Field Nats News No.292

Understanding Our Natural World

Newsletter of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc.
1 Gardenia Street, Blackburn Vic 3130
Telephone 03 9877 9860
P.O. Box 13, Blackburn 3130 www.fncv.org.au
Newsletter email: fnnews@fncv.org.au

Editor: Joan Broadberry 03 9846 1218
Founding editor: Dr Noel Schleiger

Reg. No. A0033611X

Patron: The Honourable Linda Dessau, AC
Governor of Victoria

Office Hours: Monday and Tuesday 9.30 am - 4 pm.

December 2018/January 2019

From the President

The robber fly I featured last month is still to emerge; the pupa is quite dark and moving a lot more but I suspect it will not appear before the deadline for the News. The larvae of the "compost flies", *Bbio imitator* have also now pupated (photo right).

Another interesting invertebrate made itself known when I was visiting a friend who has a large suburban block at Box Hill. A patch of undisturbed leaf litter was punctuated with numerous silk-lined openings up to 25mm across. (Photo right). Closer inspection revealed a very large spider sitting poised just inside the entrance. Touching the silk very gently with a piece of grass stem produced a spectacular response. A large mygalomorph spider darted out to near full body length and jumped with legs raised (photo below) and fangs extended outwards.

Burrow entrance with spider waiting for the trip threads to be contacted.

Defensive posture of *Stanwellia grisea*

This is an impressive spectacle for a naturalist but perhaps not so for the feint-hearted arachnophobe. The spider is the Melbourne trap-door spider *Stanwellia grisea* which is unearthed by gardeners from time to time to alarming effect; its behaviour is reminiscent of the funnel-web spiders. Both males and females dig long tunnels up to 40 cm or so and line them with silk. *Stanwellia* burrows are not equipped with trap-doors as their name suggests. They are most active at night when they wait at the entrance of their burrows to grab unsuspecting prey that touches the trip lines. Males move around looking for females in late Autumn. They are smaller (25mm long) than the large, robust females (35mm long) and tend to have longer, more slender legs. The spider belongs to the family Nemesiidae. They will bite readily if disturbed and the large fangs may inflict a deep and painful wound but there appears to be no evidence of medical problems associated with the venom. However wearing garden gloves is always a good idea. It is encouraging to see our more spectacular native invertebrates surviving in suburbia. *Stanwellia grisea* may live for many years; perhaps up to 20 years.

Continued page 3

The deadline for FNN 293 will be **10 am on 1st January 2019.** FNN will go to the printers on the 15th January with collation on **Tuesday 22nd January**. NOTE- ONE WEEK LATER THAN USUAL

Best wishes for a safe and happy Christmas and a wonderful New Year from FNN to all our readers and contributors.

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.

December 2018

Monday 3rd – Fungi Group No Meeting

Tuesday 4th - Fauna Survey Group Meeting: ***Christmas BBQ and annual round up at FNCV Hall***
Contact: Ray Gibson 0417 861 651; rgibson@melbpc.org.au

Friday7th to Tuesday 11th - Terrestrial Invertebrates Group Excursion: ***South Western Victoria Camp*** Saturday and/or Sunday will be spent searching for and/or counting the rare ladybeetle *Micraspis flavovittata.* We will also spend an additional day or two exploring nearby forests. We will camp in Cobboboonee National Park but other accommodation is available in Nelson and Portland. Allow at least 5 hours of driving from Melbourne. **Registrations essential by 30th November**
Contact: Reiner Richter: fncv@rnr.id.au. ***An email flyer has gone out from the office with details of the proposed program.***

Saturday 8th – ***Christmas Party BBQ*** 6.30 pm in the hall. Join us and help to celebrate another wonderful year with our fellow naturalists. As usual there will be a stupendous raffle! **Details see FNN p3**

Monday 10th – Marine Research Group Meeting: ***Annual members' night***
Everyone is welcome to bring along exhibits, items of interest or questions on marine invertebrates
Contact: Leon Altoff 9530 4180 AH; 0428 669 773; mrg@bluering.org.au

Wednesday 19th - Microscopy Group No Meeting

Thursday 20th – Botany Group No Meeting

Tuesday 25th – Day Group No Meeting: ***Christmas Day***

Wednesday 26th – Geology Group No Meeting

January 2019

Monday 7th – Fauna Survey Group No Meeting – ***New Year's Day***

Sunday 6th - Terrestrial Invertebrates Group Excursion: ***Cardinia Reservoir Park***
Meet at 10am in Crystal Brook picnic area car park. Contact: Reiner Richter: fncv@rnr.id.au

Sunday 6th to Friday 11th - Fauna Survey Group Survey: Survey for fishes and nocturnal reptiles at the northern end of Murray Sunset National Park. Bush-based camping, moving between locations near the Murray River west of Mildura.
Contact: David De Angelis: 0409 519 829; d.deangelis@latrobe.edu.au **Prior registration essential.**

Monday 7th – Fungi Group No Meeting

Monday 14th – Marine Research Group No Meeting

Tuesday 15th– Collation of FNN 293 has been changed by a week to January 22nd.

Wednesday 16th - Terrestrial Invertebrates Group No Meeting

(Continued on page 3)

The policy of the FNCV is that non-members pay $5 per excursion and $3 per meeting, to contribute towards Club overheads. Junior non-member families, $4 for excursions and $2 per meeting.

(Continued from page 2)

Thursday 17th – Botany Group No Meeting

Sunday 20th - Terrestrial Invertebrates Group Excursion: *Upper Yarra* Meet at 10:30 am in Warburton in the car park along Thomas Ave (behind the shops). Contact: Reiner Richter: fncv@rnr.id.au

Tuesday 22nd – Day Group No Meeting
However we will be colloating FNN 293
Commencing about 10 am. All welcome. Contact Joan Broadberry 984612128

Wednesday 23rd – Geology Group No Meeting

Friday 25th to Monday 28th - Fauna Survey Group Survey: Fauna survey at Lonsdale NCR (near Stawell). Contact: Robin Drury: 0417 195 148; robindrury6@gmail.com **Prior registration essential.**

Friday 26th – Juniors' Group No Meeting: *Australia Day*

Monday 28th – Marine Research Group Fieldwork: *Intertidal survey at Honeysuckle Point, Shoreham*. Meet at 10 am. Phone or email for exact location.
Contact: Leon Altoff: 9530 4180 AH; 0428 669 773; mrg@bluering.org.au

Tuesday 29th—FNCV Council meeting 7.30 pm sharp/Agenda items and apologies to Wendy 9877 9860; admin@fncv.org

From the President *(Continued from page 1)*

Note: "I can confirm that the small fly larvae discussed in last month's report have emerged from their pupae and are Bibio imitator as predicted.
The large asilid pupa also emerged and is a 43 mm long Colepia species, probably *C. rufiventris* (Photo right). The emergence was on 9-11-2018.

Maxwell Campbell

FNCV Christmas Party

Saturday December 8th.
Join us at 6.30 pm in the FNCV Hall
1 Gardenia St. Blackburn

Relax and enjoy a BBQ with friends and members from all FNCV Special Interest Groups and celebrate another wonderful year of activities. All welcome!

* The club will provide meat, veggie burgers, bread and nibbles. Please bring a salad or a sweet to share. BYO drinks. Email the office by **Friday 30th November** to let us know numbers coming and what food you are bringing.

* We are planning a presentation looking back over the FNCV year. SIG coordinators are requested to email about 10 images from their 2018 activities to the FNCV office no later than **Friday 30th November**.

* We will also be holding the traditional FNCV end-of-year fund raising raffle. **Donations of prizes would be much appreciated**, e.g. wine, knick-knacks, plants, books etc. Look deep into your 'present drawer'. Deliver to the labelled box in the office or (preferably) bring them with you on the night.

Queries to Wendy in the office 9877 9860 or **admin@fncv.org.au**

Members' news, photos & observations

We always have space for members' 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 the following new members who were welcomed at our last Council meeting.

Liam Daly, Hamish Beshara, Stsella Shiamaris, and Zachary Northey.

UPDATE ON PEACOCK SPIDERS

The Peacock Spiders *Maratus tasmanicus* are active again on the Blackrock foreshore where they were seen last year. There were at least eight mature males and one immature male there on a recent Saturday visit. These tiny (3-4mm), showy spiders, lift and fan out the rear part of their body to attract a female.

(Editor: At this stage , despite many visits John had not seen a male display but see note below.)

In an exciting sequel I found a second species *(Maratus plumosus) (image 1 male, image 2 female)* at Balcombe Park on the same day. Last year I photographed a wasp carrying what appeared to be a female or immature male Peacock Spider so I thought it was worth following up and after about an hour searching I was successful in finding one mature male.

The second species is not as flamboyant in its colouring or in the way it displays. On my third visit to the reserve I was lucky enough to witness a male displaying,. *(Image 3)*

NOTE: email October 29th. A male *Maratus tasmanicus* is starting to display (editor: by raising its rear legs). *(Image 4)*

John Eichler

Botany Group excursion to the Brisbane Ranges on **23rd September 2018**

BERT BOARDMAN RESERVE, STEIGLITZ

Pat Grey, David Newell and Ken Griffiths have prepared a comprehensive list with images of plants observed. This is too large to include in FNN but those who would like a copy can email Ken botany@fncv.org.au

Books used as references.

A Handbook to Plants in Victoria by James H Willis, vol 2 Dicotyledons, 1972
Flora of Melbourne by Marilyn Bull, 2014
Orchids of the Anglesea District by Everett Foster & Margaret MacDonald, 2nd ed 2004
Wildflowers of the Brisbane Ranges by Clive & Merle Trigg, 2000

Thanks to the editorial and layout team who put together FNN 292

Joan Broadberry
Wendy Gare
Sally Bewsher

Many thanks to those who helped collate and label FNN 291

Hazel Brentnall
Edward Brentnall
Andy Brentnall
Barbara Burns
Sheina Nicholls

CAN YOU HELP ?

For a number of years I have been videoing various aspects of the lives of the Paper Wasp (*Polistes humilis)* that nest on the lining of out verandah. I am particularly impressed by the variety of skills and the parental care shown by the foundress of the colony. Her first job is to make the pedicel that supports the nest then a few days later she collects more wood pulp and starts the first chamber in which she lays her first egg. On the same day she might build two or three more chambers and lay more eggs. If the weather is warm enough she will build more chambers and lay more eggs over the next few days. She also makes the existing chambers deeper and works on the pedicel. She defends the site and spends a lot of time examining the chambers. When the eggs morph into larvae she brings back food that is fed to the young. She also brings back liquids and when the temperature reaches about 30 degrees she will spend some time fanning the nest.

Eventually the larvae pupate and emerge as females and assist in building more chambers and feeding more larvae. I have managed to get useable video results of a lot of what goes on at the nest and have strong evidence that another favourite animal is a predator of the colonies.

However I am having great difficulty in finding where the wasps feed and where and what the liquid is that they collect. I have kept a close watch on every nearby water source to no avail. Peak activity is in the early months of the year when there is little flowering and I am yet to find a source of caterpillars that the adult wasps prey upon. I would would be very grateful if anyone could provide further information or direct me to where this activity is occurring..

Regards, **Alastair Traill actraill@ozemail.com.au**

The picture is a 'frame grab' from a recent video clip. The egg was a few minutes old.

2018 WHITEHORSE SPRING FESTIVAL

A small group of Victorian Field Naturalists manned a stall at the Whitehorse Spring Festival on Sunday 21st October. The weather was sunny and cool and perfect for attending a Spring Festival. The organisation by the Whitehorse Council Festival committee was excellent with co-ordinators at each section very early to assist with setting up. Each section had a few food venues and a performance site and the program allowed for something active to be happening throughout the 10 am to 4 pm day. Thanks to Philippa's personal collection, the Field Naturalists had a table jam packed with amazing flotsam and jetsam to place under the microscopes. Children and adults were enthralled. On the other table was the skulls! Matching these with the animal was not so easy for many but with support a few, very few, did manage. There was barely a lull in the parade of passing kids and parents into the tent. Thanks to the small volunteers who passionately suggested membership to all who passed or entered the tent.

Co-coordinator: **Judith Sise assisted by Philippa Burgess** ***Set up people:*** **Ray Gibson, Philippa Burgess and Judith Sise** ***Pack up people:*** **Ruth Hoskin, Ray Gibson, Judith Sise** ***Rostered helpers:*** **Patricia Amaya, Cecily Falkingham, June Anton and Ruth Hoskin**.

Judith Sise

Photos: Phillipa Burgess

Extracts from SIG reports given at the last FNCV Council Meeting

Botany Group:

At our meeting on Thursday 11th October, Ed Hill from Goongerah Environment Centre, GECO, presented on the proposed Emerald Link. This would form a continuous link from the Alpine National Park in East Gippsland down to the coast. Ed showed us some amazing trees in the link that certainly should not be logged. It consists of four major blocks of beautiful forests and would be a perfect spot for a long hiking trail. Fifteen people attend and enjoyed the presentation .

Sue Bendel

Meeting Thursday 18th October: We heard John Patykowsky of Deakin University explain his recent research exploring the role of rare plants in an ecosystem. He studied Box-Ironbark woodland, near Heathcote, using data from control burns. Spring burns promoted annual herbs. Nutrients including nitrogen and phosphorus were measured. Canopy trees were studied. Cherry Ballart and Mistletoe were identified as important to the ecosystem. Ten people attended, and engaged in questions afterwards.

Ken Griffith

Fauna Survey Group:

Meeting, Tuesday 2nd Oct. 2018. The meeting was attended by 22 members who heard a talk by guest speaker Zac Atkins on the Guthega Skink. Zac commenced with a description of the heathy high plains of Mt Kosciusko and Mt Bogong which is their habitat. The Guthega Skink *Liopholis Guthega* is a moderately large skink that lives in burrows and produces juveniles that are black with yellow spots. The mean size of litters is 1.55 in Victoria and 2.55 in NSW. They eat invertebrates such as beetles and ants and also plant material, especially later in the season. Other animals in their habitat include Mountain Dragon, Spencer's Skink, Alpine Sheoak Skink, Alpine Water Skink, Alpine Tree Frog and Corroboree Frog.

Survey Yarrara NCR 23-29th September. This Mallee survey was attended by 22 members and about 100 species of birds, reptiles and mammals were recorded. A more detailed report is on p

Ray Gibson

Geology Group:

At the Geology SIG Meeting held on 26th September, our long term FNCV member, Lisa Nink, presented a report on her on-going PhD research into the vertebrate fossils from the Bone Gulch and Fisherman's Cliff localities in the Murray Darling Basin of southwestern New South Wales. The fossils were preserved in sediments of a freshwater Palaeo megalake called Lake Bungunnia that formed when uplift blocked drainage of the Murray Darling Basin around 2.5 million years ago. Lake Bungunnia covered 50,000 km^2 at its peak, but by 700,000 years ago drainage of the basin had recommenced causing the demise of the lake. Today it is represented by only a few small, saline playa lakes in western Victoria e.g. Lake Hindmarsh. A multitude of small fossils have been found representing marsupials, fish and turtles. There is little evidence of arboreal taxa and no fossils of koalas or possums have yet been recovered suggesting it was an arid environment. A most interesting talk. We look forward to hearing about Lisa's further research.

The Geology SIG hosted Bill Reid for our meeting on Wednesday October 24th. Bill is the Exploration Manager for Castlemaine Goldfields Pty Ltd who operate the Ballarat gold mine project.

Over 3 million ounces of gold were mined from the 2000 reef mines of Ballarat before the last mine closed in 1918 Few of the original mines stopped working because of lack of gold. The usual causes were the high cost of controlling water levels in mines especially when the surrounding mines closed, as well as investment competition, the price of gold and the development of other gold fields such as Kalgoorlie. The lack of manpower during World War 1 had a major influence. Mining records from that era are an important resource used by today's geologists in mapping Ballarat's gold reserves.

Bill was an ideal person to describe how these have been used to plan future expansion of the mine, and the Ballarat goldfields are far from exhausted. The current Ballarat mine now has 42 kms of workings under Ballarat East, northward from their surface workings near Sovereign Hill and is at a depth of 750 metres, well below the majority of the historic mines. The mine is still very profitable.

Bill's talk covered a wide range of topics including:
The Ordovician (458 million years ago) background to the gold-bearing Ballarat reef quartz which is heavily folded and faulted; a description of mining term, some of which are peculiar to Ballarat such as 'leather jackets', and indicators, complete with descriptive photos of the features; he also compared the differences in mining techniques between the 19th Century mines and the present day e.g. one pump now is used to dewater all of the mine whereas each historic mine would struggle to manage the water with their pumps.

He also commented that it is very unusual to have a mine directly under a city which is not dominated by its mining as is Broken Hill or Mt Isa or other Australian mining towns. He has found that Ballarat people are very positive and encouraging about the mine in Ballarat.

It was particularly interesting to see how the historic mining records, supplemented with recent drilling results, are incorpo rated into 3D modelling of the old adits as well as showing likely gold reserves. Bill was an excellent and entertaining speaker who gave a most enjoyable talk to an audience of 34 members and visitors.

Ruth Hoskin

Australian Natural History Medallion Presentation 12/11/18

The 2018 Australian Natural History Medallion (ANHM) has been awarded to Sarah Lloyd, a Tasmanian naturalist with a life-long passion for birds, and a more recent interest in fungi and slime moulds; in fact most aspects of the natural world.

In late 1988 Sarah moved to a forest on Black Sugarloaf, Birralee in central north Tasmania with her partner composer Ron Nagorcka. The flora and fauna and the ambience of the different vegetation communities (*Melaleuca* swamp forest, ferny gullies and tall wet eucalypt forest) within walking distance of their home continue to be a source of fascination.

Birds have always captured Sarah's imagination and since she could first say the word she wanted to be an ornithologist. The Australian Bird Count, a nationwide project conducted by the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union (now BirdLife Australia) where volunteer birdwatchers were asked to count the birds in a particular area, commenced about the time of Sarah and Ron's move. She established three search areas which were surveyed for twenty minutes every fortnight, continuing for five years. It was a marvellous way to learn about the habits, calls, and habitat and foraging requirements of the forest birds. The comings and goings of the different species, especially the nomadic honeyeaters, often correlated with the flowering times of the local plants. Fortuitously, the project coincided with the inauguration of the local field naturalists' group, the Deloraine Field Naturalists, later to become the Central North Field Naturalists. It was this group who nominated Sarah for the ANHM. The 'Birds on Farms' project, also conducted by BirdLife Australia, again called on volunteer bird watchers, this time to survey birds in the patches of native vegetation that remained on productive farms. For two years Sarah surveyed birds on three farms within the local municipality.

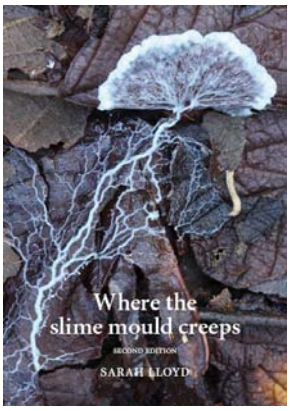
Sarah's time in the field qualified her for further bird surveys and she was able to undertake several bird-monitoring projects in the predominantly agricultural regions of northern Tasmania and King Island. Results from these projects reinforced the importance of remnant bush as bird habitat and she felt an urgency to convey this to the landowners, especially as the health of these areas was deteriorating, leading to a series of 'breakfasts with the birds' field trips for farmers.
In 2005 Sarah started studying the dawn chorus (i.e. the early morning simultaneous singing of the resident birds) at Black Sugarloaf. This involved getting out of bed pre-dawn to listen to and document the simultaneous singing of the resident birds once, twice and sometimes three times a week for over a year. The singing starts from between 30 to 60 minutes before sunrise, depending on the time of year, and continues until there is a noticeable lull, usually when the sun comes up.

In 2008, Sarah initiated 'A Sound Idea', a Tasmania-wide project to monitor birds using digital sound recording devices and an army of volunteers resulting in recordings from over 160 locations across Tasmania. Sarah spent countless hours listening to and identifying the birds and providing feedback to these volunteers and BirdLife Australia.

The 2018 ANHM was presented to Sarah Lloyd (right) by Nick Williams, Vice President of the Royal Society.
Photo: J. Broadberry

Sarah has been a member of Fungimap Inc. since 2001 and has been a major contributor, recording 'target' species not only from her home at Black Sugarloaf but also from the bird survey sites in northwest Tasmania and on King Island. She was regional coordinator for Tasmania in 2005 when she and the Fungimap Coordinator, Cassia Read, organized the third national Fungimap conference held at Gowrie Park, Tasmania. She was a member of the founding management committee of Fungimap, once the group was incorporated in 2005. Sarah was introduced to slime moulds (myxomycetes) in 2006 when several slime mould species were added to the list of Fungimap 'targets'. In about 2010 Sarah started to notice other slime mould species in the forest at Birralee. By October 2018 she had collected 1750 specimens representing about 120 species including several species new to science. Her presentation, after being awarded the medallion, *Life Among Slime* focused on this subject.

Sarah has written prolifically about natural history and has taken numerous photographs to illustrate each story. She has been a major contributor to *The Natural News*, the newsletter of the Central North Field Naturalists, and has been editor since 2005. She has published nine books including, in August 2018, the second edition of *Where the slime mould creeps*. She is a strong supporter of the Central North Field Naturalist Inc., Fungimap Inc., the Bruny Island Bird Festival, BirdLife Tasmania, the Tarkine Bioblitz, the Tasmanian Land Conservancy and the biannual bird counts at Moulting Lagoon.



Fauna Survey Group

Yarrara Flora & Fauna Reserve - September 2018

In late September, the Fauna Survey Group undertook a repeat visit the Yarrara and Mallanbool Flora and Fauna Reserves, some 80 km west of Red Cliffs. The previous visit took place in 2014 at which we recorded around 100 vertebrate species. Each trip ran for a week.

Both reserves are examples of semi-arid woodland, dominated by Casuarina. As we confirmed in 2014, they continue to provide habitat for the White-browed Treecreeper (*Climacteris affinis)*, Crested Bellbird (*Oreoica gutturalis gutturalis*), Hooded Robin (*Melanodryas cucullata cucullat*a) and Beaked Gecko (*Rhynchoedura* sp.), all of which are listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, 1988. A further six bird species observed were members of threatened communities.*

The Beaked Gecko is critically endangered in Victoria. It had been known as *Rhynchoedura ornata* across its entire range but recent studies have led to taxonomic changes. As there have been no samples taken from south of the Murray River its taxonomy in this area is still uncertain. With the appropriate approvals we have undertaken to collect appropriate DNA samples and have this work carried out in collaboration with researchers at Museums Victoria and Australian National University.

Also discovered in 2014 was the presence and capture/release of the Little Pied Bat (*Chalinolobus picatus). This species had not previously been captured in Victoria, although it is a resident of the inland in other states.*

Beaked Gecko
Matt Clancy

As in 2014, we camped at nearby Meringur in the grounds of the former primary school and now the Community Centre, where we had access to shower and toilets.


Echidna *R.Drury*

The project consisted of bird surveys on fifteen-500 metre transects, a drift fence with 10 picket buckets deployed at four sites, a drift fence with 20 funnel traps deployed at one site, four bat-traps deployed nightly, 25 remote cameras deployed for 2-3 weeks (19 on the ground and six in trees) and nightly spotlighting for reptiles. This made for a busy camp with 22 people attending for at least some of the time.

This time we recorded 100 species, but as they were not all the same as 2014, the combined total for the two surveys is 114.

The highlights included:

- Little Pied Bats were captured and released in the same location as before. Some females showed signs of breeding. A male was captured was the first on either survey, suggesting a colony may exist in the reserve.
- White-browed Treecreepers were recorded in 14 of the 15 transects.
- DNA was collected from four Beaked Geckos (the requisite number from this site). In this regard progress was non-existent till the last night when the weather was slightly warmer thereby encouraging reptile movement.
- Cameras recorded 15 bird species, 5 mammal species and 9 reptile species. Five of the bird species were

Continued page 10


Hooded Robin ***R.Drury***

Day Group

Living on the Edge,
In situ Orchid management in NE Melbourne
Speaker: Gary French

In years gone by, naturalists organised many trips to Melbourne's northeast to view its rich terrestrial orchid flora. Today the Plenty Gorge area retains a good variety of native orchids including rare species such as *Caladenia amoena* (Charming Spider-orchid), rediscovered in 1996, and *Pterostylis planulata* (Flat Rustyhood), also known from Mt. Zero in the Grampians. FNCV member Garry French, with others, has been helping to manage and conserve orchids on the NE fringe of Melbourne since the early 1990's. His presentation to the October Day Group focused on four species.

Caladenia rosella, (Rosella Spider-orchid), is one of the first spider-orchids to flower, commencing in early August. It grows in small clusters in association with dryland moss and was once widespread in box ironbark forests across Victoria. This beautiful, bright pink orchid is now restricted to a few small populations in Nillumbik Shire. Recovery actions for the species currently being undertaken by the Nillumbik Threatened Orchid Working Group include: isolating the associated fungi, raising seedlings to return to the wild, hand pollination, protecting translocated and wild populations with metal cages and fencing and intensive weed control.

Pterostylis smaragdyna, (Emerald-lip Greenhood) is part of the Tall Greenhood complex flowering from May to July. The labellum is green with a dark central stripe. In the 1990's it was known as the Greensborough form of Tall Greenhood. It is threatened by habit loss, weed encroachment and its susceptibility to grazing including by possums. If nibbled, it puts up shoots in order to photosynthesise as it has to replace its tuber each year. However, the resulting tuber is smaller than that of plants that produce a flower and it may need time to recover before flowering again. St Helena Bushland Reserve is a stronghold of this species, with over 500 plants. The reserve is surrounded by suburbia and its pollinator, a native fungus gnat, can no longer travel to it. Since the mid-2000's it has been rare to have a natural pollination event at St Helena.

Plants from St. Helena have been translocated to a site in Smugglers Gully, Plenty Gorge which contains a remnant population of about 20 plants. The orchid's pollinator is present at this site. The plants were caged to protect them from browsing and translocation was initially successful; however an unfortunatelytimed autumn burn destroyed many seedlings and set the overall population back.

Continued page 10

All images: Gary French

Continued from page 9

Caladenia oenochila, (Wine-lipped Spider-orchid) has its stronghold in Melbourne's north-east and a number of colonies remain, with a remnant population of five plants in Plenty Gorge. *Caladenia oenochila* grows in loose clusters in association with Poa tussock grasses. The Nillumbik Threatened Orchid Working Group has collected seed and the associated fungus and has grown this orchid in cultivation for translocation, which was undertaken this year. However, even with carefully prepared seed beds and supplementary watering the population in Plenty Gorge remains low but stable.

Caladenia amoena, (Charming Spider-orchid) is the smallest of the greencomb spider-orchids reaching only 10cm. It grows in tight clusters in moss, flowers from mid August to mid September and is listed as endangered. In Victoria it is restricted to two natural sites plus one re-established site. Seedlings of this dainty orchid have been raised to return to the wild with the population reaching 179 plants in 2010. But the trend has been downward since. Garry has put a great deal of thought and hard work into understanding the requirements of the Charming Spider-orchid. Each individual plant can be located and identified accurately for effective monitoring. Issues to be considered include the orchid's dormancy period and a shortened growing season due to changes in climate. In the 1990's all plants would re-emerge above ground from mid April to mid June and would die off by mid October. Since the early 2000's plants are emerging later and with the site drying out by mid September the orchid's season is now about six weeks shorter. Since 2006 not one new germinating seedling that has appeared has survived its first summer; the season appears to be just too short now. Works are continuing to protect and enhance this "*charming*" orchid.

On behalf of the Day Group I would like to thank Gary for sharing his extensive knowledge of Melbourne's orchids and allowing us a glimpse of the work that is being done to bring them back from the brink. A difficult task that involves time, patience, dedication and a continuing learning curve.

Joan Broadberry

Continued from page 8

those of conservation concern. Images allowed the

- identification of similar species: Patch-nosed Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja aspidorhyncha*) and Eastern Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja textilis*). The award for the most photographed species went to the Stump-tailed Lizard (*Tiliqua rugosa*).

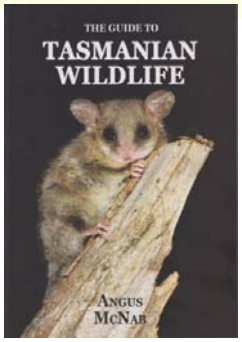
Robin Drury

Photos: R. Drury

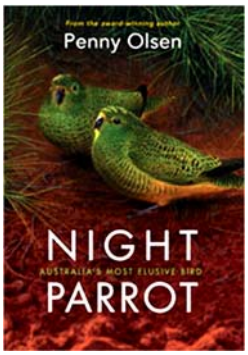
NEWS FROM THE BOOKSHOP (December 2018)

Looking for just the right gift for Christmas? The FNCV Bookshop has a wide range of books that would be perfect for a wide range of ages and interest groups. This month features only five of the titles new to the bookshop. Check out the latest catalogue for all of the new books along with the full range available. You will find it hard to pick just one! Whilst we have a large number of books in stock at the moment, which you can come into the clubrooms and purchase, or you can request books to be posted out. To ensure that you are not disappointed please make sure you get in early. We shall do our best if a book does need to be ordered, but we cannot make any promises. To order or inquire about a book, please send an email to me, at, bookshop@fncv.org.au I will reply as soon as I can. Many thanks to all who have supported the Bookshop throughout the year.

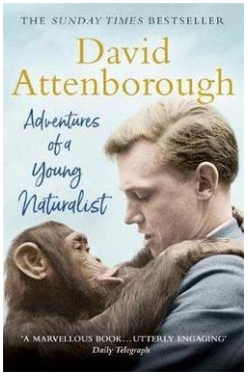
Happy reading and Merry Christmas to all, Kathy



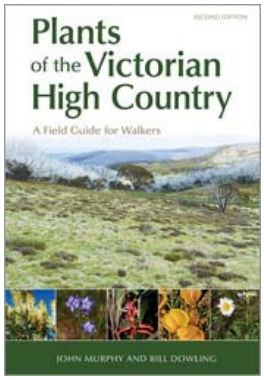
The Guide to Tasmanian Wildlife (A. McNab) is the only comprehensive guide to identifying all 324 species of amphibians, reptiles, mammals and birds that inhabit Tasmania and its territorial waters, including 30 species that occur nowhere else. The book includes detailed and user-friendly accounts of each species comprising physical descriptions, distribution maps, details on where and when to see each species, preferred habitat types, similar species and how to tell them apart, plus notes on subspecies, conservation status and ecology. Angus is a member of FNCV and has published a must have book for all that visit Tasmania. **PB, 376 pp., Nov 2018) RRP $49.99, Member $40**



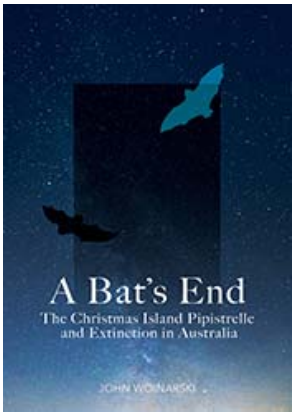
Night Parrot: Australia's Most Elusive Bird (P. Olsen) documents the competitivenessand secrecy, the triumphs and adventures of the history of the bird and it followers, culminating in the recent discovery of live birds at a few widely scattered locations. It describes what we are now unravelling about the mysteries of its biology and ecology and what is still left to learn. Complemented by guest essays, illustrations and photographs from a wide variety of sources, this book sheds light on Australia's most elusive bird. **(PB, 368 pp., Sept 2018) RRP $49.99, Member $40**



Adventures of a Young Naturalist: Sir David Attenborough's Zoo Quest Expeditions (D. Attenborough) is the story of a young television presenter, who in 1954 was offered the opportunity of a lifetime, to travel the world finding rare and elusive animals for London Zoo's collection and to field the expeditions for the BBC. Written with his trademark wit and charm, this book is not just about a remarkable adventure, but of the man who made us fall in love with the natural world, and who is still doing so today. **(PB, 416 pp., Feb 2018) RRP $22.99, Member $18.50**



Plants of the Victorian High Country: a field guide for walkers (Murphy & Dowling) allows walkers to identify plants they are likely to encounter along the popular tracks of Victoria's High Country. This second edition has been revised and expanded to describe 133 plants from the montane, subalpine and alpine zones, categorising them into five easily distinguished groups (herbs, daisy herbs, low woody shrubs, tall shrubs and trees). The guide features a glossary of botanical terms, straightforward identification keys, clear photos of the leaves, flowers & stems of the plant, and includes notes on Aboriginal plant usage. **(PB, 168 pp., 2nd ed, Oct 2018) RRP $39.99, Member $32**



A Bat's End: The Christmas Island Pipistrelle and Extinction in Australia (J. Woinarski) is a compelling forensic examination of the circumstances and players surrounding the extinction of the Christmas Island Pipistrelle. On the evening of 26th August 2009, the last known pipistrelle emerges from its day-time shelter on Christmas Island. The bat is never again recorded. Scientists search all nearby areas over the following nights. It has gone. The book is about that bat, about those scientists, about that island. But mostly it is an attempt to understand that extinction; an unusual extinction, because it was predicted, witnessed and its timing is precise. **(PB, 280 pp., Sept 2018) RRP $59.99, Member $48**

Photography tips from Wendy Clark

Wendy has followed up her September Day Group practical photography session with a handy list of tips and camera settings:

- Put your camera onto 'A' (or Av) on the mode dial so you can override what the camera thinks the exposure should be. You can then set your aperture (f stop) and the camera chooses the shutter speed. On full Auto, the camera sets the exposure (how light or dark your picture is) and you cannot alter it.
- If the exposure is too light or too dark, you can change it by using the +/- button (or exposure compensation). Go to the + side to make it lighter or the – side to make it darker. Remember to put it back to zero after you have finished using it.
- Focus Points. It is better to have a single focus point to get sharper focus. This is often called 'spot focus' in the camera settings.
- Focus on a particular subject. You need to think about what you are looking at and then focus on that.
- Backgrounds – it is important to see what is behind your subject. If your background is too busy, you can't see your subject. It is best to move yourself (and camera) so you position your subject against a shadow or something that is a long way away so the background is blurry. See images this page, *Butcher bird with caterpillar and below*, *bronzewing pigeon watching.*
- Participants were reminded to move around our subject including up and down so they could choose a suitable angle and light to get the best picture.

If people want to learn more about using their camera or photography techniques, Wendy runs Short Courses, Day Trips and Workshops all in small classes with a 'hands on' approach at her business called Master Your Camera.
See her website for more details **www.MasterYourCamera.com.au**

All images: Wendy Clark

Field Nats News 292

The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc.
P.O. Box 13
BLACKBURN VIC 3130
Reg.No. A0033611X

PRINT POST 100002072

POSTAGE PAID AUSTRALIA