



Understanding
Our Natural World
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Field Nats News No.310



Newsletter of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc.

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August 2020

From the President

In the light of the worrying increase in reported Covid 19 infections it is clear that the easing of restrictions carries an increased risk of transmission within the community and the Victorian Government has dramatically increased restrictions. As a consequence we will not be resuming our normal activities for the foreseeable future. However, when we do resume meetings and field trips, strict rules to reduce the risk of viral transmission will need to be developed and enforced in accordance with current government regulations and safe practices.

Unfortunately our ability to plan any activities and meetings in the hall is still a long way off as we do not know what the restrictions are likely to be over the coming months. We will keep you informed. In the meantime we will be focussing on organising more webinars and Zoom meetings.

FNN continues to lift our spirits and keep us in touch. Future issues will depend almost entirely on your help. Please step up to the challenge. As field naturalists, we all have much to share. See also p7 *From the Editor*.

With all of the extra time available, I have been savouring the delights of the numerous online macro photography catalogues. There are always interesting and very tempting new items of equipment guaranteed to facilitate the next amazing macro shot and deliver the incredible "wow factor". There is also a lot of wishful thinking involved in these online adventures. Super macro lenses, smarter lighting systems, diffusers, cameras and incredible photo editing software
(Continued on page 2)

FNN 311 is looking forward to more of your observations and images. Your input is critical to FNN's future.

Use joan.broadberry@gmail.com

The deadline is always 10 am., the first Tuesday of the month, 4th August 2020



Photo 1. There's a Currawong in my Kurrajong.
(Not a quote from Dr Seuss)

Index	Page
From the President	1-2
Nature Quiz 4	3
Members' news, photos & observations:	4
Vale Frank Steuart	
Meadow Argus Butterfly; The Explanation	5
Uncommon insects—Pt. Campbell & Ricketts Pt.	6
Answers to Quiz 4; notices; From the Editor	7
On the Campaspe at Ashbourne (near Woodend)	8-9
FNCV AGM; Proxy form	10
Nomination for FNCV Council 2020/21	11
News from the Bookshop	12
Members' Photo Page	13

(Continued from page 1)

can allow today's photographer to squeeze out the last bit of resolution, depth of field and perfect lighting. Of course, luck has a great deal to do with getting good photos of tiny, highly active arthropods. Naturally, as soon as you purchase a new camera with all of the bells and whistles a new, much better model always appears. With no excursions and little insect life around the garden at the moment it's a matter of being all dressed up with nowhere to go with flashy new equipment and accessories.

Fortunately, I have some larger subjects to photograph. Since the fires of February 2009, I have enjoyed the pleasant, haunting calls of Pied Currawongs (*Strepera graculina*) in my garden. Immediately after those fires I counted over 100 currawongs crowding my eucalypts before they took off to Monash University to regroup on the Clayton Campus. There seems to be no collective name for a group of Currawongs, but slaughter, crisis, catastrophe, cacophony and commotion are tenable suggestions. The birds have since persisted around the neighbourhood and I recently had five raiding my Kurrajong tree (*Brachychiton populneus*) for the bright yellow seeds which they delicately and expertly pick out of the dried pods. (Photos 1-3) The prickly little hairs on the seeds don't seem to trouble them. They make a lot of noise as they rattle the dry pods together and propel some of the seeds to the ground.



Left—photo 2.
The large beak put to delicate use.

Below—photo 3.
Success!

Sometimes magpies join them and both of the larger birds are harassed by angry Noisy Miners (*Manorina melanocephala*), albeit to little effect. Currawongs are affable, attractive and cooperative subjects for photographers but they seem to have reduced the numbers of smaller birds and like to take any insects and spiders that appear on the foliage. Along with the Grey Butcherbirds they also eat a range of small vertebrates including mice and lizards. They are very curious and don't miss much of what's going on in the garden. They sometimes turn over the leaf litter in their searches for food. Despite their beautiful call and their friendly, if not cheeky, behaviour, I believe they negatively impact the biodiversity of urban areas. Yet another example of ecological imbalance influenced by human activity?

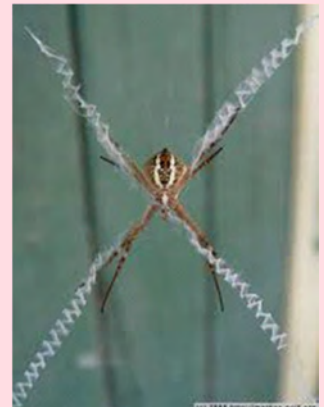
Max Campbell

All Photos Max Campbell



Nature Quiz 4 - Compiled by Barbara Burns

1. The Fly is the longest river on which large island?
2. By what other common name is the Black-necked Stork, Australia's only stork, known?
3. Jellyfish move by:
 - a. Waving their tentacles.
 - b. A form of jet propulsion.
 - c. Being carried by the waves and sea currents.
4. Which of these is the greatest threat to penguin eggs?
 - a. Albatross
 - b. Seals
 - c. Skua
5. What is the common name for herbs belonging to the genus *Salvia*?
6. Which of these is the common name of the frog that gets its name from the loud, mechanical-like sound it makes?
 - a. The Lawnmower Frog
 - b. The Chainsaw Frog
 - c. The Motorbike Frog
7. Is it true or false that two particular species of frog in the Australian wet tropics are named 'the Elegant Frog' and 'the Inelegant frog'?
8. Name the second tallest living species of penguin.
9. The Fly Agaric fungi belongs to which genus? (Photo: J. Broadberry)
10. Restricted to Australia's south-west corner is which species of Thornbill?
11. What is the only species of Sunbird commonly found in mainland Australia?
12. One of the most widespread eucalypts in Australia, common even in dry areas because it follows watercourses, is the _____.
13. The botanical name for the Mountain Ash is:
 - a. *Eucalyptus regnans*
 - b. *Eucalyptus grandis*
 - c. *Eucalyptus viminalis*
14. How much more powerful is a 7.0 earthquake compared to a 6.0?
 - a. 1.67 times
 - b. 10 times
 - c. 100 times
15. The common name of the Australian spider shown in the picture is the _____ . (Photo from the internet)



ANSWERS p7

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: joan.broadberry@gmail.com by the first Monday in the month.

Vale Frank Steuart

I wish to tell the museum that Frank Steuart died Friday, 19 June, 2020. For many years he worked as a volunteer in the department (classifying etc) and was chair of the 'Friends of the Museum' (in its original format). Each year he receives a Christmas card from the Marine Research Group and I would like them to be informed. I don't have a direct contact name, so hopefully you will pass on my message. via Melbourne Museum

After receiving the email shown above, forwarded from the Melbourne Museum, Audrey Falconer posted this tribute to Frank Steuart on the Marine Research Group's Facebook page and has kindly sent it to Field Nats News.

Frank was a key member of the MRG in the 1970s and 1980s. Unfortunately during the 1990s his eyesight started to fail and he was no longer able to see the small labels and specimens he worked with and he eventually was unable to continue working on the monthly Museum Workdays. I haven't seen him for at least 10 years.

Frank didn't have a specialty as such; he worked on maintaining the Museum's collections, data-basing and sorting and relabelling, especially the tiny dry molluscs.

Frank also made a huge contribution to the MRG's book, *Coastal Invertebrates of Victoria* which was published in 1984.

Frank I believe was the founder and long serving president of the Friends of the Museum Group, fundraising for the new Museum building, organising memberships which gave free admission to the Museum after an entry fee was introduced and organising reciprocal memberships with other museums in Australia and around the world.

SIG report given at the last FNCV Council Meeting

Fauna Survey Group.

A zoom meeting was held on 2nd June: *Fat-tailed Dunnarts are being released back into the Environment.* Speaker Millie Scicluna. There were 26 participants which included country members who were appreciative that they could attend.

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

Meadow Argus (*Junonia villida*)

On a very cold July morning, (temperature 4 degrees C), I set off for my daily walk in the Mullum Mullum Valley. The frost was just starting to melt with the warmth of the sun. The *Correa reflexa* and *Epacris impressa* were in full bloom, the latter only white, none of the showy pink. Butterflies were just becoming active as the sun warmed their bodies. At home Cabbage White Butterfly larvae had been eating my cauliflower and broccoli seedlings. On this day in the bush, a Meadow Argus fluttered into view, landed on some clay soil in bright sunlight, spread its wings and warmed itself. This butterfly occurs over most of Australia in summer, autumn, winter and spring. It is one of the few still around in winter. The larvae feed on Centaury (*Centaureum spp.*), *Convolvulus spp.*, *Goodenia spp.* and Snapdragon (*Antirrhinum*). This is one of the reasons I plant Snapdragons in my garden. The larvae also like *Goodenia spp.* and *Plantago spp.* These native and introduced species are common in the valley. *Portulaca oleracea* (Pigweed) and Common Purslane are other food plants.

This lovely Meadow Argus has orange rings on the upper surface of its brown wings with dark brown and mauve/blue within the orange. The wings are edged with white and the hind wings have two extra rows of white to cream crescents. The adult wingspan measures 45-55mm. This is the same size as the Klugs Xenica and the Eastern Ringed Xenica.

Next Spring, plant some Snapdragons, not just to attract Meadow Argus Butterflies but to show your children or grandchildren how, if you gently pinch the side of the flowers' 'cheeks', they will open and shut their 'mouths'. As a child I was fascinated by this when my Granny gave me a demonstration. It was just one of the many things that attracted me to nature as a small child.



Photo: J. Broadberry

Foot note: If you wish to view this species, see the lovely photos in 'Flying Colours Common caterpillars, butterflies and moths of South-eastern Australia' by Pat and Mike Coupar. 1992.

Cecily Falkingham

The Explanation!

Sue Tardif sent in a photo of a young male Satin Bowerbird and asked what was happening with its streaked plumage. See FNN 308 p14. Sue Bendel spoke to Sue directly, answered her question and then kindly sent this to FNN.

Ed. Thank you Sue B

“Male Satin Bowerbirds begin to transition to their adult plumage from about age five. This is done very slowly over two years. They go from looking like a zebra with only a few blue stripes in amongst the brown, to a zebra with a few brown stripes in amongst the blue ‘till they gain their full male plumage.



Before COVID-19, I had been observing these changes in a young male Satin Bowerbird named Indigo at Healesville Sanctuary. Sadly, I did not have a working camera on my phone, so do not have a record of it.”

Sue Bendel

Uncommon Insects found at Port Campbell and Ricketts Point



The first (above) is a Ground Beetle, *Drypta australis* and the second (right) is a Lichen Moth, *Phaeophlebosia furcifera*.

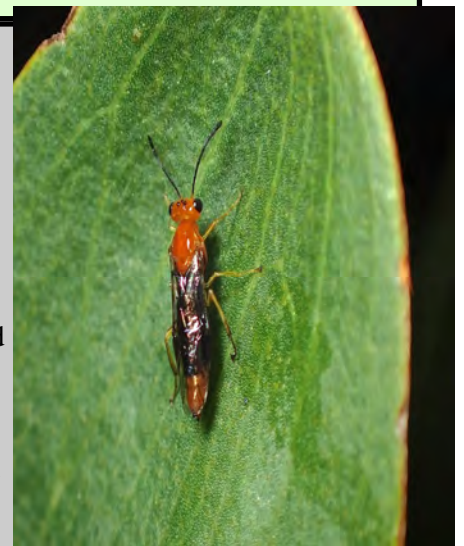
The beetle appears to be rather uncommon in Victoria, with only eleven earlier records in the Atlas of Living Australia.

These two striking insects were attracted to lights in the evenings, while I was staying at Port Campbell with the Marine Research Group in mid- March.



During a walk at Ricketts Point in mid-April, I was surprised to find two interesting insects despite the cool conditions.

The first (left) is a Leaf Beetle that seems close to *Peltoschema suturale* and *P. orphana*, but is apparently undescribed. There were five specimens on Coast Wattle near the Beaumaris Life Saving Club. I found it once before at Black Rock, also on Coast Wattle.



The second (above right) is a Eucalyptus Leaf-blister Sawfly that I initially thought was a small wasp. I had seen the larval stage on Eucalyptus at Ricketts Point and Black Rock, but this is the first time I have seen an adult. The adult is apparently scarce or perhaps overlooked because of its small size.

I posted images of both insects on iNaturalist. Interestingly mine are the only images of both the larval stage and adult sawfly from Australia on iNaturalist and the Atlas of Living Australia. However there are images of both from New Zealand.

John Eichler

Correction & Apology The heading on the article p12 FNN 309 should have read: **A Recently Described Cicada from Warburton *Yoyetta robertsonae***

Welcome
Welcome

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

Wun (Gerry) Ho, Mark Kennedy, Arabella Eyre, Joshua Burke, Rob Scott, Eloise Dowd, Julia Pickwick, Emily Scicluna and Australian Association of Bush Regenerators.

Thanks to the editorial and layout team who put together FNN 310

Joan Broadberry
Wendy Gare
Sally Bewsher

A Dream Story

A member is seeking someone to do some computer work/typing of a children's Dream Story. It's for a worthwhile cause.



The member is not able to use computers at present. For an initial story there'd be approximately four hours work.

**Is anyone interested? Please phone Greta
Tel: 03 9099 0870**

Answers to Quiz 4

1. New Guinea
2. Jabiru
3. b. A form of jet propulsion.
4. c. Skua
5. Sage
6. c. The Motorbike Frog
7. True
8. King Penguin
9. Amanita
10. The Western Thornbill
11. The Yellow-bellied Sunbird (also called the Olive-backed Sunbird)
12. The River Red Gum
13. a. *Eucalyptus regnans*
14. b. 10 times
15. St Andrews Cross Spider

15



Has anyone thought of unplugging 2020, waiting 10 seconds and then plugging it in again?

From the Editor



It is wonderful that with FNCV activities cancelled we have been able to produce four issues of FNN. But nothing is guaranteed without your help. **Future issues of FNN will depend totally on what our readers contribute.** Think of it this way, it is a lot easier to email observations and images than to give a presentation. Even though I love publishing my own photos, (p13) I would love it even more if some or all of them were from others and a true members' photo page (or pages) was established. I look forward to hearing from you very soon.

A huge thank you to everyone who has made this issue possible. Max Campbell, Barbara Burns, Kathy Himbeck, Cecily Falkingham and John Eichler continue to be some of our most regular supporters. Special thanks must go to Ian Temby for sharing with us his account of rediscovering Rakalis, not to mention Lewin's and Buff-banded Rails, on his beautiful property at Ashbourne (p8-9). The excitement of such wonderful discoveries is something that all field naturalists can relate to.

Everyone of us have had similar, unforgettable moments. We want to hear about them. Please don't just leave it to others, dig deep into your nature notes and photographs and let our readers know about the things that have created indelible memories as you have explored the natural world

Go well and stay safe, Joan

On the Campaspe at Ashbourne (near Woodend)

Ashbourne is a locality southwest of Woodend, in Victoria's central highlands, at a chilly 600m elevation. The Campaspe River, which rises nearby in the Wombat Forest, winds through our property on its way to the Murray. On our place, the river has some large remnant trees: Candlebark *Eucalyptus rubida*, Manna Gum *E.viminalis*, Narrow-leafed Peppermint *E. radiata* and Yarra Gum *E.yarraensis*) with Blackwoods *Acacia melanoxylon*, Silver Wattle *A.dealbata*, Woolly Teatree *Leptospermum Lanigerum*, River Bottlebrush *Callistemon sieberi* and Tussock Grass *Poa labillardierei* along the banks and Tall Spike-sedge *Eleocharis sphacelata*, Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, Water Ribbons *Cynogeton procerum* in the river). Ongoing weed removal is keeping the Hawthorn, Blackberries and Gorse away.

The former owner of our farm, who lived here for over thirty years, observed Platypus and Rakali in the river when it was a perennial stream. Now, mainly due to a decline in rainfall, it is intermittent, becoming a string of pools for several months each year and the Platypus is no longer present. I was very excited though, to see a Rakali in March and again in September 2015 in a permanent pool on our place and have looked for it frequently, without luck, ever since.

In March this year I found the characteristic remains of a yabby on a rock in the river, the



One of the permanent pools on the Campaspe on our property, on a frosty morning in June 2020.

(Continued on page 9)



Rakali

(Continued from page 8)

indication of Rakali's meal. I set my wild-life camera up, focussed on another rock in the river and captured images of a Rakali within a few days.

Then I found a well-defined path between pools through a patch of Milfoil that looked the right size to be made by a Rakali, so I moved the camera. On ten occasions between 12th March and 24th April I captured images of at least two Rakali, one a large male, the other more slender, travelling along the path, mainly at night, but also mid-afternoon. They must be very vulnerable to predation by foxes and larger birds of prey when travelling between pools like this.



Rakali *Hydromys chrysogaster* on the path through the Milfoil between pools, showing the characteristic white-tipped tail.

At the same site, I captured some delightful footage of Superb Fairy Wrens bathing, a White-browed Scrubwren, Crimson Rosellas bathing, a Grey Shrike-thrush bashing some prey on a rock, and less welcome, several images of a Black Rat *Rattus rattus*. The real surprise was to get images and a movie of a Lewin's Rail, a species I had not expected to find here and a very secretive bird. I had flushed a Buff-banded Rail in 2017 and captured a number of images of it in the intervening time, but had not seen one again in person, as they are also highly secretive when not accustomed to people.



I wonder now what else may be lurking here, undetected and will set cameras up in a number of spots, just on spec.

Ian Temby

Above: Lewin's Rail

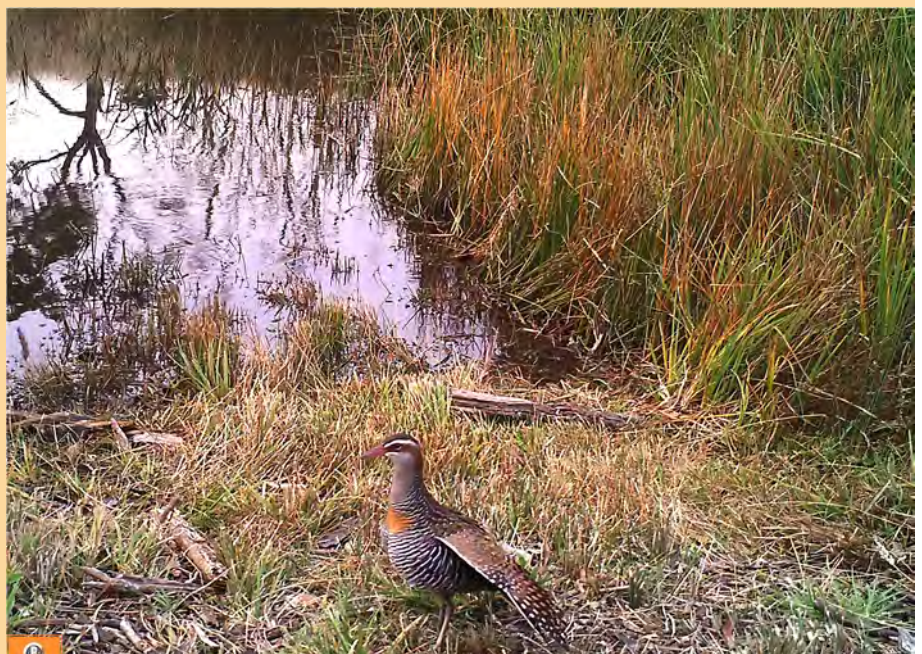
Lewinia pectoralis

Right: Buff-banded Rail

Gallirallus philippensis

Images: Ian Temby

The camera used in 2020 was a Reconyx Hyperfire HF2X and earlier I had used a Bushnell Trophy Camera. I usually have the cameras set on hybrid (stills and video) so they take three still photos and ten seconds more of video each time they are triggered.





FNCV AGM

Monday 31st August 2020 at 7.30 pm

**You are invited to attend the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc.
Annual General Meeting to be held remotely by Zoom.**

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

All welcome

- To register your name on the list to receive the Zoom meeting log-in details, please email our office at admin@fncv.org.au BEFORE 17th August. We need to have as many members as possible attending this meeting. *Contact Max 0409 143 538 for help with Zoom.*
- If you are unable to attend, please print the proxy form below, complete and sign it, then send it to our office. It can be scanned or photographed, then emailed in, or it can be sent via Australia Post to PO Box 13, Blackburn 3130.
- For a nomination form for the 2020/2021 FNCV Council and suggestions on how to proceed with a nomination, see p11.

All nominations, including SIG Councillors, must reach the FNCV office no later than 48 hours before the AGM, i.e. by 7.30 pm on Saturday 29th August but preferably before 17th August.



FNCV AGM Proxy Voting Form

I, _____
current member of The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc.

appoint (full name) _____

of (address) _____

or in their absence the AGM Chair to be my proxy at the 2020 Annual General Meeting to be convened on Monday 31st August 2020 remotely by Zoom meeting and authorise them to vote on my behalf.

*This form must reach the FNCV Secretary at admin@fncv.org.au
before 3 pm on the day of the AGM.*

Signed: _____ Date: _____ 2020



NOMINATION FORM FOR FNCV COUNCIL 2020/21

**The FNCV AGM will be held on Monday 31st August, 7.30 pm
remotely by Zoom meeting**

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, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, a Councillor representing each Special Interest Group (SIG), - Botany Group, Day Group, Fauna Survey Group, Fungi Group, Geology Group, Juniors' Group, Marine Research Group, Microscopy Group, Terrestrial Invertebrates Group - **and up to six other Councillors.** All must be FNCV members.*

**All nominations, including SIG Councillors, must reach the FNCV office
no later than 48 hours before the AGM, i.e. by 7.30 pm Saturday 29th August.**

PO Box 13, Blackburn, VIC 3130

Phone 9877 9860

E-mail: admin@fncv.org.au

Nominating members to Council 2020/2021

- A valid nomination form requires three signatures, that of the nominee and two supporting members.
- Original signatures can be photographed or scanned and still remain valid.
- A family member who is also a FNCV member can validly support the nomination of another family member.

The procedure outlined below is a suggestion only.

- With the agreement of the nominee, the first supporting FNCV member could print the nomination form, sign it and send it to the second supporting FNCV member who also signs.
- The form will then be sent to the nominee who will complete it and send it to the FNCV office by 7.30 pm., Saturday 29th August - 48 hours before the Annual General Meeting, earlier if possible.

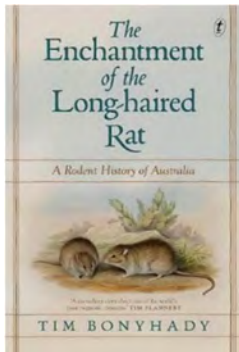
Because of the restrictions we are now operating under, this process could be completed by the following

- Direct contact with FNCV members who are part of your household or a letterbox drop/pickup.
- Emailing a scanned copy or photograph of the nomination from your phone, tablet or computer.
- Using Australia Post (allow plenty of time).

NEWS FROM THE BOOKSHOP (August 2020)

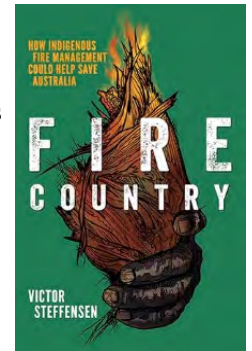
This month the selection includes requests from members and relatively recent titles that have not previously been advertised. Whilst the availability of most titles appears to be secure, there are a couple of popular books that are restricted in their supply. Even though recently reprinted, *Native Trees and Shrubs of South-Eastern Australia* by Leon Costermans is again out of print and the bookshop sold its final copy on the weekend. Bruce Fuhrer's book *A Field Guide to Australian Fungi* has been out of print for some months now and even though a reprint has been scheduled, the supply is a little slow in being delivered but hopefully it will be released soon. I will advise on the status of these two titles when stock is once again available. Thanks for your patience if you are waiting on an order. Your books are coming! To order or inquire about a book, please send an email to, bookshop@fncv.org.au and I will reply as soon as I can.

Happy reading and stay healthy, Kathy



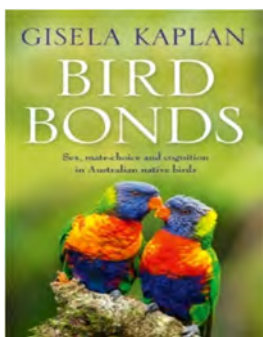
The Enchantment of the Long-haired Rat (T. Bonyhady) tells the story of a small Australian rodent known for its fast and prodigious spread after big rains. At the time, they were considered a plague species for the European colonists who feared and loathed all rats but on the other hand, an abundance of food for the indigenous peoples who feasted with delight in these times of plenty. From the earliest evidence of the rat to its most recent boom triggered by the immense rains across Australia of 2010-11 and current research of its mysterious life – presents a fascinating view of Australia's history, illuminating a species, a continent, its climate and its people. (PB, 304 pp., 2019) RRP \$32.99, Member \$26.50

Fire Country (V. Steffensen) is a powerful account on how the revival of indigenous fire practices, including improved 'reading' of country and undertaking 'cool burns', could help to restore our nation. The author, Victor, is an Indigenous land management expert and his story is unassuming and honest, written in a way that reflects the nature of yarning. Developed over many generations, the knowledge in this book clearly shows that Australia actually needs fire for land-care and healing. (PB, 240 pp., Feb 2020) RRP \$29.99, Member \$24



Community-Based Control of Invasive Species (Martin, Alter, Hine & Howard) is based on five years of research by leading scholars in natural resource and human behavioural sciences, which involved government and citizen groups in Australia and the United States. It examines questions including "how can citizens be engaged in voluntarily invasive species?", "what communication strategies will ensure good motivation and coordination?" and "how can governing bodies support citizens in their efforts?". Sometimes in order for control measures to be effective, private citizens often need to make sustained and sometimes burdensome commitments. (HB, 288 pp., 2019) RRP \$99.99, Member \$80

Victoria's Spider Orchids (R. Kuiter) features over 50 species of spider-orchids found in Victoria. Each species is lavishly illustrated with multiple full colour photographs, along with information on where and when to find them. (PB, 266 pp., 2nd ed. 2017) RRP \$70, Member \$56



Bird Bonds (G. Kaplan) uncovers the motivations and attractions some birds have when choosing a partner that are far more complex than was once believed. Some Australian native birds become childhood sweethearts and court for years before they get 'married'. Others divorce because of personality clashes and different skill levels. Many negotiate their parenting duties. But how do these personal life events link to long-lasting bonds, long life-spans and exceptional overall intelligence?

(PB, 368 pp., 2019) RRP \$34.99, Member \$28

Orchid Pollinators of Victoria 2 (R. Kuiter) is a companion volume to *Orchid Pollinators of Victoria* and focuses in more detail on the nectar-rewarding orchids, such as the Leek Orchids and their Allies. Initial observations indicated different aspects to orchid-insect relationships and it was considered this deserved more attention. Orchids that have food rewards attract a greater variety of visitors, but these include non-pollinating or pollinia-robbing insects. To compensate for losses a large number of flowers are needed on the same plant, but these are often cross-pollinated and geitonogamy is common. (PB, 84 pp., 2017) RRP \$35, Member \$28



Can a members' photo page (or pages) be an ongoing feature of future FNNs?

I hope so, but it will be up to you. Please caption photos where you can with the scientific name and/or common name. If possible, resize large images. Maybe mention where the image was taken.

Single photos welcome. joan.broadberry@gmail.com



The Purple Swamphen (left) and Crested Pigeon (below) were photographed in Westgate Park, the Silver Gulls at Sullivan's Cove, Port Phillip Bay and the Sulphur Crested Cockatoo, shown eating fruit from a garden Plane Tree, in Templestowe.

All images taken by J. Broadberry in Autumn 2020.

