



Understanding
Our Natural World
Est. 1880

Field Nats News No 326



Newsletter of The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria
Inc.

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February 2022

From the President

Welcome to the first newsletter for 2022. I hope you have all had a pleasant and safe break. As expected, COVID is still with us and creating considerable mayhem but we will do our best and continue to run our normal activities as safely as possible. It is likely that we will need to run some activities online, as dictated by current requirements and rules relating to the pandemic. To talk about one strain of a serious, disabling and potentially fatal disease as being less dangerous than another is pure nonsense; since it will do no one any good to get either. In any event the Delta strain is still present and a major threat to health. It is incumbent upon Council to protect the FNCV membership and adopt safest practice for our activities and it cannot presume to take unnecessary risks on behalf of a vulnerable member population. Notwithstanding Council's responsibility each of us has a duty to protect the safety and well-being of everyone.

For FNCV activities, double vaccination (plus proof thereof) and the wearing of masks indoors are mandatory. Seating will be arranged for effective physical distancing. We can only base our rules on best practice, not on what others may or may not be doing. What most people are doing is clearly not working and we currently have tens of thousands of new infections daily. We need to follow common sense not the herd, which seems to be heading for disastrous levels of infection.

My self-enforced isolation over the festive season has enabled me to spend even more time observing and photographing the diminishing population of invertebrates in my garden. Bright green *Siphanta acuta*, have been mating on the bottle brush leaves (Photo 1.) and the results are populating the stems on several plants (Photo 2.)

One afternoon, a gentle breeze started rustling the leaves and I noticed an unusual silence; a little brass wind chime was completely quiet. I suspected foul play and had a closer look.

(Continued on page 3)



Photo 2. *Siphanta acuta*, nymph

The due date for contributions to
FNN 327 will be Tuesday, 1st
February 2022.

Please use

joan.broadberry@gmail.com



Photo 1. *Siphanta acuta*, Flatidae, mating

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

All meetings are held at the FNCV Hall, 1 Gardenia St. Blackburn at 8 pm., unless otherwise indicated. On days of extreme weather conditions, or in order to comply with lawful restrictions excursions may be cancelled at short notice.

February 2022

CALENDAR SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Registration and proof of double vaccination are required for all events.

Tuesday 1st - Fauna Survey Group Meeting: *Artificial light at night masks the natural lunar cycle and disrupts foraging activity of the Bell Miner.* Speaker: Marty Lockett, PhD Candidate, School of Biosciences, University of Melbourne. Contact: Sally Bewsher 03 9752 1418

Monday 7th - Fungi Group: No Meeting

Monday 14th - Marine Research Group: No Meeting

Wednesday 16th - Microscopy Group Practical Meeting: *Compound, dissecting and digital microscopes set up for your use.* BYO specimens or view our slide collection with guidance and help with identification. Videos of live microscopic organisms. Contact: Philippa Burgess 0409 866 389

Thursday 17th – Botany Group Meeting: *The Gunbarrel Highway*
Speaker: Geoff Lay, FNCV member and Royal Botanical Gardens Victoria volunteer.
Contact: Ken Griffiths botany@fncv.org.au

Tuesday 22nd – Day Group 10.30 am
Meeting: *Travels to the Sub-Antarctic Islands of New Zealand and Macquarie Island.*
Speaker: Heather Ducat, Peninsula Field Nats Club. All welcome.
Contact: Joan Broadberry 9846 1218

Wednesday 23rd – Saturday 26th - Marine Research Group. Field Work based at Inverloch.
A selection of less visited locations including Cape Patterson; Shack Bay, The Bunurong; Eagle's Nest; Flat Rocks. Please register with Leon Altoff for more details.
9530 4180 AH; 0428 669 773

Wednesday 23rd – Geology Group Meeting: *The Woods Point earthquake of 22 Sept 2021.*
Speaker: James La Greca, Melbourne University M.Sc. student researcher.
Contact: Ken Griffiths geology@fncv.org.au

Friday 25th – Juniors' Group Meeting: 7.30 To be advised. Contact: Dr Patricia Amaya
juniors@fncv.org.au

Saturday 26th Juniors Group Excursion: Marine and Freshwater Discovery Centre, Queenscliff.
Explore the open pools with live sea creatures and go out on Port Phillip Bay in a boat and see some interesting creatures brought up from the bottom of the bay. **Numbers limited.** Registration essential.
Contact: Dr Patricia Amaya juniors@fncv.org.au

Monday 28th FNCV Council Meeting 8.00 pm Apologies and agenda items to
Wendy Gare admin@fncv.org.au



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)

All five brass tubes were occluded and damped by woody fibre (Photo 3). As I examined it, a small 12 mm wasp carrying an insect larva flew over my shoulder and entered one of the tubes (Photos 3-5). My camera was ready and I was able to get some reasonable photographs. It repeated the process several times in an hour and alternately carried insect larvae or balls of wood fibre into the tube.

Wasps that occupy tubes in this way are often referred to as keyhole wasps and their depredations inside the external sensors on aircraft have led to aircraft crashes. In particular, Pitot tubes which measure flow speed, do not function well when occluded by a wasp nest. A tiny insect can potentially bring down a large passenger aircraft.

There are a lot of potential wasp hotels parked in storage all over the world at the moment.



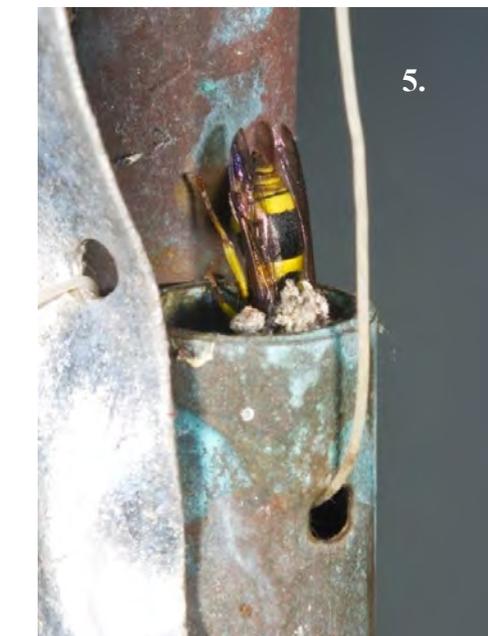
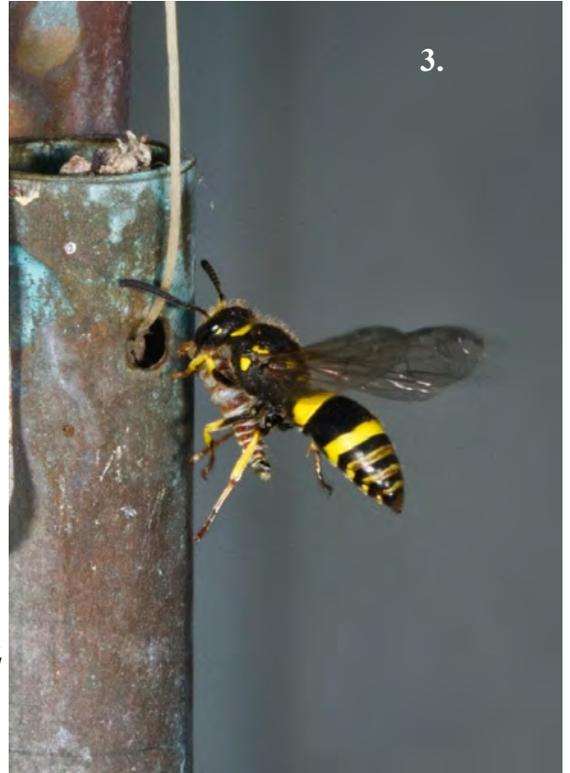
Photo 3
About to land

Photo 4
Touchdown

Photo 5.
Entering the tube

Photo 6.
Fully packed and nicely silenced.

Max Campbell
All photos, M. Campbell



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

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:

Robert Bresaz, Linden Bresaz, Christopher Lee, Matthew Wanford, Francesco Martoni, Alan Myers, Liz Denman, Pablo Cruz Granados, James Wallace and Olivia Brown.

Vale— Dr Jeannette Watson AM

It is with great sadness that we learned of the death of Jeanette (Jan) Watson who passed away in her 94th year on 6th November 2021.

Jan joined the FNCV in 1963. She worked closely with the Marine Research Group, both before and after it merged with the FNCV in 1997. Between 1973 and 2015 she contributed five articles to *The Victorian Naturalist* and ten to *Field Nats News*.

Jan was a pioneer in many fields. She worked as a metallurgical chemist in Ballarat after being the first female student to graduate from the Federation University SMB campus (formerly known as the School of Mines) in 1947.

In the early 1960s Jan taught herself to SCUBA dive and quickly developed a passion for the marine environment. She became one of the first marine biologists to use underwater photography to document her scientific interests, going on to become a world authority on the taxonomy and ecology of hydroids. In 1972 she formed a marine environmental consultancy, Marine Science and Ecology.

In 2020 Jan was recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours when she was made a member of the Order of Australia for her significant service to marine science ecology.

Our deepest condolences are extended to her family and friends.



SPECIAL THANKS TO PAT GREY FOR COMPILING THE 2021 FNN INDEX

Pat has once again done an outstanding job in providing a detailed and comprehensive index for FNN issues 315-25.

A huge, much deserved thank you Pat, for your continued dedication to this task and for the consistent hard work you put in on behalf of Field Nats News and the whole of the FNCV.

The index is being emailed with the February FNN, but if anyone would like a hard copy please contact Wendy at the FNCV office.

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.

Thanks to the editorial and layout team who put together FNN 326

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.



MEETING VIEW ZONE NON-MEETING ZONE



Terrestrial Invertebrates Group

Braeside Park 6th November 2021

The first TIG trip for Spring 2021 was on a warm sunny day and many people turned out anticipating seeing some interesting invertebrates. We started out by checking the wattles and gum trees at the southern end of the park and after lunch headed for the rapidly drying swampy areas. I have included some highlights that were found, but there were many other interesting invertebrates recorded. You can see these on iNaturalist at <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/fncv-2021-braeside-park>

We were thrilled to see an echidna walking around the swamp. It promptly dug itself in when we approached it. Many interesting varieties of flies were seen including the very large Robber Fly, several beetles, a Bluebottle Wasp that was swimming and another feeding on nectar, giving credence to its name as a flower wasp. The highlight for me was the Peacock Spider *Maratus plumosus*, which was jumping around the leaf litter as we were having lunch. The Swift Spider also gave us a run for our money as we tried to photograph it (it is very fast). I finally got some egg cases identified – they belong to the Two Tailed Spider *Tamopsis sp.* (right). For more information on this spider, see FNN page 10.



Egg cases of Two-tailed Spider *Tamopsis sp.*



Bluebottle Wasp, female *Diamma bicolor*



Bluebottle Wasp swimming



Odontomyia sp. fly



Genus *Parentia*, Green Long-legged Fly



Moth hiding in a log



Maratus plumosus, Peacock Spider



Nyssus coloripes, Swift Spider



Neoaratus Hercules
Robber Fly



Paropsisterna rufobrunnea
Leaf Beetle



Bibio Imitator Fly

Library News



Recent additions to the Library

The following monographs have been accessioned recently, and may now be borrowed. The three books that are marked with an asterisk (*) have been donated by Sue Bendel, in memory of the late Ed Grey. The Librarian thanks Sue for her generous donation.

Hall, IR; Stephenson, SL; Buchanan, PK; Wang Yun; Cole, ALJ (2003) *Edible and poisonous mushrooms of the world* [589.2 EDI]*

Petersen, Jens H (2012) *The Kingdom of fungi* [589.2 [PET]*

Robin, L; Dickman, C; Martin, M (2010) *Desert channels: the impulse to conserve* [333.73 DES]

Rowland, P; McNab, A; Harris, J (2021) *Wildlife of the Australian rainforests: a state by state guide* [508.94WIL]

Sheldrake, M (2021) *Entangled life: how fungi make our worlds, change our minds, and shape our future* [589.2 SHE]*

Wheelwright, HW (1861) *Bush wanderings of a naturalist* [RES 591.994 WHE]

Library collections now on the website

Don't forget that you can now search the library's collections on the FNCV website. Click 'About us' Library' and you will be able to download searchable lists of books, periodicals, maps and photos.

Dr Gary Presland
Honorary Librarian

Dipping into the FNN archives – what were we doing 31 years ago?

Program February 1991

(From FNN issue 2 p1)

February 1991 – Meetings held at National herbarium, Birdwood Ave. South Yarra.

Sunday 3rd General Excursion - Lancefield Marsupial Megafauna Fossils with Sanya Van Huet. Bus \$16* see note below

Tuesday 5th Fauna Survey Group meeting

Wednesday 6th Geology Group Members' night

Monday 11th General Meeting. *Spiders*, Wendy Clark

Thursday 14th Botany Group Meeting, *Parks, Plants and People* – Jane Calder

Wednesday 20th Microscopical Group Meeting, *Chemistry of Stains* – John Dawes

Saturday 23rd Botany Excursion, *Rainforests at Toolangi*. Leader: Dr. David Cameron.

*LANCEFIELD EXCURSION FOR FOSSIL DIG, SUNDAY FEBRUARY 3rd 1991

Sanja Van Huet has been involved in excavating vertebrate fossils from a Pleistocene 'swamp' deposit, which has revealed a marsupial megafauna in Victoria during the last ice age and are not present today. Genera such as *Diprotodon*, Giant Wombat, Sabre-toothed Tiger, *Macropus giganteus* (Giant Grey Kangaroo) can be identified from the bone fragments removed already. As this is a swamp deposit, it will be necessary for active participants to wear gumboots, strong gardening or rubber gloves, old clothes (e.g. overalls), one shovel between four, plastic buckets for bailing (or a sludge pump and sieves). We will need newspaper sheets in which to wrap our good specimens which Sanja says we can keep and the dig will be 'our project' in the fossil dig. Participants should bring a lunch and bottles of water as no water is available at the site. We intend running a bus leaving Batman Avenue at 9 a.m. from the usual stop down from Princes Bridge on the west bank of the Yarra. Participants must book with the Excursion Secretary. (Bus \$16)

Noel Schleiger



Day Group

Fascinating Stories of the Creatures of The Blackburn Creeklands

Welcome to my world of *Fascinating Creatures of the Blackburn Creeklands*. As you will notice, I have a particular love of insects and other invertebrates and spent the previous year documenting them and their life cycles daily. It is amazing how much more you see and learn when you look every day.

An Amazing Array of Life in an old Silver Wattle

One middle sized Silver Wattle bush on the edge of a path stood out as an incredibly rich source of creatures that lived and bred in it. The wattle had many types of spiders, flies, scale, bees and other itinerant species.

For several years in recent times it harboured the Imperial Blue Butterfly, its attendant ants, Leaf Hoppers, Coccid Bugs, various spiders and other visiting insects. Over one summer season, I photographed the life in this bush every two to three days.

Imperial Blue Butterfly



Imperial Blue Butterflies in flight with caterpillars, pupa and ants.

The Imperial Blue Butterfly only lays eggs on young trees like Silver Wattle, Blackwood Wattle and occasionally some others. I have seen them on Black Wattle later in the season after they have finished flowering. In 2020-21, there were many cycles of eggs laid, hatched and matured from the end of October to the end of March. It seemed continuous, probably due to the mild weather conditions and enough rain to keep the trees with fresh leaves. It was at the later half of that season that they moved onto the Black Wattles – *Acacia mernsii*. They choose wattle for the high nitrogen content so the exudates that feed the ants are particularly rich.

When the caterpillars hatch, they call the ants by clicking. The ants attend the caterpillars and protect them from predators. The caterpillars have no defence so are entirely dependent on the ants for survival. Even the pupae can communicate with the ants by clicking. They move sections of their stiff outer skin to make the clicks. The Tyrant Ants, *Iridomyrmex sp.*, attend the ants during the day when it is warm enough for them to emerge. The Camponotus ants look after them during the night and cool early mornings.

The male butterflies hatch first and wait for the females to emerge, mating immediately. Consequently, when it is warm enough, the bush is surrounded by butterflies, all flying around waiting for females. Eggs are laid in leaf axels, furrows in branches and on the webbing spun by some pupating caterpillars.

Thank you Wendy

Wendy Clark gave a presentation to the FNCV Day Group's November 2021 meeting via Zoom. The careful observations over an extended time of a talented naturalist and superb photographer have built up a remarkable record of the rich natural history to be found in the Blackburn Creeklands, just a short distance from our club.

Thanks to her thoughtfulness and generosity in providing a copy of her notes, FNN is able to include much of Wendy's presentation illustrated with her fabulous images.



Imperial Blue Butterfly

Acacia Horned Tree Hoppers *Sextius virescens* (right)

These bugs lived alongside the caterpillars and were also attended by the ants. They look like miniature Trilobites until they developed horns and wings. The sugar syrup that they feed to the ants is exuded from the tip of their abdomen.

Cottony Cushion Scale *Icerya purchasi* (below)



Cottony Cushion Bug

When mature, the insect remains stationary, attaches itself to the plant by waxy secretions, and produces a white egg sac in grooves, by extrusion, in the body which encases hundreds of red eggs. The egg sac will grow to be two to three times as long as the body. The larvae hatch out of the disintegrating egg sack and disperse by crawling away or on the wind. They are the only scale where the juveniles keep their legs and stay mobile.



Acacia Horned Tree Hoppers, juveniles with ants

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

A few of the birds photographed in the off-season for Invertebrates

Musk Lorikeets



Musk Lorikeet



Tawny Frogmouths

These are fast-flying birds that are usually seen at the ends of branches, hidden by flowers which they are busily chewing or drinking nectar from. I was thrilled to get these clear photos of these beautiful small parrots.

Mudlarks or Peewees

These were always seen in pairs. They stuck to their same territory along the creek year after year. They build a nest out of mud in a branch that overhangs the creek. I have seen one pair build three nests in a season. One was flooded by torrential rains and wind, one taken by predators and the third one, I am not sure. Last year was not a good year for their breeding.

Grey Butcherbirds

There are many pairs in the creeklands and their beautiful carolling songs can be heard often. They are often seen watching and listening and it is a bonus when one comes up with a caterpillar in its beak. One time I got too close to its nest and had an aggressive call projected at me.

Tawny Frogmouth Expressions

I chose these photos to show the different expressions - once they become animated. Most times these expressions are from the birds feeling threatened or disturbed and it is best to retreat and leave them be.

Spotted Pardalotes

My attentiveness to these calls was a bonus on one day as I was walking along and stopped to look for the thornbill. To my delight, I saw nearby a pardalote on the trunk of a tree. Every five to ten minutes it or

its mate would come back to tear a beak full of bark off the tree and fly off to stuff it in its nest. They did this for two days. I never did find the nest though. I could quite easily have walked straight past them as I was talking to someone at the time. The following year the tree had fallen over and there was no sign of nest material gathering, but I could hear them.

Kookaburras need to learn to laugh!

Several pairs of Laughing Kookaburras are resident at the creeklands. It is a real delight to see them grow, learn to hunt and learn to laugh. One was seen picking up a piece of bark and whacking it on a branch, like it would if it was a lizard or snake. The juveniles have short tails, fuzzy brown heads and dark little beaks. They were quite happy to watch people around the park and allow them to take photos. This year there are far fewer chicks and the parents are much more defensive.

(Continued on page 9)



Mudlarks (Magpie-larks)



Grey Butcherbird



Spotted Pardalote with nesting material



Juvenile kookaburras being fed

(Continued from page 8)

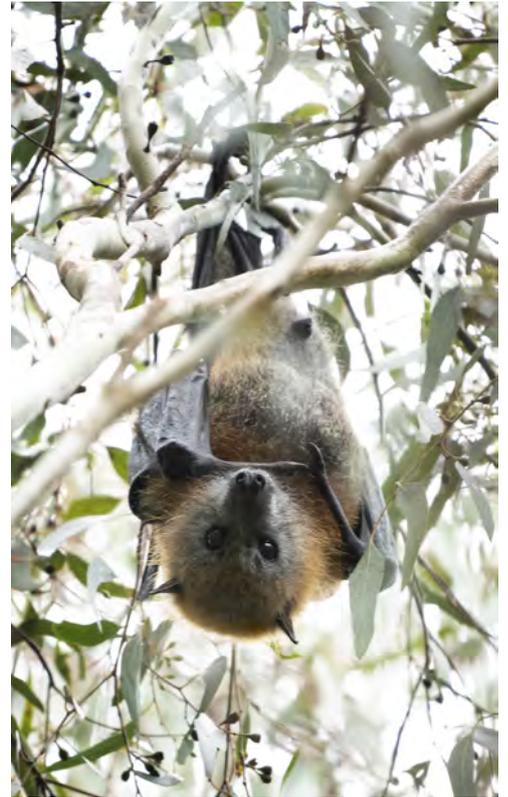
The birds tell you when something is going on.

One day we heard a large amount of noise from a Grey Butcherbird and Noisy Miners. Finding the source revealed a Grey-headed Flying Fox or fruit bat that had not found its way home in time and had roosted in the park. It was being mobbed by both types of birds. The bat had to stick it out till dark.

More fascinating invertebrates – including some quirky ones!

A Walking Mop! *Cryptolaemus montrouzieri* (below)

I saw a small white tuft on a wattle tree (I was keeping an eye on the Imperial Blue Butterflies) and I nearly walked past. Curiosity, however got the better of me and I got closer and found it was alive and moving. It was a Mealy Bug Destroyer - *Cryptolaemus montrouzieri*. It is 3mm long and a voracious eater of mealy bugs and scale. The adult is a type of ladybird. It has even been commercialized.



Grey-headed Flying Fox



***Cryptolaemus montrouzieri* (A walking mop)**

Golden Stag Beetles (right) are seen flying about or walking along the paths in summer. The larvae need tree stumps and rotting timber to eat and pupate in. Make sure your council leaves branches and stumps for our beautiful beetles.

Hairy Christmas Beetles (below) were a new sighting for me. It was photographed on a Kangaroo Apple tree.



Golden Stag Beetle



***Anoplagnathus* sp. Hairy Christmas Beetle**

Beetle Rescue (right)

I was very surprised one day to observe a beetle rescuing another that was in a hole in a luminous fungi. It really makes you question one's preconceptions about so called lower life forms.



Beetle Rescue

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

Honey-brown Beetles (*right*) have a larval stage that skeletonize dead gum leaves in the leaf litter. They are called Woolly Bears.

The World's Largest Leaf Hopper! (*below*) The tiny Leaf Hoppers are very visible against the branches and are in large numbers. Maybe they taste bad. The very large Leaf Hopper - *Ledromorpha planirostris* uses camouflage to survive. It is very flat and is hard to spot against the smooth barked gum trees. This one is the worlds largest. The nymph shown is 20mm long. A female adult with wings and an ovipositor can measure around 28mm.



Honey-brown Beetle laval stage



Honey-brown Beetle adult



Ledromorpha planirostris

Large Mealy Bugs (*right*)

I spied this insect from a distance walking up the black bark of an old Black Wattle. I thought it was a large slater so went to look. Fortunately, I did as I found it to be an amazing orange and grey Mealy Bug, *Monophlebulus sp* in the Family Margarodidae. They are usually seen with a white waxy secretion on them which can make them look like a snowball. They lose this as they get bigger. The females keep this secretion as the eggs are laid in it.



Mealy Bug *Monophlebulus sp.*

Hiding in Dimples in Tree Trunks

One day in early December, the trunk of a Lemon Scented Gum, which was smooth barked except for a series of dimples, was found to have various invertebrates in them. What really caught my eye were some large red Mites, and a real bonus – a Two Tailed Spider, *Tamopsis sp.* in the family Hersiliidae. (*below left*).



Two-tailed Spider *Tamopsis sp.*

These fascinating spiders have two long spinnerets protruding out the end of the abdomen making them look like they have two tails. They are very well camouflaged and live on tree trunks. An added bonus was finding an identification from iNaturalist for spider egg cases on a stalk – they were the eggs of *Tamopsis*! (*Photo: top right, FNN page 5*). From the numbers of these egg cases I have seen around in many places, it suggests these spiders are far more common than observations suggest.

Bright Red Caterpillar on Bitter Pea (*right*)

This beautiful caterpillar was the same colouring as the flowers on this Bitter Pea. It was busily eating both the leaves and flowers. To my eyes, it still stood out very strongly. It was identified as *Capusa senilis*. The moths are torpedo shaped and very slippery if you try to pick them up.



Capusa senilis

Wendy Clark

(All photos W. Clark)

Melbourne, a hotspot for Eastern Blue-tongue Lizards

A few days after we moved into our home in Templestowe in 1981 I spotted a large Eastern Blue-tongue Lizard ambling down the side path on stumpy legs. That was over 40 years ago but it left an indelible memory. For four decades we have enjoyed regular Blue-tongue sightings in our garden and those of our neighbours. The most recent was just a few days ago in early January 2022.

Despite their common name Bluetongues are not lizards but skinks, belonging to the Australasian genus *Tiliqua*. They are the largest members of the skink family (*Scincidae*) and can grow to 60 cm in length including a thick tail. They have wide, dark brown or blackish bands across their back and tail and a dark stripe on the head.

It was quite surprising to discover that Blue-tongue Lizards are common in Melbourne. Figure 2, *Recorded occurrences in Victoria* does not show exactly what I expected, recording as it does concentrations in the metropolitan area and on the Mornington Peninsula rather than in rural Victoria.

Blue-tongues require an environment with plenty of cover such as rocks, fallen timber, hollows and logs in which to shelter. They are ground feeders that eat a wide variety of plants and animals including slugs, snails, beetles, crickets, fruit, fungi and flowers. Early in the morning they emerge to bask in sunny areas before foraging for food during the warmer parts of the day. Reptiles do not produce their own body heat relying on the warmth of their surroundings to raise their body temperature. During the colder months their metabolism slows down considerably and they remain inactive in a safe, dry, sheltered site, emerging on sunny days to warm up.

It appears that Melbourne's parks and suburban gardens provide an ideal habitat. My house is a good example. It is in a small court, built 65 or 70 years ago on a steep hill overlooking the Yarra Valley. Because of its slope, the original landscaping in the court included terracing using rocks, logs and sleepers that provide many hiding places and have made it lizard friendly. Measured in square metres the iconic Australian quarter acre block is approximately 1012 m². Our land is a little smaller, between 900-800 m². All of the six houses in the court are on similar sized blocks. We have a mixed native/exotic garden that is quite overgrown. I have replaced the lawn with mulch. There are no side fences at the front. None of the neighbours have a particularly manicured garden. Turning native habitat into suburbia is usually the nemesis of wildlife but Blue-tongues have readily adapted to the gardens our court, where they have continued to breed over an extended period.

Walking the neighbourhood during the recent lockdowns I have become more aware that the traditional family home with a substantial back and front yard is rapidly losing ground to units and high rise apartments. After subdivision there is often no garden left at all. Just a scattering of pebbles. The push for closer development in Melbourne and the resultant loss of its habitat is a serious threat to the future of the Eastern Blue-tongue Lizard.

Although Blue-tongues show very little aggression, a characteristic of the genus is a large blue tongue that can be used as a spectacular bluff-warning to potential enemies. When threatened, blue-tongues open their mouth wide and flash their broad blue tongue that contrasts vividly with their pink mouth. This display, together with the large size of the head, is used to frighten predators. If still under threat, Blue-tongues may hiss and make themselves appear larger by flattening out their bodies. Particularly younger ones, also drop their tail as a further defensive measure.

Blue-tongue Lizards are solitary most of the year, but between September and November males pursue females and mating occurs. At this time, males may fight among themselves. Unusually for a reptile, the females do not lay eggs, but give birth to live young three to five months after mating i.e. between December and January. The embryos develop in the female's oviduct with

wildlife.vic.gov.au

Common Blue-tongued Lizards are found right across Victoria.

Common Blue-tongued Lizard *Tiliqua scincoides*

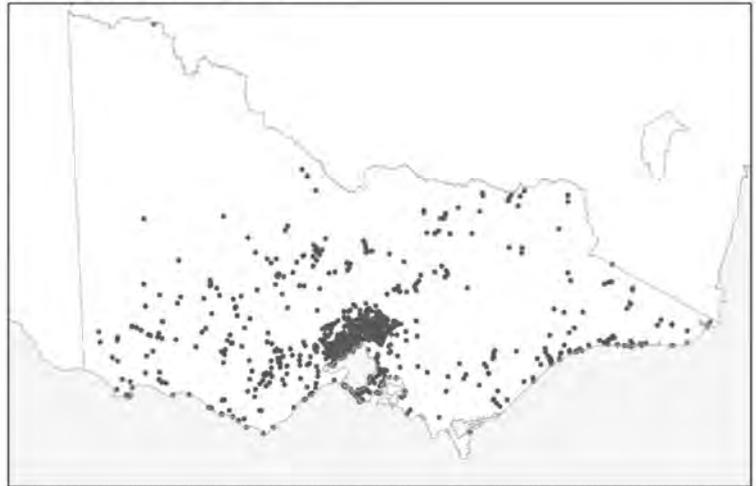


Figure 2. Recorded occurrences in Victoria

Source: Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (records post 1979), version 15/5/2017



(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

the help of a placenta. The average litter size is from 8 to 12. The young are well developed and ready to look after themselves soon after birth.

In captivity Blue-tongues have been known to live for twenty years, but in the wild, including urban areas their lives are much shorter and probably the majority of their young do not survive. They are prey to snakes such as the Red-bellied Black Snake and the Eastern Brown and are also eaten by birds such as the Laughing Kookaburra and Brown Falcon. As they like to sunbake on roads, being run over is another risk. They can be killed by humans, sometimes because they are mistaken for a snake, or accidentally when digging or mowing. Dogs, cats and foxes pose a further threat as does snail bait and insecticides. Despite these hazards the Eastern Blue-tongue Lizard is not listed as endangered.

A few months ago my grandchildren built a bush cubby house in the corner of our garden. One of their first visitors was the Blue-tongue Lizard shown in the photograph above. Luckily I was close by and could reassure them it was not dangerous in any way and we could enjoy the sighting together.

Joan Broadberry



A wasp loses its Christmas dinner to a naturalist

Yesterday at my son's place and as we were finishing Christmas lunch, I noticed this large orange and black object moving on the veranda outside. On closer examination it turned out to be a wasp with its prey. Eva managed to take a couple of photos of the pair with her phone and with a little research we think they are the Spider-hunting Wasp, *Heterodotonyx bicolor*, and it's prey a Badge Huntsman Spider, *Neosparassus diana*.

I now do have a bit of an attack of the guilts as the poor wasp after all his struggles lost his Christmas dinner. 

Ray Turner



Spider-hunting wasp, with prey



Badge Huntsman Spider— views above and below