



September 2022

## Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Newsletter



Neil Woolcock has sent in this stunning photograph of *Streptoglossa decurrens*, a beautiful member of the Asteraceae family that flowers pretty much throughout the year, tending to follow rain. This native mintbush is most often found in Central Australia however there are records of it up into the Channel Country, on the Ord Victoria Plain, way over into the Pilbara and the Simpson Strzelecki Dunefields.

It certainly gets around!

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Thankyou for being up to date with your membership fees, this goes go towards our ongoing costs such as insurance.

Membership fees are:

- Family \$30
- Concession \$25
- Individual \$20
- Concession \$15,

Life membership - Ten times normal fee.

Fees can be paid in cash, by cheque or by direct debit:  
Westpac - BSB No. 035303  
Account No.100981

# Coming events:

## Kuyunba Reserve:

Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> September

Time: 7.30am meeting time

Leader: Neil Woolcock – 0428 521 598

This little reserve not far out of town contains an important Aboriginal men's sacred site. Women can visit the reserve but are not permitted to walk around all of the 700m walking track. There is still lots to see, including some beautiful native Callitris / Pine Trees, interesting rocks, and if memory serves me right, a fair number of birds.

Please contact Neil for directions.

## Speaker night: Adam Yates and the megafauna of Central Australia

Date: 12/10/2022

Time: 7.00pm

Location: Olive Pink Botanic Garden

Topic: Central Australian megafauna – where are they now?



## Aussie Backyard Bird Count: Olive Pink and Ilparpa Claypans

<https://aussiebirdcount.org.au/>

Date: 17/10/2022

Time: 5.30pm – 6.30pm

Location: Olive Pink Botanic Garden

Leader: Clare Pearce

Australia's biggest citizen science project is on again 17-23 October. Download the Birdlife Australia Aussie Bird Count app from your favourite app store and meet Clare at the garden to learn how you can be part of Australia's biggest citizen science project.

Date: 22/10/2022

Time: 8.30am until about 9.30am

Location: Ilparpa Claypans

Leader: Clare Pearce

Bring your morning cuppa to the claypans and finish off your week of bird counts – hopefully we might catch a glimpse of a desert dwelling waterbird or two!

## [Australian Pollinator Week](#) 12-20 November: Yeperenye / Emily Gap

Date: 12/11/2022

Time: 8.30am until about 10.00am

Location: Emily Gap

Leader: Clare Pearce unless someone else wants to have a go

Get buzzy with the bees for [Australian Pollinator Week](#). The sound of busy bees – both native and introduced – are often a feature of the hot morning air at Emily Gap. Come do citizen science again and take part in a wild pollinator count. It will be getting warm so please bring a broad brimmed hat and plenty of drinking water.

**[AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY -](#)**

**[ALICE SPRINGS](#)**

[apsalicesprings@yahoo.com.au](mailto:apsalicesprings@yahoo.com.au)

## A tale of two landscapes

**Presenter night**

**Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> October 7.00pm**

**Olive Pink Botanic Garden**

**Presenter- Clare Pearce**



# Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club 2022 AGM:

The 2022 Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Annual General Meeting was held in August and with a good turnout and participation from across our 88 members, I think we are in for a fantastic year to come.

Enormous thanks must go to the outgoing committee who have steered our little ship through very rocky waters over the last few years. Many aspects of life were put to one side over the pandemic, but I think you will all agree with me that it speaks volumes for the Field Nats as a group, and to its outgoing executive committee, that we stand as strong as ever now the wave has passed.

## From their desk to ours:

It is with great trepidation that I step out as your newly minted president, waving my still fresh Field Nats membership wildly. I commented on the night of the AGM that I have big shoes to fill, and indeed I do. The impact and benefit that the knowledge, energy and generosity of Barb Gilfedder and Connie Spencer have had on our little group is obvious. From my first evening watching a presentation and sharing a cuppa, to the very recent handover of the quite daunting responsibility of providing a guiding hand, these two ladies have led the way in graciously and gracefully welcoming me and other newbies, making this little swamp rat feel quite at home in the desert.

I hope that the 2022-2023 committee can take up the challenge and carry on with it well into the future.

## Members night:

Once all the pomp and circumstance of governance and the AGM was cleared away it was time for Members Night! A chance for us all to shine, members night always proves to be fascinating, and this one was no different. With water management maps and birthday cakes and boxes of mysterious tubes there was much to talk about.



Claire brought in an interesting, and somewhat concerning map showing possible inundation risks that could be brought about by proposed development on the Todd River floodplain area.



Thankyou Rosalie for sharing your birthday cake with us!





Fascinating find of the night has to go to Peter Bannister's box of tubes. These proved to be the 'spent' larval casings, of Cossid moths, or perhaps the remains of root bark left behind once these massive moth larvae have burrowed in for their pupal stage. Peter found these buried in his garden bed.



The [Queensland Museum](#) tells us that later stage caterpillars of Cossid moths live in burrows inside the trunks of eucalypts, but in the desert some species, including the well-known Desert Witchetty Grub, *Endoxyla leucomochla*, mostly spend their early lives feeding on Acacia roots under the ground. The strangely beautiful tubes that Peter found in his garden are the 'stretched' outer surfaces of roots left behind once they were vacated by the developing larvae.

## Standley Chasm Wander 6 August 2022



Report by Barb Gilfedder

Five of us spent a beautiful morning wandering along the narrow track from the café to the chasm and back – Peter and Jane Bannister, Tanya Hattingh, Connie Spencer and me. There were lots of other people, mainly from coach trips, so they came past in groups. Most just walked watching their feet, but some paused and admired the flowers. I have become more interested in the derivation of names lately so will expound on some of these. There were many more flowers than I have described but these are the ones I found most interesting.

The most stunning flowers this time were probably on the *Acacia stronglophylla*, Round Leaf Wattle or I like the second common name, Wait-a-while Wattle. It is a straggly shrub and there are spines at the base of the leaf as well as a pointed tip to each leaf. The branches can be long and drooping, ready to catch onto clothing or skin if you pass carelessly. *Strongylophylla* from Greek *stroggylos*, round and *phylon*, a leaf. The golden yellow flower heads are big and spread all along the stems – stunning individually and en masse along the edge of the creek.





*Acacia stronglophylla*



*Acacia basedowii*



*Olearia stuartii*

A much smaller wattle, ***Acacia basedowii***, which only grows to a metre high, was also in flower. I always look for it near one of the fences, beside the path. The flowers are less showy than *A. stronglophylla*, but I love the red, coiled pods. Herbert Basedow was a 19<sup>th</sup> century South Australian explorer and geologist.

***Olearia stuartii*** was also flowering on the side of the path at the base of rocks. A pretty, little daisy with mauve rays and yellow disc flowers. *Olearia* from Latin *Olea*, the Olive tree – the leaves of the original species resemble those of the Olive tree. This species named after John McDouall Stuart, leader of several expeditions to central and northern Australia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.





*Glycine canescens*

We were amazed by the ***Glycine canescens***, Silky Glycine, scrambling over everything close, to gain height and show off its pink pea flowers. Its leaves are divided into three leaflets and it has narrow pods that split spirally.

Jane warned us about introducing it to gardens as it produces many seeds and other plants can quickly get swamped by it.

Glycine from Greek *glycios*, sweet tasting – the leaves and roots of some species are sweet; *canescens* from Latin *canescens*, somewhat white or hoary. Much of the plant has white hairs, although the seedpods have black ones.



*Grevillea wickhamii*

No one can resist admiring the ***Grevillea wickhamii* subsp. *aprica***, Holly Grevillea.

There were only a few flowers but very eye-catching.

Two people honoured here in its name, Charles Francis Greville, one of the founders of what is now the Royal Horticultural Society and John Clements Wickham, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant on HMS Beagle on Darwin's expedition and later government resident at Moreton Bay.

*Aprica* is Latin for sun-loving.

There were more flowers, *Hibbertia glaberima* sometimes called Desert Buttercup because of its sunny yellow flowers; the so blue *Halgania cyanea* on the other side of the creek that we studied through binoculars; and the *Indigofera basedowii* was still flowering, no wonder its common name is Showy Indigo.

Reaching the gorge, we focused on the two rare plants that adorn the high cliffs.

A perennial daisy *Cremnothamnus thomsonii* from Latin *cremnos*, cliff and *thamnos*, shrub and Dr William Thompson, a medical practitioner in Melbourne. Its common name is Cliffside Daisy.

The clustered, tubular flower heads about 1 cm wide are in clusters, with a yellow center and white papery bracts. It was flowering but too high for me to photograph. I did have a specimen, bought from OPBG sales, in a pot for several years which gave me lots of pleasure when it flowered.

Also high up was *Actinotus schwarzii*, Desert Flannel Flower. *Actinotus* is from Greek *actinotos*, decorated with rays – a reference to the spreading bracts and named after another man, Wilhelm Friedrich Schwarz, a co-founder of Hermannsburg Mission.

The flower head looks like a large daisy, but it is in the Apiaceae, the parsnip or carrot family.

It wasn't flowering but the large grey lobed leaves made it easy to identify. Connie says it will flower at the end of November – we have seen it on Christmas walks to the chasm.

Interestingly the very similar Flannel Flower of Eastern Australia, *Actinotus helianthi*, grows in completely different habitats - coastal heath, scrub, and dry sclerophyll forest.

So much to see, no wonder it took us two and a half hours to get back to a lovely lunch at the café.

We had been disappointed by seeing some Buffel Grass, *Cenchrus ciliaris* and Red Natal Grass, *Melinis repens* along the walk and Connie and I thought the invasive Sour Grass, *Paspalum conjugatum* had spread further along the creek... but all the native flowers were lovely and the company and lunch excellent.





# Speaker night – Bill Low from Low Ecological Services

Bill Low has been working in environmental management and research in Central Australia for well over 39 years, making Low Ecological Services the longest running environmental survey business in the NT. With a wealth of experience and a history of engagement with both the business and government sectors, Bill's detailed knowledge of Central Australian flora and fauna, landscapes, soils, and geology serve as an incredibly important resource for the environmental sector in the NT.



With such a wealth of experience, Bill's stories are always fascinating to listen to, but Bill kept us captured with stories and images of the many ways that environmental surveys are carried out, with explanations of why different methodologies are used.

Members were particularly interested in the data capture represented in the different maps that were on show, the arid lands waterways are enigmatic, and without an expert pair of eyes to guide you it can be difficult to see the difference between a sand hill and the banks of an ephemeral river.

It was also great to hear about the collaboration between Low Ecological Services and the Traditional Owners of country working together to ensure that the most ethical survey methodologies are used to see what lives in the landscape around us.

