



Canberra Nature Map newsletter

Volume 2 Issue 1: March 2024



Michael Mulvaney reached 40,000 expert ID confirmations

Congratulations to NatureMapr co-founder Dr Michael Mulvaney for reaching 40,000 expert ID confirmations across the NatureMapr platform.

Absolutely incredible!

That is 40,000 occasions where Michael has been able to share his knowledge and expertise with someone in the community and where a record has been formally verified prior to being ingested as an official government biodiversity record.

Then there are the thousands of helpful and informative comments, recommendations and advice that Michael contributes on a daily basis.

Michael's leadership within the community has helped define our culture and has provided inspiration for how NatureMapr moderators go about their important and hugely valued work.

You are a legend Michael M!



(Only 20,000 ID's to go before Tapirlord catches up.)

Contributions to the newsletter

Any member of the NatureMapr community is welcome to submit an item for the newsletter.

It may be a private trip you have arranged with friends, such as Trevor's report on the next page, or just some exciting or unusual sighting you have found that you would like to brag about.

Alternatively, you might like to highlight a local area that doesn't get a lot of attention, photos that you think may be unusual or of greater interest. Or anything at all. Don't be shy. You will be amazed on what is of interest to the greater community.

Contributions and photos can be sent to the editor at apm56@optusnet.com.au at any time throughout the year. I look forward to seeing your stories and contributions.

Contents

Michael Mulvaney reached 40,000 expert ID confirmations	1
Contributions to the newsletter	1
Numock Swamp report	2
Griffith Woodland	4
Blue banded bees, Amegilla species, cute Australian natives	5
Editor's photo picks	6



Numock Swamp report



In January I threw out a last minute invite for some nature mappers to join me on a trip to Nunnock Swamp near the top of Brown Mountain, south-east of Nimmitabel. This was not an official NatureMapr trip, but was very last minute. Alison Milton, Csteele4 and mahargiani were able to join me on the day.

Nunnock Swamp is not far from where I grew up and I had always wanted to visit this area but never had the chance until now. It was a great decision as this was such a spectacular place of high biodiversity to explore. The area contains forest, woodlands, native grasslands and wetlands to explore. The day was pleasantly warm, and sporadically random wafts of mist would drift through the area cooling us down momentarily.



I was also honoured to meet June Wilkinson and friends on the swamp circuit. June was one of many who fought hard to have this area preserved (it is now part of South East Forest National Park) and has one of the local orchids bearing her name, *Prasophyllum wilkinsoniorum*, which was found in flower during the visit.

The swamp area is peat forming and the ponds are rimmed with thick hummocks of sphagnum moss. Far from being dismal, this swamp is bright and verdant and feels as though it is burgeoning with life.

From the camp ground there are several safe walking tracks around the swamp and into the forest and one leads to a historic hut, Alexanders Hut. There are two ways in, one from the Snowy Mountains Highway via Packers Swamp Road, a spectacular journey through Glenbog State Forest, which is worth visiting in its own right, and the other is via the Monaro Highway and New Line Road, which travels past Glen Allen State Forest, also worth its own trip, and at only two and a half hours from Canberra makes day trips easily possible.



I was warned about leeches before the trip, and while I did see a few, I did not get bothered by them, possibly due to the premeditated gaff tape joining my pants to my boots and then sprayed with Bushmans insect repellent.

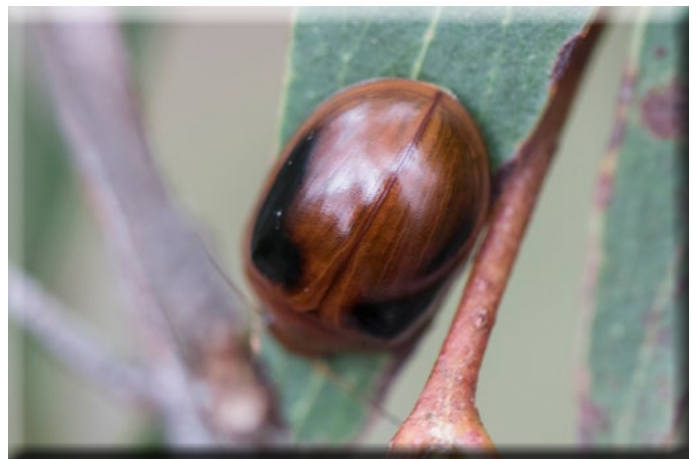
We were met there by Ned Johnston and Matt Fox who by coincidence had camped there overnight and had previously discovered many species of orchids in flower in the grasslands, woodlands and swamp. Personally I was thrilled to find my first Spencer's flatworms at the swamp, and in Glenbog State forest nearby.



This is one of the most beautiful places I have visited and I hope to return many more times in the future. Thanks to Alison Milton, Csteele4 and mahargiani for joining me on this trip and for contributing your sightings to NatureMapr.



Sightings can be seen on Canberra Nature Map, and South Coast Nature Map as this site is one which is on the border of the two maps. However, the following photos are just some of the many species we found on the day.



I would encourage others to try a group trip, it's a great way to meet other mappers. I would also encourage mappers to visit places outside of the ACT. There are so many places only an hour or two from Canberra with few sightings on NatureMapr, and your sightings make a difference in informing authorities and conservationists on what needs protecting, how to protect it, and providing valuable weed alerts.

Happy Mapping.

Trevor Preston

Griffith Woodland

Alex Kirk

The Griffith Woodland is roughly two and a half hectares, nestled behind houses on three sides – Jansz and Carstenz Crescents and La Perouse Street.

It's characterised by picturesque rocky outcrops and large, high quality remnant box-gum and other eucalypts. There are approximately 200 (mostly native) trees and a diversity of some 80-odd grassy woodland species of trees, grasses and forbs. We're very proud of seven majestic yellow box trees (five listed on the ACT Tree Register) and the many smaller ones ready to take off when the opportunity arises.

A few ring-in tree species – oaks, an apricot, loquat, walnut and fig trees – reflect the social history of the area. They were planted near people's back fences when it was common practice to extend gardens into parkland. As they're around the periphery of the woodland, they don't impinge on the integrity of the rich diversity of native species.

Volunteer conservation work started in 2018 with the creation of the Griffith Woodland Volunteer Group. It went big on removing a large infestation of woody weeds, prickly pear and aloe, revealing the striking boulders that are a key feature of the natural landscape.

There are two main tracks through the woodland, which emerged in the early 1960s by frequent foot traffic and now form a natural edge to the area of highest ecological integrity in the heart of the woodland. We've added two benches looking out on the prettiest vistas, near the walking tracks to facilitate social interaction if people want to stop and chat with whoever happens to be sitting there.

Woodland gems

Complementing the rocky outcrops and majestic yellow box trees is a prolific patch of the native grass Wild Sorghum (*Sorghum leiocladum*). It's thrived and spread in the past few years perhaps

because of the above average rainfall. More elusive, most likely due to the proliferation of ground cover following abundant rain, is the golden sun moth, first sighted in 2019.

The griffith woodland master plan

Thanks to a government grant landscape architect Barbara Payne drew up a master plan for the urban woodland that provides a blueprint for plantings and site enhancement. The emphasis is on maintaining the woodland's natural beauty and boosting biodiversity.

Mapping woodland plants and animals

Photographing the plants and wildlife and posting them on the Canberra Nature Map has been an invaluable aid to identifying and recording the myriad plant species (native and introduced) and anything that moves. It's helped chart biodiversity and guide volunteers' weeding activities.

We've also mapped every tree on the woodland using a Canadian Forestry program that over time could be used to track the health and suitability of trees as the climate and environment change.

Volunteers

Most volunteers live near the woodland or their houses back onto it. There's a core group of 6–10. The bulk of the work is weeding the highest value areas, concentrating on one or two problem species at a time. It's just an hour and a half, once a month, with morning tea provided.

The real crowd pleaser is planting!



Plantings

We've had a number of planting days, by far the most popular and enjoyable for volunteers. As there was very little shrub understorey, we've added some shrub thickets in the hope of boosting habitat for insects, lizards and small birds.

We use grass seed and tube stock of grasses and forbs, cordoning off the areas for a while to monitor progress.

Weeds

You name it, we have it! After all the wet weather, the weeds have had a field day, this season in particular. We're attacking them on all fronts – working bees, spraying programs for the most invasive and noxious species plus the odd heroic blitz. We dream of being weed-free but realise that's not possible so concentrate our volunteer efforts where we can make the most difference. Weeds spreading from some local backyards are a chronic problem and while we've highlighted this in our regular neighbourhood newsletter, the problem persists.

In just five years Griffith Woodland



has transformed from a burgeoning haven of weeds to a healthy patch of remnant woodland that came into its own during Covid. It's now often the focus of field trips and enjoyed by woodland enthusiasts, pedestrians and dog walkers alike.

The Griffith Woodland page with field guide on Canberra Nature Map can be viewed at this address:

<https://canberra.naturemapr.org/locations/guide/2028>



Blue banded bees, *Amegilla* species, cute Australian natives

Michael Bedingfield



When we think of bees, we usually think of the most common bee to be seen around Canberra, which is the European honey bee, *Apis mellifera*. However, I have had other bees visiting my garden, which include blue banded bees. Out of curiosity I decided to find out more about them. It was a surprise for me to learn that there are over 1700 species of native bees that occur in Australia, and many species of blue banded bees!

The blue banded bees, with the genus name of *Amegilla*, look similar to the European honey bee, except they have black and blue stripes, instead of dark brown and orange. I have provided a simple drawing a blue banded bee and a photograph of a male bee *Amegilla (Zonamegilla) asserta*, clinging to a plant with its 'jaws'. *Amegilla (Zonamegilla) asserta*, has been recorded all along the eastern side of the Australian continent, with some also being found in South Australia and Central Australia.



Blue banded bees, *Amegilla* sp. occur throughout all of Australia, except for Tasmania, but also in PNG, and Southeast Asia. Their habitat varies, and includes woodlands, forest, heath and urban areas. They have a solitary lifestyle. After mating, females make a small nest for their eggs. The nests are small tunnels made by burrowing into earthen banks, soft stone or mud bricks. They collect pollen and nectar for their young. It is common for their nests to be close to those of other females, creating a community of independent individuals. Males don't make nests, but cling to vegetation when resting, and they don't help with their offspring.

These insects are only active during the warmer months, and die when cold weather arrives. The immature juveniles remain dormant in their nests during the cold months, and emerge the following spring. They have a typical insect body. It is composed of the head, with large multi-lensed eyes and a long 'tongue' or proboscis; the thorax, which is furry and reddish-brown and to which the legs are attached; and the abdomen, which is black with iridescent blue (or occasionally white) stripes. They grow up to 12 mm long, with males having five blue stripes and females four. In flight they dart quickly between flowers, and are able to hover in one place. They are not aggressive, though they can deliver a mild sting if grabbed or stepped on, and can sting more than once. Nearly all of our native bees are solitary. Only 11 native species are 'social' like the European honey bee, but they do not sting.

By contrast, the European honey bee is quite aggressive, and can give a painful sting. It is a social bee, with a queen in charge of a large colony, numerous female worker bees, and the male drones. This species was introduced to Australia by the early colonialists, and the insects have moved away from the hives to become feral pests in the natural environment. Their effect on native species was not regarded as an issue until recent times. Not enough is known, and there is research going on to measure their effect on native flora and fauna.



As a competitor with native bees, they impact on their food sources and their populations. They may also be interfering with the pollination processes of some native plants. These bees are also recognised as a threat to native birds, as they create colonies in tree hollows, so fewer hollows are available for the birds. It is not unusual to see a honey bee's nest in a tree hollow in our region. In Western Australia this is regarded as a serious problem, especially for some species of cockatoos, and measures have been introduced to combat the feral bee populations. There is also serious concern for the impact of the Asian honey bee, *Apis cerana*, which has moved into Queensland in recent years.

It is amazing what you find out when led by your curiosity. A blue banded bee is quite different to the familiar European honey bee, and I would prefer it to visit my garden any day!

Way back in 2019 CNM won the ACT Landcare Award for Citizen Science. See the [new page](#) on the dropdown list under 'Community'. This is what we do!

There is great interest in insect pollinators on CNM and native bees in particular. Meredith Cosgrove (mcosgrove) is beginning a research project on insect pollinators in Canberra's home gardens and has started with native bees. So I have created a

new 'Collection' on CNM called '[Native Bees of Canberra Home Gardens](#)'. It would be very useful if you could add the sightings of the native bees that you find in your home garden to this Collection. In the longer term we hope to learn more about the plants that our native bees prefer and so guide future garden plantings for people's homes. This will improve insect biodiversity in our town and be a win for our lovely native bees!

This article has been revised and edited from one published in the Friends of Grasslands Newsletter of March-April 2013.

Main references

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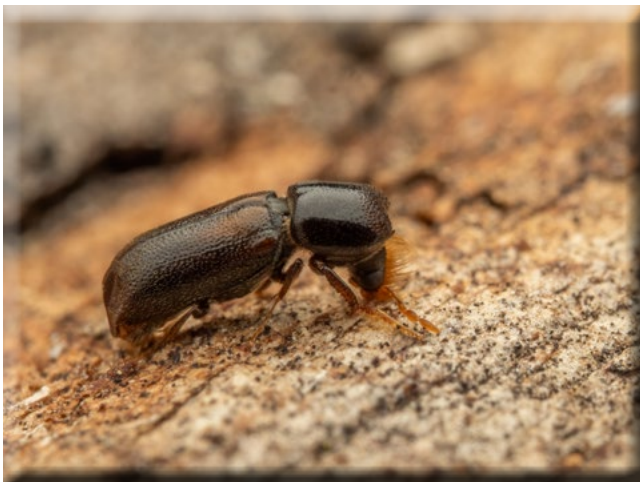
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Editor's photo picks for this quarter

This quarter I am loving the very unusual looking beetle *Xylobosca canina* (an Auger beetle), found by both 'living' and Dianne Clarke and a first sighting for Canberra Nature Map. There is strong sexual dimorphism observed in this genus; males are much shorter, and the apex of elytra is differently shaped, with long spines.



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