



# Canberra Nature Map newsletter

Volume 1 Issue 1: March 2023



## Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of the Canberra Nature Map (CNM) newsletter.

The aim is to produce four issues per year with contributions welcome from all members. If you have an interesting project or sighting you'd like to share with the CNM community you can send your report to the Editor. Details are on the back page of each issue.

Please send the text either as a Word document, or similar, or as text in an email. If including any photos, please send these as hi resolution images as attachments separately to the text. It may be necessary to send several emails with only a few images per email. Please do not include the images in the text.

Michael Bedingfield and Lisa Bradley will be assisting as part on a small editorial team.

I look forward to receiving your contributions and photos and hope you enjoy the newsletter.

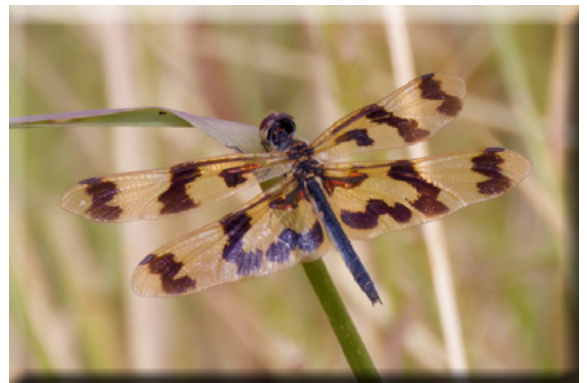
**Alison Milton**  
CNM Editor

## Editor's March photo picks

Two photos have caught my eye this week.



A beautiful capture of [Neochmia temporalis, Red-browed Finch](#) at Hackett by trevsci.



Secondly, a rare species of dragonfly, [Rhyothemis graphiptera, Graphic Flutterer](#) at Breadalbane by KorinneM. This species is a first for CNM.

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## Tiger Moths, subfamily Arctiinae – brightly coloured for protection

Michael Bedingfield

The darkness of the night has a magical quality and its creatures are silent or very quiet most of the time, reflecting the silence that is so soothing to us humans. Moths are mysterious insects and most are active at night. I have photographed over 160 species that have come to my home, the great majority of which came out of the darkness and were attracted to my house lights. Sometimes the night's silence was disturbed by the gentle sound of moth wings beating against my kitchen's windowpane. But there are some moths that are active by day and I mention a few of these in this article. The ones I have chosen for this essay are brightly coloured Tiger Moths from the subfamily Arctiinae. I have photographed them in daylight while exploring Canberra's grassy landscapes.

There are over 20,000 species of moth in Australia, of which only about 11,000 of them have been described and named scientifically. Over 2000 species have been recorded in the A.C.T. and the number is growing constantly as the result of the work of local moth enthusiasts. Canberra Nature Map (CNM) has been of great assistance in documenting this work. My book reference is *Moths in the A.C.T.*<sup>1</sup> which is a huge step forward in revealing some of the secrets of moths to the general public. CNM's list of A.C.T.'s Tiger Moths is given in my references.<sup>2</sup>

There are nearly 300 Australian species in the large subfamily Arctiinae of Tiger Moths. The subfamily occurs worldwide, mainly in the tropics, but there are more than a few local species. The subfamily common name comes from the colouring, the more well known of which are quite striking in yellow-orange and black or may include bright red. These colours are meant to warn or repel predators, so they are usually unpalatable or are mimicking such species. Many of these species are able to exude a pungent secretion when disturbed. Some species are black and white and there are others that have plainer colours that camouflage them in their preferred environment.

Donovan's Tiger Moth *Aloa marginata* comes to light at night and can be flushed out during daytime walks. I found a female in the delicate occupation of egg laying on a plant stem. The wings are mostly white with streaks and dots of black and red, orange or yellow. The abdomen has the same colouring. The larvae are dark brown with cream spots and very hairy, and feed on a variety of low growing herbs. Speaking generally, adult moths don't need much food, but have a liquid diet and feed using a long proboscis. They

feed mostly on flower nectar and are important pollinators. But they also feed on fruits, and more rarely on the honeydew of scale insects and other nutritious liquids they may find.

Handmaiden Moth is the name that covers the genus *Amata*. They have wings that are black with orange or yellow spots and abdomens that are striped in those colours. They are day flying and are attracted to light too. The adults feed actively on flowers, particularly Blackthorn *Bursaria spinosa* when it is available. Many species have similar wing patterns and the patterns are variable within species, so it is usually impossible to identify species from photographs. They are quite common and their spectacular colouring makes them easy to see.

The Heliotrope Moth *Utetheisa pulchelloides* is white with lots of red and black dots. It is a common sight in daytime rambles in the warmer months, perching on low vegetation or fluttering away to a safe distance when disturbed. The larvae feed on plants of the Borage or Forget-me-not family. There are a number of other similar looking *Utetheisa* species but most occur more to the north of Australia.

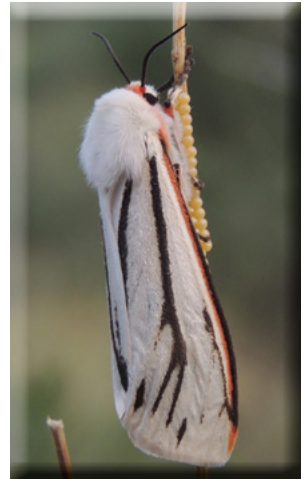
The wings of Shepherd's Footman *Termessa shepherdii* are coloured in bars of black and yellow. The feather-like antennae of the specimen in my photograph indicate that it is a male. There are numerous *Termessa* species that have similar colouring so care is required to identify to species. Some of the larvae of these species have been found to feed on lichen. There are a lot of moth species for which the larvae are not known so researchers will sometimes take unrecognisable caterpillars into 'protective custody' and raise them to adults to find out to what species they belong.

What I have provided here is a glimpse into only one subfamily of moths, a tiny window into the variety of moths that one might find at home or in your favourite patch of nature. You can find out about National Moth Week and how to become a 'moth-er' at the address given in the references.<sup>3</sup>

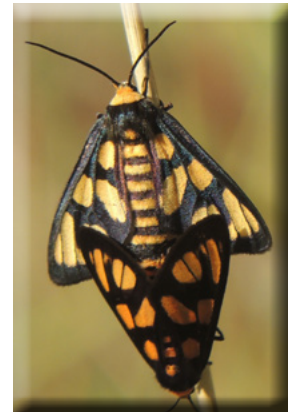
*Reprinted from Friends of Grasslands Newsletter for September – October 2022.*

### References

1. *Moths in the A.C.T.* Glenn Cocking, Suzi Bond and Ted Edwards, published by Glenn Cocking.
2. [Canberra Nature Map Tiger moths](https://canberra.naturemapr.org/categories/guide/319) (<https://canberra.naturemapr.org/categories/guide/319>).
3. [National Moth Week](https://nationalmothweek.org/) (<https://nationalmothweek.org/>).



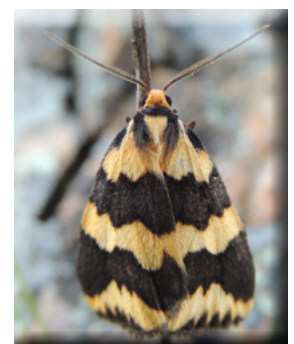
Donovan's Tiger Moth  
*Aloa marginata*



Handmaiden Moth,  
Genus *Amata*



Heliotrope Moth  
*Utetheisa pulchelloides*



Shepherd's Footman  
*Termessa shepherdii*



## Red Hill: In search of fauna

A small number of Field Naturalists of the ACT gathered to explore the southern slope of Red Hill with the focus on searching for fauna.

In the two hours we didn't cover much ground but we found an impressive 65 species.

Some of the highlights were a flock of Black-tailed Cockatoos flying overhead just after arrival (not photographed), tiny leaf-rolling weevils, and a beautifully coloured Bag case moth, found by one of the members. Jacky led us to a colony of coconut ants in a dead tree stump and the significance of these ants was explained to the group, most of whom were not aware of this.

Photos or recordings weren't taken of every sighting but I have posted some on Canberra Nature Map and added them to a [collection](#). I still have more to add but the small number recorded on Canberra Nature Map compared with the total number of species found just shows how much we may be missing on our excursions into Canberra's nature reserves.

The full list is below.

### Ants (7)

*Black house ant* (possibly)  
*Camponotus consobrinus* - Banded Sugar Ant  
*Camponotus suffusus* - Golden-tailed sugar ant  
*Iridomyrmex purpureus* - Meat Ant  
*Notoncus capitatus* - An epaulet ant (possibly) tending scale  
*Papyrius nitidus* - Coconut ant  
*Rhytidoponera metallica* - Greenhead ant

### Arthropods (3)

*Beautiful Badge Spider* - skin  
*Phonognatha graeffei* - Leaf Curling Spider  
*Ambigolimax nyctelia* - Slug

### Beetles (10)

*Chrysolina quadrigemina* - Greater St Johns Wort beetle  
*Euops* sp. (genus) - A leaf-rolling weevil  
*Gonipterus scutellatus* - gum tree weevil  
*Paropsisterna cloelia* - eggs and larvae  
*Paropsisterna decolorata*  
*Paropsisterna fastidiosa*  
*Paropsisterna octosignata*  
*Paropsis atomaria* & eggs  
*Trachymela* sp. (genus) - Brown button beetle  
*Transverse lady beetle*

### Birds (15)

*Australian Magpie*  
*Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike*  
*Crimson Rosella*  
*Gang Gang*  
*Grey Butcherbird*  
*Grey Fantail*  
*Long-billed Corella*  
*Noisy Miner*  
*Rainbow Lorikeet*  
*Red Wattlebird*  
*Satin Bowerbird*  
*Spotted Pardalote*  
*Sulphur-crested Cockatoos*  
*Welcome Swallow*  
*Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos*

### Butterflies - moths (6)

*Cebysa leucotelus* - Australian Bagmoth  
*Heteronympha merope* - Common Brown  
*Pieris rapae* - Cabbage white  
*Platyptilia celidotus* - Plume Moth  
*Scopula rubraria* - Plantain Moth  
*Zizina otis* - Common Grass-Blue

### Leaf hoppers (5)

*Eurymeloides pulchra* - Gumtree hopper  
*Azora unicolor* - Grey Planthopper  
*Brunotartessus fulvus* - Yellow-headed Leafhopper  
*Chaetophyes compacta* - Tube spittlebug (pupae casing)  
*Ipoella* sp. (genus) - Leafhopper (attended by meat ants)

### Mammals (2)

*European Rabbit*  
*Grey Kangaroos*

### Other flying insects (9)

*Apis mellifera* - European honey bee  
*Black wasp*  
*Braconidae* sp. (family) Unidentified braconid wasp  
*Damsel fly*  
*Echthromorpha intricatoria* - Cream-spotted Ichneumon  
*Hover fly*  
*Parasitic wasp egg*  
*Praying mantis egg*  
*Sheep blow fly*

### Other (8)

*Amorbus alternatus* - Eucalyptus Tip Bug  
*Anisolabididae* (family) - Unidentified wingless earwig  
*Aphididae* (family) - aphid  
*Creiis costatus* - Shell lerp  
*Frog* (heard)  
*Johnrehnia concisa* - a native cockroach  
*Scale*  
*Wasp galls*

**Alison Milton**

### CNM Committee

[Emma Collins](#) (convenor)  
[Ian Baird](#)  
[Michael Bedingfield](#)  
[Yumi Callaway](#)  
[Ciaran Ernst-Russell](#)  
[Matthew Frawley](#)  
[Stuart Harris](#)  
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[Alison Milton](#)

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### Editorial team

Michael Bedingfield  
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Canberra Nature Map was co-founded by [Aaron Clausen](#) and Michael Mulvaney

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