



Understanding
Our Natural World
Est. 1880

Field Nats News No 370



Newsletter of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc. Editor: Joan Broadberry 03 9846 1218
Telephone 03 9877 9860
Founding editor: Dr Noel Schleiger

1 Gardenia St. Blackburn 3130 www.fncv.org.au
Newsletter email: joan.broadberry@gmail.com
(Office email: admin@fncv.org.au)

Reg. No. A0033611X

Office Hours: Monday and Tuesday 10 am - 4 pm

February 2026

From the President

Welcome to 2026 and another year of FNCV activities. I hope that you all enjoyed a pleasant and productive festive season. Once again, as we commence a new year, we need to consider the election of a new Council to run the Club so please mark the Annual General Meeting to be held on May 3rd in your calendars.

The November excursion to Cosstick Reserve did not turn up a large number of invertebrates but it was very pleasing to see a Red-lined Gumtree Hopper, not often recorded. *Eurymelops rubrovittata*. (Photo 1.) Report pages 9-10.



Photo 1. Red-lined Gumtree Hopper, *Eurymelops rubrovittata* at Cosstick Reserve

There has been a notable absence of invertebrates in my garden and in the bush sites I have recently visited. Nevertheless, I did have an unpleasant wildlife encounter of the expensive kind involving the native Black House Ant, *Ochetellus glaber*, which set up home in the switchboard of my house. All of the circuit breakers started dropping out at variable intervals requiring some very expensive repairs and limited pest control measures. (Photo 2.)

Another interesting wildlife experience was the emergence of six stag beetles comprising three males and three females, from a small *Eucalyptus* log in the garden. (Photo 3) —see page 4



Photo 2. *Ochetellus glaber* (2.5 mm) nesting in a ruined circuit breaker

The due date for FNN 371 will be

Monday February 2nd.

Please use my email:
joan.broadberry@gmail.com

Index	Page
From the President	1, 4
Calendar of events —February 2026	2, 3
Members' news, photos & observations	3, 5
Australian Natural History Medallion	5
Mali Dunes —Survey and working bee.	6
Day Group: How to pick a good web browser. Local spiders.	7-8
Visit to Walter and Louisa Cosstick Wildflower Reserve	9-10
FNCV Christmas Party	10



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

All meetings are held at the FNCV Hall, 1 Gardenia St. Blackburn at 8 pm., unless otherwise indicated.
There may be changes to the program, for example due to extreme weather conditions or the unavailability of a speaker.
Please check with the FNCV website www.fncv.org.au or contact person for the most up-to-date information

February 2026

Thursday 29th January to Sunday 1st February - Fauna Survey Group Survey: Kilcunda Nature Conservation Reserve, Powlett River Surveying for small mammals, reptiles and shore birds. Camping for the weekend at the local campsite.

Prior bookings essential.

Contact: Deb Colville deb.colville@gmail.com 0411511746

Tuesday 3rd - Fauna Survey Group Meeting: Data training and discussion session: Victorian Biodiversity Atlas, Atlas of Living Australia, BirdWeather and more.

Speaker: Andrej Hohmann. Contact: Andrej Hohmann

andrej_hohmann@yahoo.com.au 0410 934 779

Sunday 8th – Invertebrate Study Group Excursion: Cardinia Reservoir 9.30am – 3pm. Registration essential.

For more details contact: Wendy Clark inverts@fncv.org.au

Sunday 8th – Juniors Group 10.30am-2pm Excursion: Point Leo & Hastings with the Dolphin Research Institute. Beach explorers rock-pool ramble and presentation with dolphin and whale artefacts. BYO lunch. **NOTE: This event is limited to 20 juniors members. Expressions of interest essential.** Email early to receive further details. Contact: Nicole Brown nicole.vickridge@gmail.com

Wednesday 11th – Invertebrate Study Group by Zoom Meeting: Discussions and members' photos. Recent observations and other items of interest.

Contact: Wendy Clark inverts@fncv.org.au

Wednesday 18th - Microscopy Group Practical Meeting: Compound and dissecting/zoom microscopes set up for your use. BYO specimens or view hundreds of our specimens. Freshwater pond samples, prepared and stained fish scales and sharkskin, determine the age of the fish through the scales. Make an imprint and view the stomata and guard cells of leaves. Videos of live microscopic organisms, learn temporary slide preparation and view instantly on screen through digital microscopes. Contact: Philippa Burgess 0409 866 389

Thursday 19th – Botany Group Meeting: Play as Ecology: Understanding children's encounters with the Natural World.

Speaker: Zoe Davis, Master of Science in Forestry, PhD candidate, Melbourne University. Zoe's research looks at the intersection between biodiversity, exposure to green space and childhood development, health and well-being.

Contact: Philippa Burgess 0409 866 389

Sunday 22nd – Invertebrate Study Group Excursion: Blackburn - Tree Trunk Dwellers, Wasps and other interesting invertebrates 3.30pm-5.30pm. Registration essential. For more details contact: Wendy Clark inverts@fncv.org.au

Monday 23rd – Thursday 26th - Marine Research Group Fieldwork: Intertidal survey. Early morning meeting times

Our permits and access to most of our survey areas require that we don't take untrained members on our surveys. Previous experience or attendance of an induction session is mandatory prior to being able to attend any MRG field work. Location: Portland area. Please register using this link for exact location details: <https://forms.gle/u753vqztRq4xd6KW9>

Contact: Leon Altoff 0428 669 773; marine@fncv.org.au

(Continued on page 3)



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 2)

Monday 23rd FNCV Council Meeting 7.30pm. Apologies and agenda items to Wendy Gare admin@fncv.org.au

Tuesday 24th – Day Group Meeting: 10.30am coffee and a chat, speaker 11am. *“A Lift of the Veil, if only by ever so little,” that has hidden the Ediacaran world.* Speaker: Dennis Rice. Contact: Joan Broadberry joan.broadberry@gmail.com

Wednesday 25th – Geology Group Meeting: *Hydrodynamics in Arid Landscapes: Modelling the shorelines of Lake Eyre*
Speaker: Thomas Faraon, PhD student, School of Geography, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, University of Melbourne.
Contact: Ken Griffiths geology@fncv.org.au

Diary date: The botany group is planning an excursion to the Royal Botanical Gardens in their new ‘drought proof’ arid/dry area surrounding Guilfoyle’s volcano. It is to be in the first two weeks of March. There will be a cost of \$9 –\$10.
Contact: Philippa Burgess 0409 866 389

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.

Tribute to Murray Haby (1945–2025)

It is with sadness that we note the passing of Murray Haby, a Long-term Member of the FNCV, on 1 December 2025. He was 80 years of age.

Murray joined the FNCV in December 1984. In 1988 he was appointed FNCV delegate to the Gould League of Victoria. He also was a regular proof-reader for *The Victorian Naturalist* between 1996 and 2011.

The Club extends its sympathy to Murray’s family.

EXCITING FIND FROM FNCV’S FACEBOOK PAGE

Recently posted/shared, an amazing find of a Blind Snake from Wagga Wagga, that could be extremely significant to herpetology and museums.

Below, a few postings:

Original post: *Seeking an ID of this worm-like creature found whilst digging between 0.5-1m below the soil surface near Wagga Wagga NSW. It is 20-30cm in length. Thanks! Anonymous.*

*There’s a growing suspicion that you may have stumbled upon a very significant specimen. Are you able to take closer photos of the head, from above and the side? I note the Australian Museum has been in touch ... If it does prove to be a rediscovery of *Anilius batillus* after more than a century, closer images of its very distinctive head shape may confirm it.* Steve Wilson

*This is indeed a very interesting specimen. The head shape, what can be seen of it, is very suspicious. This could be the first sighting of *Anilius batillus* since the type was collected in 1874 from an unspecified locality somewhere near the vicinity of Wagga Wagga.*
Glenn Shea

A lot of interest from respected herpers. John Harris

Thanks to George Paras for bringing this to our attention.

His comment:

One of the most amazing zoological finds, shared fortuitously on our FNCV Facebook page.



(Continued from page 1)

Close examination of vegetation often reveals unsuspected phenomena as I discovered during a weeding session on December 11th. A blade of grass revealed a ladybird, *Coccinella transversalis*, apparently stuck to the vegetation. It was moving backwards and forwards in spasms and was standing over a cocoon which had incorporated its feet in the silk threads. (The wasp larva probably emerged a day earlier.) I have seen this phenomenon on numerous occasions but rarely get a chance to study it more closely. The cocoon belongs to the braconid wasp *Dinocampus coccinellae* which injects an egg into the beetle. A wasp larva then develops inside the beetle feeding on haemolymph and body tissues. About three weeks later, the beetle comes to rest on vegetation and the wasp larva exits the body and weaves a cocoon between the legs. The beetle, now paralysed, moves and jerks involuntarily and seems to be protecting the wasp pupa in its cocoon. On December 21st the wasp emerged from the cocoon. The beetle in this case did not survive although it has been recorded that up to 25% do survive the invasive experience.



Photo 3. Male Stag beetle *Ryssonotus nebulosus*, just emerged

The control of the beetle by the wasps is achieved via an *Iflavirus* in a manner similar to the control of insects by pathogenic fungi. It is yet another example of the persistence and universality of symbiotic relationships. (Photos 4-6.)



Photo 4. *Coccinella transversalis* "guarding" the wasp cocoon under the control of an *Iflavirus*.



Photo 5. The opened cocoon



Photo 6. *Dinocampus coccinellae*, just emerged from its cocoon.

The Invertebrate Study Excursion to Cranbourne Botanic Gardens was not remarkably productive for invertebrates overall but it was encouraging to see a Southern Brown Bandicoot, working its way through the leaf litter. (Photo 7.)

In early January I was once again treated to the annual and gruesome spectacle of Grey Butcherbirds feeding the remains of captured black rats to their fledged young. The adult bird had pushed the rat forcefully into the fork of a branch and proceeded to efficiently pull it apart with its hooked beak. (Photo 8.)



Photo 7. Brown Bandicoot, *Isoodon obesulus obesulus*, at Cranbourne Botanic Gardens Photo: Faye Campbell



Photo 8. Grey Butcherbird, *Cracticus torquatus*, tearing muscle from a black rat and disembowelling it to feed its young fledgling. The rat's head is jammed securely into a fork in the branch of a Tea Tree.

Max Campbell All photos M. Campbell unless otherwise indicated

Australian Natural History Medallion Monday 10th November



Congratulations to Roger Thomas who was awarded the 2025 Australian Natural History Medallion for his contribution to Public Education, Conservation, Birds and Botany. Roger was nominated by the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat of which he is a life member. A large group from Ballarat attended the event. The medallion was presented by Associate Professor Rob Day, representing the Royal Society of Victoria.

Roger's presentation was titled, 'Ballarat's Nature Noted: a retrospective of Nature Writing over four decades.' His talk focused on his widely-beloved 'Nature Notes' column in the Ballarat Courier which he has written for 41 years.

Thank you to those who set up the hall, prepared the delicious buffet dinner and helped with the catering and cleaning up: Barbara Burns, Philippa Burgess, Judith Sise, Ray Gibson and Carol Page. Thanks also to Maryse Hermence who took photos.



Max Campbell, Roger Thomas and Rob Day

Photo: John Harris

A detailed report will appear in a future edition of *The Victorian Naturalist*.

WANTED TO EXCHANGE OR PURCHASE:

INDIVIDUAL ISSUES AS PUBLISHED:

***The Southern Science Record* 1883–1886**

&

The Victorian Naturalist

January 1884–March 1893 (various issues),
September 1935, January 1937,
January 1980–Oct 1982 (various issues),
December 1983, Aug 1985, Jun & Aug 1986,
February 1993, August 1996, October 1998,
December 1999, December 2004,
January 2013–December 2014,
February 2021.

Needed to complete a set of the entire publication from first issue to last.

Please contact:

Dr Mark R Cabouret
Level 4

No. 2 Collins Street
MELBOURNE VICTORIA 3000
0476 234 671

Email: heathercabouret@yahoo.com.au

SEANA Autumn Camp

The next South Eastern Australia Naturalist Association (SEANA) get-together will be held on the weekend of Friday 27th—Sunday 29th March 2026. It will be hosted by The Geelong Field Naturalists Club.

Apologies, an earlier (wrong) date was mentioned in FNN 369 p14.

The first circular has been sent out to all those on the SEANA mailing list. It includes an overview of planned activities, guest speakers and a registration form which should be returned to the GFNC by 6th February 2026.

If you haven't been to a SEANA get-together and are not on their mailing list, please contact the FNCV office for a copy of the first circular.

**Thank you to all those who helped produce
FNN 370**
Joan Broadberry, Sally Bewsher & Wendy Gare

Mali Dunes Survey and working bee Cup Week November 2025

Andrej Hohmann will be writing a more detailed trip report sometime in the future. In the meantime, he has sent a short summary of what was achieved.

- towed three toilets
- worked two pitfall trap lines
- worked two funnel trap lines
- checked 3000+ tiles
- checked a dozen nest-boxes
- installed 30 nest-boxes
- put out 30 wildlife cameras
- dismantled old fencing
- picked up and stashed hundreds of rebar posts
- monitored dozens of Malleefowl mounds

Photos: Clockwise—checking nest-boxes, under tiles and funnel traps. Ray White initiated the first planting at Mali Dunes

Photos: Joan Broadberry



An interesting observation at Mali Dunes

Acacia entericarpa, Jumping Jack Wattle is a nationally endangered species of wattle found at Mali Dunes.

- July 2025, newly fenced wattle
- November 2025, four months later

The difference is evident once protection from browsing kangaroos is in place.

Photos: Mark Anderson





Day Group

How to pick a good Web-browser! Local Spiders. Speaker: Ian Moodie

Ian opened by telling us that he is not an arachnid specialist, but his fascinating presentation, illustrated with superb images, introduced us to the basics of nearly 40 spiders. Astonishingly these were photographed in the local area over the last six months.

A spider is not classified as an insect. It has two body segments, not three, eight legs not six and many have eight eyes. Spiderlings, miniature spiders, hatch from eggs. Spiders are preyed upon by wasps. Ian's video graphically portrayed a spider being captured and dragged into a nest hole as food for the wasp's young. Below are some of the species described in his presentation.

Huntsman spiders are often found inside houses, although in the bush they shelter under bark. There are over 90 species, including the beautiful Badge Huntsman, *Neosparassus sp.* The Daddy-long-legs *Pholcus phalangioides*, the Black House Spider, *Badumna insignis* and the White Tail Spider *Lampona cylindrata* are also familiar 'house' spiders, as is the Redback Spider, *Latrodectus hasselti*. Only the Redback has a dangerous bite but is not aggressive.

An unusual image was of the nocturnal Leaf Curling Spider, *Phonognatha graeffei* making its home inside a plastic wrapper. Garden Orb-weavers *Eriophora sp.* are often beautifully coloured. Some take their web down at daybreak and rebuild it in the evening. The Golden Orb-weaver *Nephila edulis*, most often encountered in the bush, spins a large, golden web. The male is much smaller than the female and is often eaten after mating. The female St Andrews Cross Spider *Argiope keyserlingi*, is known for the zigzag pattern of silk that forms a cross in the centre of its web. She sits in the middle of the cross holding her legs in pairs. The Jewel or Christmas Spider, *Austracantha minax*, is a colony former.

Less well known is the rare Two-spined Spider, *Poecilopachys australasia*, the Scorpion-tailed Spider, *Arachnura higginsi*, the lovely Enamelled Spider, *Plebs bradleyi* and the Whip Spider *Ariamnes colubrinus*. An amazing local spider, known as the Wrap-around Spider, *Dolophones sp.* is wonderfully camouflaged, hiding during the day in plain sight. Wolf spiders from the family Lycosidae do not make a web but hunt on the ground at night. Their eyes shine brightly in torch light. Fishing Spiders, also known as Jesus Spiders, *Dolomedes sp.* are able to use the surface tension of water to walk on the surface of ponds.

Jumping spiders are the largest family of spiders in the world, (Salticidae). Most are small with eight eyes, two being very large. They hunt by leaping on their prey which can be bigger than themselves. Ian showed a number of beautiful images including the Jovial Jumping Spider *Apricia jovialis*, Garden Jumping Spider *Opisthoncus parcedentatus*, Bronze Hopper *Helpis minitabunda* and Frost's Jumping Spider *Jotus frosti*.

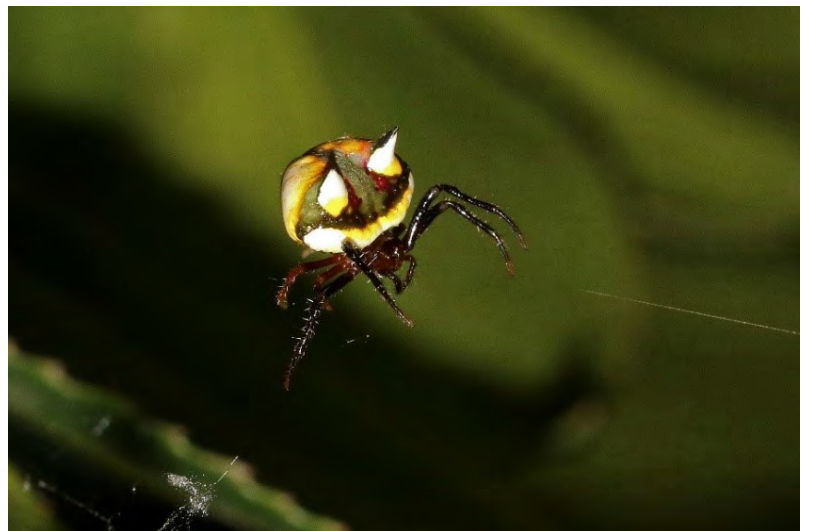
Peacock Jumping Spiders are tiny and are mostly overlooked, but there are more than 100 species and they can be found in our local parks. Males are much more colourful than females. *Continued p10*



Garden Orb Weaver *Eriophora sp.*



Leaf Curling Spider, *Phonognatha graeffei*



Two-spined Spider, *Poecilopachys Australasia*

Continued from p9.

Examples are the Flying Peacock Jumping Spider *Maratus volans* and Dunn's Peacock Jumping Spider *Maratus pavonis*. The ant-mimicking Jumping Spider, *Ligonipes sp.* has adopted a special disguise.

The Rufus Net-casting or Ogre-faced Spider *Asianopsis subrufa* has a unique way of hunting. At night it spins a net of elastic silk which it holds in its front legs ready to throw over its prey, which is then quickly wrapped in silk and immobilised.

Who knew there were so many spiders sharing our parks and gardens? Ian's presentation finished with even more species including Lynx Spiders, Crab Spiders, the Trapdoor Spider and the inimitable Bird-dropping Spider.

This was an outstanding Day Group presentation. Ian's photography is of a professional standard. His talk provided a wealth of information and the fact that he concentrated on local spiders made his presentation especially relevant. Ian is an accomplished speaker who, with a relaxed, light touch entertained as well as instructed. I have received much feedback as to how enjoyable the Day Group audience found his talk.

Mega thanks to Ian for his continued support of the Day Group program, including excursions, talks and his help with this report.

All images were taken by Ian.

Joan Broadberry



Wrap-around Spider, *Dolophones sp.*



Peacock Jumping Spider

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

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

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.

**Advertising in the
Field Nats News**

VERY REASONABLE RATES

Contact Wendy in the Field
Nats Office

admin@fncv.org.au

9877 9860

(Mon –Tues 10 am—4 pm)

Visit to Walter and Louisa Cosstick Wildflower Reserve, Maryborough, 22-11-2025

On 22nd of November 2025 ten people from the FNCV travelled from Melbourne to meet members of the Maryborough Field Naturalists Club for a joint visit to the Walter and Louisa Cosstick Wildflower Reserve. The reserve of 3.7 hectares was bequeathed to the FNCV by the Cosstick family in 1959. The visit was a picnic survey, to check tiles, nest-boxes and the general state of the reserve. The area was parched, with few wildflowers evident as the Maryborough area had experienced a dry spring. The ten members from the FNCV were led by Max and Faye Campbell. Barbara Burns, Joan Broadberry, Ken Griffiths, Ray Gibson, Ray White, Andrej Hohmann, Philippa Burgess and Liz Denman attended. The members from Maryborough were John Spoth - Vice President, Jan Gray, Jack Gray, Barbara Thomson - Secretary, Jenny Blackman and Sue Lloyd. Sue is in the process of compiling a booklet with photos of the plants in the reserve.

NESTBOXES: Ray Gibson, Ray White and Andrej Hohmann checked 11 nest boxes and installed three extras. Sightings were: two Sugar Gliders (Kreff's Glider), an Owllet Nightjar on a nest containing two eggs and one Common Brushtail Possum.



Ray Gibson and Ray White checking nest-boxes. Photo: J. Broadberry



Common Brushtail Possum in large log-nestbox. Photo: Andrej Hohmann

TILES: The only reptile found sheltering under a tile was an Eastern Large Striped Skink, (previously *Ctenotus robustus*). The tiles were donated/salvaged from renovation of the Port Phillip Eco centre, St Kilda botanical gardens. These can provide additional shelter for rock-loving reptiles, invertebrates and hopefully even common dunnarts. The 'two Rays', Gibson and White, helped Andrej lay out 50 extra roofing tiles in a 10 x 5 grid.

OTHER: Several Garden Skinks were spotted including one under wood near the southern boundary. A Common Blue-tongue Lizard was also located. The two surprises of the survey were the presence of the Common Blue-tongue and the Common Brushtail Possum. 'Common' in the name for both these species is a bit of a misnomer when it comes to the Maryborough area as neither are particularly common in Box-ironbark Forests.



Jewel Beetle Photo: J. Broadberry

There were also many insects buzzing around including: Painted Lady Butterflies, Jewel Beetles, a beautiful Katydid and lots of Spiny or Christmas Spiders.

NEW SIGN: During the visit we were able to discuss with the Maryborough Club members the plan to replace the existing sign with a new one which includes the names of both clubs. The funding was allocated in April 2025 from the FNCV Environment Fund.

MINE SHAFT RESCUE: An eagle-eyed naturalist spotted a Blue-tongue Lizard at the bottom of the relic mine shaft in the middle of the reserve. The mine shaft is fenced to prevent kangaroos and wallabies falling in but the fence does not reach completely to the ground. The shaft is a sheer drop of at least three metres. Luckily Andrej had a long-handled insect net with him and, with the help of a banana as bait, was eventually able to scoop up the lizard and lift it out. As the reptile was alert, responsive and appeared in good health, if maybe a little skinny, the decision was made to release it. It was carried several hundred metres away to a place with fallen timber available for shelter.



Andrej with his insect net, fishing for the Blue-tongue Lizard Photo: Ray Gibson.

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

ANDREJ: Andrej Hohmann arrived late and stayed after the rest of the Melbourne and Maryborough group had left. He reported that:

“I walked the boundary to redo some Covram assessments to see the change year on year. On the southern boundary, I came across this large old tree next to some she oaks. The she oaks themselves are an interesting record, as I think they are Bulokes. I also checked the side of the property abutting the neighbouring house with their gazania infestation. I only found a couple of plants, and I removed those. So great that the infestation is limited! Either my efforts from last year’s removal were still effective, or the dry winter held them back, or the Maryborough field nats might have removed more plants.”

For the next visit, we should consider the following:

- Place the visit in the FNCV calendar sooner, so it is on people's radar
- Pick up rubbish and remove weeds along the highway road easement. Both rubbish and weeds are spilling onto the property.
- Install more nestboxes
- Fill in or improve the fencing of the mine shaft.



Photographing invertebrates and plants
Photo: J. Broadberry

Ray Gibson, Andrej Hohmann and Joan Broadberry – Edited Barbara Burns

FNCV Christmas Party

FNCV members and friends came together on Saturday 6th December to celebrate another busy and productive year. It was lovely to welcome nearly 40 members and friends from the FNCV's many Special Interest Groups.

Philippa Burgess, Barbara Burns and Judith Sise led the team of volunteers who shopped, gave the hall a wonderful festive look, sold raffle tickets and made serving and cleaning up so easy. Thanks to those who prepared an absolutely delicious array of sweets and salads. Special thanks to Ray Gibson who worked hard to get the BBQ functioning and then went on to do the cooking. Gary Presland prepared a PowerPoint presentation, highlighting some of the club's activities over 2025.

John Harris ran the night and the traditional Christmas raffle, with donated prizes, which raised \$215 for club funds. Everyone seemed delighted with their winnings. To sum up, it was a fun night with a great party atmosphere.



Photos: Sally Bewsher