



Anticlinal fold (2019), Lithograph, 320 x 420mm
Artwork: Bev Lewis

The Art of Natural History Illustration

At our meeting in May we were treated to a presentation about her work by Bev Lewis, a local artist with particular expertise in natural history illustration. Bev's works are held in private collections, the State Botanical Collection at the Herbarium of Victoria, the State Library of Victoria and the City of Melbourne. In 2012 Bev was awarded the Celia Rosser Medal for excellence of the art form including the highest degree of scientific accuracy. She grew up with a passion for the natural world and has been

creating her art works since 2002.

Bev does extraordinarily painstaking, detailed and beautiful works of natural subjects. Bev's works, which typically take over a hundred hours to complete, include graphite pencil drawings and lithographs, as well as limited edition prints of her drawings. Her main focus is plants, but she has also created illustrations of birds, animals and geological subjects.

Bev asked 'Why not just take a photo?', and then showed us with examples why scientific illustration can provide a perspective on natural objects that cannot be achieved with a photograph. A drawing, for example can isolate the key features of the object, removing clutter that masks the details. All of Bev's works show the value of this. One example she showed us in her presentation was the anticlinal fold in Lyttleton Street, where she has removed (artistically) the concrete block and plaque that

The Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung community as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Country where we meet and study the natural environment. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and future.

have been placed on top of it, as well as the background behind and above the fold. Another example isolates a single branch from the fascinatingly contorted *Ulmus glabra* 'Camperdownii' (Weeping Elm) in the Castlemaine Botanical Gardens. These trees are on both the National Trust and Council's Significant Trees register.

Bev showed examples of her work that include multiple perspectives on a subject, including multiple angles. In



Ulmus glabra 'Camperdownii' (2019), Lithograph, 480 x 320mm, part of triptych, and photograph for comparison.

one astounding example of a *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (River Red Gum) Bev germinated seeds on kitchen paper and in soil so that she was able to show the life cycle of the tree in the one illustration, with the tree in the background, the fruit (or gumnut), the seeds and young seedlings at different points in time. This work was scanned and digitally reproduced in 3D on a 4.45 metres long concrete panel. It has been installed at Northern Memorial Park, a

cemetery near the corner of Sydney Road and the Ring Road in Melbourne.

In order to commit the amount of time required to produce any of her artworks, Bev said that the subject must have allure, must present research and drawing challenges and must allow her to learn through the process. Sometimes she ponders a possible topic for a period of time then decides she is not interested enough in it to do a complete work. At other times she plays with scale to increase a subject's interest.



One example of this that Bev included in her presentation was a *Hakea decurrens* seedpod, which she drew at 6 times life size, which gives it monster characteristics, such as a shark 'beak' and erupting 'skin'.

Bev is aware that she is following in the footsteps of earlier scientific illustrators and she is also inspired by contemporary artists. She cited Sydney Parkinson (1745-1771) as one inspiration. Parkinson



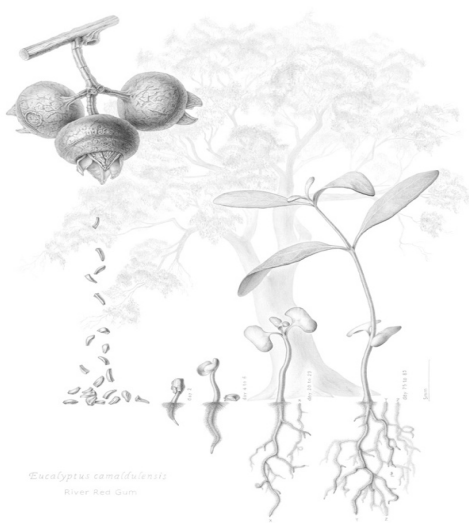
Bev Lewis shows a preparatory drawing for her lithograph based on one of the Weeping Elms (*Ulmus glabra* 'Camperdownii') in the Castlemaine Botanical Gardens. Photo: Lou Citroën

was the botanical draughtsman who accompanied Joseph Banks on Captain Cook's journey on the Endeavour to the South Seas and Australia. He was the first European artist to set foot in Australian soil and draw and paint Australian plants. More recent contemporary artists Bev admires include Celia Rosser, whose work is honoured with the medal Bev was the recipient of in 2012, as well as Simon Deere and Anne Hayes, also Australian.

Bev amazed us all with descriptions of her technique, including: how she sharpens her pencils (with a Stanley knife and fine sandpaper); how she has to draw lithographs such as the anticlinal fold back-to-front first then reverse it onto the block; and how she is currently experimenting with making watercolour paint using ochre from the goldfields .

If you want to try it yourself you will need to be patient! It involves collecting the ochre, grinding it in a mortar and pestle, creating a water solution to remove the larger sediment, regrinding the smaller sediment and then creating a paste with a variety of components, including honey and oil of cloves!

Bev concluded by saying that one of her goals is to inspire greater curiosity about the natural environment. She certainly achieved that when she spoke to us and showed us some examples of her work.



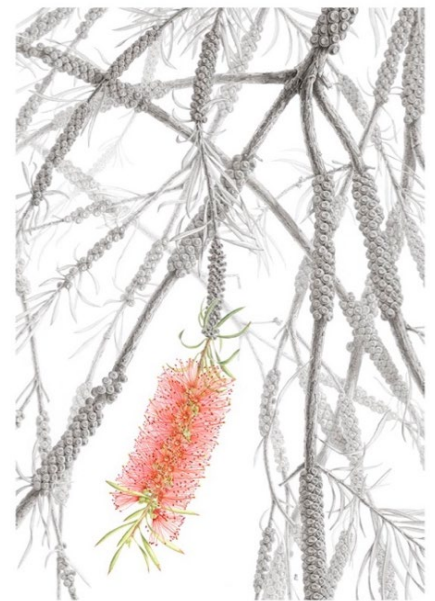
Eucalyptus camaldulensis, life cycle (2014), Graphite drawing, 770 x 570mm, and seedling at day 2 on the right.

To cap off the evening, Bev very generously donated for a door prize a digital print of a drawing of *Callistemon linearis* (right), the original of which is in the National Herbarium of Victoria collection. The lucky winner was Alison Radford.

Cathrine Harboe-Ree



Hakea decurrens (2019), Seed pod x6 magnification, Lithograph, 380 x 280mm



May Excursion: Post Office Hill Reserve, Chewton

The land we visited on our May excursion would once have been an open woodland of mixed box Eucalypts with an understory of native herbs and shrubs. It was used by the Dja Dja Warrung people who left evidence of their presence in the form of artefacts and small rock wells that still hold water. We saw some of these wells

above the small gully that we walked along during our visit.

When the area was settled by early farmers, the woodland was modified. And then gold was found! The first wave of diggers removed much of the vegetation in their search for easily accessible gold. Later waves of diggers searched for gold missed by earlier diggers

and established the Post Office Hill mine to access the gold-bearing quartz reefs. The original Chewton Post Office was here and after the railway was built, Chewton Station was on the southern edge of the reserve.

The area then became a rubbish tip (What else do you do with an old mining site?)

which was later capped, although there are still indications of this prior use. Weeds, such as gorse, flourished.

In the early 2000's, the Post Office Hill Action Group (POHAG) was formed and took over management of 22.6 Ha of public land on the reserve. They have undertaken major weed control work which has massively reduced the extent of the gorse and other weeds. There has also been a large amount of planting over the last 15 or so years to complement the natural regeneration of indigenous plants and establish wildlife corridors. Work has been done to slow rainwater runoff and control erosion, and nesting boxes have been installed to improve wildlife

habitat. Today the environment is recovering well.

The POHAG have set up a project on [iNaturalist](#) where you can see some of the flora and fauna that is returning. To date around 100 species have been recorded on iNaturalist although numbers will go up over time. The reserve is also an [eBird hotspot](#) for the recording of bird sightings. So far about 80 bird species have been recorded with Gang Gangs an exciting recent visitor. Another initiative is the use of wildlife cameras to record animal activity in the reserve. These have been set up to record short 30 second movies of activity at water points, nest boxes and other places within the reserve. Some of these movies showing

birds and mammals such as Phascogales, Krefft's Gliders and Brush-tailed Possums have been loaded to [YouTube](#) where you can view them.

When CFNC visited the reserve, Joel Bloom led us along some of the paths that the group had created. This gave us the opportunity to see revegetation work, nest boxes and water points, interesting rock formations such as the stone arch and evidence of indigenous people's activity. Some participants have loaded their [observations](#) from the afternoon onto iNaturalist where you can see them. A list of the plants in flower and birds that were recorded on our excursion is below.



Wildlife camera recording activity at a suspended water point.



Nestbox occupied by Australian Owlet-nightjar



Photos:
Noel Young

One of the indigenous rock wells that we passed along the way.



Cranberry Heath - *Styphelia humifusa*.
Photo: Cathrine Harboe-Ree



Hoary Sunray - *Leucochrysum albicans*.
Photo: Euan Moore



Eroded Sandstone



Stone Arch

Photos: Cathrine Harboe-Ree

One surprise from the day was how few of our members knew of or had previously visited the Post Office Hill Reserve in spite of it being only 10 minutes drive from the centre of Castlemaine. If you have not visited the reserve, I urge you to take a look. There is more information including photos and a map on the [POHAG Facebook](#) page.

Thank you Joel and POHAG for all your hard work and a great afternoon.

Euan Moore

Flora List	Fauna List	
In flower	Birds	
*Gorse, <i>Ulex europaeus</i>	Australian Magpie	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
*Spiny Rush, <i>Juncus acutus</i>	Australian Owlet-nightjar	Superb Fairywren
Cherry Ballart, <i>Exocarpos cupressiformis</i>	Brown Thornbill	Varied Sittella
Coarse Dodder-laurel, <i>Cassytha melantha</i>	Crimson Rosella	Weebill
Cranberry Heath, <i>Styphelia humifusa</i>	Grey Fantail	White-eared Honeyeater
Hoary Sunray, <i>Leucochrysum albicans</i>	Grey Shrikethrush	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Rush, <i>Juncus sp.</i>	Little Raven	Yellow Thornbill
Sifton Bush, <i>Cassinia sifton</i>	Long-billed Corella	Others
Spreading Wattle, <i>Acacia genistifolia</i>	Mistletoe Bird	Eastern Grey Kangaroo
Sticky Everlasting, <i>Xerochrysum viscosum</i>	New Holland Honeyeater	Bibron's Toadlet
*Tall Flat-sedge, <i>Cyperus eragrostis</i>	Red Wattlebird	Common Eastern Froglet
* Introduced Weed	Scarlet Robin	Eastern Sign-bearing Frog
	Silvereye	Cabbage White Butterfly
	Spotted Pardalote	Two-spotted Line-blue Butterfly
	Striated Pardalote	

OBSERVATIONS



Left – *Ligyra cingulata*. A Bee Fly (Family Bombyliidae).

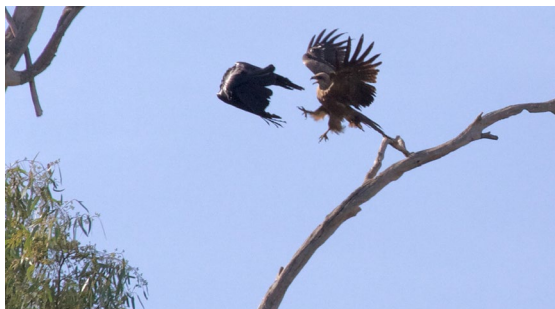
Right – Black Rock Scorpion with scorplings. Refer to adult form on page 12.



Photos: Denis Hurley.

Kerrie Jennings had several wonderful encounters with a variety of Raptors at Baringhup.

No.1 – A stand-off between a Black Kite and Raven on a dead branch near the Loddon River. Kerrie thinks it was over the carrion from ewes beginning to lamb in a nearby paddock.



No. 2 - **Black Kites** love a fire, and a small agricultural paddock burn in late April returned more than expected, with 56 counted at the burn, increasing to 70 as the smoke and birds settled. During the burn, the Kites swooped and dived over the flames looking for any prey trying to outrun the burn.



No.3 – The alarm calls of White-plumed Honeyeaters alerted Kerrie to a Peregrine Falcon amongst the branches of an old River Red Gum.



No.4 – A **Black Falcon** (above) together with two **Whistling Kites** worked over some panic-stricken ducks, coots and grebes for several minutes causing wild, watery sprays and splashes. They then perched and casually left one by one, and our bewildered little waterbirds returned to their quiet foraging.



Macquarie Turtle at Barkers Ck Reservoir, Harcourt. Photo: Euan Moore



Australian House Centipede, *Allothereua maculata* Shepherds Flat. Photo: Jill Williams.

Geelong Autumn SEANA 2026 Excursion Reports

The following reports are a continuation of those by CFNC members from the May "Castlemaine Naturalist".

Swan Bay Saltmarsh - Peter Turner (including photos in this report)



The Saturday morning excursion to Swan Bay was led by Brad Farrier, assisted by Bernie Lingham, both very knowledgeable about the many species of saltmarsh plants that flourish around Swan Bay. As we waited for the last of the group, looking north an egret was seen and identified eventually as a Little Egret, next to a group of Pelicans. Among a long line of Little Pied and Little Black Cormorants perched on the jetty railings was one large Pied Cormorant. And of course there were Swans.

We then walked south through (and inevitably on) the diverse range of saltmarsh plants.

Between the tall Shrubby Glasswort, *Tecticornia arbuscula*, the ground level plants included Austral Sea-bite, *Sueda australis*, Beaded Glasswort, *Salicornia quinqueflora* subsp. *quinqueflora*, and Southern Sea-heath, *Frankenia pauciflora* var *gunnii*, amongst many others. In a watery area, Grey Glasswort, *Tecticornia halocnemoides* subsp. *halocnemoides*, had formed rings growing out from dead central areas.

A Saltbush Blue butterfly, *Theclinesthes serpentatus*, perched on Glasswort. Where crabs had dug holes, small shells had been excavated,

indicating the types of creature that make these areas rich feeding grounds for migratory waders. Patches of bare ground were covered with a dark grey leather-like layer, formed by bacterial growth. Back to the north of the carpark, we were shown a patch of Rounded Noon-flower, *Disphyma crassifolium* subsp. *clavellatum*.



Grey Glasswort Islands



Southern Sea-heath



Beaded Glasswort



What the crabs brought up!

Despite some brief showers of rain, this was a stimulating morning learning about a complex ecological system so different from our area. Thanks

to Bernie Lingham for identification of the plants and butterfly I had photographed. Geelong FNC member Lorraine Phelan had produced an

invaluable pamphlet "Some saltmarsh plants found in the Geelong area" with a key for identification, plant list and illustrative drawings.

Barwon Heads Rock Pools and Barwon Estuary – Euan Moore



Rock platforms at Barwon Bluff. Photo: Euan Moore

On Saturday afternoon Peter Crowcroft led a group exploring rock pools around the headland at Barwon Bluff. For those of us from inland locations this was an opportunity to explore some of the intertidal flora and fauna found along the Victorian coast.

The geology at Barwon Bluff includes layers of sandstone and an area of basalt flows. These rocks are capped with a layer of limestone-rich concretions that formed when water percolated the overlying sand dunes. This geology resulted in different rock pool formations between the sedimentary and igneous rocks.

Initially we looked at some of the algae that were attached to or had broken off the rocks. This included Giant Kelp (*Macrocystis pyrifera*) and several other brown algae. There were also red and green algae to be found in the rock pools. On the rock platforms there was a dense mat of

Neptune's Necklace (*Hormosira banksii*).

Once we moved onto the basalt area the landscape changed with more boulders and deeper



Pete Crowcroft showing the group a plant of Giant Kelp, *Macrocystis pyrifera*. Photo: Jenny Rolland



Bubbles of oxygen from photosynthesis on the submerged leaves of Sea Nymph, *Amphibolis antarctica*. Photo: Euan Moore

rock pools. In some deep pools there were large plants of Sea Nymph (*Amphibolis antarctica*). This is a flowering plant in the *Cymodoceaceae* family. It was bright sunlight when we saw these plants which had bubbles of air (mainly oxygen) on their leaves which is a byproduct of photosynthesis.

There were several species of mollusc on the rocks while turning (and carefully replacing) rocks revealed crabs, sea anemones and sometimes small fish. We were lucky enough to see a Sea Hare, *Aplysia concava*, which is a shell-less Gastropod mollusc distantly related to the more familiar snails.

Moving round the bluff into the more sheltered entrance to the Barwon Estuary, the habitats changed again. Without the strong wave action there was a shallow bay with fine sediments. Rock



Barwon Bluff – a geologist's dream! Photo: Jenny Rolland

pools were largely absent and there was mud filling the area between boulders. There was much less seaweed than on the exposed coast. Turning rocks revealed a different group of animals including small

crustaceans in the genus *Zuzara*.

On land there was the usual range of coastal shrubs. Singing Honeyeaters were seen in the taller vegetation and we were treated to the sight of one of the resident Peregrine Falcons flying past.

There were shorebirds such as Great Crested Tern, Great and Little Pied Cormorants, Silver Gull and White-faced Heron. Out to sea there were Australasian Gannets, Shearwaters and Albatross although most were too distant



An Isopod. This small crustacean may be from the genus *Zuzara*.

Photo: Euan Moore

to identify, even with binoculars.

You can see some of the observations made that afternoon on [iNaturalist](https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/100000000).

Serendip Sanctuary, Lara - Judy and Philip Hopley

Jeff Dagg from the Geelong Fields Naturalists Club and a volunteer guide at Serendip led this walk. The sanctuary is managed by Parks Victoria and before we commenced our walk, a ranger briefed us on the history of the area and future plans for its development.

The sanctuary is a 250-hectare protected area near Lara. Originally used for farming and other purposes, it was purchased in 1959 by the State Government of Victoria for wildlife research and the captive management and breeding of species threatened in Victoria, such as the Brolga, Magpie Goose, Australian Bustard and Bush Stone-curlew. The sanctuary contains many different types of wetland and is home to many plant species as well, such as River Red Gums, Tall Spike-rush, and Tussock Grass. The ranger advised that the focus now is more on environmental education about the flora and fauna of the wetlands and open

grassy woodlands of the Volcanic Western Plains of Victoria. Currently there is work being undertaken to upgrade the sanctuary's facilities. A new indigenous plants sensory area has recently been completed where various inter-activities for children and visitors can be enjoyed. Bird hides and walking tracks are being updated.

Serendip is home to over 150 species of native birds, including threatened and endangered species. The group wandered along the various walkways and observed birds from the Marshland Bird Hide and Billabong Bird Hide, both look out to the marshlands. The Wader Bird Hide looks over the west side of Lake Serendip. The Farm Dam Bird Hides are located on the North Arm lake. All birds except one Brolga are wild. We

observed many birds including Black Swans, Cape Barren Geese, Red-rumped Parrots, a variety of honeyeaters and a large number of Red-browed Finches. Several Emus were roaming in the grasslands. In addition, the sanctuary is home to Eastern Grey Kangaroos and Swamp Wallabies. On the morning we visited no Magpie Geese were seen, but on advice from Jeff we returned to the township of Lara and found hundreds of geese on a wetland near the centre of the town!



Cape Barren Geese.
Photo: Euan Moore

Threatened Species Conservancy

Extract from “The Conservancy Chronicle”

Volume 4, April 2026

This week I’m sharing news about the rare Southern Shepherd’s Purse, *Ballantinia antipoda*.

When we last emailed about this project in February, we were unsure how badly recent bushfires had affected the sole remaining population at Mount Alexander in central Victoria.

Our botanists Mads and Stan have since each visited the site, accompanied by local Parks Victoria staff. While fire severely burned parts of Mount Alexander Regional Park, the moss mats where most of the known *Ballantinia* population occurs remained largely unburnt. However, one site where a few hundred *Ballantinia* plants grew in a rock crevice appears to have been burnt.

Ballantinia is an annual herb – seeds germinate in moss mats during winter and flowering occurs during spring, with plants dying off in late spring as the moss mats dry out – meaning no specimens were visible when Mads and Stan visited. While it’s good news that most sites weren’t badly burnt, there is still a risk that sediment runoff over the moss mats could hinder seed germination.

Ideally, we’d survey the area in September when *Ballantinia* plants will be flowering, but our current funding ends in June. Sourcing additional funding for further surveys is now an urgent priority.

As mentioned in our last newsletter, thanks to funding we’ve already received through the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Saving Native Species program, we’ve successfully propagated seedlings with help from our partners at La Trobe University and the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria. We’re progressing plans to translocate the propagated plants within Mount Alexander Regional Park and other suitable sites.

We’ll share further updates throughout this year as we learn more about the impacts of the fire. Visit the project-specific [webpage](#) for more information about the broader project.

Ballantinia also now has a [species profile](#) on the Statewide Integrated Flora and Fauna Teams (SWIFFT) website.

How you can help

Thank you again for being part of the *Threatened Species Conservancy* community.

If our work inspires you, please **share it** — every new supporter helps spread awareness about Australia’s lesser-known threatened species.

Website: www.tsconservancy.org

Contact: info@tsconservancy.org

Abi Smith

Chief Executive Officer
Threatened Species Conservancy



Coming Events in June

Monthly Meeting: Friday 12th June, 7.30pm by Zoom

“Brown Brood Frogs (Bibron's Toadlet); Adding to the Knowledge Pool”

Speaker: Max Sonnemann (Deakin University)

The June meeting will be the first of our 3 winter meetings by Zoom for 2026.

Brown Brood Frogs have sadly experienced a significant population decline across Victoria, attributed to habitat loss, altered water flows and the deadly disease, chytrid fungus. It is also likely that changes in seasonal rainfall, driven by climate change, may negatively affect the breeding success of Brown Brood Frogs. Max is a student at Deakin University and a keen frog and reptile enthusiast. Last year he completed a research project with Professor Don Driscoll and Dr Jawad Jilani looking at the effects of environmental watering on Brown Brood Frogs, along with monitoring their population health and breeding success.

Despite their declines, Brown Brood Frogs remain locally common in the vicinity of Castlemaine and luckily there is some indication they are resilient to intermittent bushfires.

How to join the Zoom meeting – you need to **register in advance** to receive the link for joining the Zoom session. To register, please click on the following link or copy this url into your browser:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/FdbIPG85ScWRDepoSjs3-A>

We recommend joining the session 5 – 10 mins before the meeting to avoid congestion at 7.30pm.

Observations: Members and visitors are invited to share their interesting observations at the meeting. Please email any photos with short explanatory notes as uncropped JPEG file(s) to **Jill Williams** (jilliwill33@gmail.com) by noon on the day of the meeting.

Excursion: Saturday 13th June, 9.00am

“Aboriginal history and culture field trip, Boort”

Leaders: Paul Haw and Sue Luke

The Yung Balug Aboriginal Artefacts Museum houses a vast collection of important aboriginal artefacts, some found and donated by local farmers. The garden includes indigenous food plants (and a marvellous collection of *Eremophila* species). The museum entry is free but donations are appreciated with 100% of funds spent on housing an ever-expanding collection.

After lunch there will be a field trip to view nearby cooking mounds and stone-axed scar trees. Boort has the highest concentration of scar trees in Australia.

Our guide will be Paul Haw, a Boort local, retired farmer/reveg. nurseryman and amateur self-published historian whose life-long interest in Dja Dja Wurrung culture began as a lad rabbiting among Aboriginal cooking mounds on the Loddon River. Paul works closely with Djaara clan members.

Meet: for car-pooling and **9.00am** departure at the northern end of the car park, north of the Railway Goods Shed, Kennedy St. Castlemaine.

Or meet at **10.45am** at the Yung Balug Museum, 3645 Boort-Pyramid Road, approximately 2 km east of Boort ([Google Maps](#)). Approximate travel time from Castlemaine is 1 hr 40 min.

Bring: water, snacks, **clean** sturdy shoes, chairs, lunch.

Paul and Cathie may cook us treats from their plots of Wattles and/or Kangaroo Oat Grass, so would appreciate knowing the approximate number of visitors.

Please register your attendance via SMS to Sue Luke 0419 445 226.



Black Rock Scorpion, *Urodactus manicatus*
Photo: Denis Hurley

Program

Monthly Meetings: will be held on-line via Zoom again during the winter months (June, July and August) commencing at 7.30pm. Please register in advance (see "Coming Events" page) to receive the link for joining the meeting.

Excursions are held on the Saturday following the monthly meeting and leave from the northern end of the car park north of the Railway Goods Shed, Kennedy St. at 1.30pm unless stated otherwise.

See "**Coming Events**" page for details on June activities.

Fri 12th June, 7.30pm

Meeting (Zoom) "Brown Brood Frogs (Bibron's Toadlet); adding to the knowledge pool"

Speaker: Max Sonnemann (Deakin Uni),

Sat 13th June, 9.00am, all day.

Excursion: Yung Balug Aboriginal Artefacts Museum, Boort

Leaders: Paul Haw, Sue Luke

Fri 10th July, 7.30pm

Meeting (Zoom) "Using Research to Save Australian Snakes"

Speaker Prof. Rick Shine AM FAA FRZS (Macquarie University)

Sat 11th July, 9.30am

Excursion: "Fungi Search"

Leader: Joy Clusker

Fri 14th August, 7.30pm

Meeting (Zoom) "Plume Moths"

Speaker: Donald Hobern

Visitors are welcome at club activities

SOUTH EAST AUSTRALIAN NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION (SEANA) SPRING CAMP

Castlemaine, 9-11 October 2026, hosted by our club!

Registrations are now open.

[Information](#) and the [registration form](#) are on our website

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc. #A0003010B

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Membership – fees due 1st April

Includes the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist.

(Membership forms on [CFNC website](#))

Single \$35, Family \$50

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Email items: newsletter.cfnc@gmail.com

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The Nodding Greenhood Pterostylis nutans is the club emblem. Design by Rita Mills

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club.