Field Nats News No 338

Understanding Our Natural World Est. 1880

Newsletter of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc.
1 Gardenia Street, Blackburn Vic 3130
Telephone 03 9877 9860
Mail address: 1 Gardenia St. Blackburn 3130
www.fncv.org.au
Newsletter email: joan.broadberry@gmail.com

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

Reg. No. A0033611X

Patron: The Honourable Linda Dessau, AC
Governor of Victoria

Office Hours: Monday and Tuesday 10 am - 4 pm

March 2023

From the President

The year is progressing rapidly and we are back into the business of running FNCV. We will be having more meetings in the hall this year. We have many activities planned and I look forward to catching up with you all. However, the Omicron sub-variants of COVID19, BA.4 and BA.5 are still circulating and the number of infected individuals is increasing along with hospitalisations and deaths. The current absence of reporting is not an indicator of absence of disease. The issue has not gone away and we can expect to have ongoing COVID seasons each year as we already have cold and influenza seasons so we need to be proactive about how we manage our risks. As part of our risk reduction stategy, Council has purchased a hospital grade air purifier for the hall, which will I prove the air quality during meetings and ostensibly reduce the risks from air borne transmission of disease, allergens and dust etc. However, an air purifier is only part of safe practice where administrative and personal behaviour aspects are the most critical elements. Masks, interpersonal distancing and hygiene measures are still the best options. It is a personal choice, but the wearing of masks is recommended, not just for COVID, but to reduce the transfer of the many other viruses to which we are constantly exposed. We are still required to wear masks and maintain social distancing whenever we visit hospitals and health professionals for good reason.

The due date for FNN 339 will be the first Tuesday of the month, March 7th.

However, as the editor will be away for the first three weeks of March it would be greatly appreciated if at least some copy could be submitted by 3rd March.

Gary Presland has kindly agreed to act as guest editor. Please email both joan.broadberry@gmail.com and library@fncv.org.au

A pair of Musk Lorikeets were preening each other after a splash in the birdbath. Parrots, including Musk Lorikeets, are enjoying some of the garden flowers and fruits. The provision of bird baths certainly encourages their presence and keeping them replenished with clean water each day increases the attendance of birds in general.

The prolonged warmer weather, interspersed with periods of cool, wet days has encouraged the growth and flowering of plants and the appearance of a few more invertebrates, mainly insects and spiders, in our gardens and parks. Flies (Diptera) are always well-represented, including crane flies (photos 1 and 2) and robber flies (Photo 3). Colepia rufiventris is a large fly, circa 40 mm in length, which actively hunts other flying insects. I frequently find their large larvae in my vegetable garden. (refer FNN 29 and 292). Only a few compost flies, Bibio immitator, have appeared this year.

The birds in my garden have maintained the predation pressure on the larger insects and spiders. As we looked on, one of our resident butcher birds perched above a pot-plant and scrutinised the leaves. It suddenly plunged into the foliage and reappeared with a large green mantid struggling in its beak. As soon as the invertebrates attain a certain size they are more easily noticed by the magpies, noisy miners and butcher birds. Mantids (Photo 4) persist through a couple of instars but most are eaten well before the adult stage. Only two of eleven St Andrews Cross Spiders are still surviving and these drop into the undergrowth when the flashgun fires; clearly a nervous disposition that

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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, excursions may be cancelled. Please check with leader.

March 2023

Monday 6th – Fungi Group Meeting: ***Endophytes: The future of wound dressing.*** Speaker: Olivia Brown, Bachelor of Science (Biotechnology) from Swinburne University of Technology.
Contact: Melvin Xu fungifncv@gmail.com 0410 522 533

Tuesday 7th - Fauna Survey Group Meeting: ***Triple jeopardy in the tropics: assessing extinction risk in Australia's freshwater fish biodiversity hotspot***. Speaker: Matthew Le Feuvre, PhD graduate, University of Melbourne, and Senior Aquatic Ecologist at Jacobs. Contact: David De Angelis 0409 519 829 d.deangelis@latrobe.edu.au

Friday 10th to Tuesday 14th - Fauna Survey Group Survey: ***Labour Day weekend camp at Bael Bael Grassland Nature Conservation Reserve***. **Prior bookings essential**.
Contact. Andrej Hohmann 0410 9354 779 andrej_hohmann@yahoo.com.au

Monday 13th - Marine Research Group No Meeting: ***Labour Day***

Wednesday 15th - Terrestrial Invertebrates Group Meeting: A brief natural history of, and introduction to True Flies (Diptera). Speaker: Max Campbell. Contact Max Campbell mcam7307@bigpond.net.au

Thursday 16th – Botany Group Meeting: ***Revegetation work at an urban park.*** Nettleton Park is at the confluence of Back and Gardiners Creek, a biodiversity area. Speaker: Ruth Scharley, Nettleton Park Friends Group.
Contact: Ken Griffiths botany@fncv.org.au

Sunday 19th - Terrestrial Invertebrates Group Excursion: Cranbourne Gardens and Bushland Area. We will be comparing the insect life in the bushland section and the Australian Garden section.
Registration essential. Contact: Wendy Clark wendy.empathy@optusnet.com.au

Wednesday 22nd – Geology Group Meeting: ***South West Coastal Landforms.*** Speaker: Graham Patterson, author
Contact: Ken Griffiths geology@fncv.org.au

Sunday 26th – Juniors Group Excursion: ***Platypus at Warrandyte***. Early morning. Registrations essential.
Details advised to Juniors by email. Contact: Adam Hosken adamhosken@gmail.com

Sunday 26th – Wednesday 29th - Marine Research Group Field Work: ***Warrnambool area***. Meet at 7 am. Locations to be decided while on site. Register for more details. Contact: Leon Altoff 9530 4180 AH; 0428 669 773

Monday 27th—FNCV Council Meeting 7.30 pm via Zoom. Apologies and agenda items to
Wendy Gare, admin@fncv.org.au. Max will email the link.

Tuesday 28th – Day Group Meeting 10.30 am coffee and a chat, speaker at 11 am. ***The Geology of Building Stones - observations in Victoria and England***. Speaker: Rob Hamson. Contact: Joan Broadberry joan.broadberry@gmail.com
All welcome, no need to register.

Friday 31st – Juniors Group No Meeting

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.

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:

Norie Neumark, Maria Miranda, Peter Sorjonen-Ward, June Ward, Marta Salamon, Lou Kearney, Silvia Zele, Bruce McKenzie, Andrew Reid, Chris McKenzie, Carina Johns, Ira Vivekananda, Kuragayala Vivekananda and Robyn Johns.

Plight of our faunal emblems:

the Helmeted Honeyeater and Leadbeaters Possum 4 March – 28 May 2023
Chambers Gallery | Yarra Ranges Regional Museum

A monumental effort is currently underway to save Victoria's faunal emblems, the Helmeted Honeyeater and the Leadbeaters Possum, from the brink of extinction. Both species are currently listed as critically endangered due to massive habitat loss caused by increased human activity and industry in their natural environment. The Yarra Ranges' Yellingbo (Liwik Barrik) Nature Conservation Reserve, located along the edge of the Yarra Valley and southern Dandenong Ranges, is the only known location where the Helmeted Honeyeater and the lowland population of the Leadbeaters Possum continue to cohabit in the wild.

John James Wild 1884

In 2021, Victoria celebrated the 50th anniversary of the declaration of the state's two faunal emblems. *Plight of our faunal emblems: the Helmeted Honeyeater and Leadbeaters Possum* presents a selection of creative responses made by artists, conservationists, and school students, associated with the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater and Friends of the Leadbeaters Possum groups, to commemorate the faunal emblems' anniversary.

The resulting exhibition seeks to highlight the ongoing need for greater education and awareness about the species, and the dire need for the preservation of native vegetation to ensure their survival. *Plight of the faunal emblems* captures a collective sense of hope: that if together we can save our faunal emblems from extinction, then there is a chance we can save the environment – in Australia and across the world – from global heating.

John Gould 1867

Facebook followers 30,759

FNN INDEX

A comprehensive digital index for FNN issues 326—336 will be emailed with this newsletter. A printed version of the index is available from the FNCV office.

Once again, our thanks to Pat Grey who has undertaken to compile the index .

This will in fact be the final digital or printed FNN index to be compiled. As FNN is now almost totally digital it can be searched directly– there is no need for a separate index.

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.

Thank you to all those who helped produce FNN 338

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

(Continued from page 1)
has served them well to date. A single Enamel Spider, *Plebs bradleyi*, (photo 5) and a Garden Orb Weaver have also survived. The latter is nocturnal and probably somewhat protected from the birds. Only the smallest jumping spiders are still active during the day. Mature *Helpis sp* and *Opisthoncus sp* are readily taken by birds but small crab spiders, *Thomisidae* (photo 6) wait patiently and motionless on flowers appearing to avoid the birds' attentions. The mole crickets, *Gryllotalpa spp* (Photo 7) are deafening at this time of year and there seems to be a very large number of them calling. In the evening large numbers of females can be seen running about with great purpose and determination looking for the males who are singing at the entrance to their underground burrows. When they locate the burrow they do not hesitate to barge in.

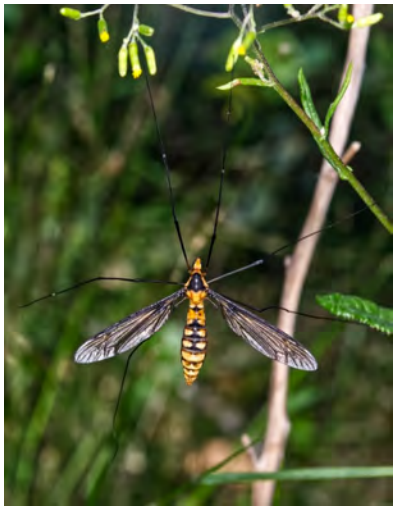

Photo 1. *(left)* Crane Fly, *Leptotarsus clavatus* at Yellingbo, Ventro-lateral**.**
Photo 2. (*above)* Dorsal view

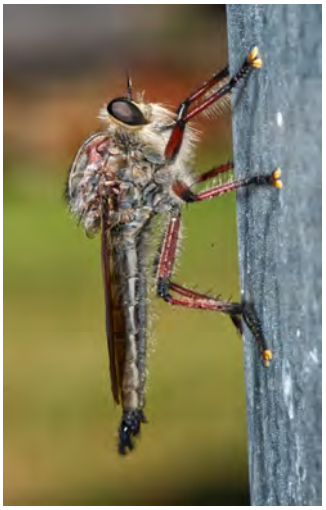

Photo 3. Robber Fly, *Colepia rufiventris* with a body length circa 4 cm. Clayton.

Photo 5. An Enamel Spider, *Plebs bradleyi,* in broad daylight awaiting prey or possi-

Our Angophoras, Silky Oak, Melaleucas, Kurrajongs, Tea trees and Callistemons are flowering prolifically but are attended almost solely by introduced *Apis mellifera* and a few blowflies. There is none of the cockchafers, jewel beetles or larger scarabid beetles that normally buzz noisily in my trees. Not a single Christmas Beetle, Cowboy Beetle or Fiddler Beetle has made an appearance to date. I have seen a single Plague Soldier Beetle, *Chauliognathus lugubris* (Photo 8) this season. There are normally hundreds of them about and in past years great swarms of thousands of them have appeared (Photo 9). I would be interested in hearing if others are experiencing a reduction in the invertebrate numbers in their gardens fruits.

Photo 4. Still small enough to hide, but growing rapidly, this *Pseudomantis* may not have long to live.

Photo 6. Crab spider, *Australomisidia sp,* Thomisidae, patiently awaiting prey to arrive on a dandelion flower.

Photo 7. A mole cricket, *Gryllotalpa sp*.

Photo 9. (left)

Part of a swarm of thousands of *Chauliognathus lugubris.* Clayton 2013, Video Grab.

Photo 8. The only Plague Soldier Beetle, *Chauliognathus lugubris* that I have seen in my garden this season.

Maxwell Campbell
All photos Max Campbell

FNCV Environment Fund: Call for Grant Applications

Due Date: Monday 17th April 2023

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 17th April 2023 at 3 pm.
Late applications will not be accepted. The date and time cut off for grant applications will be strictly adhered to as this year our turnaround time is very tight.

All applications will be acknowledged and results of applications communicated by **Wednesday 26th April 2023.**

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/environment-fund/**

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 Inc.,
1 Gardenia Street,
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/donate-to-the-club/**

or are available on request from the FNCV Office: phone 9877 9860 or email **admin@fncv.org.au**

Native Bees Roosting in Clusters – by Wendy Clark

One late afternoon in January I was checking on the progress of the Imperial Blue Butterflies in Kalang Park Blackburn, when I noticed a cluster of bees on several of the leaves, with more flying in as I watched. I rushed home to get my camera and returned to try and take some good photos of the details of the bees in the mass. The sunny light was casting shadows and making it difficult to see all the bees clearly.

These native bees are *Lipotriches australica* and they are all males. They are one of the ones more commonly seen roosting in clusters. They will roost like that overnight and then disperse in the morning when it is warm enough. The reason they are doing this is not known, though there is a study going on about whether there are pheromones attracting them together. It is suggested a contributing factor is that most Australian native bees are solitary nesters and, as a rule males are not allowed to stay in the nesting holes. There are of course exceptions. If you keep an eye out, you may be able to see these roosting clusters on cool or cloudy mornings or evenings. Other native bee species do this too.

Male native bees roosting in clusters at Kalang Park.
Lipotriches australica

From the Office

Hi everyone,
with all the restrictions in the past few years, sadly even on cups of tea and coffee, it is a long time since we have had to ask for supplies for the FNCV kitchen and toilets.

However, we now find ourselves low on small containers of long-life milk and toilet paper. If you can help out, donations can just be left in the kitchen.

Many thanks.

Wendy Gare
Office administrator

Day Group

12 Day Western Explorer Expedition, Broome to Perth 10—21 August 2022

DAWSONS BURROWING BEES *Amegilla dawsoni*

PART 2, Continued from FNN 337 p9


Linda Rogan

Carnarvon was about to produce another, this time wonderful, unexpected wild card. Near the top of my wish list was one of Australia's most beautiful native bees, Dawson's Burrowing Bee, *Amegilla dawsoni*. From the photo *left* you can appreciate why. I had checked with the naturalist friend from whom I first learned about the bees and knew that the Coates Western Explorer would pass through the right area at the time of year when the bees were active. However, as a passenger on a group trip with a set itinerary, I also knew there was only a very small possibility of seeing them.

What happened is roughly this. One of our travelling companions, just by sheer chance, ran into a friend in the street in Carnarvon, who was terribly excited at having seen the burrowing bees and urged her not to miss out. Remember it was only the heavy rain which closed many roads that caused us to be in Carnarvon at all. (Plan B). She passed on some information as to where to locate the bees, fortunately not very far away on the outskirts of the town. Several people on the bus caught the excitement. Our leaders were persuaded by the enthusiasm to look for them before we set off south the next morning, even though they normally did not like to deviate from the what had been planned for the day. It was only to be a quick drive around, but luck was on our side and a burrowing bee colony, being photographed by someone from the Museum of Western Australia, was spotted up a side road. *Photo above right*.

Amegilla dawsoni is part of the genus Amegilla (made up of 250 species) in the tribe Anthophorini the long-tongued bees. Dawsons Burrowing Bees are nomadic and are only found in north-west Western Australia on clay flats. They are amongst Australia's largest bees and can be over 2 cm long. Females have dense white fur on their thorax. *Photo right*. Males have gold-yellow fur on their thorax. *Amegilla dawsoni* use their long tongues to collect pollen and nectar from flowers, but don't produce honey.

The females burrow deep into clay flats to make their nests. Even though they build their burrows in close proximity, the bees are said to be 'solitary' in that they don't work together. In building burrows, the females wet the clay with nectar and bite it away with their jaws. The first soil excavated is used to construct a mud turret around the entrance to the burrow to stop the loose earth from falling back in. *Photo left* Therefore the initial indication of a nesting colony are little piles of dirt. Up to 10,000 burrows have been recorded in one area. The females shelter in their burrows at night and go in and out constantly when they are provisioning the cells.

Males play no part in nest building, their only role being to mate with females. They never go into the burrows but rest on vegetation at night, holding on with their jaws. Males obsessively patrol burrow entrances. Virgin females are mobbed by a number of males that aggressively battle each other, often to death, for access to females.
Photo right, Amegilla dawsoni mating.


museum.wa.gov.au

There was a tremendous amount of activity and noise in the Carnarvon colony even though it was quite small in size. A video is the best way to show this. Hundreds of buzzing bees flew around. Females were diving in and out of burrows almost too quickly for the eye to follow. *Photo right taken from a video.* I did not note or photograph any males, but we only observed the bees for a short time. The date was the 18th of August 2022. I think the colony was probably at the stage when nearly all females had been mated, most males had died, and the females were busy constructing and provisioning their brood cells.

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Of course we could not see what was happening inside the burrows, but once mated, female Dawsons Burrowing Bees are left alone to go about making their nests. They dig a shaft from15 to 35 cm deep. They then dig a horizontal side-shaft. Next they dig downwards in the side-shaft to create an urn-shaped brood cell. The cell wall is waterproofed with wax and it is half filled with nectar and pollen. An egg is then laid on top of the food and the cell capped with mud. The horizontal side-shaft is extended and up to seven more brood cells may be created. Finally the external hole is sealed with a mud plug and the turret destroyed. At that point the female is spent from her hard work, and dies.

After a few days the eggs hatch and the larvae eat the liquid provisions on which they are actually floating. In a few weeks they grow into fat white grubs that fill the cells. Eventually the larvae curl up and remain unresponsive until it is time to pupate. They then gnaw their way through the cell cap and dig up to the surface. Adults are only present from July to September when they emerge from their burrows for the flight and reproductive season, (coinciding with the flowers blooming). For the other nine months, Dawsons Burrowing Bees exist only as dormant larvae in underground brood cells.

Seeing *Amegilla dawsoni* was a fabulous high for me. All the more so from being the unexpected result of a long chain of serendipitous events. My wish list had a loss, Kennedy Ranges National Park and a win, the burrowing bees. As so often happens in life, Plan B can be equal or even better than Plan A.

Joan Broadberry

All photos, except where indicated, J. Broadberry

Extracts from SIG reports given at the last FNCV Council Meeting

December 2022—January 2023

Fauna Survey Group: Meeting 6th December—Members' night
Included slides of recent trips and surveys.

Saturday 14th & Sunday 15th January 2023: Rushworth Forest nestbox check was postponed due to hot weather.

Marine Research Group: Meeting Monday 12th December:
Annual members' night. A report of this meeting appears in FNN 338 on page 5.

Terrestrial Invertebrates Group: Excursions

Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve – December 2022: A full report of this very successful excursion led by Wendy Clark appears in FNN 338 page 11-12.
In addition there is now a Langwarrin page on iNaturalist.
A total of 104 observations of 60 species have already been posted.

Cardinia Reservoir Park- January 2023:
The leader, Wendy Clark, was joined by 18 members and visitors, all with sharp eyes and camera at the ready. We met at the far end of the Crystal Brook Picnic Area car park (off Wellington Road) at 10.00 am. Excursion concluded at 3:30 pm. A full report is included in this issue of FNN.

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

Terrestrial Invertebrates Group *Cardinia Reservoir Park*

The excursion was well-attended. The leader, Wendy Clark, was joined by 18 members and visitors, all with sharp eyes and camera at the ready. We met at the far end of the Crystal Brook Picnic Area car park (off Wellington Road) at 10.00 am. The excursion concluded at 3:30 pm.

The weather was mild, slightly overcast with patches of sun and a light warm breeze. In the morning, we walked uphill along the Tea Tree Trail, searching for invertebrates as we progressed.

Insect and invertebrate numbers in general appeared lower than last year. There were plenty of flowers but we didn't find many insects on them. There were very few beetles to be found this year, but we saw a few beetle and other insect species. Flower chafer beetles, Honey Brown Beetle, reduviid (Assassin) bugs, dragon flies, damsel flies and numerous dipterans (flies) were sighted, including tabanids (March flies), calliphorids (Blow flies), syrphids (Hover flies) and tipulids (Crane flies) in small numbers. Some orthopterans (grasshoppers) were observed in the grassy areas. A few lepidopterans (butterflies and moths) and their caterpillars were noted.

During the morning walk, we also found a boggy area with hundreds of beautiful pink spiral orchids (*Spiranthes australis)* and some onion orchids (Microtis parviflora).

After lunch, we walked the trail along the Cardinia Creek. There seemed to be more insects along this section, perhaps because it was near the water and it was warmer in the afternoon. There were many damsel flies and dragonflies which proved difficult to photograph. Over the course of the day, most of us took photographs of insects and spiders. Some are included here.

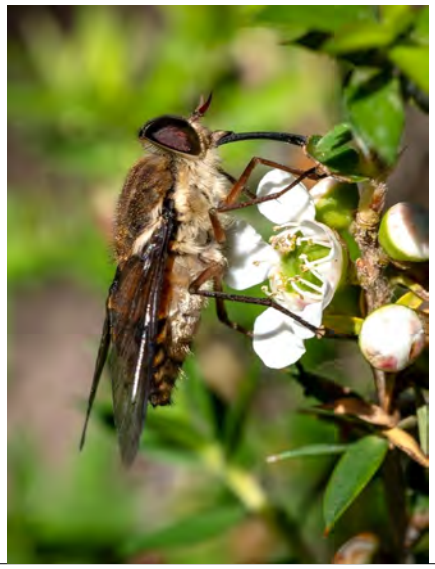
For a full list and photos of all we recorded, go to this link at iNaturalist
https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?page=4&place_id=any&project_id=fncv-2023-cardinia-reservoir&verifiable=any&view=observers

Orange Assasin Bug, *Gminatus australis*
Photo: Torbjorn von Strokirch

Blue-spotted Hawker, *Adversaeschna brevistil*
Photo: Torbjorn von Strokirch

Left: Soldier Fly
Odontomyia sp
Photo: Ros Osborne

Right: Horse-fly,
Scaptia sp.
Photo: Ros Osborne



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Orb-web Spider, *Argiope keyserlingi*
Photo: Ros Osborne

Longicorn Beetle, *Hesthesis plorator.*
This beetle is a wasp mimic. Photo: John Eichler

Plant Bug, *Trilaccus mimeticus* This bug is a braconid wasp mimic. Photo: John Eichler

Jewel Beetle, *Castiarina scalaris*
Photo: John Eichler

Green Bottle Fly, *Lucilia sp. Calliphoridae*
Photo: Max Campbell

Fruit Fly, *Acanthonevroides basilis* Photo: Carol Page

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Above: Geometrid Caterpillar Photo: Jacob Rodda
Below: Geometrid Caterpillar Photo: Wendy Clark

Left: Bagworm Moth Cocoon *Psychadie sp.* Photo: Maryse Hermence

Right: Cottony Cushion Bug, *Icerya Purchase* Photo: Wendy Clark

Pink Spiral Orchid, *Spiranthes australis*
Photo: Maryse Hermence

Eucalyptus Leaf Beetle larvae, *Paraopsisterna cloelia* larvae. Photo: Maryse Hermence

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Photographing Pink Spiral Orchid, *Spiranthes australis,* Photo: Joan Broadberry

Pink Spiral Orchid, *Spiranthes australis*
Photo: Joan Broadberry

Above: Crysomelid Leaf Beetle larvae, *Calomelia ioptera*
Photo: Wendy Clark

Right: Nicodamas sp.
Red and Black Spider
Photo: Wendy Clark

Thanks to Wendy Clark for organising the excursion. We look forward to the TIG excursion to the Cranbourne Gardens and Bushland area on Sunday 19th March, where we will be comparing the insect life in the bushland section with that in the Australian Garden section. Please register accordingly.

Maryse Hermence

Native Slugs in Blackburn

***Cysstopelta purpurea* on a wattle leaf.**

I was walking through Blackburn Lake Sanctuary recently after substantial rain. Everything was still wet and dripping. I was checking for caterpillars and any other insects I could find when I spied a slug on a leaf on a wattle seedling.

I was very excited; it had the right shape, it looked a bit like a snail that had lost its shell but with not quite as large a bump. Could it be a native slug called Cystopelta? I had only ever seen them out in the bush usually after rain and crawling up the trunks of Silver Wattles. I had no idea they could be in the suburbs as I had only seen introduced slugs. Blackburn Lake does have some good original vegetation and looking at the tree where I found it, I noticed it was a wetter area than the surroundings and had some nice moss beds.

I returned home with the photos and promptly checked my Victorian Slugs and Snail book. I was right. It *was Cystopelta purpurea.* I posted it on iNaturalist and had it confirmed there. It seems there were records of Cystopelta in the outer eastern forested areas with the odd sighting in Vermont, Wantirna and Ringwood. My sighting was the western-most observation of this region.

***Cystopelta* showing enlarged mantle.**

Slugs are terrestrial gastropods (snails) in which the shell has been reduced to a small vestige or lost altogether. There are eight families of slugs in Australia, Five of which were introduced into the country in comparatively recent times. Australia has a significant number of snails that are on the way to losing their shells. Helicarion (below right) is one such species. Its shell is almost transparent and it is too small for the snail to retreat into.

Wendy Clark

All photos W. Clark except where indicated.

***Lehminnea nyctelia*, the Striped Field Slug is introduced and is commonly seen in suburban gardens. Note the mantle is very flat.**

***Helicarion sp.* Courtesy of the internet.**

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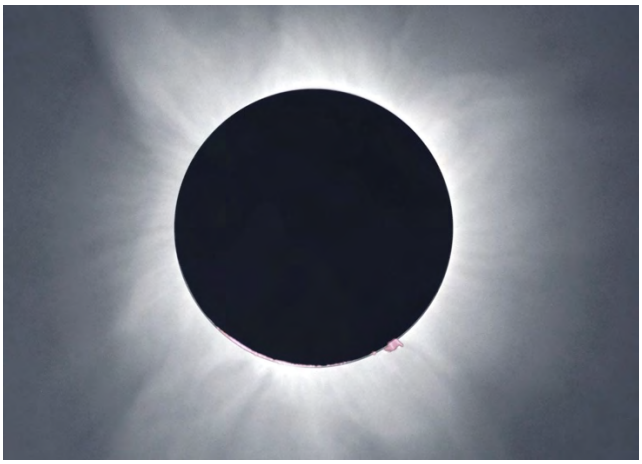
Eclipse Expedition

7 Day Accommodated/camping Tour - Departs Perth 16th April 2023 - Maximum of 12 participants

April 20, 2023 will mark a once-in-a-lifetime event. A rare hybrid Eclipse will occur over the coastal town of Exmouth attracting people from all over the world. With most eclipses occurring over the ocean, this will be only the third Hybrid eclipse to occur over land in the last 100 years.
On this 7-day trip we will travel from Perth towards Exmouth staying at Hotels/Motels in Kalbarri and Carnarvon while also visiting National parks and points of interest along the way. Just outside of Exmouth, we will stay at Bullara Station. This Station stay will give us a great launch spot from which to view the eclipse without getting us caught up in the crowds staying in Exmouth. After the eclipse we will travel back to Perth, stopping in Geraldton.



Pilbara Reef and Ranges Expedition

12 Day Accommodated Tour Departs - Perth 29th April 2023 - Maximum of 12 participants

Good summer rains in the north will ensure 2023 offers excellent wildlife and botanical highlights in the Pilbara. Head north of WA for seabird colonies on coral islands, marine life, coral reefs, and beautiful gorges. Discover the Abrolhos Islands, Shark Bay, Ningaloo Reef and Karijini National Park on this 13 day fully accommodated expedition.

Kimberley Wonders Expedition

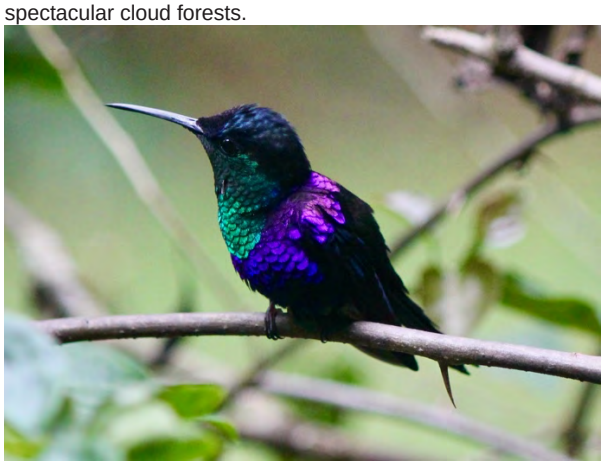
13 Day Easy-Camping Tour– Departs Kununurra 28th July 2023 - Maximum of 12 participants

Enjoy a wonderful outback experience as we discover Kimberley's wildlife, spectacular outback scenery, and many wonderfully refreshing waterholes as we explore Purnululu N.P, the many gorges of the Gibb River Rd plus Home Valley and Drysdale River Stations.

Costa Rica Wildlife Safari

17 Day Accommodated Tour – Departs San Jose 25th October 2023 - Maximum of 12 participants

Costa Rica has it all. We will explore mangroves, riverways and rainforests starting in the tropical coastal lowlands. Moving further inland, the landscape will change to a more temperate ecosystem rich in a different set of birds, plants and wildlife. Lastly, we will visit Costa Rica's volcanic highlands where we will be amazed by the spectacular cloud forests.



Contact us for further information on these tours and details of our full 2023 natural history expedition program.
Ph: 1800 676 016 or 08 9330 6066 - Web: www.coateswildlifetours.com.au - Email: info@coateswildlifetours.com.au