

# **THE FIELD NATURALIST**

NEWSLETTER NO. 131: SUMMER, 2017/18

ALBURY-WODONGA FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB INC.  
Reg. No. A0023416K



Lady Bath Falls  
Photo – Neil Blair; Sketch Stephanie Jakovac



'Sacred Kingfisher with dinner' – Richard Andrews

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**PRESIDENT'S REPORT/ AGM**

**9<sup>th</sup> February 2018**

This year has again been a very successful one for the club with a healthy membership of 24, enriched by regional members, and an average outing attendance of 11. There were 24 outings held and 2 outings were cancelled due to weather, both in April.

Again we travelled to a lovely variety of habitats, both within and in all directions from Albury/Wodonga – Doctor's Point billabong and nearby river Albury, Wonga Wetlands Albury, Kremur St. river walk and ponds Albury, Nail Can Hill Albury, Walla Walla, Chiltern/Mt Pilot NP, Baranduda, Mt Baranduda, Sugarloaf reserve at Springhurst, Granya State Forest and Jarvis Creek Reserve, Winton Wetlands, Woomargama NP, Warby/Ovens and Killawarra NP, Beechworth Historic Park and Stanley State Forest, Mt Buffalo NP, Falls Creek Alpine NP. Our mid-year Pub luncheon at Stanley, Christmas get-together at Mt Buffalo and 4 day Falls Creek 'campout' were well attended and enjoyed by all. Discussions last year revealed that members felt our key activity should remain our outings. Due to the large number of "environmental" groups and the associated increasing demand on available speakers it was decided not to try and 'resurrect' public evening meetings with guest speakers which the club did in the past. However the idea of Members Evenings is one we can look at this coming year. The booklet "Along the Bush Tracks" has been released and is available free from the club. This together with Guide Brochures from Victoria and NSW departments, Friends of Chiltern Mt Pilot NP and other groups means there is now a lot of good local information on the native flora and fauna for those visiting the bush. In addition websites such as Friends of Chiltern Mt Pilot NP, Vicflora and a host of specialist sites means that members can follow-up on observations made during the outings. On behalf of all at the Club I wish to congratulate Peter Stokie, one of our members on his being awarded an OAM for his outstanding work for the Mallee Fowl. Peter was part of the original working group set up many years ago.

This year has again run very smoothly and for this I would like to thank my fellow committee members, members who assist with administrative tasks, excursion leaders, the newsletter editor and contributors, and our enthusiastic participants. It has been another very enjoyable year.

**Neil Blair**

Also, thanks to members Jan & Annelies Willinck for their excellent presentation outlining the evolution & development of 200 acres of barren farmland at Table Top, into their revegetated, native paradise home, "Galateah". We were treated to a 7 minute video produced by their daughter Lizette (My Crazy Passion) and their personal (continuing) learnings from the journey. AGMs are rarely so inspiring! [Ed]

2018 has begun and the programme has been planned until the end of August. My personal thanks to our president for his untiring work for the club, outings and newsletter [Ed].

15 members travelled to the Mt Buffalo Caravan Park, Porepunkah on Friday afternoon for our last outing of the year - our Christmas break-up - and had a most enjoyable shared BBQ meal on Friday night. A spotlight walk revealed a very young frog with its tail still attached (?species), a big number of large Leopard Slugs (*Limax maximus*) and a Brushtail Possum waiting patiently for us (or supper perhaps?) back at our cabins.



Yellow Robin – P Spencer



Leopard Slug – N Blair



Brushtail Possum – N Blair

Saturday’s outings started at 9 am at the Visitors Centre at the Park Entrance, where our numbers swelled to 17. A short walk to the Eurobin Creek and the Swing Bridge was a good introduction to Mt Buffalo’s montane flora with Tussock Grass (*Poa labillardiera*), Sword Sedge (*Lepidosperma laterale*), Christmas Bush (*Prostanthera lasianthos*), Tree Violet (*Melicytus dentatus*) and the Buffalo endemic Fern-leaf Baeckea (*Sannantha crenulata*) being amongst the flora noted.



Fern-leaf Baeckea (N Blair)



Unidentified insect on Burgan (G Steed)



Group at swing bridge (D Andrews)

Noting the good flow in the Eurobin Creek following recent rain we then walked into Lady Bath Falls and the Lower Eurobin Falls which were lovely to see. The flora on the banks along the walk included Violets (*Viola hederacea*), Trigger Plants (*Stylidium montanum*) and the Shrubby Platysace (*Platysace lanceolata*). Morning tea was had at the walk into Rollanson’s Falls, a lovely treed picnic area where a nest of Large Dolly Ants (*Dolichoderus sp.*) with larvae was found in the BBQ!!



Giant worm, Megascolex – P Spencer



Large Dolly Ants – G Steed / N Blair





Another handsome, but unidentified fellow – G Steed

We then proceeded to the Chalet Visitors Area and had a short walk along the Lake Catani path through the Alpine Ash and enjoyed views of the Victorian Alps from a rock platform before returning back for lunch (shared with an envious Pied Currawong & Little Raven) and views of the Gorge.



Pied Currawong – D Andrews



Alpine Ash – G Steed



Group at rock platform – D Andrews

The afternoon was spent on the Dickson Falls walk from the Cresta carpark. This walk traverses a grassy, swampy plateau before a granite, shrub passage to the lookout above the falls, looking out over the Buckland Valley. Although the sought after Olive Whistler was frequently heard, on this occasion we were denied a sighting. The flora was abundant. On the grassy plateau a stand of Coral Heath (*Epacris gunni*) stood out and among the tussocks Granite Buttercups (*Ranunculus graniticola*) and the less common Gunn's Alpine Buttercup (*R. gunnianus*), Billy Buttons (*Craspedia sp.*), Alpine Rice-flower (*Pimelea alpina*) and the Bog Fleabane (*Pappochroma paludicola*) were among the more colourful herbs and an Alpine Shrub Violet (*Melicytus angustifolia*) in flower was characteristically hugging a granite boulder. Amongst the many flowering shrubs were Alpine Orites (*Orites lancifolius*), Alpine Phebalium (*Phebalium squamulosum*), Alpine Boronia (*Boronia algida*) and Alpine Westringia (*Westringia senifolia*). Mountain Hood-orchids (*Caladenia alpina*) were plentiful on the granite shrubland.



Alpine Shrub Violet – N Blair



Gunn's Alpine Buttercup – N Blair/ G Steed



A well-earned evening meal was enjoyed at the Porepunkah Pub.

Sunday morning 5 members stayed on to do the walk into Marriot's Lookout from Mackeys Lookout, a section of The Big Walk. It starts as a zig zag across the rock face which was part of the original track up Mt Buffalo, appropriately named the Zig Zag. Hardy Brittle Gums (*Eucalyptus mannifera*), the endemic Buffalo Sallow Wattle (*Acacia phlebophylla*) and a diverse heath grew in the poor thin soil. Alpine Westringia (*Westringia senifolia*), Mountain Burgan (*Kunzea peduncularis*), Shrubby Platysace (*Platysace lanceolata*) and Violet Kunzea (*Kunzea parvifolia*) were among the most colourful and numerous shrubs.

Some steep sections made the trip seem considerably longer than the 1.2 km signposted. A bird highlight was the sighting of a Scarlet Honeyeater, by John and Gail, at Marriot's Lookout more than a 1000 metres up the mountain.



Buffalo Sallow Wattle - N Blair



Marriot's Lookout – J Shepherd



Fringe Lilly - J Shepherd

Lunch at Rollanson's Falls picnic area ended a lovely weekend.

**Neil Blair**

**Plants of note on Mt Buffalo trip, December 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> 2017: (G Datson, N Blair)**

| <b>Mt Buffalo endemics (= only found on Buffalo)</b> |                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Acacia phlebophylla                                  | Buffalo Sallow Wattle                       |
| Sannantha crenulata                                  | Fern-leaf Baeckea (crenulated leaf margins) |
| <b>Some other plants in flower</b>                   |                                             |
| Arthropodium milleflorum                             | Pale Vanilla Lily                           |
| Baeckea gunniana                                     | Gunn's Baeckea (or Alpine Baeckea)          |
| Baeckea ramossima                                    | Rosy Baeckea                                |
| Brachyscome nivalis                                  | Snow Daisy                                  |
| Brachyscome spathulata                               | Spoon Daisy                                 |
| Caladenia cucullata                                  | Hooded Caladenia                            |
| Craspedia glauca                                     | Common Billy-button                         |
| Epacris gunnii                                       | Gunn's Heath                                |
| Grevillea alpivaga                                   | Buffalo Grevillea                           |
| Lagenophora montana                                  | Mountain lagenophora                        |
| Orites lancifolia                                    | Alpine Orites                               |
| Phebalium squamulosum subsp alpinum                  | Alpine Phebalium                            |
| Pimelea alpina                                       | Alpine Pimelea                              |
| Ranunculus graniticola                               | Granite Buttercup                           |
| Thelionema spp.                                      | Tufted Lily                                 |
| Thysanotos multiflora                                | Fringe Lily                                 |

Bird List - Mt Buffalo trip, December 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> 2017 (Glenda & Bernie Datson; \*John Shepherd).

|                            | Caravan Park | Picnic area, NP entrance | Lady Bath Falls | Chalet   | Dickson Falls | Marriot's Lookout* |
|----------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|-----------------|----------|---------------|--------------------|
| Australian Raven           |              |                          |                 | *        |               |                    |
| Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike  | *            |                          |                 |          |               |                    |
| Brown-headed Honeyeater    |              |                          | *               |          |               |                    |
| Brown Thornbill            |              |                          |                 | *        |               |                    |
| Crimson Rosella            | *            |                          |                 |          |               | *                  |
| Eastern Spinebill          |              | *                        |                 |          |               | *                  |
| Fantail Cuckoo             |              | *                        |                 |          |               |                    |
| Flame Robin                |              |                          |                 | *        |               |                    |
| Golden Whistler            |              | *                        |                 |          |               |                    |
| Grey Fantail               | *            |                          |                 |          |               | *                  |
| Grey Shrike Thrush         |              |                          |                 |          |               | *                  |
| Kestrel                    |              |                          |                 |          | *             |                    |
| King Parrot                | *            |                          |                 |          |               |                    |
| Kookaburra                 | *            |                          |                 |          |               | *                  |
| Little Raven               |              |                          |                 | *        |               |                    |
| Magpie-lark                | *            |                          |                 |          |               |                    |
| Noisy Friarbird            |              |                          | *               |          |               |                    |
| Oriole                     | *            | *                        |                 |          |               |                    |
| Pied Currawong             |              |                          |                 | *        |               |                    |
| Red Wattlebird             |              |                          |                 |          |               | *                  |
| Satin Bower Bird           |              | *                        |                 |          |               |                    |
| Satin Flycatcher           |              |                          | *               |          |               |                    |
| Scarlet Honeyeater         |              |                          |                 |          |               | *                  |
| Scrubwren                  |              | *                        |                 |          |               | *                  |
| Silvereeye                 |              |                          |                 | *        |               |                    |
| Spotted Pardalote          |              | *                        |                 |          |               |                    |
| Striated Pardalote         | *            |                          |                 |          |               | *                  |
| Striated Thornbill         |              |                          |                 | *        |               | *                  |
| Superb Blue Wren           | *            |                          |                 |          |               |                    |
| White-naped Honeyeater     |              |                          | *               |          |               |                    |
| White-eared Honeyeater     |              |                          |                 |          |               | *                  |
| White-throated Treecreeper |              |                          |                 | *        |               |                    |
| White-throated Warbler     | *            |                          |                 |          |               | *                  |
| Yellow-faced Honeyeater    | *            |                          |                 |          |               |                    |
| Yellow Robin               |              | *                        |                 |          |               |                    |
| <b>Total = 35</b>          | <b>11</b>    | <b>8</b>                 | <b>4</b>        | <b>8</b> | <b>1</b>      | <b>14</b>          |

**Day 1** - 10 members participated in this year's camp, meeting at the Tawonga Store at 10 am. The morning was spent at the Mountain Creek Reserve at the foot of Mt Bogong exploring the campsite vegetation and the Gully Walk. Lunch was had at the Clover Dam Arboretum under a Gingko biloba tree. In the afternoon we visited the Fainter Falls and explored the vegetation between Howman's Gap and Falls Creek via the back road. After settling into the Lodge we enjoyed a communal meal on the Lodge deck utilizing its BBQ. After dark we looked at the moon through binoculars and explored the summer star constellations.

**Day 2** - In the morning we wandered along the aqueduct towards Roper's Lookout and then climbed the first part of the Heathy Spur Track. Lunch was had at the Rocky Valley Dam and the afternoon was spent walking into and out from Wallace's Hut. In the evening we enjoyed a meal at the Last Hoot restaurant.

**Day 3** - We started at Ruined Castle and then proceeded to the Pretty Valley Hut. Lunch was had at the nearby campground and we wandered the alpine grassland nearby before proceeding to the Pretty Valley Dam and its surrounds. Finally we drove to the dam wall and looked at the released water cascading on the granite boulders, forming the start of the west branch of the Kiewa River. Pizzas were ordered for the evening meal and enjoyed back at the Lodge.

**Day 4** - Started with a walk into Cope Hut followed by a wander across the adjacent alpine grasslands. We then drove down to the Bogong Village and after a short Lake walk enjoyed lunch in one of the lovely gardens where the west and east branches of the East Kiewa River meet before running into Lake Guy. Following lunch we said our farewells and made our way home in the mid-afternoon.

Some of the many highlights were;

- Defining montane, subalpine and alpine and looking at the changing vegetation as we made our way up the mountain.
- Tasting bush tucker including the fruits of the Prickly Currant Bush (*Coprosma quadrifida*), Wild Raspberry (*Rubus parvifolius*) and the non-native Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus* spp. agg.). The fruits of the Cherry Ballart had finished. Also tasted were the leaves of the Alpine Pepper (*Tasmannia xerophila*) and the leaves of the non-native Sheep Sorrel (*Acetosella vulgaris*).
- Thinking about the problems alpine plants face and looking at the many strategies they have adopted to survive.
- Getting lovely close-up views of the White-naped Honeyeater and its red eye patch and also of the White-browed Scrubwren (see Bird List).
- Coming across a Highlands Copperhead snake, basking beside a walking track on 3 of the 4 days. Skinks made up the other reptiles noted.
- Capturing photos of often uncooperative Butterflies, Moths, Katydid, Grasshoppers, Flies & Caterpillars
- Enjoying and identifying (we are becoming quite expert !) over one hundred flowering plants with memorable patches of:
  - o BLUE (Veined Sun-orchid -*Thelymitra cyanea* and Royal Bluebells - *Wahlenbergia gloriosa*),
  - o PINK (Alpine Triggerplant - *Stylidium montanum*),
  - o WHITE (Sun-daisies - *Celmisia* spp, Shrub Everlastings - *Ozothamnus* spp.) and most of all,
  - o YELLOW/ORANGE (Billy-buttons - *Craspedia* spp., Alpine Everlasting - *Xerochrysum subundulatum* , Alpine Podolepis - *Podolepis robusta*).
- Looking at some invasive non-native plants such as the Himalayan Honeysuckle (*Leycesteria formosa*) and Blackberry (*Rubus fructosus*) in the montane and Milfoil/Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) in the subalpine/alpine regions.
- Learning about the Geology and Geomorphology of the country we were in at the time.

This was a lovely camp, full of goodwill, with the participants bringing a range of shared knowledge, so that a broad "Field Naturalist" experience was had by all.

**Neil Blair**



Rosy Hyacinth Orchid (*Dipodium roseum*) White-browed Scrubwren (D Andrews)



Purple Leek Orchid (*Prasophyllum suttonii*)

Sky Lily (*Herpolirion novae-zelandiae*)

*Ewartia* sp (D Andrews)



Alpine Candles (*Stackousia palvinaris*)

Carpet Heath (*Pentachondra pumila*)  
(D Andrews)

Starfish fungus (*Aseroe rubra*)



Highlands Copperhead  
*Austrelaps ramsay*  
(N Blair)



View above Cope Hut



Group at Ruined Castle

(D Andrews)





Robber Fly  
*Cerdistus sp.*



Yellow-headed Blowfly  
*Amenia sp.*



Omnivorous Tussock Moth  
*Acyphas chionitis*



Unidentified red spider  
(N Blair)



Carpet Moth  
*Chrysolarentia oxygona*



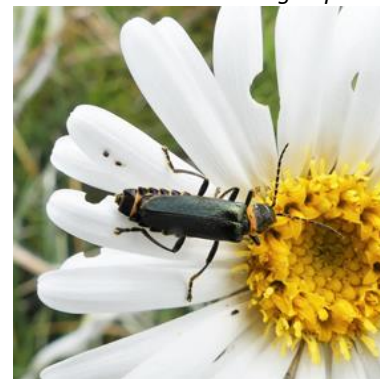
Carpet Moth, Small Radiating  
*Chrysolarentia chrysocyma*



Tiger Moth - (N Blair)  
*Phaos aglaophara*



Katydid - *Tinzedo albosignata*



Soldier Beetle - Cantharidae (N Blair)

Birdlist Falls Creek (J Shepherd) – January 22-25, 2018

|                    |                         |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Australasian Pipit | Masked Lapwing          |
| Australian Magpie  | Nankeen Kestrel         |
| Brown Thornbill    | Olive Whistler          |
| Crimson Rosella    | Pacific Black Duck      |
| Eastern Spinebill  | Pied Currawong          |
| Flame Robin        | Red Wattlebird          |
| Gang-gang Cockatoo | Scarlet Robin           |
| Great Cormorant    | Scrubwren               |
| Grey Currawong (?) | Striated Thornbill      |
| Little Raven       | White-naped Honeyeater  |
| Magpie-lark        | Yellow-faced Honeyeater |
| <b>Total = 22</b>  |                         |

Both these outings were well-attended, held in 'not too hot' conditions and with good bird counts.



Reed Warbler

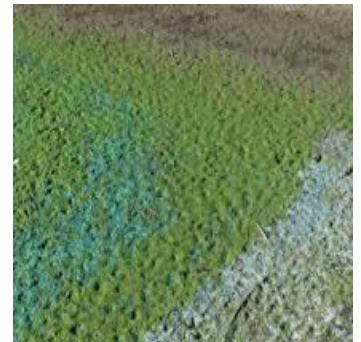


Turtle (D Andrews)

10 members participated in the 8am Wonga Wetland outing on a warm summer morning. We looked at 4 lagoons before returning on a circular path back to the parking area, after 3 hrs, for morning tea and a return home before the midday sun.

The ponds were quite low in water and algae including blue-green algae were readily visible. Some ponds were covered in a bloom of Azolla fern. The bird life on the ponds lacked the usual numbers and variety although by the morning's end a good list was found.

A mistletoe (Drooping Mistletoe - *Amyema pendula*) was found on a Bottlebrush (River Bottlebrush - *Callistemon sieberi*) which is quite an unusual sighting.



Blue-green algae at water's edge of Lagoon 1 (N Blair)



Drooping Mistletoe (N Blair)

Noogoora Burrs (*Xanthium occidentale*) found along the Murray Valley were fruiting and we looked at the seeds within the burrs, the latter aiding seed dispersal by attaching to animal coats including human clothes.



At morning tea we looked at a copy of the book “Insects of South-Eastern Australia - an ecological and behavioural guide” by Roger Farrow, CSIRO publishing.

I would strongly recommend this book to all members with an interest in entomology.

**Neil Blair**

See below for bird lists from both outings.

|                           | Kremur St, 4 pm, 11/02/18<br>(P Seeley) | Wonga Wetlands, 8 am, 24/02/18<br>(G & B Datson) |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Australasian Grebe        |                                         | *                                                |
| Australian Raven          | *                                       |                                                  |
| Black Duck                | *                                       | *                                                |
| Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike | *                                       | *                                                |
| Black Swan                | *                                       |                                                  |
| Brown Goshawk             | *                                       |                                                  |
| Brown Treecreeper         | *                                       |                                                  |
| Coot                      | *                                       |                                                  |
| Corella                   |                                         | *                                                |
| Crested Shrike-tit        | *                                       |                                                  |
| Crimson Rosella           |                                         | *                                                |
| Darter                    | *                                       | *                                                |
| Dollarbird                | *                                       |                                                  |
| Dusky Moorhen             | *                                       | *                                                |
| Dusky Woodswallow         | *                                       | *                                                |
| Eastern Rosella           |                                         | *                                                |
| Galah                     | *                                       | *                                                |
| Great Cormorant           | *                                       |                                                  |
| Great Egret               | *                                       | *                                                |
| Grey Fantail              | *                                       | *                                                |
| Grey Shrike-thrush        | *                                       |                                                  |
| Grey Teal                 | *                                       | *                                                |
| Kookaburra                | *                                       | *                                                |
| Little Black Cormorant    | *                                       | *                                                |
| Little Pied Cormorant     | *                                       |                                                  |
| Magpie                    | *                                       | *                                                |
| Magpie Lark               | *                                       |                                                  |
| Masked Lapwing            | *                                       | *                                                |
| Pelican                   |                                         | *                                                |
| Pink-eared Duck           |                                         | *                                                |
| Purple Swamp Hen          | *                                       | *                                                |
| Rainbow Bee-eater         | *                                       | *                                                |
| Red-browed Finch          | *                                       | *                                                |
| Reed Warbler              | *                                       | *                                                |
| Restless Flycatcher       |                                         | *                                                |
| Sacred Kingfisher         | *                                       | *                                                |
| Scrubwren                 |                                         | *                                                |
| Shoveler                  |                                         | *                                                |
| Spotted Pardalote         |                                         | *                                                |
| Straw-necked Ibis         | *                                       | *                                                |

|                             |           |           |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Striated Pardalote          |           | *         |
| Sulphur-crested Cockatoo    | *         | *         |
| Superb Fairy-wren           | *         | *         |
| Tree Martin                 | *         |           |
| Welcome Swallow             | *         | *         |
| Whistling Kite              | *         | *         |
| White-breasted Woodswallow  | *         |           |
| White-eye                   |           | *         |
| White-faced Heron           | *         | *         |
| White Ibis                  | *         |           |
| White-plumed Honeyeater     | *         | *         |
| White-throated Tree-creeper |           | *         |
| Willy Wagtail               |           | *         |
| Wood Duck                   |           | *         |
| Yellow Robin                | *         |           |
| Yellow Rosella              | *         | *         |
| Yellow Spoonbill            | *         |           |
| Yellow Thornbill            |           | *         |
| <b>Total =</b>              | <b>42</b> | <b>42</b> |

### Life history of the Dainty Swallowtail - *Papilio anactus* (Papilionidae)

One of our members, Eileen Collins, always keeps a keen eye on the wildlife in her garden at Chiltern. This includes the invertebrates and recently she witnessed the life cycle of the Dainty Swallowtail. The adult female butterfly lays a single egg on the tip of a fresh, juvenile citrus leaf. This hatches into a small caterpillar which undergoes a number of changes (instars) as it grows to a mature caterpillar which then pupates by spinning its own pupa, complete with sling, to mimick its surroundings. It emerges as the butterfly which, in Eileen's garden, was attracted to the nectar in an Emu Bush (*Eremophila* sp.). At Eileen's invitation I was able to photograph this sequence.



Neil Blair

**Upcoming Outings – Autumn 2018**

~ **11<sup>th</sup> March** – Thurgoona; 9 am SS&A Carpark Albury; contact Phillip Seely

~ **24<sup>th</sup> March** – Corowa/Rutherglen; 9 am SS&A Carpark Albury; contact Gail Steed.

~ **7<sup>th</sup> April** – Urana (joint outing with Birdlife Australia); 8:15 am Ebden St old Waterwheel site, Albury; contact John Shepherd or Neil Blair

~ **28<sup>th</sup> April** – Table Top “Galateah”; 9 am SS&A Carpark Albury; contact John Shepherd.

~ **12<sup>th</sup> May** – Henty Swamp; 9 am SS&A Carpark Albury; contact Neil Blair.

~ **26<sup>th</sup> May** – Yackandandah; 9 am Acacia Carpark Wodonga; contact Richard Andrews.

*2018 outing details have been compiled for Autumn & Winter & are available in a separate list. Contact Secretary for a copy or access via Ecoportal.*

*Please confirm outing details in Saturday’s Border Mail and contact the outing leader in the week prior if you need a lift.*

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**Arsonist Falcons??**

Ornithologist Bob Gosford & colleagues at the Central Land Council in Alice Springs have published a paper in the Journal of Ethnobiology, citing eye witness accounts of birds of prey using burning sticks to spread existing fires. Black Kites, Whistling Kites & Brown Falcons have been reported using this technique to expose prey and it is now thought to be deliberate.

They are not sure how common the behaviour is, so keep a look-out next time you are fire-fighting!

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