simmons Reef Road, (Mel Ed 37 X909 E11). Contact: Virgil Hubregtse 9560 7775

Tuesday 19th—Collate FNN. Starting about 10.00 am. All welcome. Contact Wendy at the office 9877 9860; admin@fncv.org.au

Wednesday 20th - Terrestrial Invertebrates Group. Meeting: Terrestrial Flatworms, the Good, the Bad and the Beautiful. Speaker: Dr. Leigh Winsor Contact: Max Campbell 0409 143 538; 9544 0181 AH; mcam7307@bigpond.net.au

Thursday 21st – Botany Group Meeting: Cool Temperate Rainforests. Speaker: Maggie Riddington Contact: Sue Bendel 0427 055 071

Sunday 24th - Botany Group. Field Trip: Planting day at the Clyde Grasslands. Contact: Sue Bendel for directions 0427 055 071

Sunday 24th – Juniors' Group: Field Trip with Botany Group - Planting day at the Clyde Grasslands Contact: Claire Ferguson 8060 2474; toclaireref@gmail.com

Sunday 24th – Fungi Group Foray: Mt Macedon Ranges National Park – Sanatorium Lake / Days Picnic Ground. Meet at 10.30 am. Drive north uphill on Mt Macedon Road C322 through the town; near top of hill do not turn left on C328 to Camels Hump and Memorial Cross; about 100 m further on C322 turn right on to Barringo Road (first section may be called Lions Head Rd). Picnic Ground is about 1.5 km along Barringo Rd (Mel Ed 37 Map X909 G/H 10 more detail in VICROADS Map 60 B 7/8). Contact: Virgil Hubregtse 9560 7775

Monday 25th - FNCV Council Meeting - 7.30 pm sharp. Agenda items and apologies to Wendy, 98779860 or admin@fncv.org.au

Tuesday 26th - Day Group Natural history highlights of Westernport Bay. Speaker Graham Paterson. Meet at 10. 30 am for coffee and a chat. Speaker at 11 am. Contact Gary Presland 9890 9288.

Wednesday 27th – Geology Group Meeting: The Rush that Ended: The Quest for Rubies in Central Australia Speaker: Jim Enever, mining engineer (retired), formerly CSIRO. Contact: Ruth Hoskin 9878 5911; rrajh@optusnet.com.au

Friday 29th – Juniors' Group Meeting: PNG Camera Surveys Dr Euan Ritchie, Ecologist. Contact: Claire Ferguson

Sunday 31st – Fungi Group Foray: 'The Bump', Yarra State Forest Meet at 10.00am at Powelltown General Store. We will then travel to Big Creek Rd. and foray on some of the 'Walk into History' track. Note earlier meeting time. (Mel Ed 37 Map 912 T4) Contact: Virgil Hubregtse 9560 7775

NB. Day Group 28th April, 11 am. Bruce Fuhrer will speak on "Nature Close Up. Apologies, this was wrongly advertised in FNN 251

The policy of the FNCV is that non-members pay \$5 per excursion and \$2 per meeting, to contribute towards Club overheads. Junior non-member families, \$2 per excursion only.

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

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

Rhonda Neumann, Bernie Newmann, Janet Davies, Reiner Richter, Amanda Taylor, Rose Baulch, Fiona Sheridan, Natalie Thong, Janelle Thomas, Daniel Idczak, Natasha Gunn, Eileen Laidlaw, Eril Riley, Sharee Harper, Marlenne Rodriguez, Jose Maria Barredo, Stephen McKinnon and Steven Ford.



Right: Crossback Stingaree, *Urolophus cruciatus*.
Source of photo:
Mark Norman -
Museum Victoria



Leopard Slug: Photo taken by Wendy Gare in her garden.



Photo above: male Musk Duck, taken at Lake Wendouree, Ballarat during the recent SEANA autumn camp, hosted by Ballarat Field Nats. This was a very enjoyable weekend with wonderful input from our local guides. If you have not attended a SEANA camp you are definitely missing out. FNN page 5 contains details of the forthcoming SEANA spring camp which will be hosted by the Donald Historical and Natural History Group.

Joan Broadberry

Crossback Stingaree

Recently, whilst walking on the Ventnor Beach at Phillip Island, I found a dead crossback stingaree (*Urolophus cruciatus*). It had been washed up in the shallows and was quite badly damaged. I had seen stingrays before but not this species. They are endemic to South-eastern Australia and can be found in coastal waters of Victoria and Tasmania. The specimen I found was 50cm long and fully grown. These animals are nocturnal, lying motionless on the sea floor, partially buried during the day. They feed on Isopods, Polychaete worms, Amphipods and Shrimps.

The stingaree can inflict a painful sting that may require surgery if the serrated tip of the sting breaks off inside the victim. I discovered this fact as I lifted it out of the water onto the sand to photograph it. Although it was dead I felt a sharp sting on my fingers.

My chances of seeing this interesting nocturnal animal hunting and moving gracefully along the ocean floor is nil, but what I love doing is walking the beaches after a storm and doing some beach combing. And in doing so it is often possible to turn up something fascinating and maybe something I have never seen before.

Cecily Falkingham.

FACEBOOK—Thanks to the efforts of Ian Kitchen, the FNCV now has 1050 facebook friends.

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



How to Mount &/or Frame your own Photos Easily & Cheaply



When: Tuesday 19th May, 9.30 am – 12 noon
Where: Field Naturalists Club Hall
 1 Gardenia St Blackburn 3130

Come and learn how to:

- ⇒ Mount your photos in ready-made mounts
- ⇒ Fit them to ready-made frames
- ⇒ Preparing your photo to use ready-mades
- ⇒ Cutting mats to suit non standard photo sizes
- ⇒ Fitting your photos into the mounts
- ⇒ Cutting a double mat
- ⇒ What equipment is available & where to get it

Cost: \$75 or *Early Bird price of \$45 (book & pay by 1st May)*
 15 people Max. Materials if purchased are extra.



Bring: a photograph you can mount yourself
More Info: phone Wendy on 9877 9266 or
 0435 377 065

www.MasterYourCamera.com.au

The Victorian Naturalist— now available on-line

Dear members, as we mentioned in the last issue of *Vic Nat* for 2014, and in an email to you, we are very keen to save the paper, the printing costs and the postage costs associated with publishing *The Victorian Naturalist*, so we have developed a way of getting it to you electronically. The Editors have allowed me to send the *Vic Nat* download details to all of you whose email addresses are on our membership database so you can “have a go” and see how it’s done. If you follow this link:

<http://www.fncv.org.au/tvn-fomxvutj/>

you will be able to download the latest issue and the previous 5 issues of *The Victorian Naturalist* onto your computer.

This service will be available from now on to those who request it, with a new link for every future edition. Just let me know by return email if you would like this method of receiving *Victorian Naturalist* instead of a paper copy. If you do I will put you on our list to be emailed when each issue is ready, and you will be able to feel that you’re doing your bit for the environment and for your club!

Regards Wendy Gare

*** We already have 46 people opting for an e-VicNat, saving the FNCV approximately \$760 per annum.**

Second-hand Book sale

Once again the FNCV has put together a successful sale of second-hand books donated by members. Special thanks to the estate of Fred Smith for allowing us to sell much of his library.

Thanks to those who donated their time both before and on the day. Without you this biannual fund-raiser and publicity event would not have taken place:

Su Demsey, Gary Presland, Ruth Hoskin, Sue Bendel, Barbara Burns, Anthea Fleming, Peter Fagg, Carol Page, Sally Bewsher, Denise Carew, Cecily Falkingham and others.

Sue Bendel will take the remaining books to the Judith Eardsley, Save Wildlife Association. Barbara Burns has already taken five boxes to a library sale.

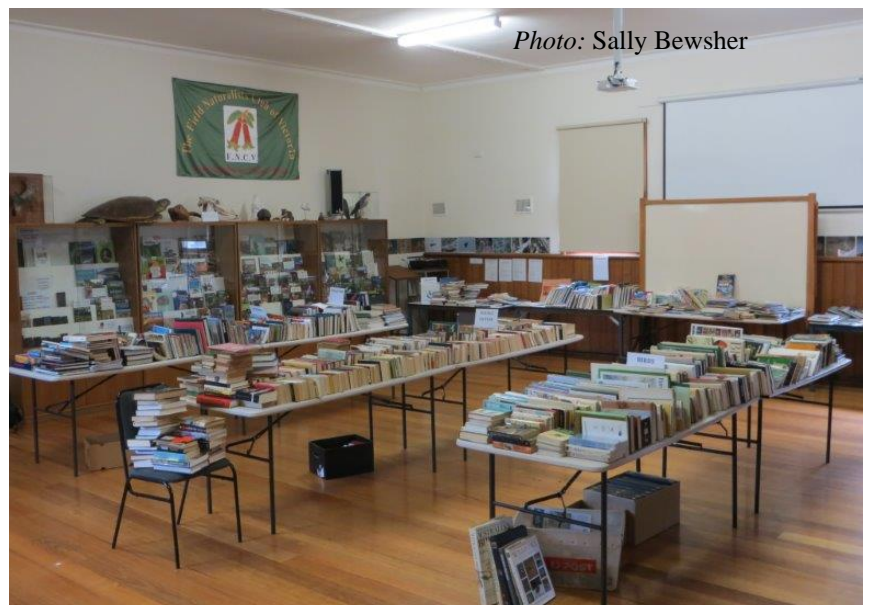


Photo: Sally Bewsher

\$1441 was raised for the FNCV!

**South East Australian Naturalists'
Association Inc (SEANA)
Spring Camp 2015
Friday 25 – Sunday 27 September 2015**

Hosted by Donald Historical and Natural History Group Inc. Accommodation is available at the town's hotels, motels, caravan park and apartment (Book early as there is another function in town). The venue, including basic accommodation, will be at the Donald Racecourse.

Dinner on Friday and Saturday night (there will be a bar operating); breakfast for Saturday and Sunday, and a packed lunch for Saturday will be available at the Donald Racecourse. A barbeque lunch will be available on Sunday at the Racecourse. Please order requirements on Registration Form.

Registration and payment should be returned to Donald Historical and Natural History Group by **21 August 2015**.

The FNCV has emailed the complete first circular to our members. For further information, contact the office or Donald Historical and Natural History Group, PO Box 111, Donald, Vic 3480 Email dhgnhg@jgr.net.au



Library News

A reminder that you can now search the library's collections on the FNCV website. Click About us – Library and you will be able to download searchable lists of books, periodicals, maps and photos.

Recent additions to the Library

The following monographs have been catalogued and shelved in the FNCV Library:

Archer, M *et al* (1991) *Riversleigh* [560.99 RIV]
Romanowski, N (2013) *Living waters* [333.91 ROM]
Seddon, G (1994) *Searching for the Snowy* [333.91 SED]
Sprawson, W (2010) *The overland track: Cradle Mountain to Lake St Clair* [582/946 SPR]

Recent periodicals:

- *Australian Birdlife* 4(1) has an article by Tim Low entitled 'Where birds began'. It looks at the intriguing new views coming out of DNA research about the evolutionary relationships of birds.
- *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Vic* 126(1/2) publishes papers from a symposium on Victoria's energy future.
- *Wildlife Research* 41(6) includes an article about the need to manage the impact of the yellow-throated miner on small birds and tree health in the Mallee.

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

Diary Date— Biodiversity Symposium 12th & 13th September *"Impacts on Biodiversity During the Anthropocene".*

There are 16 topics and speakers lined up, including:

- Introduction. What is Biodiversity?
- Climate Change, with Prof. David Karoly
- Impact of Feral Animals on Biodiversity
- Land Management & Impact of Biodiversity
- Impact of Chemicals & Plastic on Marine Life
- Impact of Cattle in Alpine Regions. Speaker from VNPA
- Urbanisation – Impacts on Biodiversity
- Impacts of Ecotourism.

Many thanks to those who helped collate & label FNN 251

Sheina Nicholls
Hazel Brentnall
Edward Brentnall
Andy Brentnall
Neil McLachlan
Keith Marshall
Bill Fenner
Cecily Falkingham
Joan Broadberry

This newsletter is printed on recycled paper.

Next Garden Working Bee

Saturday 1st August, 10 am to 1 pm. Mulching, weeding, pruning, planting etc. Please bring tools such as loppers, mulchers, spades etc. Mulch and plants for the day will be ordered via FNCV.

Our goal is to get the garden into good shape before spring. All welcome even for a short time.

**Contact Barbara Burns
for more information-
0425 842 489**



(Continued from page 1)

Dusky Dolphins was very rough and I pulled the pin on the albatross encounter not wanting to chance my luck at being sea sick and missing some birds. The trip produced 76 species of birds and a few mammals (all introduced) and has helped keep my 2015 bird-a-day competition alive :-)

I hope that my blurbs have been informative, slightly amusing at times and sometimes just matter-of-fact, but always with a sense of respect for the front page of the FNN.

**Yours in all things "green",
John Harris**

***BONUS PHOTO PAGE FOR THOSE WHO RECEIVE FNN BY EMAIL p13**

Thanks to the editorial and layout team who put together FNN 252

Joan Broadberry
Wendy Gare
Sally Bewsher



Geology Group

Meeting March 25th 2015

The geological basis of Melbourne's history

Speaker:

Dr Gary Presland

Our own Gary Presland spoke on a topic which is covered in much richer detail in his book *The Place for a Village*. Gary listed five geological formations which are found around Melbourne and explained the differing influences they have had on the development of the city.

To make a very rough generalisation, Melbourne is geologically split down the middle, with relatively young (less than 2 million years) 'Newer Basalt' to the west and much older (more than 400 my) Silurian sediments to the east. The flat basalt soils supported vast grasslands (partly a result of Aboriginal burning) – a great attraction to settlers like John Batman who brought many thousands of sheep from Tasmania in the first few years after 1835. In contrast, the strongly folded Silurian sediments of the eastern suburbs supported a hilly, relatively well-watered picturesque landscape where the well-to-do were keen to build their houses. Noxious industries such as wool-scouring and abattoirs were located on flat land where they could dump their waste into the Maribyrnong or Yarra River. On the Yarra this was on the basalt side. Workers

in these industries tended to live nearby. So while Richmond (basalt) and Hawthorn (Silurian sediments) faced each other just a short distance across the river, the socio-economic distance was great.



Robert Hoddle's watercolour of Batman's Hill, the best known landmark with the 'older volcanics'

Lava which formed the 'Newer Basalts' flowed down the watercourses, so rivers such as the Yarra had to wear a channel through the basalt in places to get back to the sea. There was a resistant chunk of basalt which formed a bar across the Yarra where Queens Bridge now spans the river. Fresh water was only available upstream of the bar and this, more than

any other factor, determined 'the place for a village'. This bar was removed long ago.

There is a ridge of 'Older Basalt' stretching from the Melbourne CBD towards Moonee Ponds. The creek which once flowed along the route of Elizabeth Street (and occasionally still does) found its way along the boundary between this 'Older Basalt' and the Silurian on the eastern side.

Quaternary silts were deposited in low-lying places where there were swamps. Around Melbourne they included the large West Melbourne Swamp, the Sandridge Lagoon and what is now Albert Park. These places were highly valued by the Aboriginal people as a source of food and other resources, but they were shunned by European settlers who thought disease was caused by 'bad air' arising from them. The settlers used them as rubbish dumps and over time most of them were filled in.

'Tertiary' sands from what is now known as the Neogene period (2 - 23 my) were deposited by rivers flowing down from the mountains to the north-east at that time. They would once have covered most of Melbourne, but they have mostly been eroded away. They survive in a few places and form the 'sand-belt' of the south-eastern suburbs. There were no useful watercourses here, but water was obtained by drilling wells into the water table. The area was used for market gardens before being covered by houses after World War 2.

It's a fascinating story because it's where we live, and we greatly appreciate Gary helping us to make sense of it.

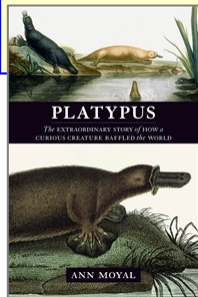


A profile of Silurian deposits, Eastern Freeway, Doncaster. Photo: Gary Presland

NEWS FROM THE BOOKSHOP (May 2015)

A few different books, which are regularly stocked on the shelves have recently been bought. Extra copies are available. But be quick! These books are about the Platypus, Kangaroo and Shorebirds. The books on Rocks & Fossils and Sponges are new to the bookshop and were released in 2013. If there is interest in these topics I will endeavour to stock more titles on those topics. *Where the Slime Mould Creeps* is a very curious title and if you are interested in fungi you might like a copy. As the fungi season is soon approaching you may want to view the wide range of fungi books currently in stock on the shelves. If you have any questions, would like to order or inquire about a book, please send me an email to bookshop@fncv.org.au

Kathy Kimbeck



Platypus: The extraordinary story of how a curious creature baffled the world (Moyal) is an enigmatic story of a biological riddle that confounded scientists for nearly ninety years, challenging theories of creationism, evolution and the classification of species along the way. Secretive, elusive and beguiling, the platypus has continued to captivate public and scientific attention to the present day.

(PB, 249 pp., 2010) RRP \$24.95, Members \$20

Shorebirds of Australia (Geering, Agnew & Harding) was a winner of the 2008 Whitley Award for Field Guide. It brings together information about the evolution, ecology and behaviour of shorebirds and how they are distributed in Australia. Complete with colour photographs and up-to-date distribution maps, it provides descriptions and tips to assist with the identification of all species of shorebird in Australia. The book is a valuable reference for a broad range of people, from birdwatchers and field naturalists to professional ornithologists

(PB, 246 pp., 2007) RRP \$39.95, Members \$32.50

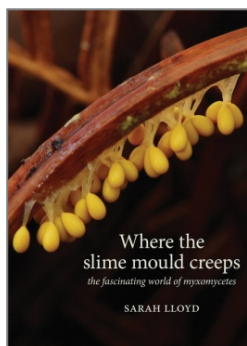
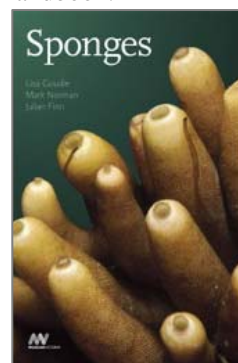


Rocks & Fossils (Australian Geographic) Fully revised and updated, this book provides a comprehensive and revealing guide to unearthing the marvels hidden in the worlds of rocks and fossils. Detailed expert information on low-impact collecting and preserving of fossil finds. Hints on using the latest equipment, such as CPS, in the field. Authoritative fact files to help identify collected rocks and fossils. Spectacularly illustrated throughout with over 800 stunning, full-color photographs and expert diagrammatic illustrations. The perfect rock and fossil hunters handbook.

(PB, 288pp., 2013) . RRP \$34.95 Members \$28.50

Sponges (Goudie, Norman & Finn) This guide introduces naturalists, divers and biologists to sponge species commonly encountered in southern Australia, their identification, biology, defences and associations with other animals. Sponges occur in all oceans of the world and have lived there for at least 600 million years. They help clean our seas, are experts at chemical warfare and can even rebuild themselves after being torn apart. They come in all shapes and sizes and some can live as

long as 2000 years. (PB, 135 pp., 2013) RRP \$19.95, Members \$16



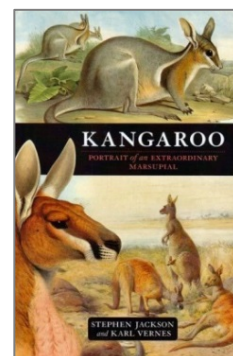
Where the Slime Mould Creeps: the fascinating world of myxomycetes (S. Lloyd).

Slime moulds are not slimy, nor do they look like mould; in fact, most are exquisite, except for *Fuligo septica*. This common cosmopolitan species forms yellowish blobs known variously throughout the world by the names 'dog's vomit slime', 'demon drop-pings' or 'snake poo'. The book captures over sixty species found in northern Tasmania, in colour photos, showing their miniature spore-bearing 'fruits'.

(PB, 100 pp., 2014) RRP \$30, Members \$27.

Kangaroo: Portrait of an extraordinary marsupial (Jackson & Vernes) provides a remarkable story of our most famous marsupial, from its ancient origins and prehistoric significance to current-day management and conservation. The authors examine our sustained fascination with kangaroos, spanning 40,000 years, that allows these engaging marsupials to be instantly recognised by people the world over.

(PB, 338 pp., 2010) RRP \$24.95, Members \$20



Extracts from SIG reports given at the last FNCV Council Meeting

Botany Group: Daniel Ohlsen presented on ferns of Victoria. Daniel described the distinguishing features of the various genera of ferns. Daniel also updated us on changes to fern taxonomy due to DNA work. A most informative evening.

Fungi Group: At our first meeting for 2015, on March 2, Ian Bell gave a very interesting presentation about fungi to a large audience of about 40 people. The presentation included several time-lapse sequences of fungal fruit-bodies growing.

Geology Group: The Geology SIG were treated to a double length talk by Ian Lewis on the 25th February. He spoke about the Nullarbor Plains and described its geology and particularly its extensive cave network. As Ian is a caver as well as a hydrologist - and is writing his PhD - he was able to give a very personal insight into the area. It was a fascinating night, and very well attended - nearly 40 people stayed for the two hour period.

Many, many thanks to both Ruth Robertson and also Rob Hamson who have stepped in to organise the second half of the Geology SIG's programme. We are holding three excursions this year, and the lecturers Ruth has organised are presenting on interesting topics. Healthy attendances at the meetings adds to a most enjoyable evening..

Juniors' Group: Our February meeting was an excellent talk by John Harris about his fauna survey trip to the Gibson Desert last September / October. We heard not only about the various creatures found, but also about the Blackstone (Papulankutja) Aboriginal Community students (who travelled 400 km to camp with them) and with whom they exchanged environmental knowledge.

Excursion: Phillip Island Adventure report

On March 15th a group of 26 of our Juniors' group met at the Newhaven, Phillip Island Visitor Centre, to start our adventure. We were again blessed with a lovely sunny day for our excursion. Our first stop was Fisherman's Bend near the entrance of Churchill Island where many species of water birds are known to live and we walked along the boardwalk to the lake. Next we went to Forest Caves for a walk along the beach to the awesome geological features where we found a freshly deceased penguin, 'by the wind sailors' and a very smelly Potato Sponge! To catch the low tide we then had lunch at Sunderland Bay where we checked out the rock pools. We found many creatures including a swimming anemone, crab, pink sponges and a stunning Feather Horned Beetle. From there we headed inland to Oswin Roberts Reserve (which is the last remnant of bushland on the Island) and did the shortest walk there. Unfortunately we didn't see any koalas, but we did see a swamp wallaby and a variety of birds. Our last group stop was to the Rhyll Inlet Mangrove walk where we saw some very cool crabs and continued to see the birds wading in the inlet where I was excited to see a Royal Spoonbill. Three families of keen birders then travelled across the island to Swan Lake, the only fresh water lake on the Island, where we saw many water birds (and a few kangaroos) from the bird hides. To complete the Swan Lake experience, Alex performed his aerobics routine for us as we had no ballerinas amongst us. Thanks for a great day everyone who came and to the Goodes for bringing along their telescope for us all to share. All up we saw 70 different bird species!



Terrestrial Invertebrates Group: March meeting. The meeting was well attended. Max Campbell displayed live, female specimens of the scorpions *Urodacus armatus* and *Cercophonius squama*, both with numerous juveniles clinging to their bodies. They fluoresced nicely under UV light. Wendy Clark showed photographs of a native bee and hoverfly larva on a lily.





Day Group

SURVEYING FAUNA IN THE GIBSON DESERT

On the 24th of March, the Day Group was fortunate indeed to enjoy a presentation by John Harris, FNCV president. In August 2014 John, with his wife Kathy Himbeck and friend Fred Bohner, spent three weeks surveying fauna in the Gibson Desert, working with Desert Discovery Inc. This is a non-profit, volunteer organisation who undertake biennial expeditions into remote regions of Australia, with the aim of increasing scientific knowledge and thereby helping to protect the environment.

John and Kathy set off with 4WD and trailer filled with equipment including meals for 27 days, pre-cooked and frozen. Highlights early in the trip included finding a Curl Snake, *Suta suta* near Coober Pedy, sighting the Black-footed Rock Wallaby *Petrogale lateralis* at the Heavitree Gap Caravan Park at Alice Springs and visiting Hermansburg, and Palm Valley. John and Kathy then travelled via desert roads and tracks into the remote Gibson Desert of northern Western Australia. Desert Discovery's base camp was located at Ambulance Bore. The traditional owners being the Ngaanyatjarra Aboriginal People. During the three weeks, over 130 people came through base camp. Surveying was carried out by well organised teams, each with a specific focus. For example, botany, mammals, birds, reptiles or geology. John and Kathy with Fred made up a small team of three. Their initial job was set out lines of

buckets(photo right) and traps for reptiles and small mammals. Over time, the group sampled a range of habitats such as dune shrub-lands, hummock grasslands, mulga shrub-lands or clay pans. Heavy work was often necessary in order to dig holes for the buckets. A constant



Short-tailed Pygmy Monitor *Varanus brevicauda*, the world's smallest monitor.



Hill's Sheath-tailed Bat *Ta-phozous hilli* gravid female.



Pitfall trap showing Centralian Blue-tongue moving towards the bucket.

challenge was checking the traps early in the morning, processing animals and recording data. Each capture had to be released at the place it was caught. Release must be at an appropriate time for the species, for example, nocturnal creatures would only be set free after dark. John is a dedicated "birdo", but the focus on reptiles and mammals meant bird watching opportunities were limited. With the daily tasks completed, it was of course, very enjoyable to share stories and discoveries with others around the evening campfire.

Over three weeks John & Kathy's team totalled 2328 trap nights, using pitfalls, and Elliots, cage and harp traps. They caught 503 individuals made up of 63 species. Reptiles included skinks, geckos, blind snakes, legless lizards and dragons. Snakes were

scarce, the traditional owners pointing out August was not warm enough for pythons. As well as trapping, active searching resulted in sightings of or traces of (footprints and scats) other animals such as dingoes and Hopping-mice.

It is wonderful to report that Bilbies, *Macrotis lagotis*, are present in the Spinifex area. At one point, a line search was organised to record their burrows and diggings. Participants were stationed 30 metres apart making a line of one kilometre. Camels can be a big problem in the inland. The water was turned off at Ambulance Bore about six weeks before the survey in order to keep the survey area relatively clear of them.

It was great to hear of the hospitality given extended by the Tjirrakarli Community and the exchange of knowledge of the fauna that took place between the traditional owners and the survey group. John and Kathy were able to work alongside locals including children, and learn many Aboriginal names and stories of the fauna of the Gibson Desert.

John showed us many beautiful images of the reptiles and mammals captured and told us a little of their biology. Accurate identification of species was another exacting task for all the teams. A

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Young members of the Tjirrakarli community assisting with trap checking



Terrestrial Invertebrates Group

Close up photography Speaker: *Alastair Traill*

Meeting: 18th March 2015

The meeting was well attended. Max Campbell displayed live, female specimens of the scorpions, *Urodacus armatus* and *Cercophonius squama*, both with numerous juveniles clinging to their bodies. They fluoresced nicely under UV light. Wendy Clark showed photographs of a native bee and hoverfly larva on a lily.

Alastair Traill (FNCV) delivered a thoroughly informative and interesting presentation on close-up cinematography. He briefly discussed the problems encountered when attempting to film and photograph very small invertebrates including optical limitations, vibration, resolution, depth of field, focussing and parallax. Alastair has both modified existing equipment and designed and built innovative, specialised, new equipment to address many of those inherent problems. He brought along numerous examples of that equipment to demonstrate to the audience. In addition to older video cameras, he also described the virtues of modern digital Go Pro cameras which are small, light, adaptable and record in high definition. He has them professionally modified to more common lens mounting systems such as C-mount so that they will accept a broader and more useful range of lenses.

The stunning results achieved by his skill, patience and superlative photographic equipment were demonstrated by an incredible series of high definition videos of ants, paper wasps and wolf spiders. There was also a time-lapse sequence of the micro-wildlife of wallaby dung. The depth of field was exquisite.

Alastair exemplifies the high level of innovative skill, knowledge and professionalism existing within the membership of the FNCV. The presentation was very well received indeed.

**Maxwell Campbell,
TIG Covenor**

Right: A very clear wolf spider face



Above: Alistair at work. Right: Camera at the end of the motorised boom. The ants are very small. Below: The ant in detail.



**Frames
from
video
clips**



Right: Paper wasp chewing prey to feed to young.





Marine Research Group News

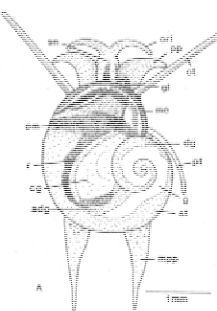
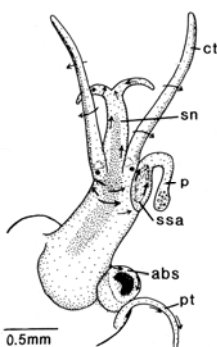
Continuation of summary of MRG extended field trip to the Toora region, 24-27 Feb. 2015. Day 3: Shallow Inlet, Thursday 26 February, 2015. Arriving well before low tide, we had a good opportunity to examine the upper and mid littoral levels of this soft-sediment locality as we waited for the tide to recede.

The stalk eye crab *Heloecius cordiformis* was abundant in the upper littoral regions and very quick to scamper into its burrows on approach. A few of the related *Macrophthalmus latifrons* were recorded but this was not common. The bivalve *Anapella cycladea* was common and a few large ark shells *Anadara trapezia* were pleasing records. The pulmonate gastropods *Phallomedusa solida* and *Ophicardellus ornatus* in the supralittoral saltmarsh were common.

The receding tide then allowed the recording of the soft-sediment gastropod species *Polinices (melastoma, conicus and sordidus)*, *Nassarius (pyrhus, jonasi, burchardi and pauperatus)*, *Zeacumantus diemenensis* and various species of bubble shells (*Tornatina* species, *Retusa pelyx*, *Cylichnatys campanula*, *Haminoea* sp, a juvenile *Bulla quoyii* and *Liloea brevis*). The micromollusc *Hydrococcus brazieri* was present in numbers amongst *Heterozostera* beds. One specimen of the aglajid snail *Melanochlamys handrecki* (Burn, 2010, Shallow Inlet is the type locality for this species), and the microsnails *Nozeba topaziaca* (two) and a single murchisonellid *Kolonella cf. moniliformis* were very interesting finds.

As more shoreline became exposed, large numbers of the soldier crab *Mictyris platycheles* were noted. It was soon apparent that there were also occasional specimens of the larger *Mictyris longicarpus* amongst them—this is the eastern Australian species that was not known west of Wilson's Promontory until the MRG recorded it at Shallow Inlet on our last visit here. John Eichler was soon able to find *M. longicarpus* at will by looking for its wider diameter sand-holes.

Without doubt the most interesting molluscan find of the trip was made at Shallow Inlet, with a single specimen of the heterobranch microsnail *Cornirostra pellucida* recorded from the mid-littoral zone (specimen shell length 1.3 mm).



Cornirostra pellucida (Laseron, 1954). Left: dorsal view of the head; below: dorsal and ventral views (all diagrams from Ponder, 1990).

Described on the basis of its shell in 1954, the extraordinary anatomy of *C. pellucida* was discovered and reported on by Ponder (1990). This record comprises a significant western range extension of this species in Victoria. A detailed report on this find is currently in preparation.

The little green sea-star *Parvulastra exigua* was very common on mid and lower littoral silt (we have also observed this on previous visits here); this species is otherwise normally found on rocky reefs.



M. longicarpus (above) and *M. platycheles* (below), Shallow Inlet, Thursday 26 February, 2015. Photos: P. Vafiadis.



Day 4: Foster Beach, Corner Inlet, Friday 26 February, 2015.

This beautiful shoreline along Corner Inlet is a silty mudflat with scattered beds of *Heterozostera* seagrass at mid and lower littoral levels, and *Posidonia* seagrass in the sublittoral reaches (unfortunately we could not quite reach appreciable beds of the latter for sampling). As such, many of the species recorded from the other soft-substrate localities of Toora, Port Welshpool and Shallow Inlet were also found here. Some rocks in the upper littoral / supralittoral zone also provided good crab habitat.

The micro-pyramidellid snails *Syrnola bifasciata* and *Pyrgiscus fuscus* were present. *Calopia burni* was common and two unidentified *Turella* turrids were also noted. The microbivalve *Legrandina bernardi* was very common. The pygmy squid *Idiosepius notoides* was recorded from a few sparse blades of *Posidonia* seagrass.



Foster Beach, Friday 27 February, 2015. Photo: P. Vafiadis.

Fourteen brachyuran crab species were noted including *Parasesarma erythro-dactyla*, *Paragrapsus laevis* (common), *Paragrapsus gaimardii* and also the introduced *Carcinus maenus*. The anomuran crab *Polyonyx transversus* was also recorded, associated with the paper tubes of the polychaete worm *Chaetopterus variopedatus*.

This summary concludes reporting of the extended visit to the Toora region; we thankfully had good weather, low tides and some extremely interesting finds.

Reference: Ponder WF (1990). The anatomy and relationships of a marine valvatoidean (Gastropoda: Heterobranchia). *Journal of Molluscan Studies* 56: 533-555.

Platon Vafiadis



FNCV AGM

Sunday 3rd May 2015 at 2pm

*You are invited to attend
The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc
Annual General Meeting*

to be held at the FNCV Hall, 1 Gardenia Street, Blackburn.

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

Guest Speaker: Dr Gary Presland,
who will speak on his progress in writing the history of the FNCV.

Afternoon tea will be served. All welcome

**Nominations for Council must reach the registered office of the Club no later than 48 hours before the AGM,
i.e. Friday 1st May 2015, by 2 pm
(Nomination form, see p12 FNN 251 or website)**



(Continued from page 9)

complete list from his presentation is too long for this report, but I am sure John and Kathy will supply more details to those who are interested. I will select just a few creatures to illustrate. The most common small mammal caught was the Sandy Inland Mouse, *Pseudomys hermannsburgensis*. Brooks' Wedge-snouted Ctenotus, *Ctenotus brooksi* was the most common reptile trapped. All six possible species of Goannas were seen. The beautiful Short-tailed Pygmy monitor *Varanus brevicauda*, length 23cm. was

one of these (photo p9). John described the Lesser Hairy-footed Dunnart, *Sminthopsis youngsoni*, as a predator "with attitude". One of the few snakes caught was the lovely Desert Banded Snake, *Simoeselaps anomalus*. The Jewelled Gecko, *Diplodactylus eldери*, is one of the most stunning nocturnal reptiles. Even on the last trapping morning new species such as Desert Delma were caught.

Later into the trip John and his team learned of a cave in a breakaway cliff. Bat traps were erected and

two species of small insectivorous bats caught. These were the Inland Cave Bat, *Vespadelus finlaysoni* and one of John's favourite finds, Hill's Sheath-tailed Bat, *Taphozous hilli* (photo p9).

On behalf of everyone present I would once again like to thank John Harris for sharing this fabulous expedition with us. For a short time we, the audience, were transported to the ancient landscapes in the heart of Australia and through his brilliant photography were introduced to much of its amazing fauna.

Joan Broadberry

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Yellow-eyed Penguin



Dusky Dolphin



Images taken by John Harris from his recent holiday with Kathy to New Zealand.

New Zealand Fantail, black phase.



Franz Josef Glacier



Northern Royal Albatross



Takahe

