



Understanding
Our Natural World
Est. 1880

Field Nats News No 345



Newsletter of The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc.
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October 2023

From the President

Welcome to the October FNN. Spring is certainly showing its colours now and *Kennedia prostrata* plants (photo 1) are spreading their green foliage and beautiful red flowers across the leaf litter in my garden. More and more insects are appearing, notably caterpillars and flies. The true bugs are also now out in force.

We have a rich hemipteran fauna in Australia and a close examination in most gardens will reveal a significant number of them (photos 2 – 10). Now that the weather has improved a little, it was encouraging to see many of them appearing again this spring. A few gardeners may beg to disagree of course. Aphids have rapidly populated their preferred food plants and many have already been attacked by parasitic wasps; their brown, mummified bodies can be seen amongst the hordes. The larvae of hover flies are also active and will account for many more aphids before the season is over. The predatory larvae of both green and brown lacewings are also now on the prowl. The former also prey on the nymphs of Passion Vine Hoppers. The ova of brown lacewings and hover flies can be seen on plants wherever there are populations of aphids.

The due date for FNN 346 will be, as always, the first Tuesday of the month, **Tuesday 3rd October 2023.**

Please use

joan.broadberry@gmail.com



Photo 1. *Kennedia prostrata*, a clear sign that spring has arrived.

The *Neuroctenus grandis* nymphs (photo 7) were found in large groups under the bark of fallen logs near Yellingbo. There were no live adults present but there was a broad range of

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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.*

October 2023

Monday 2nd - Fungi Group Meeting: *Members' night and annual fungi foray plans.*

Come along to discuss next year's activities.

Contact: Melvin Xu fungifncv@gmail.com 0410 522 533

Tuesday 3rd - Fauna Survey Group Meeting: *Song and dance for Barmah Australasian*

Bitterns. Speaker: Bruce Wehner, Planning Officer in the Northern Victoria Regional Operations Team, Parks Victoria. Contact: Sally Bewsher 03 9752 1418

Friday 13th to Monday 16th - Fauna Survey Group Excursion: *Threatened Fauna Survey*

at Powlett River: Surveying for small mammals, reptiles, bats and shore birds.

Prior bookings essential. Contact: Andrew Constantinou 0425 752 016 andrewconstantinou8@gmail.com

Sunday 15th - Whitehorse Spring Festival: 10 am—4 pm Whitehorse Civic Centre, 399 Whitehorse Rd Nunawading. The

FNCV has a stall and volunteers will be needed on the day. Please contact FNCV office administrator,

Wendy Gare admin@fncv.org.au

Wednesday 18th - 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.* Regular workshops are held on slide preparation and dissecting tool making. BYO specimens or view any of our many botany, marine, freshwater and invertebrates specimens. Contact: Philippa Burgess 0409 866 389

Thursday 19th – Botany Group Meeting: *Members' night—lists and pictures from the September excursion.*

Contact: Ken Griffiths botany@fncv.org.au

Sunday 22nd - Terrestrial Invertebrates Group Excursion: *Baluk Willam Reserve, Belgrave.*

Bookings essential via email. Contact: Wendy Clark wendy.empathy@optusnet.com.au

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

Tuesday 24th – Day Group Meeting: *What drives variations in Australia's climate? Including discussion of el nino and la nina.*

Speaker: Terry Hart, meteorologist. 10.30 am. coffee and a chat. Speaker 11 am. Visitors always welcome.

Contact: Joan Broadberry joan.broadberry@gmail.com

Wednesday 25th – Geology Group Meeting: *New data and a new model for the Stavely Arc and Grampians*

Speaker: Ross Cayley of Geological Survey of Victoria, by video presentation in the hall.

The Geological Survey's website is well worth a look <https://gsv.vic.gov.au/> Contact: Ken Griffiths geology@fncv.org.au

Friday 27th – Juniors Group—No Meeting

Saturday 28th – Juniors Group Excursion: *Night walk to listen for spring-calling frogs.* We will be on private property

near Tooradin / Koo Wee Rup. **Bookings in advance essential!** Contact: Adam Hosken adamhosken@gmail.com

Attendees are requested to register for excursions so that they can be contacted if there is a change in arrangements. Registering also means that the leader is better able to plan activities.



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:

Dr. Eddie Pang, Peter Crowcroft, Oliver Crowcroft, Hugh Crowcroft, Ellen Doxey, Christopher O'Day, Tayla O'Day, James Peake and Caelan Rouse



SOUTH EAST AUSTRALIA NATURALISTS ASSOCIATION (SEANA)

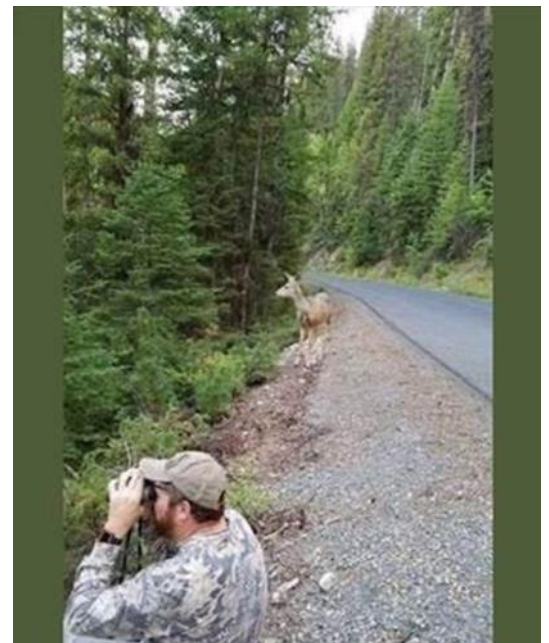
AUTUMN 2024—YOUR HELP NEEDED

SEANA meets twice a year, autumn and spring, with the get-together (sometimes called a camp) organised by one of the twenty member clubs. This creates a wonderful opportunity to meet and learn from fellow naturalists as we explore new areas and share the things we love.

The FNCV is hosting the 2024 autumn get-together which will be held on **Phillip Island** from **Friday 19th—Monday 22nd April 2024**. This will take place over two half days and two full days. Friday afternoon, all Saturday and Sunday and Monday morning. A welcome BBQ on Friday evening and a gala dinner on Saturday evening are planned. There will be speakers on all three nights. A variety of excursions will be offered Saturday—Monday. Going on past events, we are likely to attract over 100 field naturalists.

A sub-committee from council—Philippa Burgess, Max Campbell, Ken Griffiths, Joan Broadberry and Barbara Burns, has been formed and venues are already booked. Participants will organise their own accommodation.

It is still early days, but we are going to need a lot of help during the get-together. Please add the dates to your diary. SIG leaders are requested not to schedule any activities for those days. If you are able to volunteer please contact Philippa Burgess 0409 866 389 or the FNCV office. This is a whole club event. We look forward to hearing from you.



FNCV Facebook report:
34,750 followers.

Correction FNN 344 p4.

Eddie Pang spoke to the Botany Group, (not Geology) on 20th July 2023.

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.

DIARY DATE:

The 2023 **Australian Natural History Medallion** has been awarded to Maureen Christie for her contribution to Conservation of Shorebirds.

The presentation will be made to Maureen at the FNCV Hall in Blackburn, on **November 20th 2023**. **Details FNN 346**

**Thank you to all those who helped
produce FNN 345**

Joan Broadberry, Wendy Gare and
Sheina Nicholls.

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

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Photo 2. Aphids at Blackburn Lake Sanctuary. The long white eggs of their predators can be seen on the flowers. A few brown “mummified” aphids attest to the predation by tiny wasps.

nymphal instars. They are about 10-12 mm long and dorsoventrally flattened; well adapted to a life under bark. Often referred to as Flat Bugs (Family Aradidae), they are thought to be microphagous (eat fungi) and are found worldwide. Australia has a rich biodiversity of the group.

Predatory assassin bugs (Reduviidae) are once again moving around in the foliage and leaf litter, impaling their prey with their haustella. The deadly feast of life, as ever, goes on in the undergrowth.

There will be plenty of interesting invertebrates to see and photograph on TIG excursions which will commence on 24th September. I hope to see you there with your cameras.

Max Campbell
All photos: Max Campbell



Photo 4. Spittle bugs at Blackburn Lake Sanctuary, *Philagra parva*, Aphrophoridae on *Goodenia ovata*



Photo 3. *Eriococcus* sp, Eriococcidae at Blackburn Lake Sanctuary adorning the eucalypt branches. These are normally attended by ants.



Photo 5. *Siphanta acuta*, Flatidae



Photo 6. *Scutiphora pedicellate*, Scuterellidae

Continued page 5.

Continued from page 4.



Photo 7. *Neuroctenus grandis* nymphs Aradidae



Photo 8. *Rayieria* sp, Miridae



Photo 9. *Matusca brevicornis*, Aldidae



Photo 10. Passion Vine Hopper *Scolytopa australis*, Ricaniidae

Vale Phil Ingamells (18 April 1947 – 25 August 2023)

The movement to protect Victoria’s natural environments has lost a firm friend, mentor and ally, with the death of Phillip Ingamells.

Phil played a critical role in protecting Victoria’s natural places and national parks, for which cause he was a tireless advocate. He was an eloquent speaker and his writing was both thoughtful and persuasive. With such expansive skills, and knowledge honed over the past two decades at VNPA and beyond, Phil played a key role in numerous park management plans.

Phil’s special love of Wilsons Prom compelled him to fend off development proposals in the 1990s and again in 2013. More recently, he pushed government to control the feral animals destroying the Alpine landscapes.

We all owe him a great debt of gratitude for his work. Nature in Victoria is better for his efforts and we are all the wiser.



Fauna Survey Group

Meeting, Tuesday 1st August. Speaker: Danielle Wallace, PhD student, Faculty of Veterinary and Agricultural Sciences, University of Melbourne, Chytrid Fungus and colour changes in endangered frogs.

Amphibian Chytrid fungus infects the skin of frogs and toads and has caused 200 extinctions globally. It infects the keratin components in the skin, and the sporangium ejects zoospores into the water and the infection spreads. In Australia the Mountain Mist Frog, Mt Glorious Day Frog, Northern Tinker Frog, Sharp-snouted Tree Frog, and 2 species of Gastric Brooding Frogs have gone extinct. Chytrid fungus is more severe at lower temperatures and dies above 26 degrees.

In Victoria, Alpine Tree Frogs *Litoria verreauxii alpine*, infected with Chytrid Fungus survived long enough to complete the first breeding cycle before dying. The infected frogs were found to have larger ovaries and produce more eggs. Males change colour when breeding, and infected males were found to be more colourful than the uninfected ones, and the UV chromophores increased. Detailed investigations of the calls of frogs using sonograms showed no changes in the calls of Alpine Tree Frogs that were infected, although changes have been observed in other species. The Alpine Tree Frog is listed as critically endangered in Victoria under the Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, and habitat protection is vital for conservation of the species.

Raymond Gibson



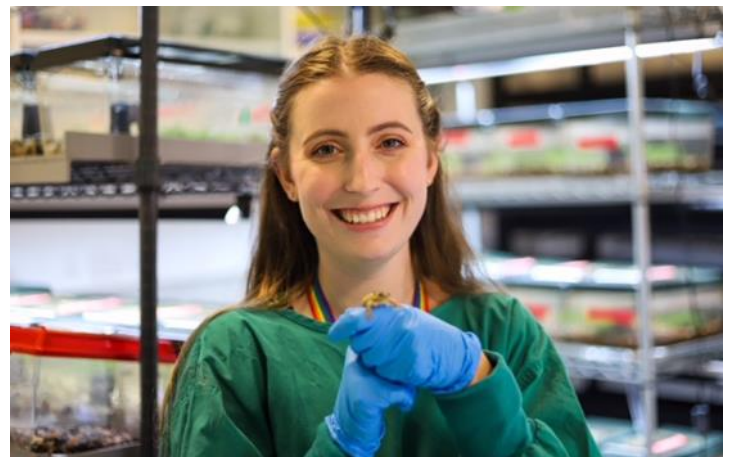
Photos:

Alpine Tree Frog
Photo: Danielle Wallace

Alpine Tree Frog in hand
Photo: Tharaka Deepal

Danielle Wallace in the lab
Photo: Tharaka Deepal

- The capture and handling of
- all animals on FNCV field
- trips is done strictly in ac-
- cordance with the Club's re-
- search permits.





Geology Group

The Activities of the Nunawading and District Lapidary Club Presented by Mike Quinn

Mike has had over 30 years experience with the Lapidary Group. The group was founded in 1967 and has over 200 members. Members ages range from 12 year olds to 97 year olds. Mike told us about the increasing interest in lapidary during the 1960s. There were many lapidary groups and there was much fossicking done throughout Victoria, generally in old quarry sites. Over the years with health and safety protocols much of this fossicking has been banned. There are few areas remaining where this type of fossicking can continue freely.

The shaping of the found rocks, minerals and gemstones is carried out in the group's club rooms. The results are produced through faceting, slicing and producing cabochons, a gem that is polished but not faceted.

The refractive index of the stone is important when considering the faceting proposed. The faceting creates an internal refraction where light comes in on desired angles, bouncing around and helping to create the "sparkle".

The primary grinding material for faceting is diamonds. Diamonds are also used for polishing. A 300 grit polishing disc starts the process, followed by 3,000 grit, then 8,000 grit, the final polishing requires 100,000 grit!

Photographs shown of the groups club rooms were very impressive. Rows of grinding machines, polishing machines and tumblers were present in their different rooms. Other activities that the members partake in include opal cutting, rock tumbling, silversmithing, stone carving, bone carving or scrimshaw, the making of chain mail, mineral and fossil collecting through fossicking, and finding agates in creeks.

The tumbling of stones is certainly a long process. Rocks are tumbled with grit and water for up to 10 days per grit stage, this is repeated up to 4 times changing the coarseness of the grit at each level. The machines are going day and night for weeks. They have noticed the rising cost of electricity has affected their enthusiasm for tumbling stones.

Members of the club can gain instruction and attend workshops on all the different aspects of Lapidary and the machinery required to produce their final masterpiece.

All this work the members are engaged in culminates in an Annual Club Show during October. There are competitions at club, state and national levels.

Within the Lapidary group there also exists a separate Mineral Group, meeting monthly.

Mike also covered a few sneaky tricks performed by jewellery manufacturers whereby a very thin slice of Ruby can be attached to a clear quartz block giving the impression that it is a complete large Ruby.

Mike set up a wonderful display of raw rocks, with examples following the steps to produce a faceted, silver mounted stone. He had many very interesting rocks and minerals, several reacting with a UV light. Colours included neon green, pink and purples.

A nice story Mike related was that of how he first attended the Lapidary Group. His 12-year-old son had been attending with his father-in-law. Mike needed to step up one month to cover for his father in law. Mike then began his 30 year love of lapidary and geology and his 12-year-old son is now a geologist!

A very enlightening evening with a great range of pertinent questions from a large gathering of interested audience members.

Philippa Burgess

Nunawading and District Lapidary Club Presents Whitehorse Gem Show



Gems Jewellery Minerals & Fossils Sales and Display
City of Nunawading Jewellery Competition
Huge range of hand-crafted Jewellery, Rocks, Minerals & Fossils
Gemstone & Faceting Rough Tools & Equipment
Tours of clubrooms—Light lunches —Lucky dip



Saturday 14th October 10 am to 5 pm—Sunday 15th October 10 am to 4 pm
Last entry 3:30 pm

Whitehorse Community Hub, 96 Springvale Road, Nunawading
(Parking access via Esdale Street)

Admission Prices: All entry \$5, children under 12 with adult, free. No Concessions

Contact: Mal Caffin 0419 117 488 Mike Quinn 0409 091 520 Greg Lewin 0412 923 844



Microscopical Group

Meeting Wednesday 16th of August.
*Practical instructional meeting on the making of
 microscopy tools and discussion of their use*

Max Campbell and Philippa Burgess

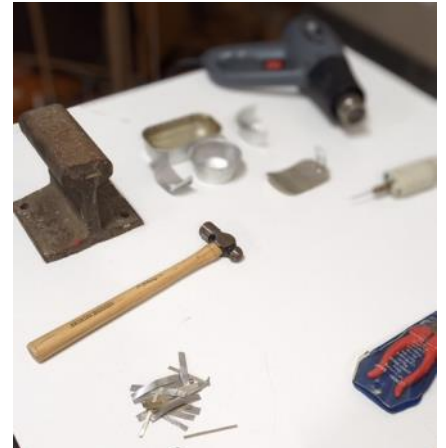
Members were instructed on the methods and steps required to make several different types of microscopy tools. An impressive and vast array of materials and all required equipment was provided.

With pre-cut pencil sized pieces of dowel, using table vices, mini drills, pencil sharpeners and sandpaper the dowel pieces were prepared to accept their inserted and glued pins, or probes.

Straight probes and angled probes were made, a vital instrument required in our microscopy work.

Several types of spatulas were also made using the dowel pieces. Strips of aluminium were cut and/or rounded to produce the spatulas. After using a fine saw on the cut end of the dowel, the spatula piece was inserted into the groove.

Following this we used a heat gun and heat shrink plastic tubing to encase the dowel and aluminium piece. This created a permanent and strong support for the spatula and was an extra fun part of the process. These can be bent with pliers at the end, after drilling a hole. This serves as "lifter" for transferring specimens to the microscope slide.



All members who attended were very enthusiastic, really enjoying the steps involved and all became very proficient at tool making. Most people made at least three tools each. We will be using these in future during meetings whilst making slides and viewing live specimens.

Philippa Burgess





Day Group

Lichens, beauty in miniature.

Speaker Dr Kathleen Ralston

Lichens are very tolerant of temperature extremes and have colonised the world from the arctic to Antarctica. There are an estimated 20,000 lichens worldwide and 2,500 species of lichen in Australia with 1,000 being endemic. They grow on rocks, trees, leaves, metal, glass, fences, gravestones and more. However, there are “lichen deserts”, in large cities where pollution prevents them from growing.

Copyright Merle McIntyre

Kathleen’s interest in lichens began when she lived in Breamlea. One day, while walking along the coast, she looked up and saw a beautiful lichen on a branch. It was similar to one drawn by her sister-in-law Merle McIntyre. (Photo right.) She contacted the Melbourne Herbarium and asked for help with identification. A researcher based in Canberra offered to work with her. Kathleen travelled to Canberra every six weeks, taking the specimens she had collected with her. Her specimens became part of the Herbarium’s collection and Kathleen was duly appointed as an Honorary Researcher, delightfully known as a ‘lichenologist’.



Lichens are commonly found in three forms:

Crustose: Crustose lichens form a crust on the substrate on which they live. They are found on trees and rocks. Two examples are: *Chrysothrix candelaris*, a bright yellow lichen, commonly found on tree bark in suburbia (image right) and *Caloplaca marina* an orange lichen seen, worldwide, on coastal rocks such as those at Tidal River. On the lower edge of the rock a black lichen grows, as *Caloplaca* cannot withstand salt water.



Chrysothrix candelaris



Filiose: Filiose lichen have a leafy appearance with cup-like fruiting bodies which are important for identification. Image left from Flora of Australia, Volume 54 p215 *Cladonia pleurota* highlights its beautiful green cups,

Fruticose: Fruticose lichens are shrubby in form that often grow on the ground. An example is the unusual *Metus conglomeratus* with its fruiting bodies on top looking like little hats. Image right.



Metus conglomeratus
Photo: H. Lepp

A fascinating characteristic of lichens is that they are a mutualistic, symbiotic association between two organisms, made up of 90% fungus and 10% alga. Each one cannot survive without the other. Some aspects of the relationship between the two organisms are not yet completely understood.

Most ascospores are just one or two cells. They're termed **simple** when one-celled, and **1-septate** when two-celled.

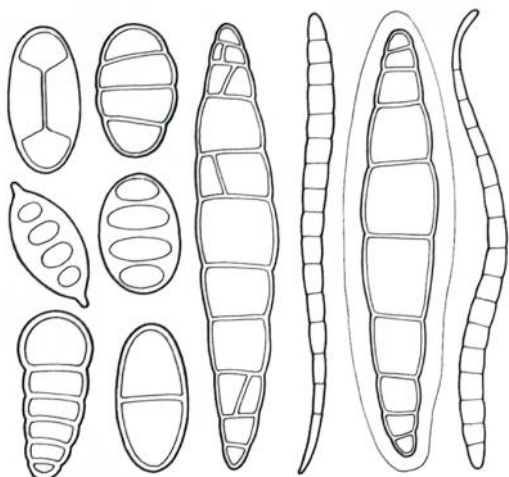


Megalospora gompholoma habit. The genus was named for its large spores. 5 mm

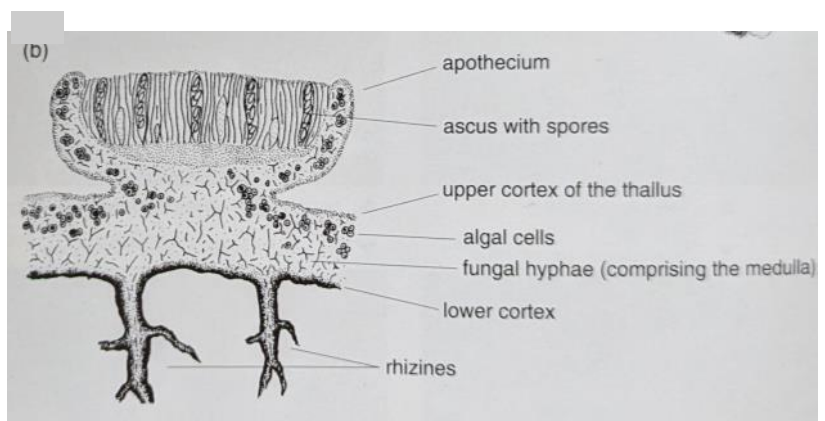


Megalospora gompholoma mature ascus with 1-septate ascospore. 50 µm

Lichens don't have leaves or true roots and their rhizines are only used to anchor them to the substrate. The fruiting bodies (apothecia) are very important in identifying lichens. They are usually cup-shaped and hold the spores. The spores are very small and of different shapes and are vital to identifying lichens to species level. Image left.



A sampler of ascospores of typical shapes and sizes (various magnifications).



Cross section of a lichen showing the thallus, the apothecium fruiting body, and rhizines which anchor the lichen to the substrate.

Image: Kathleen Ralston

continued p10

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Lichens regenerate when it rains and droplets fall into the fruiting bodies. The spores are splashed out and eventually form a new lichen thallus. The spores have to land on the right alga to reproduce. Some species appear differently when they are dry compared to when they are wet. *Condropsis semiviridis* is rolled up when dry, but is flat and green when wet.

Kathleen's passion for lichens has led to a species, collected when she and her husband were travelling in arid Australia, being named after her, *Neofuscelia ralstoniana*.

Her presentation finished with a series of images illustrating that lichens are indeed beauties in miniature. Left to right below, these included: *Eremastrella crysallifera*—the surface has the appearance of crystal; the gorgeous *Teloschistes chrysophthalmus* with its fringed, orange fruiting bodies; the well-known lichen that grows on trees, Old Man's Beard *Usnea molluscula*; *Menegazzia myriotrema* which has holes throughout the thallus and *Xanthoparmelia mougeotina* growing on a bottle.



Eremastrella crysallifera—from *A practical guide to soil lichens*, p38



Teloschistes chrysophthalmus from *Flora of Australia*, Volume 59



Usnea molluscula Old Man's Beard



Menegazzia myriotrema from *Lichens of rainforest in Tasmania*, p84



Xanthoparmelia mougeotina
Photo: R.Cooper, from *Flora of Australia* Volume 55, p197

This was a very enjoyable and instructional talk covering new ground for many of us. It was much appreciated that Kathleen encouraged her audience to ask questions and take part in the discussion throughout her presentation.

I will certainly be noticing lichens in a way I have never done before. My view of roofing tiles, which I now understand are often covered in beautiful lichens, has completely changed.

On behalf of the August Day Group I would like to thank Kathleen for being part of our program and for generously allowing FNN to publish a number of the images used in her talk.

Special thanks to Garry Presland for his help in setting up the presentation.

Joan Broadberry

Extracts from SIG reports given at the last FNCV Council Meeting

Botany Group: Meeting Thursday 17th August:

Brett Mifsud showed us numerous giant forest trees of Victoria and Tasmania. Unfortunately, some of the biggest were evidenced only by their stumps. Early black and white photographs survive as records. In Victoria, greater than 85 m in height, or 12.5m in girth (circumference) defined a forest giant for protection - but this standard was too high to save many. Of course, big old Eucalypts develop hollows for wild life. Some trees less tall nevertheless have enormous girth and therefore wood volume. Brett has worked with authorities to protect giant trees from fire. 31 attended.

Ken Griffiths

Day Group: Meeting Tuesday 22nd August

Lichens, beauty in miniature. Speaker Dr Kathleen Ralston gave an enjoyable and educational presentation on the fascinating and beautiful world of lichens. The meeting was well attended. A full report is to be found on pages 9 and 10. *Photo right.*

Joan Broadberry

Fauna Survey Group: Meeting, Tuesday 1st August:

Speaker for the night was Danielle Wallace, PhD student, Faculty of Veterinary and Agricultural Sciences, University of Melbourne, '*Chytrid Fungus and colour changes in endangered frogs.*' A report is to be found on page 5.

Ray Gibson

Geology Group: Meeting Wednesday 26th July:

Leon Costermans spoke about the Howitt Province, a region east of the Melbourne Zone, and north east of Bairnsdale. We were shown how to read the relevant geological map - see p504 of *Costermans & VandenBerg, 2022*. Powers Lookout is on Mt Kent conglomerate. The paradox that stones from ancient river valleys end up on ridge tops was explored.

Another rock in this complex is ignimbrite - originally from explosive volcanism. Where, when and why were these volcanoes? Many will know the King River, the Avon Wilderness or the upper Mitchell River. Leon recounted anecdotally, how he did some university field work in this region as a student years ago. 45 attended.

Meeting Wednesday 23rd August:

Mike Quinn of Nunawading and District Lapidary Club provided many samples on the tables to illustrate multiple aspects of work of the club members. One activity is shaping gemstones, such as sapphire for sparkle, or emerald for colour. Another activity is to polish stones to produce agates. Impurity can give colour. Mike demonstrated a wide range of minerals of interest. Those which fluoresce under light stimulus particularly caught our attention. The meeting was well attended.

Ken Griffiths

Juniors Group:

A well-attended meeting was held on Friday 25th August at the Hall, with a fantastic presentation from Jaclyn Harris on animals of the Little Desert and post fire management practices for reptiles and small mammals.

The Landcare Grant has been submitted and closed off. A huge thanks to Sue Bendel for all her help with this.

Adam Hosken

Microscopy Group: Meeting held Wednesday, August 16th:

Max and Philippa provided a vast array of all tools and materials required.

Using pencil sized pieces of dowel, clamps, mini drills, sandpaper, pins and slices of aluminium, participants either drilled or cut into the top. For probes a pencil sharpener was then used to create a smooth angle to the pin probe base. Several types of spatulas were also made. These were secured to the dowel handle with heat shrink plastic tubing. Using the heat guns this created a permanent and strong attachment. Ten very enthusiastic members attended and made several tools each.

A more detailed report is to be found on page 7.

Philippa Burgess



Crustose lichens:
a mosaic of species
growing on bark



Coates Wildlife Tours

Specialists in Nature Tours since 1986

- Informative naturalist guides • Small groups (6 – 12 participants) • Private charters available
- Fully accommodated, assisted camping, and remote camping tours

New Zealand South Island Wildlife & Wilderness Tour 15-Day Accommodated Tour - Departs Nelson 31 January 2024 - Max 12 participants

Discover Te Wai Pounamu (New Zealand's South Island) with Coates, as we take you away from the population centres and tourist 'honey pots,' to lesser known but equally spectacular parts of NZ. One day you may be high in a majestic mountain valley, viewing giant buttercups and 'vegetable sheep', and the next, you may be hiking in sub-Antarctic rainforest, or viewing Dusky Dolphins and Sperm Whales at sea. Accommodation is in pleasant hotels and motor lodges with private facilities, and travel is by comfortable small coach, including an on-board botanical and nature reference library.



New Zealand North Island Expedition 14-Day Accommodated Tour – Departs Auckland 17 February 2024 - Maximum of 12 participants

The forests of Aotearoa (New Zealand) are a reminder of a world long gone; ferns, ancient conifers, flightless ground birds, prehistoric reptiles and insects, and virtually no mammals. We explore these other world forests as we traverse the North Island from Auckland to Wellington. We will discover dramatic fascinating landscapes, from sub-Antarctic beech forests to the ever-changing podocarp forests of the volcanic plateau. Throughout our journey, we will learn the intricacies of the forests, their birdlife, and the landscapes on which they sit.



Wild Coastlines of the South East 11-Day Accommodated Tour – Departs Perth 1 February 2024 - Maximum of 12 participants

Starting in Perth, we travel south-east to Hyden and discover 'Wave Rock' and beautiful Indigenous rock art. We then travel through the Great Western Woodlands before heading south to Esperance, where we visit Cape Le Grande National Park and cruise the Recherche Archipelago. We explore Fitzgerald River National Park, internationally recognised as a Biosphere Reserve, due to the richness of flora and fauna that exists there (20% of WA's plant species). We also spend a full day on the water searching for Orca, and explore Stirling Range & Dryandra Woodland National Parks as we make our way back to Perth.



Sri Lankan Wildlife, History & Culture Tour 15-Day Accommodated Tour – Departs Colombo 12 March 2024 - Maximum of 12 participants

Sri Lanka is home to wild elephant herds, leopards, sloth bears, Asiatic buffalo, numerous monkey species and beautiful birdlife. The island features diverse habitats and plant life, as well as magnificent scenery and historic fortresses, temples, and monasteries. Ancient Buddhist traditions, teaching compassion for all living creatures, have paved the way for the country's long history of conservation. Highlights include Yala National Park and whale watching off the coast of Mirissa in search of Blue Whales and Sperm Whales.

