



Understanding
Our Natural World
Est. 1880

Field Nats News No 316



Newsletter of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc.

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March 2021

From the President

Welcome to
the second

FNN for 2021. An especially warm welcome to Troy Williams who has joined the FNCV Council as a representative for the Terrestrial Invertebrates Group (TIG).

We have managed to have excursions for both the Marine Research Group (MRG) and the TIG this year. More are scheduled, so keep checking the calendar. The modifications to the toilets in the hall are planned for February 10, so the hall and facilities will be unavailable for up to three days from then. The upgrade will include hand dryers, hot water and touch-free taps.

Photographing large numbers of huntsmen spiders over many years has shown me that large numbers of them lose legs throughout their lives. I have seen huntsmen with half their legs missing and they seem to regenerate them by their next moult. (Photos 1 and 2). It may be very difficult for them if they lose them all on one side. I have occasionally found them in such condition, hidden under bark perhaps waiting until they grow some new ones. I can't imagine how they managed to get under cover unless the attack happened there.

How they lose them is of interest to me. Some may be due to encounters with other predators, both invertebrate and vertebrate. Wasps are known to remove the legs from larger spiders to facilitate their transport and storage as living hosts for their young. Some loss may be related to mating since I have seen more males than females with missing legs. Another, perhaps more interesting possibility is the shedding of limbs, autotomy, when attacked by a reduviid bug, wasp or bee. This phenomenon has been observed with orb weaving spiders (*Argiope spp*) when their prey fight back and attack them. If a reduviid bug injects a leg, the spider may autotomize it and probably saves its own life by doing so. It is possible that some of the huntsmen I observe may have a similar strategy, perhaps in response to a predatory wasp sting or similar attack. Of course, a sting on the body will not be improved by losing legs. Whenever I have actually witnessed wasps attacking huntsmen, the protagonists often rapidly disappear into the undergrowth without trace so I have been unable to follow up on the outcomes. I have observed groups of European wasps attack spiders and remove their legs but they generally butcher the entire spider and carry it away in pieces. Our spiders seem to experience a great deal of predation.

On January 14th a black pompilid wasp buzzed across my lawn carrying a male huntsman spider which was clearly paralysed, legs dragging, as its nemesis struggled across the garden in a straight line towards its burrow. For some reason the wasp gave up and dropped the much larger spider and never returned for it (Photos 3 & 4). (Cont. p3)

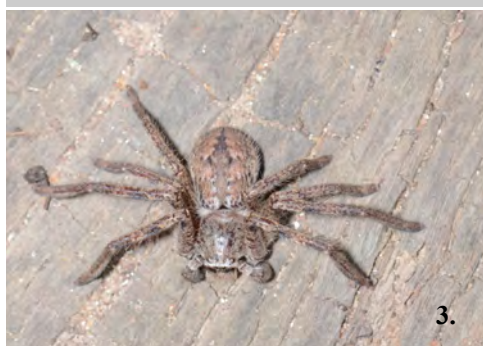
The due date for FNN 317 will be, as always, the first Tuesday of the month, **March 2nd**. Use my personal email joan.broadberry@gmail.com - see from the editor p14.



A 7-legged huntsman, 2nd right leg missing.



Huntsman with newly regenerated left, 4th leg



Huntsman abandoned by the wasp.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS



The calendar has been prepared on the tentative assumption that, in March, meetings will return to being held at the FNCV Hall, 1 Gardenia St. Blackburn at 8 pm. As the Covid 19 situation is fluid, this may change at any time. Activities may be cancelled or meetings switched to Zoom. There is also the issue of a numbers cap of 30 in the hall. You are therefore asked to register for *both* meetings and excursions as soon as you can, preferably supplying a phone number and email, so that you can be reached at short notice. As a courtesy please let the SIG contact know if your plans alter.

Members are reminded that at meetings, masks must be worn, hands sanitised, physical distancing adhered to and that you will be required to sign in with the Victorian Government online app (logo above). It is actually simple. Just bring your phone; download the app if you can; assistance will be available and you can be registered, if need be, on another phone. It will help if everyone can arrive 10-15 minutes early.

Keep in mind that as always, on days of extreme weather conditions, excursions may be cancelled at short notice.

More details on Covid-safe procedures will be emailed to a members early next week.

March 2021

Monday 1st – Fungi Group No meeting: Unfortunately the speaker had to cancel the scheduled talk.

Contact: Carol Page 0438 446 973; cpage356@gmail.com

Tuesday 2nd - Fauna Survey Group Meeting: *Modelling the distribution of the threatened Howard Springs Toadlet Uperoleia daviesae in the Northern Territory.* Speaker: Matt Clancy, Honours graduate, University of Melbourne. Contact: David De Angelis 0409 519 829; d.deangelis@latrobe.edu.au **Please register at least three days prior.**

Fri 5th to Mon 8th - Marine Research Group Field Work: *Apollo Bay area.* **Bookings at least one week in advance essential.** Exact locations decided while on site. Contact: Leon Altoff 9530 4180AH; 0438 669773

Friday 5th to Monday 8th - Fauna Survey Group Survey: *Labour Day weekend camp: Bael Bael Grasslands NCR.* **Bookings at least one week in advance essential.** Contact: Andrej Hohmann 0410 934 779; andrej_hohmann@yahoo.com.au

Sunday 7th - Terrestrial Invertebrates Group Excursion: *Lerderderg State Park* Meet 10 am at O'Briens Crossing, O'Briens Rd. We can walk along the mostly dry Lerderderg River and surrounding tracks. <https://www.google.com/maps?q=-37.4959,144.3610> **Bookings at least one week in advance essential.** Contact: Reiner Richter fncv@rnr.id.au

Monday 8th - Marine Research Group No Meeting: *Labour Day*

Sunday 14th – Juniors' Group Excursion: *Mt Rothwell Biodiversity Interpretation Centre* Leaders: Centre staff. Evening meeting. Fee to be confirmed but partly subsidised by Landcare grant. **Bookings a least one week in advance essential.** Contact: Dr Patricia Amaya juniors@fncv.org.au

Wednesday 17th – Terrestrial Invertebrates Group Meeting: TBA. Contact: Max Campbell 0409 143 538; 9544 0181; mcam7307@bigpond.net.au **Please register at least three days prior.**

Thursday 18th – Botany Group Meeting: *Forests and woodlands of the west (Victoria) and the threats to them.* Speaker: Jordan Crook. Contact: Ken Griffiths botany@fncv.org.au **Please register at least three days prior.**

Sunday 21st – Terrestrial Invertebrates Group Excursion: *Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne* Meet at 10 am. main carpark, Mel 133 F10. <https://www.google.com/maps?q=38.1296,145.2682> Hopefully there will be insects on the flowers in the watered garden. **Bookings at least one week in advance essential.** Contact: Reiner Richter fncv@rnr.id.au

Monday 22nd - FNCV Council Meeting: 7.30 pm. Apologies and agenda items to Wendy Gare admin@fncv.org.au

Tuesday 23rd – Day Group Meeting: 10.30 am. *Australian Wildlife Conservancy:* the largest private owner and manager of land for conservation in Australia, protecting endangered wildlife across 6.5 million hectares in iconic regions such as the Kimberley and Cape York. Speaker: Bianca Friend, AWC. **Please register at least three days prior.** Contact: Joan Broadberry 9846 1218; joan.broadberry@gmail.com

Wednesday 24th – Geology Group Meeting: *New information on the first Pleistocene megafauna from the Buchan-Murrindal karst including the well preserved fossils of Palorchestes and Thylacoleo.* Speaker: Dr Tim Ziegler, Collection Manager, Vertebrate Palaeontology, Melbourne Museum. **Please register at least three days prior.** Contact: Ruth Hoskin 9878 5911; 0425 729 424; rthoskin@gmail.com

Friday 26th – Juniors' Group Meeting: 7.30 pm. *Camping Gear.* Speaker: Max Campbell, FNCV President. Contact: Dr Patricia Amaya juniors@fncv.org.au **Please register at least three days prior.**

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 per excursion and \$2 per meeting.

(Continued from page 1)

I eventually collected it before the ants took it and have kept it for over two weeks now. In the beginning the unfortunate animal was completely limp and did not respond to touch or being moved. The wasp delivers its venom with speed and pinpoint accuracy to great effect. It would be interesting to determine if they adjust the injected dose to body weight of the prey. A smaller spider might die rendering it useless as food if the dose is too high. On the other hand, insufficient venom might make a larger spider more dangerous to subdue.

The narcotised spider is the most cooperative macro-photographic subject I have ever had, with just a tremble in one palp every now and then. (Photo 5) Normally, by this stage, the spider would have been in a tunnel with a wasp larva slowly consuming it alive. I have been observing it several times a day and gently moving its legs with a soft paint brush in addition to placing water on its mouthparts. Over the period of a fortnight, it has started moving its legs and palps and more or less attempting to stand on its legs. It exhibits some

startle responses when touched. (Photo 6) There is also increasing reaction to visual stimuli.

The venom itself is clearly not necessarily fatal and if the spider is isolated and protected it may perhaps survive the envenomation. It has not dehydrated and is more responsive each day. It appeared to take in the water, so the next step was to apply insect protein solution to its mouthparts. Crushed silverfish elicited some response. Diluted honey also seemed to be acceptable. The abdomen has reduced slightly and it will be interesting to see if it regains sufficient neurological function to be able hunt or take live food before it starves to death. Its chances seem good for now.



Day 15, standing up with limited defensive response to touch and displaying a marked startle response..



Aedes notoscriptus, the attractive lyre markings clearly visible.

Our current rainy, almost tropical weather is favouring mosquitoes, notably *Aedes notoscriptus*, the Common Garden Mosquito (Photos 7 & 8) which, at the moment, is ruining the evening tranquillity of my garden, and many others. Their bite is very painful and, in my case, the reaction lasts for hours. Not a single skin exposure escapes their avid attention. They are believed to be vectors of dog heartworm, (*Dirofilaria immitis*), Ross River virus, Barmah Forest virus and other arboviruses. The species occurs Australia-wide and seems to be active throughout the day and night with an increased presence in the late afternoon and dusk. They can make macro photography a very difficult activity. On this occasion they became one of my subjects before I was forced to beat a hasty retreat indoors.

Unfortunately, mosquitoes will always be an issue for naturalists since we tend to find their habitat to be of great interest. However, we need to remain mindful of the risks and take every possible precaution.

Maxwell Campbell (All images: M. Campbell)



Day 1. A completely limp and narcotised spider



Easy macro photography. Book lungs and epigastric furrow.



Another female *Aedes notoscriptus*, lateral view.

Members' news, photos & observations

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

Welcome
Welcome

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

Barbara Darvall, Alisson Bolden, Greg Wood, Melanie Simpson, Kate Henderson, Philippe Asselin, Lydia Hsiang Low, Hal Hopkins, Gemma Vetere, Jorg Metz, Loris Cassar, Rachel Oliver, Deb Colville, William Muhlhauser, Felicity Williams, Tom Williams, Maggie Williams, Haruto Williams and Mary Williams.

Photo: Carol Page



Vale Edmund John Grey 29th October 1930 — 4th January 2021

We were saddened to hear of the passing of highly respected FNCV member Ed Grey, who died on 4th January 2021, aged 90 years. From the beginning of his membership, Ed was an active and committed member of the Club. He joined on 13th August 1990, and in the following May was elected FNCV Secretary.

It was during his time as Secretary that the FNCV was forced to find a new home, and it was Ed who discovered the hall in Gardenia Street, Blackburn, in January 1995. He was a part of the sub-committee that negotiated a successful purchase.

Through most of the three years he served as FNCV secretary, Ed (along with Pat) was also an assistant editor of *The Victorian Naturalist*. They began this task together in August 1991 and continued until May 1995, at which time they took full responsibility for the production of the journal, as joint editors. Their stewardship of the journal continued until December 1998.

In addition to editing the journal, Ed was also a regular contributor of articles and notes. Over a period of 20 years—from February 1998 until February 2018—Ed published 13 papers in *The Victorian Naturalist*. The subjects addressed in these papers are a good indication of his wide-ranging interests in the natural world. Eight focused on invertebrate species, four were about fungi and

there was one relating to a plant species.

Ed was also a regular contributor to *Field Nats News*. Between November 1991 and September 2009, he submitted more than 20 pieces, on a variety of subjects.

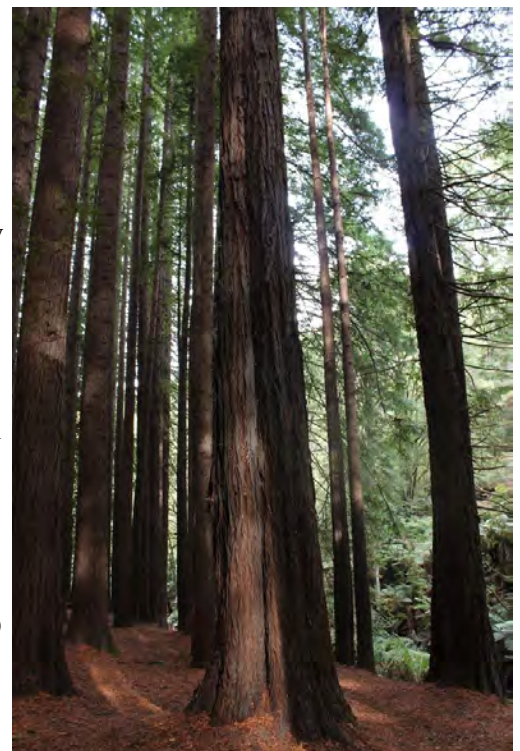
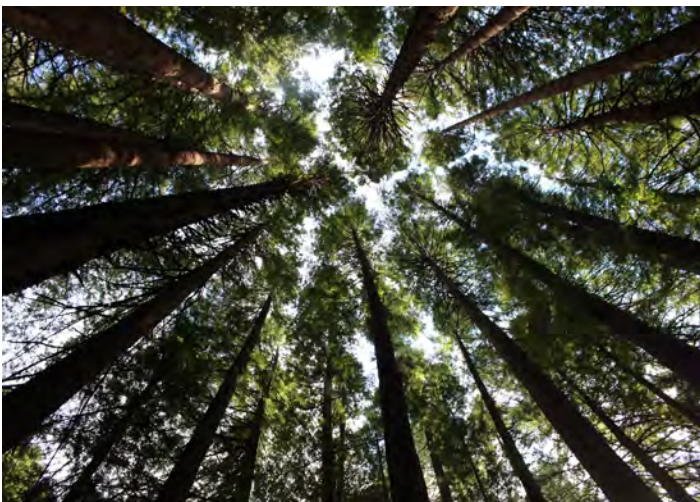
Our deepest condolences are extended to Ed's family.

Californian Redwoods *Sequoia sempervirens*

There is a 0.5 hectare patch of Coast (or Californian) Redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) adjacent to the Aire River in the middle of the Otway Ranges, SW Victoria. These trees were planted in 1936 on an alluvial flat of the Aire River, upstream from the Hopetoun Falls. The land had been partially cleared for farmland but had reverted back to scrub after settlers abandoned their farm. Subsequently the Forests Commission of Victoria planted the area with Redwood seedlings, that would have been grown from seed in the Commission's Macedon tree nursery. Because of the good, deep soil and good water availability, the trees here have grown exceptionally well.

Retired Forester Roger Smith has written a book titled *The Redwoods of the Otway Ranges*, published by Lothian in 2015. The book records that as at 2004, after 68 years, the dominant tree height was 60 m with a diameter (measured at 1.3 m above ground level and over bark) of 106 cm. The largest diameter tree was 185 cm (not including edge trees). The diameter growth, averaged over the 68 years, was an amazing 2.3 cm per year.

Although they are not native to Australia, the Redwoods are now included in the Great Otway National Park and listed for their cultural and historic features. The Redwoods are a very popular destination for tourists. With no understorey and a soft layer of shed leaves, a stroll in the cathedral-like stand of Redwoods is a great experience. They are reached by travelling along Aire Valley Rd if you are approaching from the North or Binns Rd if from the South (via the Great Ocean Rd).



Peter Fagg
(Images: P. Fagg)

A further record of the Striped Legless Lizard, *Delma impar*

In July 2019, I was planting some Lightwood (*Acacia implexa*) in a rocky paddock of my property near Redesdale, central Victoria. In the bottom of one planting hole I noticed a small, attractively marked legless lizard. (Photo right) It looked like a Striped Legless Lizard. However, I am not an herpetologist so I sent the photo to noted expert, Peter Robertson. He confirmed the identification. It is (or 'was') *Delma impar*.

The western half of my property is on a Tertiary basalt flow, with the associated abundant surface rocks and fine-grained, fertile clay loams. But this site was not the typical native grassland that is usually described as the species' habitat. Canary Grass (*Phalaris aquatica*) over-dominated the site, to the exclusion of most other species, native and introduced.



Phalaris is a perennial tussock grass of high bulk and thus provides useful cover for the Striped Legless Lizard, which may also use the exposed rocks as either basking sites or sites to acquire warmth on cooler days.

Their habitat is usually described as "lowland native tussock grassland with good cover" (see FFG Action Statement no. 17). Nevertheless, there are occasional records of Striped Legless Lizards from introduced grasslands elsewhere, e.g. the 2016 *ecology and heritage* assessment of the Stockyard Hill Windfarm site near Ballarat. My report from Redesdale was in a thoroughly anthropogenic *Phalaris*-dominated rocky grassland (never cleared for cropping), alienated and grazed by stock since the 1840s. The FFG Action Statement dates back to 2003. A revision is probably due.

The Striped Legless Lizard is listed as 'Vulnerable' nationally and 'endangered' in Victoria. More information can be found in *Frogs and Reptiles of the Bendigo District* by Darren Green and Dale Gibbons (Published by the Bendigo Field Naturalists).

David Cheal

Images 2-4
Delma impar habitat, Redesdale.

(Images: D. Cheal)



Surveying Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve using iNaturalist

Sue wrote, 'I have been coordinating some field surveys of the flora, fauna and fungi species in Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve recently. I've been using iNaturalist with the aim of creating a visual record of species within the Reserve, as apposed to a written list. This is fabulous, but so much more rewarding is the real magic of using iNaturalist—watching people who would never have thought they can contribute to an activity like this, getting actively involved.'

I thought FNN may like to publish a photo or two of just a few things that we all found fabulous to see. One of the great joys of being in the Australian bush is being able to share the 'discoveries' with others! Thank you for what you do to share those experiences.'

Sue Tardif, FoHH Volunteer Program
(All images: S. Tardif)



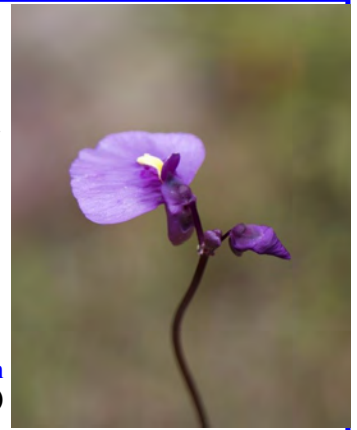
Sacred Kingfisher
Todiramphus sanctus



Left:
Elbow Orchid
Thynninorchis
huntiana



Devil's-fingers *Clathrus archeri*



Fairies' Apron
Utricularia dichotoma



Pale Grass Lily *Caesia parviflora*

A full set of Tongue-orchids

On a trip to East Gippsland I had the lovely experience of being able to photograph all four species of Tongue-orchids found in Victoria on one day, the 3rd of January 2021. The Bonnet and Leafless Tongue-orchid are considered endangered.

1. *Cryptostylis erecta* Bonnet Orchid
2. *Cryptostylis hunteriana* Leafless Tongue-orchid
3. *Cryptostylis subulata* Large Tongue-orchid
4. *Cryptostylis leptochila* Small Tongue-orchid

Joan Broadberry (all photos J Broadberry)

3.



1.



2.



4.



Marbled Bird-dropping Spider *Celaenia calotoides*

These are photos of a very interesting spider which has been in my back garden for the past three or four weeks. It is a female Marbled Bird-dropping spider (*Celaenia calotoides*) minding a string of egg sacs.

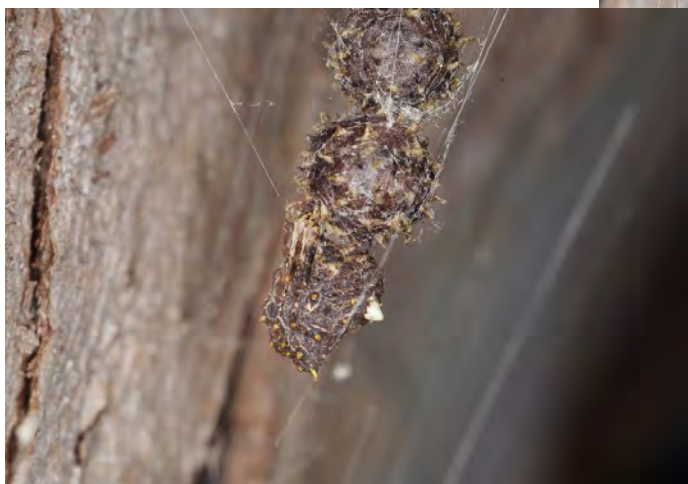
I have seen the plain white and black-brown species of Bird-dropping Spiders, but I have never before observed the Marbled Bird-dropping Spider.

The spider is around 8mm in size; her round egg sacs being about 8mm in diameter.

In the first photo you can just see the spider's tiny head on the left hand side in between her two lower legs, with a tiny pointed head and eyes

I have been waiting weeks to get photos of the spiderlings hatching—still waiting!

Geoff Boyes (Images: G. Boyes)



Thanks to the editorial and layout team who put together FNN 316

Joan Broadberry
Wendy Gare
Sally Bewsher

The views and opinions expressed in any material including websites and newsletters are not necessarily those of FNCV Inc.

Phillip Island in January

Like most people who frequent Phillip Island, I find it a Naturalist's paradise. The bird list slowly grew on a recent holiday down there with the family. We travelled to all the places where birds are likely to be in numbers, i.e. the circuit drive around from the Penguin Parade area, going in a loop around the coast, stopping at all the small bird-viewing ramps on the way. Swan Lake is always worth a visit. The bush birds on the walk into the lake area increased the list to twenty four birds. Oswin Roberts Reserve, a lovely walk and Shearwater Estate are a must for any bird watcher. A long board-walk surrounds the lakes and if visited in the early morning, can be very rewarding. We are always surprised at how quiet it is in spite of the housing estate close by. Red Rocks and the nearby Ventnor Beach are both worth visiting with the possibility of seeing Hooded Dotterels. At Swan Lake we saw the Musk Duck elevating its fan-shaped tail feathers and slapping the water, perhaps practising for the breeding season; the throat pouch on the male bird clearly visible. Two Wedge-tailed Eagles flew over the walkway setting many of the birds into a frenzied flight.



Eriophora biapicata Photo: C. Falkingham

The highlight of my day was two beautifully-patterned spiders! The first one was *Gastercantha minax* (the Spiny Spider) often found in coastal areas and woodlands. They can vary in colouration depending on the area that they are found. The other was the very common Garden Orb-weaving Spider (*Eriophora biapicata*) pictured. The pattern on the upper surface of the abdomen is like a beautiful Aboriginal painting making it well camouflaged in the foliage. Male and female are similar.

Any bird watching excursions can yield interesting insects, spiders, reptiles etc and a two hour walk can easily extend into four hours or more! My family no longer take me seriously when I say I will be back in two hours!

Cecily Falkingham

Ant Lions

For years, ant lion pits have been a feature of my garden in Baulkham Hills, a north-western suburb of Sydney. Their main development is in several areas of dry, dusty soil in gardens next to the foundation wall of the house.

They usually begin to appear in late winter or early spring and they particularly like the long, thin garden between a concrete path and the wall. It faces north-west and is 5.1 metres long and 40 cm wide and in September 2019, I counted over 100 pits in it. I call it 'the ant lion capital of the World', but perhaps much bigger 'cities' have been observed.

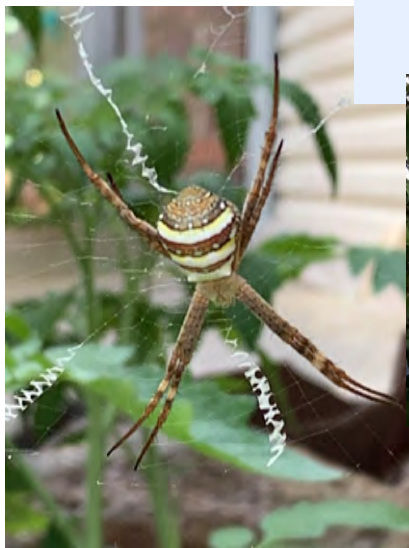
John Walker (Images: J. Walker)



Ant lion pits,
September 2019.
Scale in mms.



Local sightings



Photographed in a Doncaster garden

- Gorgeous St. Andrew's Cross Spider
- Plum-pine that has fruited for the first time in the past year.

Liz Haylock



White-browed Scrub-wren

One of the commonest small birds of riverside undergrowth is a White-browed Scrub-wren. It may have had a young family nearby, as it was loudly scolding intruders and possible predators. The camera was unable to stop the motion in its lower bill. As it is usually seen feeding on the ground, one doesn't always get such a good view of its white eyebrow, malar stripe and its white eye.

Photographed at Wilson Reserve Ivanhoe.

Anthea Fleming



bookshop@fncv.org.au

for any orders or bookshop queries.

If you don't have access to email, the FNCV office will pass on your message. Kathy will then be in contact with you.

FIELD NATS NEWS 2020 INDEX Issues 304—314

Many thanks once again to Pat Grey for compiling the index. This will be sent as an attachment to the digital version of FNN 316.

Those who receive a printed copy will need to contact the FNCV office and request that a hard copy of the index be mailed to them.

Phascogales make a return to the wild

In October of this year, I was handed seven orphaned Brush-tailed Phascogales. Based on the development of teeth, the young were about 16 weeks of age and still weaning. Previous researchers have noted the high rates of abandoned young by mother phascogales which leave the nest due to the high demands from feeding so many young.

It took a bit of experimentation to encourage these young animals to get into a feeding routine. At this age, they were also very sensitive to hot and cold temperatures. I provided them with a hot water bottle every night to keep them warm. I unfortunately lost one on a very hot day in November. The remaining six phascogales grew very quickly from their original 30grams of body weight to about 130grams by mid-December.



© William Terry

At six weeks of age, these orphans were still dependent on formula. They weighed on average 29-31 grams.



The Phascogales lived in my kitchen and became very excited at feeding time. Sometimes they just couldn't wait to come out of their nest-box.

After they were weaned, I fed them on a mixture of vegetables (corn, peas, boiled egg, carrot) and mince. All meat was frozen for a minimum of one month to avoid accidental poisoning from toxoplasmosis.

Housed in my kitchen, my family would go to sleep to the chattering of phascogales. My animals will tap their front feet when excited or to ask me for more food. They shake their tails when excited and make a variety of social sounds.

All animals were released on Boxing Day 2020. Prior to release, five phascogales had radio collars attached to track their post-release survival and nesting sites. Supplementary food (corn and dry cat food) was provided for the first week. I also checked on the animals regularly



© William Terry

Once weaned, they were fed on a varied diet including corn, peas, boiled egg, mince and live insects.

with a camera trap placed over the entrance of the nest box from which they were released.

On the first night of release, the animals quickly scampered up the host tree and immediately began searching for food under the bark. This demonstrated their skills of finding food were instinct-based and not taught or learnt through observation. Radio tracking showed that all animals survived the first week and that two animals moved 1.94km during this period. A few phascogales removed their collars in early January. At the time of writing (five weeks after release), there are still two hand-reared animals that I am radio tracking with consistent signals.

Living with the phascogales gave me a new perspective to them and I have learnt much more than I could have done through observations or research of wild animals. For more information, check out my website and feel free to drop me an email: www.thephascogaleproject.com

Radio tracking was undertaken under a DELWP approved scientific research permit(10009481) with animal ethics approval from Southern Cross University.

William Terry (Images: W. Terry)



© William Terry

Right: The hand-reared animals had radio collars attached to track their movements.

A very exciting request from the BBC

One of our members, Ruth Ault, has learned through her birding network that Niall Stopford, researcher for the BBC Natural History Unit team, is requesting advice on possible Tawny Frogmouth nest filming sites in Melbourne's private backyards and parks. Nest sites are needed this year for filming a segment on suburban frogmouths which will feature in the next BBC wildlife documentary series, Planet Earth III in 2022. Keep in mind that Tawny Frogmouth breeding pairs will often return to the same nest tree branch site to build their next nest. Niall's request has been around the birding world for over a year. However, Ruth has been in recent contact with him and has forwarded a quote from an email received on Jan 22nd. *"The more the merrier seeing as frogmouth nests have quite a broad range in development across the season, so we hope to have a few candidates to increase our odds of fledging chick in our filming window (Oct-Nov 2021)."*

There is also a general request for background information regarding environmental factors and predators of Tawny Frogmouths which would help the BBC obtain a better 'big picture' of their subject. Ruth has already responded, pointing out amongst other things, that local populations of Pied Currawongs and Little Ravens have significantly increased in recent years. Pied Currawongs changed from being seasonal non-nesting Whitehorse visitors to nesting residents. Max Campbell pinpointed it as being after the major Victorian bushfires in 2009. Niall's reply included the following: *"This is really fascinating, I didn't realise the bush fires are having such a significant knock-on effect to the life within less affected areas, Originally we were going to focus on introduced predators as being the novel problem for urban frogmouths, but this is great to know and to look out for. Do you have any papers or articles about this change to nesting residents? Also, how often do you observe frogmouth nests being hassled by miner/ currawongs/ ravens?"*

If you are interested in becoming involved, Niall Stopford niall.stopford@bbc.co.uk is happy for you to contact him directly. Before doing so it would be advisable to ask the FNCV office for further information as the above is only a brief summary of a much longer series of emails.

Ruth has provided a wealth of information on Tawny Frogmouths including a tabulated pdf entitled *Tawny Frogmouth Habitat Requirements*. It is unfortunately not suitable for direct inclusion in FNN, but is of such significance to the understanding and conservation of these much loved birds that it is being sent as an attachment. She has also shared a beautiful local image and provided details of a video she has made. Gisela Kaplan's book, *Tawny Frogmouth* can be obtained from the FNCV bookshop.

Joan Broadberry(with many thanks to Ruth)



The photo is a relatively unusual one of a family group of five Tawny Frogmouths. The row includes the current breeding pair, this season's offspring—two fledglings and last season's offspring, a single bird. My tawny-watching, daily-observer friends at Gardiners Creek Reserve in Burwood alerted me to the line up on 6th January and luckily they were still lined up when I got there with my camera.

I have recently added my short amateur video on local nesting to my You Tube channel <https://youtube.com/CEWIFghQVGO>

Ruth Ault



Terrestrial Invertebrates Group

Warburton 10th January 2021

With a change of scenery under the current situation, the TIG trip was moved out of the Warburton township to avoid large crowds. We met at Big Pat's Creek in the morning and looked for little beasts in this damp forest along the track lined with forest wire-grass *Tetrarrhena juncea* shaded by rough tree-fern *Cyathea australis* and several species of *Eucalyptus*.

Found among vegetation during summer, especially where it is not too dry, you'll find spider webs (often with your face first) and their makers. We found quite a few Enamelled Spider *Plebs bradleyi*, one of my favourites, even though they are quite common in the hills near Melbourne. The mottling on their backs is variable, depending on habitat, and this green and brown form is the most common around here (although you can occasionally see ones with all yellow or green backs).

Also fairly common, but less noticeable, is the Leaf-curling Spider *Phonognatha graeffei*. Normally hidden in a curled up leaf during the day these are quite attractive spiders with their yellow and brown zig-zag patterns. The one shown here only had a small, young leaf to work with and couldn't make a concealing home with it.

On some flat leaves we found small, green leafhoppers (family Cicadellidae) of the *Ishidaella* genus. Leafhoppers are true bugs that suck sap as adults, like this one, or as larva. Some species can display amazing colors and patterns.

The sharp eyes of Isaac, our youngest participant, spotted a tiny red-eyed fly with a maze-like pattern all over its body. The details on some of these tiny creatures can't really be appreciated by the naked eye. We haven't been able to identify this fly better than being in the Lauxaniidae family. Here it is posing beside the fluffy nymph of a Passionvine Hopper *Scolypopa australis* (another true bug and plant sucker).

In the afternoon we visited Little Peninsula Picnic Ground beside the clear waters of the upper Yarra River. Again we were accompanied by biting March flies (family Tabanidae). Like related mosquitoes, the females flies need to digest blood to be able to grow their eggs so it's a necessary part of their life cycle (they don't just do it to annoy us). Some of these flies can be quite attractive too, if you have the mettle to observe them.

There was also some Sweet Bursaria in flower that contained feeding insects but it was quite warm out in the sun so we didn't study these for too long.

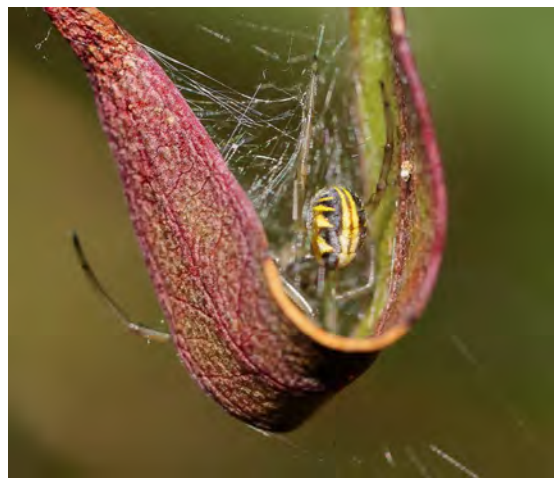
For photos of what was seen here, and more on the rest of the day, view our iNaturalist project page:

Reiner Richter
Images: R. Richter

<https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/projects/fncv-2021-warburton>



Plebs bradleyi Enamelled Spider



Phonognatha graeffei Leaf Curling Spider



Ishidaella sp. Leaf Hopper



Left:
Scaptia sp.
(March Fly)

Right:
Scolypopa australis,
(fluffy nymph of a
Passionvine Hopper)
with *Lauxaniidae*
(fly)



My highlights from the TIG Trip to Warburton 10th January 2021

Wendy Clark

It was great to be back in the bush on a TIG trip looking for invertebrates and other interesting creatures. Catching up with friends again was an added bonus. Below are some highlights of the creatures I photographed.

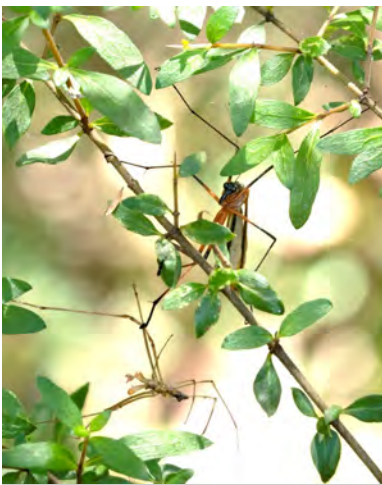
1. Scorpion Fly, eating a Spider

The Scorpion Fly I found amazing. I had read about them and seen the odd one sitting calmly, but to see one in action was awesome. I often thought they were easy to confuse with a Crane Fly as they both have long legs, but now I have had a good look at this, there is no problem identifying it.

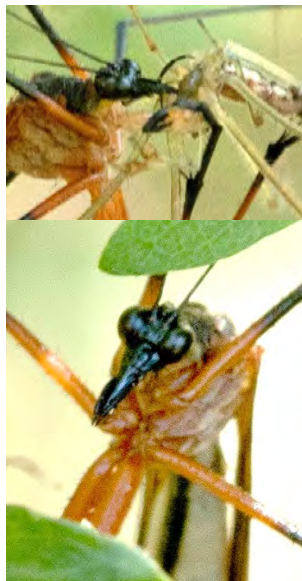
The hooked feet for holding its prey were unmistakable and wonderful to observe. Its keen eyes, and sharp pointed mouth parts, marked this insect as a strong predator. In these pictures you can see it holding and eating a Long-jawed Spider in the Tetragnathidae family.



Scorpion Fly holding spider, showing its hooked feet.



Scorpion Fly holding a Long-jawed Spider.



Scorpion Fly showing large eyes and sharp, sucking mouthpart.



Crane Fly. Note no hooked feet, no sharp beak, less robust legs and thorax.

2. Fungus that eats wasps

The next amazing creature that caught my attention was a brightly coloured wasp that had been infected by a fungus and was being slowly digested.



Continued p12

3. Olios Spider Camouflaged on lichen

Camouflage is also something that I find fascinating. This Badge Spider (it has a beautiful red and blue badge under its abdomen) is in the Genus *Olios*. It is a type of Huntsmen Spider and is distinguished by its more chunky, rounded appearance as well as its white eyebrows. It was sitting on a lichen-covered trunk in the shade and was quite well camouflaged. It never moved while we all photographed it.



All images: *W. Clark*

The FNCV Environment Fund

The FNCV Environment Fund was set up in 2003 to provide a means of funding small-scale environmental projects. It is an important initiative of the Club and has made a valuable contribution over 17 years by funding modest but significant projects which have contributed to preserving and enhancing the biodiversity of Victoria. It fills a niche in providing small amounts of money to individuals and local organisations, without the need for lengthy submissions, who might otherwise struggle to find funding.

To date more than \$50,000 has been raised through **tax-deductible** donations, and over 70 projects have been supported. Grants are from \$200 to \$1,000. Historically, about 40% of grants have been made to the Special Interest Groups of the FNCV, with the balance going to university students, local environmental groups, friends groups and other field naturalist clubs. Calls for grants are made once a year in March. The Fund is an excellent example of micro-financing.

A committee consisting of Malcolm Calder (Chair), Barbara Burns, (Secretary and Treasurer), Bob Rogers, John Harris, Ian Moodie and Cathy Willis administer the Fund.

Grants Approved in April 2020

Organisation	Expenditure and Purpose	Funded
Bendigo Field Naturalists Club	3 x Motic Red 30S Microscopes for use in workshops for members and the public	\$1,000
Friends of Grove Street Reserve, Eltham	Habitat Restoration of Grove St. Reserve- chainsaw hollows, nest boxes, planting indigenous plants	\$1,000
Wildlife of the Central Highlands	One Garmin GPSMAP 66i Unit. WOTCH surveys high value native forest allocated to logging. When threatened species are observed, video, GPS and photographic evidence is sent to DELWP to stop timber harvesting in that location. Note 1.	\$800
Friends of Sassafras Creek. * see details p13	4 x Bushnell Trophy Cam Trail cameras to help confirm and extend the sightings of animals and birds along Sassafras creek. Sightings will be entered into the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas.	\$900
Kinglake Friends of the Forest	One GPS unit to specifically ascertain numbers and locations for Greater Gliders around Kinglake. The aim is to preserve habitat for gliders by surveying ALL coupes prior to logging in the central highlands area. The sightings are forwarded to Vic Forests who are then required to factor this information into their logging plans. Note 1.	\$529
		<hr/> \$4,229

Note 1. The GPS app on a smart phone is not considered accurate enough by DELWP.

Friends of Sassafras Creek (FOSC) Grant from FNCV Environment Fund April 2020

Friends of Sassafras Creek was able to purchase four cameras in early 2020 through the FNCV Environment Fund. The cameras are being used to successfully survey local wildlife along this important corridor in the Dandenong Ranges. So far the cameras have been out for a total of 148 days and they have enabled the group to extend and confirm the presence of species at a number of different sites. These records include native birds and mammals, as well as introduced pests and predators. A total of 29 species has been recorded so far. A few screen shots from the cameras have been included below.

A more detailed report is being prepared for *The Victorian Naturalist*.

Sally Bewsher (on behalf of FOSC)



Above: Common Wombat, right: Superb Lyrebird and chick



Above: Fox, left: Black Wallaby

From the Editor

What a wonderful response FNN has received! For the past two weeks I have been busy at home working through a bulging inbox. It is not just the amount that has come in, but the amazing diversity of subjects that members have chosen to share with FNN. Max Campbell describes giving intensive care to a Huntsman Spider envenomated by a wasp, but alive. (Pages 1 & 3). He reports brushing its mouth parts, first with water then with crushed silverfish and diluted honey. This is something you won't read about very often! Max, you MUST let us know how the spider has fared. Sue Tardif, who has been coordinating a visual survey of Yellingbo NCR was one of the first to contribute. William Terry sent FNN a delightful account of raising seven orphaned Brush-tailed Phascogales in his kitchen; filling hot-water bottles and preparing their favourite foods, before releasing them successfully. Sue Bendel has provided FNN with the details of the City Nature Challenge coming up on the 30th April.

With an endangered species of Legless Lizard, Californian Redwoods, the 'Ant Lion capital of the world', an invitation to work with the BBC natural history unit via Ruth Ault and a wealth of superb images, FNN 316 has been an absolute pleasure to edit. Check out Reiner's stunning photo of a Leaf-curling Spider, usually hidden from view (p10), Wendy's masterful image of the Scorpion Fly's hooked feet (p11) and Ruth's fabulous photo of Tawny Frogmouths (p9). Thank you too Cecily, Geoff, Liz, Anthea and Sally for allowing us a glimpse into your lives. Please, everyone, support the FNCV environment fund if you can.

Once again, a huge thank you to all who have contributed to this bumper issue. To think that a short time ago I was worried that there might not be a March newsletter!

Joan Broadberry



FNCV Environment Fund: Call for Grant Applications, *Due Date: Monday 29th March 2021*

The FNCV Environment Fund has the following purposes:

- To support and finance environmental research, in particular research into the biodiversity of Victoria.
- To support and finance dissemination of information on the natural environment by any legitimate means, including public lectures, seminars, field trips, courses and publications.
- To support and finance practical projects aimed at preserving and enhancing the biodiversity of Victoria.

The FNCV Environment Fund is administered by a committee consisting of Malcolm Calder (Chair), Barbara Burns, (Secretary and Treasurer), Bob Rogers, John Harris, Ian Moodie and Cathy Willis.

The committee calls for applications for the next round of funding from the FNCV Environment Fund. Requests for projects between \$200 and \$1,000 will be considered.

Applications can be from organisations or individuals, but in the latter case must be supported by an organisation. Suitable organisations are established natural history or environmental organisations (Field Naturalist Clubs, Landcare Groups etc.), educational institutions or government departments. Multiple applications from one research group are not encouraged.

Applications for this round of funding close Monday 29th March 2021 at 4pm.

Late applications will not be accepted. All applications will be acknowledged and results of applications communicated by **Friday 16th April 2021.**

Grant money is required to be spent within 12 months of notification of receiving a grant with a short report on the project supplied to the FNCV within 12 months of the same date. The report can be published by FNCV and successful applicants are encouraged to also communicate the results of their project to the Club via articles, talks or field trips.

Additional information about the Environment Fund is available at www.fncv.org.au

Please include the following information in the application:

- Project title.
- Project description (max 250 words).
- How the project meets the aims of the Fund.
- Budget (include GST on all relevant items). Also indicate other sources of funding
- Indicate if the application is from an individual or organisation and give the name of the individual or organisation.
- Applicant name and contact details, including mailing address/phone/email.
- Signature of applicant.
- Endorsement of organisation (signature of responsible person such as President, Secretary, Manager, Head of Department, include name and position held).

Applications should be sent to:
**Secretary FNCV Environment Fund
Field Naturalists Club of Victoria
PO Box 13,
Blackburn Vic 3130
or emailed to admin@fncv.org.au**

Your support is much appreciated.

Donations to the FNCV Environment Fund are **tax deductible**.

Donation forms can be down-loaded from the website www.fncv.org.au or are available on request from the FNCV Office. Phone 9877 9860 or email admin@fncv.org.au

CITY NATURE CHALLENGE 2021, 30th April-3rd May

The City Nature Challenge is on again in 2021. This time around participation has doubled. A total of 540 cities from across the world are joining the event, with Australia's involvement growing to 24 cities. The nature observation period begins on Friday April 30 and runs until the end of Monday May 3. The review and identification period will continue to the end of Sunday May 9. The City Nature Challenge is organised by the Natural History Museum, Los Angeles and the California Academy of Science. This year seven local council areas have joined together to create the Melbourne Eastern Metropolitan Region project.

Is your local council involved?

The councils that have joined the competition are Manningham, Whitehorse, Boroondara, Maroondah, Stonnington, Monash and Knox. Observations must take place within the boundaries of these councils, but you do not have to be a resident to register.

Registering

Please register and join the 2021 Bioblitz <https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/projects/city-nature-challenge-2021-melbourne-eastern-metropolitan-area-024939d6-10c4-4662-a325-b18f092a9a0b>

There will be a friendly competition between the council areas, but all will join as one to take part in the global challenge.

Help requested please

- Any members or friends who have the capacity to run a field trip for members of the public (and our members) in one or more of these areas during the event from April 30 to May 3, 2021, please contact Sue on possum56@gmail.com to schedule the event. This will be a great opportunity to showcase our club.
- Anyone wishing to run a zoom session on using iNaturalist, photography or identification skills would be greatly appreciated.
- Anyone who can assist with identification until the end of Sunday May 9, 2021 your help will be greatly appreciated.

Training sessions

The local councils will be running a zoom training session for the use of iNaturalist in early March. The date and time with registration details will be provided to Wendy when available, and Wendy will kindly email this information to members.

BackyardBio

For those of you who are unable to participate in the City Nature Challenge due to restrictive dates or areas, there is a further opportunity to join a global bioblitz taking part on six continents for the entire month of May. This is the BackyardBio - a campaign designed to encourage the public, and especially children, to get out exploring nature near them - observing, documenting and sharing their finds with the world all May long (<https://www.backyardbio.net/>). More information to follow in March.

Protecting our wildlife

Unfortunately, our native fauna have been having a hard time in the last few years due to the extensive fires over the summer of 2019/20 and loss of habitat due to human activities. We can make life a little more comfortable for our wildlife by driving more slowly between dusk and dawn when most of our mammals are active, or preferably by rescheduling driving in rural areas to daylight where possible, to avoid collision with vehicles.

If an animal is found injured you can assist by taking it to a vet or calling a wildlife carer. A good starting point is Wildlife Victoria 8400 7300 wildlifevictoria.org.au

If you see a dead animal lying on the road, you can help, if safe to do so, by moving the animal off the road so that scavenging animals such as birds of prey are not also hit by vehicles.

In the case of marsupials please check if deceased animals are female, and if so please look to see if they have a joey in their pouch. It is important not to pull a joey from its mother's nipple as this can cause injury to the mouth parts requiring the joey to be euthanised. If you see deceased wildlife on the side of the road painted with a cross or other markings, this is a sign to show that you do not need to stop to check if a joey is present, as someone has previously done this.

Lastly for those hot dry days, please put out shallow bowls of clean, fresh water at various heights to allow our wildlife to have a drink and cool off. Please place a stick, or rock with gradually sloping sides in the bowls to facilitate smaller animals being able to exit the water.



Eastern-grey Kangaroo crossing a road.

Photo: Joan Broadberry

Enjoy watching your wildlife, Sue Bendel