

NATURE TERRITORY

December 2018

Newsletter of the Northern Territory Field Naturalists' Club Inc.

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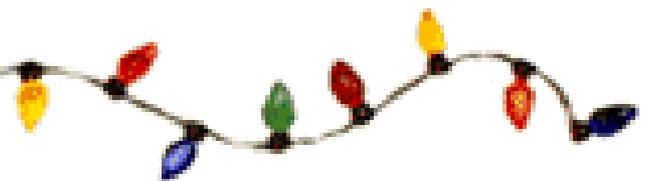
Club web-site: <http://ntfieldnaturalists.org.au/>



Native Mistletoe (*Amyema* sp.). Photo: Leona Sullivan

Happy and safe holidays

**May 2019 bring you
 everything you wish for
 and many wonderful
 encounters with nature**



FOR THE DIARY



December Field Trip: Sunday 2 - Christmas/End of Year Get Together at George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens

December Meeting: Wednesday 12 - Studying the Ocean Without Diving In with Ruth Patterson

See pages 2 - 3 for more details

Disclaimer: The views expressed in *Nature Territory* are not necessarily those of the NT Field Naturalists' Club Inc. or members of its Committee.

December Meeting

Studying the Ocean Without Diving In: Remote Research in the Gulf of Carpentaria by Ruth Patterson

Wednesday 12, 7.45 pm, CDU Casuarina, Room [BLUE 2.1.51](#)

Summary: The Gulf of Carpentaria in northern Australia is one of the most remote and pristine enclosed seas on earth. It is an internationally recognised habitat for 5 of the 6 species of sea turtles. The Gulf also supports significant and highly regulated Australian fisheries. However, it is not untouched by the outside world. Modern pressures such as marine debris and climate change threaten biodiversity and ecosystem health.



Derelict fishing gear poses a threat to marine wildlife.
Photo: Anindilyakwa Land Council.



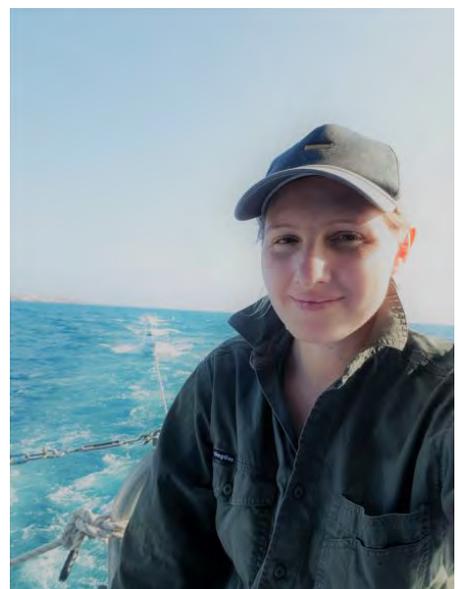
False killer whales inhabit the waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria.
Photo: Peter Zeroni.

Remoteness, expanse and jurisdictional boundaries make the Gulf of Carpentaria both expensive and difficult to monitor, which in turn makes it vulnerable to rapid change. Therefore we must find novel and inexpensive ways to monitor this sea and the animals that live within.

Biography: Ruth Patterson is a PhD candidate at Charles Darwin University studying the movement of animals in the ocean, with a focus on the Gulf of Carpentaria. Her thesis topic is to

investigate how physical patterns in the ocean such as tidal flows and currents relates to the way animals move. Ruth is following an emerging philosophy of scientific research that focuses on using data that has already been collected and published, to gain a better understanding of systems we know little about.

Ruth will present novel and interesting stories about the movement of the ocean and the animals within, in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Ruth grew up in the tropics and has a passion for maths and the ocean. She has worked in oceanography and oceanographic modelling for the past 10 years in Darwin and started her PhD in late 2017.



Ruth Patterson on a field trip to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

December Field Trip

Christmas/End of Year get together

Sunday 2 December at George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens

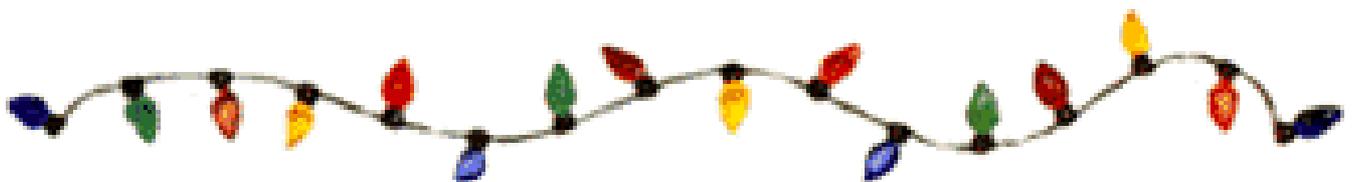
Join us for a talk on the planned new Visitor Centre delivered by Bryan Harty, Director of the George Brown Darwin Botanical Gardens, followed by a low key picnic.

MEET

At 8.30 am at the car park in front of the fountain. Picnic will be held at the tables behind the fountain.

WHAT TO BRING

Picnic food for yourself and to share. BYO drinks. There are tables but they are not always empty so it may be prudent to bring along your own chair.



Upcoming Field Nats Activities

No January Meeting

January Field Trip: Sea Turtle Recovery Centre (TBC)

November Field Trip Report

Duke Street Rainforest with Richard Willan

Saturday 17 November 2018

Text and photos by Tissa Ratnayeke

The Duke Street Rainforest is a tiny patch of remnant forest close to Darwin's CBD. The damage to trees from Cyclone Marcus in March was clearly visible and will take many years to recover. Fortunately



the few giant *Syzygium armstrongii*, an outstanding feature of this forest survived. Not only were there many other interesting natives plants but invasive creepers and trees were trying to get a foothold. We also saw a large number of bird species plus many beautiful Pale Triangle butterflies that didn't settle long enough for a photo.

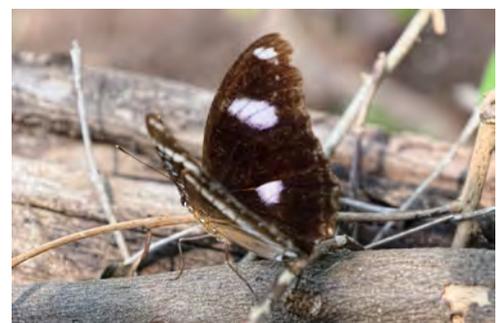
This Little Friarbird fledgling struggled to swallow a cicada fed to it by one of its parents.

Bird List

Australasian Figbird
Torresian Imperial Pigeon
Bar-shouldered Dove
Pheasant Coucal
Blue-winged Kookaburra
Helmeted Friarbird
Little Friarbird
White-gaped Honeyeater
Blue-faced Honeyeater
White-throated Honeyeater
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike
Black Kite
Brahminy Kite
Whistling Kite
Masked Lapwing
Australian White Ibis
Spangled Drongo
Green (Yellow) Oriole
Magpie Goose
Red-collared Lorikeet



Sporting an elongated forehead, *Thanatodicta* sp (thanks to Graham Brown for ID) is a tiny bug that feeds on the sap of fig trees such as this Sandpaper Fig.



This female Common Eggfly (left) looks like she has had a few lucky escapes. The males (right) have a large white spot on each wing.

Plant List

Sandpaper Fig (*Ficus scobina*)
Flagellaria Vine (*Flagellaria indica*)
Peanut Tree (*Sterulia quadrifida*)
Cocky Apple (*Planchonia careya*)
Northern Milkwood (*Alstonia actinophylla*)
Wild Grape (*Ampelocissus acetosa*)
Micromelum (*Micromelum minutum*)
Red Bead Tree (*Adenanthera pavonina*)
Terrestrial Mangrove (*Caralia brachiata*)
Native nutmeg (*Myristica insipida*)
Native Jasmine (*Jasminum didymium*)
White Bush Apple (*Syzygium armstrongii*)
Tuckeroo (*Cupaniopsis anacardioides*)
Cayratia spp.

Introduced plants/weeds

Qld Cheesewood (*Alstonia scholaris*)
Tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*)
Centro (*Centrosema pubescens*)
Bush Passionfruit (*Passiflora foetida*)
Neem (*Azadirachta indica*)
Fishtail palm (*Caryota mitis*)
Poinciana (*Delonix regia*)
Milk weed (*Euphorbia heterophylla*)
Coffee Bush (*Leucaena leucocephala*)
Mother-in-law's Tongue (*Sansevieria* sp.)
Ornamental rubber vine (*Cryptostegia madagascariensis*)



The trunks of the large *Syzygium armstrongii* on the right of this photo.



In the middle of the forest was one of the thinnest and tallest Peanut Trees (*Sterculia quadrifida*) I have seen, a result of its struggle to reach light in the tall, dense habitat. The black seeds inside the mature orange pods are edible and taste like ...

The fruit of *Micromelum minutum* will turn bright red when ripe.



Gaping holes as a result of damage from Cyclone Marcus in March will provide opportunities for some of the seedlings mature. Photo: Greg Flint

AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

DARWIN 3-5 JULY 2019



REGISTRATIONS OPEN



Registrations for the
*Australasian
Ornithological Conference*

Open on 7/8/2018

REGISTER NOW
for earlybird registration rates

Artwork by John Gardlam



Northern Territory
Field Naturalists' Club

▶ *Student Researcher Scholarship*

for the 2019
Australasian Ornithological Conference
in Darwin, Northern Territory



*Applications open
15 October to 16 December 2018*

The **Northern Territory Field Naturalists' Club** is a Darwin-based society that has a passion for the environment with many birdwatchers amongst its members. The Club is pleased to sponsor a student to attend the **10th Australasian Ornithological Conference** which is being held in **Darwin** between **3-5 July 2019**.

This biennial Conference is the primary meeting for BirdLife Australia and Birds New Zealand. It is the largest gathering for professional and amateur ornithologists from Australasia.

Check your eligibility▶

- You must be enrolled for an honours, masters or PhD degree at a recognised tertiary institution between 15 October and 16 December 2018. Students enrolled in the third year of a BSc degree during 2018 can also apply.
- You must be undertaking research on any taxonomic group of birds (or any avian faunal assemblage). Preference will be given to students working on shorebirds (resident or migratory).

▶ To view scholarship conditions visit -
<http://ntfieldnaturalists.org.au/AOC-Scholarship>

▶ For more information on the conference visit -
<https://www.aocdarwin.com/>



Podcasts - Off Track, Radio National

For lovers of nature and podcasts, if you haven't discovered these already, you may enjoy this series from Radio National. Here is a selected summary of those aired over October. To access the podcasts check the website at: <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/offtrack/>

3 Nov: He's been through the desert

His business card says 'desert walker' and he's not afraid of death.



10 Nov: Hit the frog and toad

It was thought that cane toads couldn't survive, and certainly couldn't breed as far south as Sydney. That thought was spectacularly wrong.



Branch Out – Discover the surprising world of plants with science and stories from the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney – Australia's oldest living scientific institution. Episodes aired in Nov:

16 Nov: Bizare BEE-haviour and snoty gobbles

SPIDERS



© Jürgen Otto

15 December 2018 – 28 April 2019

magnt.net.au

Admission fees apply

**MUSEUM
AND ART
GALLERY**
NORTHERN
TERRITORY

An exhibition developed & toured by the Australian Museum & Questacon - The National Science and Technology Centre



Chitter Chatter - excerpts from the Club's Facebook group



20 November: Fiona Fireland: We found the cutest little walking Christmas tree (Casemoth) while dog walking tonight.



10 November: Brian Worsley: Can anyone share any information on this little fungus growing in our lawn, Virginia, NT?

John Grylls One of the Coral/clavarioid fungi I think

Pieter G Bekkers: I only know it as s coral fungus. I am sure someone will be able to identify it better. Check it out when it is fully dark, some of them are bioluminescent



15 November: Kylie Roberts: Morning all, apologies if this is the incorrect forum for my question, (and for the average pic quality), but would anyone be able to ID this critter for me? TIA

Tissa Ratnayeke: Kylie where did you see this skink, it's always helpful to have a location.

Sancho Mabuza: Hard to ID from this pic but looks like a closed-litter rainbow skink (*Carlia longipes*). Location?

Kylie Roberts: Just in the backyard at Tiwi!

Scott van Barneveld: *Carlia sexdentata*.

Tissa Ratnayeke: Scott, if I remember correctly these were introduced to Darwin. Original habitat north Qld and NE NT.

Scott van Barneveld: That's the one.



20 November: Christopher Spooner: An awesome way to wrap up the day, Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove perched low and in the open.



15 November: Tissa Ratnayeke: Not sure what this Magpie Goose was feeding on yesterday but it certainly must have been worth the effort to stick its head that deep into the mud. Have a look at its head in the 3rd pic.



BLACK KITE SURFING STORM DOWNDRAFT, DARWIN NT

JOHN GIRDHAM NIKON D80 SIGMA 80-400MM F4.8 ISO200 1/1000

19 November: John-Marg Girdham: Spotted this Black Kite near Holmes Jungle the other day flying very close to the downdraft of a thunderstorm. Brave!

NT Field Naturalists' Club Directory

President:	Richard Willan	8999 8238 (w)
Secretary:	<i>Vacant</i>	
Treasurer:	Jo Rapley	0487 193 241
Committee Members:	Graham Brown	0417 804 036
	Mark Grubert	8999 2167 (w)
	Lyn Lowe	0411 269 216
	Leona Sullivan	0423 951 874
	Andrew Bell	0428 882 979
BirdLife Australia Liason Officer:	Andrew Bell	
Newsletter Editor	Leona Sullivan	0423 951 874
Website and Facebook:	Tissa Ratnayeke	0417 659 755



Club web-site: <http://ntfieldnaturalists.org.au/>

Club notices

Thank you: The previous issue was despatched by **Tissa Ratnayeke**.

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Newsletter contributions welcome: Sightings, reports, travelogues, reviews, photographs, sketches, news, comments, opinions, theories , anything relevant to natural history. Please forward material to news.ntfieldnatsnt@gmail.com

Deadline for the February newsletter: 30 January 2019

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Need a Club membership form? Go to: <http://ntfieldnaturalists.org.au/membership/>

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Northern Territory Naturalist:

Chief Editor, Richard Willan, advises that Volume 28 has been printed and copies have been mailed out to members who haven't been able to personally collect their copy. Contributions for next year's volume are now welcome.

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Top End Native Plant Society General meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of the month at the Marrara Christian College, corner Amy Johnson Ave. and McMillans Road, and commence at 7:30 pm (speaker at 8 pm). Visit <http://www.topendnativeplants.org.au/index.php> or contact **Russell Dempster** on 0459 440 665.

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NT Field Naturalists' Club Meetings are *generally* held on the second Wednesday of every month, commencing at 7:45 PM, on the Casuarina Campus of Charles Darwin University.

Subscriptions are on a financial-year basis and are: Families/Institutional - \$30; Singles - \$25; Concessions - \$15. Discounts are available for new members – please contact us.