



31 July 2015 Ken Walker (kwalker@museum.vic.gov.au) Museum Victoria. Edition 19.

Hi All – I met two interesting young girls this week. Last week was National Moth Week in America. It's summer in the US so it makes sense but it's not great moth weather here in Australia at present. In January, 2015 on a hot evening, I gave a walk and talk to my local Montmorency Cubs group. When we opened the doors of the hall it was so hot that I suggested we go for a walk while some fresh air ventilated the room. During the walk there was one person who stood out with her ability to find and name insects. That person turned out to be Laura - a 10 year old child. She wanted to participate in National Moth Week so her Mum, Cynthia, remembered me from the talk and asked for my help. Since I also live in Montmorency, I offered to drive to their home and hang a UV light sheet over their backyard clothesline for an hour or so. Fortunately, four very cold Tortricidae (leaf roller) moths managed to fly onto the light sheet so the evening had some success. Laura asked me lots of questions and clearly showed she had been reading any insect related books she could find. Her parents have to date kept her away from the internet until she is a year or two older. Laura expressed an interest in keeping an insect pet and observing its behaviour. We spoke of potential species and decided on the spiny stick insect which Cynthia found on the web cost \$25 per specimen to purchase. Since the Museum breeds several species of stick insects for the Bugs Alive!

exhibition, I offered to source a specimen from the Museum stock. I returned the next night with Laura's new pet and asked her what name would she call her pet. Immediately she replied "Phasme – that's French for Phasmid". Of course, I expected a 10 year old to know that. So, here is Laura and "Phasme".



Using her Mum's email, Laura sent me a thanks message which she signed off as "From Laura the junior entomologist" and to which I replied "From Ken the senior entomologist". I hope Laura maintains her insect passion and will join BowerBird when she gets a camera and is able to access the internet.

The other young person I met was last night when I gave an evening Museum Members' tour of the insect collection to 11 people. I initially sat them down and tried to explain what a taxonomist was and does and then introduced them to the history, culture and scientific value of the ento collection. On the table I had a drawer of specimens collected by Alfred Russell Wallace. I told them about the famous biogeographical "Wallace's line" and how both he and Charles Darwin had independently developed the theory of evolution from their separate travels and collections. But before I told these stories, I asked if anyone in the group had heard of Alfred Russell Wallace and only one person put up her hand. Emily, a year 10 student, was the youngest of the tour group and was there with her father Richard. Quite a shy person but I called Emily over to read out aloud the hand written label from one of our oldest specimens. I had previously asked people to estimate the age of a hawk moth and the oldest date suggested was "about 50 years old". Emily read out the collection date of "28 August 1796". One of the many drawers I had on display was of the bee subgenus *Quasihesma* – which contains the world's smallest bee. They were amazed at the minute size of these bees and asked "How can you see them? So, I took them into our digital microscope and took a picture of just the head



0.5mm in width.

Rainbows!

I think everyone stops to look at and enjoys seeing rainbows – but you do not often see them on BowerBird until now! Teresa Van Der Heul snapped this wonderful image near Millicent, SA.



And here is a recent rainbow over Melbourne's Royal Exhibition Building. Photo by Peter Lillywhite.

A feast of magical insect imagery.

Our favourite Wimmera farmer, Maree (you remember – she spends days on end lying on her stomach in front of the bird-bath photographing insects) and her husband Graham decided to retreat north to the Daintree, Qld to escape the winter chills of the Wimmera. A few editions ago, I showed some of Maree's photos on route, but a few evenings ago, I could hear my iPad inbox pinging away as new emails arrived. The noise drove me pick up my iPad to investigate this sudden burst of email activity. It was Maree sending me about 20 emails containing some of the best insect imagery I have seen for a while. I will share some of these images delights with you.



Halictine bee *Mellitidia tomentifera* – Photo by Maree Goods

There are several interesting facts about this bee. The species was first described in 1909 by the German entomologist Heinrich Friese from specimens sent to him which had been collected in the late 1890s around Cairns, Qld. The ALA map below shows the extremely restricted distribution of the species – only the Cairns district and nearby Atherton tablelands as well as a few of islands such as Dunk Island. It's a relatively large halictine bee so there must be some habitat or host plant requirements that have restricted the bee's distribution so markedly.

People sometimes ask me about the effects of human activity (the so called Anthropocene) on the native bee fauna. Here is a bee that seems to happily co-exist with humans despite the enormous agricultural (sugar cane) and urbanisation changes that have occurred within its limited range.



The males of this species are frequently spotted roosting in large numbers. These large bee aggregations have sometimes mistakenly identified as a swarm of *Apis cerana* – the exotic

Asian bee. Due to the high humidity in which these bees live, fungal attack of the roosting male occurs frequently.

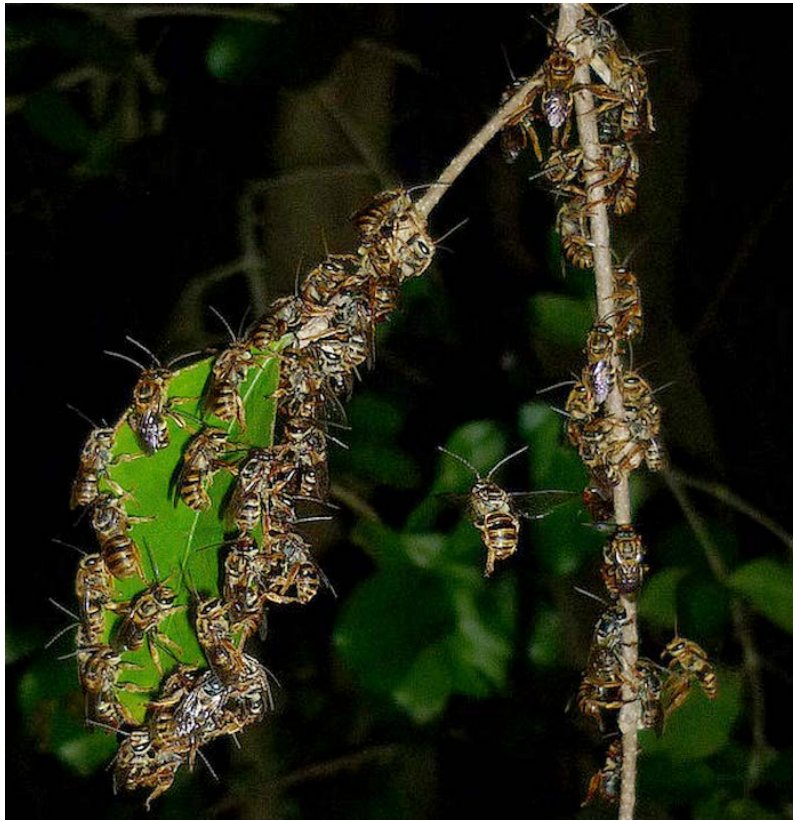


Photo by Bernhard Jacob



Photo by Judy King

I loved Maree's commentary about photographing this braconid wasp: "I nearly had to stand on my head to get this critter. He insisted on moving around the branch on the opposite side to what I was."



Photos by Maree Goods

Speaking of commentary, you'll enjoy her description of photographing this paper wasp: "There is quite a story to this wasp. Graham and my brother, Ian, were standing in the middle of a small roundabout in the busiest part of Daintree Village. If you have been to Daintree there is not much too it once you are away from the half dozen tourist businesses. Anyway they were busy photographing birds in a shrub which was flowering just across the road. They had to stand in the middle of the roundabout because their lenses would not allow them to get any closer. While this is going on I saw this wasp building her nest on the back of a give way sign on the roundabout so I am on my hands and knees busy photographing the wasp at work while the boys were doing their stuff. Yes we got asked several questions??? In fact one lady was quite concerned until she saw what we were photographing. Nothing untoward. If we were we would not have made it that obvious. Well the boys got their birds and I got my wasp." Country girls are made tough!



Maree managed to photograph both the highly distinctive larva and adult of this moth - *Crotalaria podborer* - *Argina Astraea*.



Two of Maree's favourite images for the trip were this skipper butterfly – The Iris Skipper - *Arrhenes dschilus iris*



And, this pair of bibionid flies – “Joined at the hip”.



Maree was surprised to see so many colourful jumping spiders:



Cosmophasis sp.



Mopsus Mormon — Photos by Maree Goods



Cosmophasis micans –



Nymph of the ubiquitous Hedge Grasshopper –

Valanga irregularis - Photos by Maree Goods

However, my favourite image was this neon cuckoo bee. The arrangement of bee, petals and yellow tipped anthers – magic.



Thyreus nitidulus – Photo by Maree Goods.

Thanks Maree – wishing you and Graham a safe trip home from North Qld back to the whistling winds of the Wimmera.

I wonder who has been looking after your famed “bird-bath” in the front yard ??????????

A mental image gone wrong

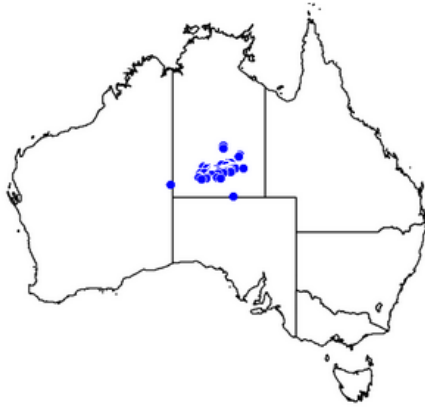
Have you ever corresponded with someone by email for quite some time before you actually meet that person? While we were developing BowerBird, John Read from SA contacted me. He was looking to develop a somewhat similar project called WOMPA? which is an aboriginal word literally meaning “What is it?” Over time and many emails, I created my own mind’s image of John as someone working from an office who always wore a tie to work. When I finally met John, my impression was almost the exact opposite to reality. John’s like me – ties are for wedding and funerals only!

WOMPA? is a Project on BowerBird and it has the distinction of being BowerBird’s first created project: (Note the “1” at the end of the URL) <http://www.bowerbird.org.au/projects/1>



I encourage people to join WOMPA? as it portrays a unique view into the deserts of Australia. John travels the deserts of SA and NT extensively and is currently in the deserts of NT. This week he posted this strange looking gecko with a shortened and shrivelled looking tail from NW of Aileron, NT.

Looking at ALA records for this species, the species has a limited distribution and has been sparsely recorded. The last ALA record for this species was in October, 2013, then one record in February 2012 and only ones and twos records for the previous several years. So, John’s recent July 2015 record is a significant one indeed.



Sighted 23 Jul 2015



Anmatjere NT 0872, Australia



Centralian Knob-tailed Gecko - *Nephurus amyaе* Photo by John Read

Confirmed non-occurrence evidence as valuable as confirmed occurrence evidence

Another of John's interesting recent records was to present evidence that the Black-footed Rock-wallaby (*Petrogale lateralis*) was **not** found during his visit to a particular location. John uploaded a typical Black-footed Rock-wallaby habitat image as well as an image of old scats and commented: "Photos shows one very old warru scat from cave next to fresh euro scats. Despite kilometres of seemingly prime habitat with plenty of spearbush food, BFRock Wallabies no longer extant in the vicinity of Native Gap but are found north and south."



Photos by John Read

And then another of John's records presents evidence for the occurrence of the Black-footed Rock Wallaby further south near Anmatjere, NT.



LOT 1811 Stuart Highway, Anmatjere NT 0872, Australia



Photos by John Read

John commented: "Great den site for small warru population - vertical crevice and fig tree".

The ways and means people find to use BowerBird and the diversity and complexity of BowerBird record continues to impress me.

I found it over the weekend.

Some may remember from last week's Bugle, that I explained the way to recognise a huntsman spider was that the leg length of the first two pair of legs is noticeably longer than the leg length of the hind two pair of legs.

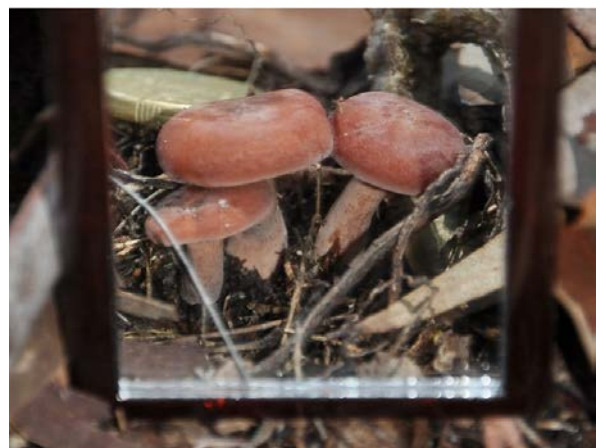
Over the weekend, I ventured down to my local park, pulled back some bark and there was a huntsman admirably displaying this different leg length character. The spider was obviously cold as it did not move from when I peeled back the piece of bark to when I put it back – probably fast asleep.



Holconia immanis Huntsman spider - Photo Ken Walker

Have you ever heard the expression? – It's all done with mirrors!

Well, using a mirror is how Judy and Rob Peters like to photograph fungi. They often find money as well. (:-> !!



Photos by Judy & Rob Peters

Fungal delights from this week.



Red and Brown Fungi: Ascomycota: Hypocreales: Nectria.
Photos and story by Matt Campbell: “Growing as clusters of small balls, each one around 0.5mm in diameter. Naturally found across the Northern Hemisphere on dead and decaying wood, several species will also parasitize living trees and can be a huge problem for apple growers. It appears that the species recorded so far in Australia and New Zealand are introduced. In the case of this sighting, it was growing on a long dead and fallen *Acacia melanoxylon*.”



Panaeolus - Photo by Tamara Leitch



Fungi: Basidiomycota: *Boletales* Photo by Judy & Rob Peters



Amanita ochrophyloides? - Photo by Judy & Rob Peters



Basidiomycota: *Tremella mesenterica* – Photo by Matt Campbell.



Basidiomycota: *Heterotextus peziziformis* –Photo by Matt Campbell

Claussenomyces australis



Photos by Matt Cambell

These images brought congratulation posts from Reiner and Teresa. Reiner commented: "Good find of this uncommon fungus. I have seen it a few times in the past year on relatively recently fallen Eucalyptus regnans where the smooth bark is still intact."

And, finally a liverwort!



Riccia sp. - Photo by Teresa and John

My AP (Aesthetically Pleasing) moments for the week

Steve Young's image of this Royal Spoonbill photographed at Coffs Harbour is a wonderful image .. the water bubbles, the water ripples, the out of focus foreground tree branch up top and reeds underneath is a wonderfully framed and composed image. I share it for all to enjoy.

(I'm sure Steve just snapped it on the run (:->@!!)



Photo by Steve Young.

Here is another of Steve's wonderful photography.

Look at the concentration of sunlight at the tip of the bird's beak and droplet of water.

The image of this Rainbow Lorikeet – (*Trichoglossus haematodus*) was taken yesterday at Sandy Beach, NSW just south of Woolgoolga



Photo by Steve Young.

The water droplets on this unidentified fungus caught my eye as well as an “AP” moment.



Photo by Matt Campbell

.And, the vibrant colours in the braconid wasp jump out at you!



Callibracon sp. - Photo by Tamara Leitch

Just for fun! - Urban Jungle Monk



A mantispid lacewing — Photos and copyright by Mark Berkery

As always from BowerBird .. that's your lot for this week.

Haveagoodweekend all Happy photographing ...

Cheers – Ken

(If you wish to leave this email list, please contact me directly at
kwalker@museum.vic.gov.au – else share with your friends)