



Understanding
Our Natural World
Est. 1880

Field Nats News No 334



Newsletter of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc.
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Governor of Victoria

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October 2022

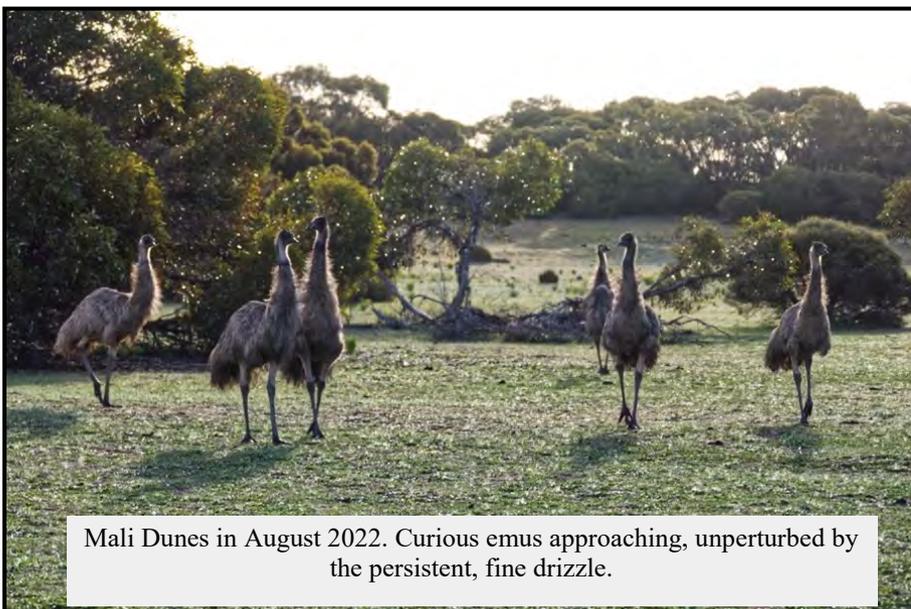
From the President

Last Easter, the Juniors camp was held at Mali Dunes and the vista was dry and desert-like with temperatures in the thirties until the last day when the skies opened up and water was virtually dumped on the property. The wet has continued until now. Faye and I spent five days at Mali Dunes to meet with people from the National Malleefowl Recovery Group and to repair some equipment and check some of the facilities and fences. It was freezing cold, unbelievably windy with heavy, almost horizontal rain. It was a very soggy place. There were a few, brief periods of sunshine and the ground was bright green with mosses and small herbaceous plants in-

(Continued on page 5)



Mali Dunes in April (Easter) 2022, dry and dusty.



Mali Dunes in August 2022. Curious emus approaching, unperturbed by the persistent, fine drizzle.

The due date for FNN 335 will be as always the first Tuesday of the month, **October 4th.**

Please use:
joan.broadberry@gmail.com

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Meetings in October will be held in the FNCV Hall, 1 Gardenia St. Blackburn at 8 pm (for an evening meeting). Please register asap where indicated.

October 2022

Monday 3rd - Fungi Group Meeting: *Mycological explorations in Patagonia*. Speaker: Dr Camille Truong
Contact: Melvin Xu fungifncv@gmail.com

Tuesday 4th - Fauna Survey Group Meeting: *The Nest Box Program at Organ Pipes National Park. Birds, Sugar Gliders and Microbats: Successes and Failures*. Speaker: Robert Irvine, Friends of Organ Pipes National Park
Contact: Ray Gibson 0417 861 651; rgibson@melbpc.org.au

Sunday 9th – Juniors Group Excursion: *Royal Park – Superb Fairy Wrens and wildflower meadows*
<https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/news-and-media/Pages/Royal-Park-blooms-to-boost-biodiversity.aspx>
This is the Juniors Birthday Celebration, so bring a costume and win a prize! The costume theme this year is invertebrates. Meeting time and location will be emailed out closer to the date. **Bookings in advance essential.**
Register with Adam Hosken adamhosken@gmail.com

Monday 10th - Marine Research Group Meeting: Contact: Leon Altoff 0428 669 389; 9530 4180 AH

Tuesday 11th – Special Event 10.30 am: Movie: *The Message of the Lyrebird* A magical journey through Australia's native forests to understand the sophistication and complex artistry of the lyrebird. [Trailer for The Message of the Lyrebird](#)
Entry/viewing by donation. Movie commences 11 am. Contact: Sue Bendel possum56@gmail.com 0427 055 071

Wednesday 12th – Special Event 8 pm: Movie: *The Message of the Lyrebird*. A magical journey through Australia's native forests to understand the sophistication and complex artistry of the lyrebird. [Trailer for The Message of the Lyrebird](#)
Entry/viewing by donation. Movie commences 8 pm. Contact: Sue Bendel possum56@gmail.com 0427 055 071

Friday 14th – Online Special Event 7.30 pm: Movie: *The Message of the Lyrebird*. A magical journey through Australia's native forests to understand the sophistication and complex artistry of the lyrebird. [Trailer for The Message of the Lyrebird](#).
Movie commences 7.30 pm. Bookings via Eventbrite (donation), contact Sue Bendel possum56@gmail.com 0427 055 071 for details. Register with Max Campbell for the Zoom link.

Sunday 16th—Terrestrial Invertebrates Group (TIG) excursion. *Peacock Spiders and other invertebrates.*
Beaumaris/BlackRock 10 am –mid afternoon. The Peacock Spiders should be in full colour and hopefully we can see their mating dance. Afterwards we will visit nearby reserves. Register with Wendy Clark wendy.empathy@optusnet.com.au

Sunday 16th – Special Event 2 pm: Movie: *The Message of the Lyrebird*. A magical journey through Australia's native forests to understand the sophistication and complex artistry of the lyrebird. [Trailer for The Message of the Lyrebird](#)
Entry/viewing by donation. Movie commences 2 pm. Register with Sue Bendel possum56@gmail.com 0427 055 071

Wednesday 19th - Microscopy Group Meeting: *Practical evening using our compound, dissecting and digital microscopes with guidance and help in identification, also screen videos of live microscopic organisms*. BYO specimens or view any of our many botany, marine, freshwater and invertebrates specimens. Contact: Philippa Burgess 0409 866 389

Thursday 20th – Botany Group Meeting: *Botanical classification of wattles*.
Speaker: Bill Aitchison, Australian Plant Society. Contact: Ken Griffiths botany@fncv.org.au

Monday 24th -Tuesday 1st November - Fauna Survey Group Survey: *Yarrara Flora and Fauna Reserve survey*. **Prior bookings essential. Register with Robin Drury 0417 195 148; robindrury6@gmail.com**

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.

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(Continued from page 2)

Monday 24th FNCV Council meeting 8 pm via Zoom. Apologies and agenda items to Wendy Gare admin@fncv.org.au
Max will email councillors the link.

Tuesday 25th – Day Group Meeting: 10.30 am coffee and a chat, speaker 11 am.

Coastal guide to nature and history 3: Western Victoria. Speaker: Graham Patterson. In writing his third book, Graham has walked from Point Lonsdale to the SA Border documenting and photographing its history, geography and natural features. *All welcome.* Contact: Joan Broadberry 9846 1218 *See also p9.*

Wednesday 26th – Geology Group Meeting: Dating. Speaker: Tony Reyes, Physicist.

Contact: Ken Griffiths geology@fncv.org.au

Friday 28th – Juniors Group. No Meeting.

Saturday 29th - Tuesday 1st November – Juniors Group Cup Weekend Camp: Junior members will be advised of arrangements by email. **Bookings in advance essential!** Register with Adam Hosken adamhosken@gmail.com



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.

Welcome
Welcome

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

Ellia McComb, Imogen Manins, Emily Crick, Ross Macfarlane, Chandeswor Shrestha and Ana Amin Bevan



Photo: Kathryn James

Mammatus clouds

The photo left, was taken on the 4th August 2022 near the Merri Creek. It shows a cellular pattern of pouches hanging underneath the base of a typically cumulonimbus rain cloud. The name is derived from the Latin mamma (meaning "udder or breast").

The distinct "lumpy" undersides are formed by cold air sinking down to form the pockets, contrary to the puffs of clouds rising through the convection of warm air.

J. Broadberry

Vale Neville Scarlett

Club members will be saddened to learn of the sudden passing of noted botanist Neville Scarlett. Neville died suddenly in August 2022. He was 77. Neville had joined FNCV in September 1966, but that membership lapsed. He re-joined the Club in June 1984 and this time maintained his membership up to the present day.

Neville was always happy to share his vast knowledge and expertise in the field of botany, through providing advice to other members, undertaking research, leading excursion and acting as a referee for manuscripts offered to *The Victorian Naturalist*. He was the sole or joint author of five papers published in the FNCV journal, between October 1969 and October 1994.

The Club extends its condolences to Neville’s family.



From the Office



We no longer have a post office box because Blackburn Post Office is now closed. Our new postal address is:

1 Gardenia Street, Blackburn Vic 3130.
Please amend your address book.

We have a spiffy new letter box at the front of our hall which Max Campbell and Ray Gibson installed – and now we have our first letters! Here is Gary Presland taking out our very first batch of mail from the letter box!

Regards, Wendy Gare,
Administration Officer

FNCV Facebook report: 25,677 followers.

Welcome: John-Harris advised that George Paras has been added to the moderators list.

[**bookshop@fncv.org.au**](mailto: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.

CHARGING...



FULLY CHARGED.

Advertising in the Field Nats News

**VERY REASONABLE
RATES**

Contact Wendy in the Field
Nats Office

[**admin@fncv.org.au**](mailto:admin@fncv.org.au)
9877 9860

**Thank you to all those
who helped produce
FNN 334**

Joan Broadberry,
Wendy Gare,
Sally Bewsher,
Pat Grey and
Sheina Nicholls.

More members' observations p11 and 12.

(Continued from page 1)

cluding many sundews. Fungi were everywhere and there was little reminder of the desert-like Mallee of Easter. The change was both dramatic and stunning.

Western Grey Kangaroos, Shingleback Lizards, Marbled Geckos, Emus, Red-capped Robins, wattlebirds, various honeyeaters, psittacids, whistlers and numerous invertebrates including ants, tenebrionid beetles, spiders, phalangids, large centipedes and termites were observed over the period. Unfortunately, the conditions were not good for bird photography. (Emus an exception). The ground was covered in soft emu droppings or pats, providing fertiliser for plants and food for insects. Notably, at night, the ground is covered in wolf spiders on the prowl; seemingly undeterred by the cold, wet conditions. They can be seen in incalculable numbers scuttling about with their front eyes reflecting the spotlight like tiny cars on high beam.

Mosses generally house a rich micro-fauna with complex symbiotic relationships. The mosses at Mali Dunes are no exception and close, albeit brief, microscopical examination has revealed numerous organisms including tardigrades, ciliates, amoeboids, testate amoeboids (filose and lobose) and springtails. Determining the real extent of biodiversity is simply a matter of

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Western Grey Kangaroos enjoying the ample fodder. Emu pats in the foreground.



Shingleback (*Tiliqua rugosa*) enjoying a brief moment of sunshine.



A wolf spider, Lycosidae, one of thousands hunting at night in the cold, misty conditions.



A prostrate sundew. *Drosera* sp. in flower

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bothering to look; in this case using microscopes. Despite long periods of drought, heat and prolonged periods of desiccation, mosses and their microfauna revive with spectacular speed after rain. (Details to be included in FNN 335).

Our ongoing ownership of Mali Dunes will require continued monitoring of all aspects of its biodiversity including lilliputian plants, protists, fungi and invertebrates which comprise over 99% of Biodiversity. These organisms are a major part of the ecology of Mali Dunes and must be included in any biodiversity monitoring. The numbers of ants, termites, wolf spiders and tenebrionid beetles are staggering and they are clearly significant components of the ecosystem. Existing species lists for plants and vertebrates will need to be regularly updated.

We also need to monitor, repair and develop existing infrastructure such as fences, nest boxes and buildings. There will be more working parties and survey groups organised in the coming months. Details of these will be advised as soon as the timetable can be set. We have established a Management Committee which has had its first meeting and is, amongst other things, developing a list of priorities. The boundary fences are a high priority and will be checked, cleared and, if required, repaired. Surveying the fences will commence in September. Hopefully, Spring will be extraordinary at Mali Dunes, as it normally is. There will be many plants in flower and a host of pollinators.

With one exception, the included images relate to early August 2022.

Max Campbell

Images M. Campbell



Geastrum sp.



Campanotus sp also moving around in brief sunlight.



Mosses were everywhere. A clump or mat may contain numerous species of bryophyte, each with its own microfauna.



Arcella sp, a lobose, testate amoeboid from moss at Mali Dunes



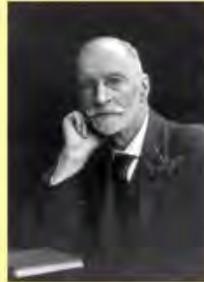
Day Group

‘Wattle-time or yellow-haired September’.
A brief history of Wattle Day
Speaker: Dr Gary Presland 23rd August 2022

Historian, Dr Gary Presland, via Zoom, led the August Day Group through many of the key events which resulted in *Acacia pycnantha* (Golden Wattle) being gazetted in 1988 as Australia’s floral emblem and in 1992 the 1st of September being declared National Wattle Day.

- The history of Wattle Day began in 1838 with the use of acacia as an emblem in Hobart Town at the anniversary regatta celebrating the European discovery of the island. In Launceston in 1853 a procession celebrating the cessation of transportation marched under a triumphal arch decorated with wattle blossoms.
- In 1889 Will Sowden vice- president of the Adelaide branch of the Australian Natives Association (ANA) suggested the formation of a Wattle Blossom League. The league, part of the woman’s section of the ANA, was inaugurated in March 1890. This move initiated the concept of celebrating a national day based a national floral emblem. A major aim of the league was to promote a sense of patriotism among Australian women and the younger generation.
- In an article in the Melbourne Herald in 1891, J L Purves a founding member of the ANA, advocated the adoption of, ‘some sort of national emblem and motto’. This patriotic fervour was generated by the approach of federation (which came in 1901). A Herald reader, David Scott put forward 14 reasons why an acacia should be the national floral emblem and why *Acacia pycnantha* should be chosen.
- In 1899 Archibald James Campbell, a prominent member of FNCV, founded a Wattle Club for interested people promoting the appreciation of acacias through Wattle Day outings held on the 1st of September each year near Melbourne for example to the You Yangs, Eltham and Werribee Gorge.
- Campbell gave a lecture in 1908 in Melbourne, *Wattle-time or yellow-haired September*, (the phrase Gary has used in the title of this presentation). He advocated that Wattle Day be celebrated throughout Australia and that one acacia species should become the Australian national flower. This lecture was published in 1921 book, titled *Golden Wattle our national floral emblem*. (See image right.)
- In 1909 Joseph Henry Maiden, director of Sydney Botanic Gardens, along with others, called a public meeting in Sydney which revived the idea of an Australia-wide Wattle Day with a species of acacia as the Australian national floral emblem. The first national Wattle Day was celebrated in 1910 on the 1st of September in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.
- In January 1913 the first pan-Australian conference of the Australian Wattle Day League was formally opened by the Prime Minister Andrew Fisher. It was attended by delegates from Victoria, NSW, SA, WA and Tasmania. This conference led to the federalisation of the Wattle Day League movement.
- Wattle was introduced into the new design of the Australian Commonwealth Coat of Arms.

Archibald James (AJ) Campbell, Naturalist (1853–1929)



In his 1921 book *Golden wattle, our national floral emblem*, Campbell gives pre-eminence to the wattles that flower in September. He also weaves in Australian poetry particularly that of Henry Kendall, with September, linking the ideas of the season of spring with the feminine, and with the glories of the colour yellow associated with acacias.

AJ’s son, Archibald George Campbell (1880–1954) in 1913 purchased a property at Kilsyth on which he planted over 300 varieties of wattles. He maintained the Wattle League activities, until the demise of the organisation in the 1950s.

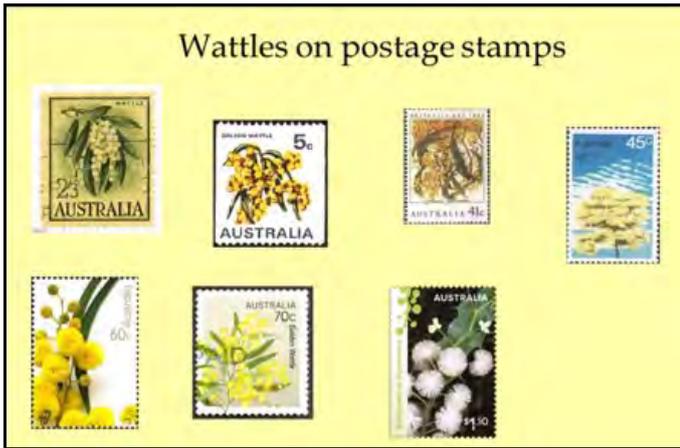


Australian Coat of Arms with the Golden Wattle design, 1921

See image left.

- The first Australian stamp featuring wattle was issued in 1913.
- From 1914 to 1918, Wattle Day was used as a focus for raising funds for WW1 and to engender patriotism. In 1916, NSW changed the date to the 1st of August, which allowed the Red Cross to use the earlier flowering, more familiar Cootamundra Wattle, *Acacia baileyana*, to raise money.
- Badges were made each year and sold to help the cause. (See image above right)
- Throughout the 1920s Wattle Day continued to be used to raise money for charitable works, principally directed to helping children in need.
- Wattle Day changed in the early 1930s, eventually fading away altogether. A Wattle Day League

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limped on in Victoria until the mid-1960s, but the other states were no longer interested.

- Enter Maria Hitchcock OAM, a garden presenter for ABC Radio New England North West. In 1986 she made a submission to the Prime Minister, R J Hawke requesting that 1st September be officially recognised nationally as Wattle Day. This was later revised to include an additional request that *Acacia pycnantha* (Golden Wattle) be recognised as the national floral emblem. The campaign was carried out with the aid of Ian McNamara (Macca) also from ABC radio. 100s of letters written by listeners were sent to the Prime Minister.



Maria Hitchcock OAM

is the former Leader of the ASGAP Correa Study Group and is the recognised international expert on Correas. She is former Leader of the Waratah and Flannel Flower Study Group. Maria is a garden presenter for ABC Radio New England North West.

- On the 1st of September 1988, the year of Australia's bicentenary, Golden Wattle was gazetted as the national floral emblem. A further campaign of letter writing with the help of Macca, resulted in the 1st of September being formally declared in 1992 as *National Wattle Day* by Ros Kelly, minister for the environment.

'... the wattle needs no advertisement. It is the shining glory of our hills and streams. It pours out its richest treasures of gold when other flowers are hidden. It redeems the wilderness and illuminates the breaks between the barren scrub.'

The Herald, Thursday 1 September 1921

On behalf of everyone, I would like to thank Gary for taking us on another fascinating historical journey and for allowing FNN to publish many of the images used in his presentation.

Thanks must also be extended to Max Campbell who put in the hard work of organising the Zoom format which meant the Day Group could continue despite a worrying spike in Covid19. Max also recorded the presentation which made it much easier to prepare a report of the meeting.

28 people participated.

Joan Broadberry

In February 2020, the National Brand Advisory Council released a new logo, in the shape of a 'wattle flower', to be used at international trade shows and exhibitions to promote Australian education, agriculture and tourism along with other key exports. The project to design a new logo had cost \$10 million, but the logo had to be withdrawn because it was soon unfavourably compared in appearance to a particle of the COVID virus.



The replacement logo used a design incorporating three boomerangs.



Extracts from SIG reports given at the last FNCV Council Meeting

Electing The State Fossil of Victoria, *Koolasuchus cleelandi*

Tim Ziegler
Museums Victoria
20 May 2022



The Zoom meeting had 27 online connections.

Geology Group Meeting:

Wednesday 27th July - Tim Ziegler, from Vertebrate Palaeontology at Museums Victoria, detailed the role of the public in choosing, from eight candidates, the Victorian Fossil Emblem during 2021. *Koolasuchus cleelandi* was a crocodile-like amphibian that lived beside dinosaurs in Victoria during the Cretaceous, about 125 million years ago. The other candidates were: *Isograptus victoriae* (this fossil animal colony formed a V for Victoria), *Baragwanathia* (a pioneer land plant from about 400 MYA), *Bishops whitmorei* (a tiny mammal among Victoria's dinosaurs), *Janjucetus hunderi* (ancestor of today's whales), *Pelagornis* (a giant toothed bird), *Palorchestes azael* (an ice-age marsupial), *Leaellynasaura* (a slender polar dinosaur).

<https://museumsvictoria.com.au/melbournemuseum/state-fossil-emblem>

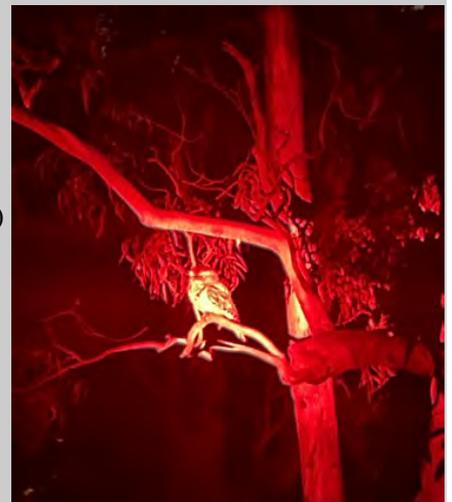
Ken Griffiths

Juniors Group Excursion: Spotlighting in Rosanna Parklands

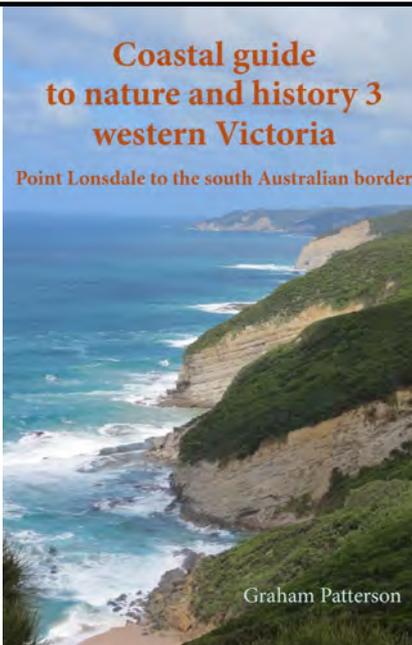
On the 9th of July, the Field Nat Juniors went on a night excursion led by author Harry Saddler and the Friends of Rosanna Parklands in the Rosanna Parklands looking for nocturnal wildlife. The Rosanna Parklands are a mixture of natural regeneration and replanted bushland and home to lots of nocturnal creatures. We saw Tawny Frogmouths, Ringtail and Brushtail Possums as well as large numbers of Krefft's Sugar Gliders. We got to see not only gliders leaving their hollows at sunset but a wide range of behaviours such as foraging and also gliding between trees. Krefft's Gliders prefer woodland/ revegetation with high numbers of Black/Silver Wattles (*Acacia mearnsii* and *decurrens*) as these provide not just sap but also lots of tasty insects. Because the trees at Rosanna are too young to form hollows, gliders, possums and parrots use artificial wooden nest boxes for breeding. Krefft's Gliders usually take about two weeks to use a new nest box at Rosanna and they support most of the population, however some nest in cracks starting to form in dead eucalypts.

We would like to thank Harry Saddler, the Friends of Rosanna Parklands and all who attended the night for such an enjoyable experience.

Thomas Hosken (Junior Field Naturalist)



Tawny Frogmouth seen spotlighting.
Photo: Thomas Hosken



Graham Patterson, after setting himself the challenge of walking the entire Victorian coastline, has published his third book, *Coastal guide to nature and history 3 in western Victoria*

P 1. "The journey begins at Point Lonsdale at the entrance to Port Phillip Bay, then heads west towards Nelson on the South Australian border. This 420 km shoreline offers spectacular scenery, with the formations around the Twelve Apostles and Port Campbell topping the list. Other wave-battered cliffs such as Cape Otway, Cape Nelson and Cape Bridgewater are also monumental. ... There are traces of thousands of years of Aboriginal occupation of the area. Hunters of seals and whales showed the way for the first European invaders in Victoria around Portland. ... Like Phillip Island, Western Victoria has penguin colonies and mutton-bird rookeries. There are distinctive plant communities in heathlands near Anglesea and Port Campbell and from Portland westwards there are plants which are more common in South Australia. Four Marine National Parks and six smaller Marine Sanctuaries protect diverse animals and plants and their habitats. ..."

The book can be purchased for \$35 through Graham's website.
www.coastalguidebooks.net.au

It will also soon be available to FNCV members through the bookshop.

bookshop@fncv.org.au

Graham will be speaking about his new book at the Day Group meeting, 10.30 am Tuesday October 25th. All welcome.

Thanks to Wendy Clark for forwarding this article

Florence Merriam Bailey born 1863 – Bird Watcher

When Florence Merriam Bailey was born on this day in 1863, birds were more often seen ornamenting women's hats than they were in the wild! In fact, on one walk through Manhattan in 1886, she counted 40 different species, stuffed and mounted for fashion. The pioneering ornithologist wanted to stop this trend, which killed an estimated five million birds a year. Her solution was to encourage people to go out and admire living birds through bird watching. "We won't say too much about the hats," she declared. "We'll take the girls afield, and let them get acquainted with the birds. Then of inborn necessity, they will wear feathers never more."

Bailey developed an early interest in birds, but when she went to Smith College in 1882, she learned that most ornithologists had little interest in bird behavior. Instead, they studied birds which had been killed, skinned, and mounted for private or museum collections. Bailey proposed that naturalists should learn to observe living birds in their habitats. She recommended an opera glass to allow bird watchers to see details: "The student who goes afield armed with opera-glass," she declared, "will not only add more to our knowledge than he who goes armed with a gun, but will gain for himself a fund of enthusiasm and a lasting store of pleasant memories."



In 1889, at the age of 26, she published "Birds Through An Opera-Glass." It was the first modern bird watching field guide: an illustrated guide to recognizing 70 common species in the wild, written for hobbyists and young people. Her approach of watching birds through magnification formed the basis of modern bird watching, which still uses binoculars today. Her book was also unusual because it was published under her own name, an uncommon practice at the time. Bailey's independent and feminist streaks come out in her writing about her beloved birds too. "Like other ladies, the little feathered brides have to bear their husbands' names, however inappropriate," she lamented. "What injustice! Here an innocent creature with an olive-green back and yellowish breast has to go about all her days known as the black-throated blue warbler, just because that happens to describe the dress of her spouse!"

Bailey went on to write over 100 journal articles and ten books, including the "Handbook of Birds of the Western United States," which remained a standard text for over 50 years. Bailey was named the first woman associate member of the American Ornithologists' Union in 1885; in 1929, she became its first woman fellow and received its Brewster Medal, which recognizes authors of exceptional work about birds, in 1931. In a fitting tribute to this trailblazing advocate for birds, eminent American biologist Joseph Grinnell named a subspecies of mountain chickadee after her in 1908: with the scientific name of *Parus gambeli baileyae* and the common name of Mrs. Bailey's Chickadee.

Florence Merriam Bailey's inspiring story is told in the lovely picture book biography, "She Heard the Birds," for ages 5 to 9 at <https://www.amightygirl.com/she-heard-the-birds>
Her book "Birds: Through an Opera-Glass" is also still available in print at <https://amzn.to/3vLOY7s>

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

Members' observations *(continued from p4)* **St Andrew's Cross Spider**



Photo: Linda Rogan

J. Broadberry

St Andrew's Cross Spider in her web.

A St Andrew's Cross Spider spun a huge web inside my netted cat enclosure, a place safe from birds, which allowed me to observe her for many weeks. This included being able to video her constructing and repairing the web and catching and wrapping food items

Female St Andrew's Cross Spiders (*Argiope keyserlingi*) rest in their web with paired legs outstretched in the shape of an X, usually aligned with a white zigzag pattern in the centre of the web called the stabilimentum; a posture which makes the spider appear larger. The zigzag area reflects UV light and has been shown to play a role in attracting prey, although its exact purpose is not completely understood.

When it is time to mate, the much smaller male constructs a mating thread within the web, onto which it attracts a receptive female by vibrating the thread. No male appeared on the web of my spider but I have included a photo (above right) taken by Linda Rogan of the male and female together.



J. Broadberry

St Andrew's Cross Spider with prey.



J.B

St Andrew's Cross Spider egg case.

After mating, the female constructs a pear-shaped egg case from silk and suspends it on a network of threads, often among leaves where the sac's greenish colour disguises it. The photo left was taken some time ago in a corner of my garden.

Joan Broadberry



Photo: C. Page

A backyard Xanthorrhoea (Grass Tree) has a flower spike.

"I just saw it when I was putting some washing on the line. It couldn't have come up overnight of course, but I haven't been in the back garden very often lately."

I bought the plant in 2010 at Yelgun Valley Nursery. I was with a group of people from the now defunct Fern Society."

Carol Page



Willy Wagtail

Willie Wagtail seen in Blackburn!

It was a wonderful surprise to see a Willie Wagtail in my backyard in Blackburn. I haven't seen them around here for many years. When I grew up in Hawthorn, I observed them regularly in the suburbs.

Willy Wagtails are very charismatic birds in the fly catcher family. A handsome black and white bird with a white eyebrow that wags its tail as it makes a 'chic a chic' call. They are often seen in open spaces and eat flying insects. A similar bird is the smaller grey fantail (right) that is reasonably common in bush areas in Melbourne.



Grey Fantail

Blue Bracket Fungi at the Rhododendron Garden in Olinda

On a walk at the Rhododendron Garden the other day, we found a small track around a lake. As we walked along, we found large amounts of a beautiful blue-toned bracket fungi along many dead trunks of old trees.

On a leaf behind one of the masses of fungi was a tiny, iridescent blue beetle.

Wendy Clark
All photos: W Clark



Blue Bracket Fungi



Close up of Blue Bracket Fungi



Iridescent blue beetle.

FNN would love to know what you have observed on your travels or in your backyard this spring and summer.