



8 May 2015 Ken Walker (kwalker@museum.vic.gov.au) Museum Victoria. Edition 7.

Hi All – Lots happening this week on BowerBird – as usual.

I have always been a sucker for roosting bee male images.

Overnight, female bees nest inside their burrows, either underground or in tree holes, while males are left to fend for themselves outside. We have no idea why but male bees seem to like each other's company to while away the wee hours of the night.

In the late afternoon, the male bees find a suitable twig, branch, grass stem or something similar and they all come to spend the night together. Sometimes, there can be several different species of male bees all roosting together.

“Why?” is the obvious question and at present, there does not seem to be a reasonable answer. Perhaps it's the sweaty socks or sweaty jocks that bonds “us” males??

Finding roosting male bees is something you all should look for during your spring, summer and autumn late afternoon walks. Once you get your eye in, they are not difficult to find. Of course, take your camera, record the roost and pop the image onto BowerBird. Here are a range of male bee roosts.

Some roosting males like to wedge in tight on top of each other.



Photo by Martin Butterfield



Photo by Linda Rogan

Some choose leaves to roost on



Photo by Linda Rogan

Others choose grass stems. Some spread along the stem



Photo by Michael Batley

Others clump together on grass stems as balls or strings ...



Photo Richard Marchant



Photo by Linda Rogan

Blue banded *Amegilla* male bees like to spread out



Photo by Laurence Sanders

Of interest, is that Blue Banded male bees, hang on with their mandibles rather than hanging on with their tarsi (feet) ...



Photo Jean and Fred Hort



Photo by Jenny Thynne

Leaf cutter Megachilid males bees use their mandibles as well
I loved seeing this bee having a BIG leg stretch .. it feels Sooo
Gooooood



Photo by Mitch Smith

To my absolute surprise, BowerBird taught me that
Euryglossine male bees roost as well



Photo by Marc Newman

As do Hylaeine bees roost ...



Photo by John Thompson

Some lined up in rows see their “cute” neatly folded forelegs



Males from two different species and different subfamilies!



Photos by Linda Rogan

Some male bees roost inside flowers that close their petals at night .. “Snug as a bug and don’t let the bed bugs bite”



Photo Linda Rogan



Photo by Sujaya Ran

But ... My favourite roosting males are the cleptoparasites
Thyreus bees which roost singly ..



Photo by Karen Retra



Photo by Reiner Richter

Like the carpenter and leaf cutter bees, *Thyreus* males also hang on and sleep by just their mandibles.

This one looks like he has had a hard day chasing female bees and he's all done in.

Nighty night.



Photo by David Rentz

A sad huntsman with mites !!

Martin Lagerwey captured these wonderful images showing a shield huntsman spider literally covered with mites.

I asked a mite expert, Dr Dave Walter, to comment and he replied: “Wow, that spider sure picked the wrong spot to hunt. The red mites are larval Parasitengonina and probably in the family Erythraeidae. A common genus that attaches to arachnids is *Leptus*, but there are lots of others.”



Photos by Martin Lagerwey

The fungal images keep rolling in

Two of my favourite fungi are :

The Earthstars – if you poke the central globule, a wisp of spores will puff out of the central hole.

I'm like a big kid and love puffing earthstar fungi !!



Photo by David Akers

And, the introduced fly agaric and quintessential “toadstool” at the bottom of the garden - *Amanita muscaria*.

Amanita muscaria is noted for its hallucinogenic properties but I prefer to admire it from a distance in the ground.

For me, nature’s way of warning of danger is painting something red !!



Photo by David Akers

Favourite Image of the week ...

My daughter is currently in Year 11 at Eltham High school and is doing photography. Last weekend, she asked for my assistance on a photography assignment to find images that related to a wide range of photographic styles such as symmetry, the one third rule, shallow depth of field so that the subject was in focus and the background was out of focus etc

This wonderful image by Anna Lanigan reminded me so much of my daughter's photographic assignment as it matches so many of the photographic standards And it a great image!



Photo by Anna Lanigan.

BowerBird software upgrade

As most people would know and expect, Government funds are very tightly controlled. Citizen Science, while highly appreciated, does not seem to be something government agencies want to actually fund at present.

However, through lots of emails, phone calls, meetings, cups of tea etc I have been able to raise about \$35,000 for BowerBird software upgrades this year. These funds have primarily come from the Hugh Williamson Foundation and its closely aligned Bug Blitz program. I also did a work contract for ABRS (the Australian taxonomy agency) which added to the pot.

Several people have submitted to me ways they would like to see the BowerBird software enhanced and I have tried to spend the funding I currently have in ways that will benefit all. So here is what we will hopefully get for these funds:

FIXES:

- Both Video and Audio upload files
- Fixing the Edit/Save button so that it will save the changes
- A few minor fixes such as being able to add a background image of projects.

NEW FEATURES:

- Currently, the BowerBird MasterNames checklist, which contains over 220,000 names for the Australian flora and fauna, is static – no new names can be added to this list. This new feature will allow us to add new scientific names to this checklist which will allow us to add missed names and add newly described names.

- Email notification. Currently, the only way to see if someone has identified or commented on your record is to reopen the record and have a look. Email notification will advise you by your email when anyone adds anything to your record. As well, anyone who has added anything to a record will be emailed when anyone else adds anything new to the record you have added to. The email will contain a link back to the BowerBird record.
- BowerBird App. Finally !! We will produce a BowerBird app that will be downloadable from iTunes. This will allow anyone with a smart phone or mobile device (eg. iPad) to take an image and directly upload it into BowerBird. No more downloading images and reuploading them. Many of these smart phones and mobile devices have an inbuilt GPS chip so the image's location and date will be automatically added to the record. Hopefully, this will encourage many people on walks to snap a photo and upload it immediately. It will also be a significant education tool. Students will be able to upload their finds from Bug Blitzes and then be informed of their identifications through email notifications.

So, that's how these initial funds will be spent and hopefully spent wisely for the benefit for all.

Fingers crossed for more funds in the future.

I would like to sincerely thank and acknowledge Martin Carlson OAM of the Hugh Williamson Foundation for its continued financial support of BowerBird and citizen science.

Finally, I feel a future Bugle edition coming on about spiders .. with images like this one .. why not? Arachnophobes beware !!

What a wonderful display of bravado from this shield huntsman – making himself look as big as possible and displaying his underneath the abdomen black shield with white dots.

Take a bow *Neosparassus diana* – all class.



Photo by Frank Pierce.

And close up ! See the swollen last palp segment (black and arrowed). That's what makes it a male.

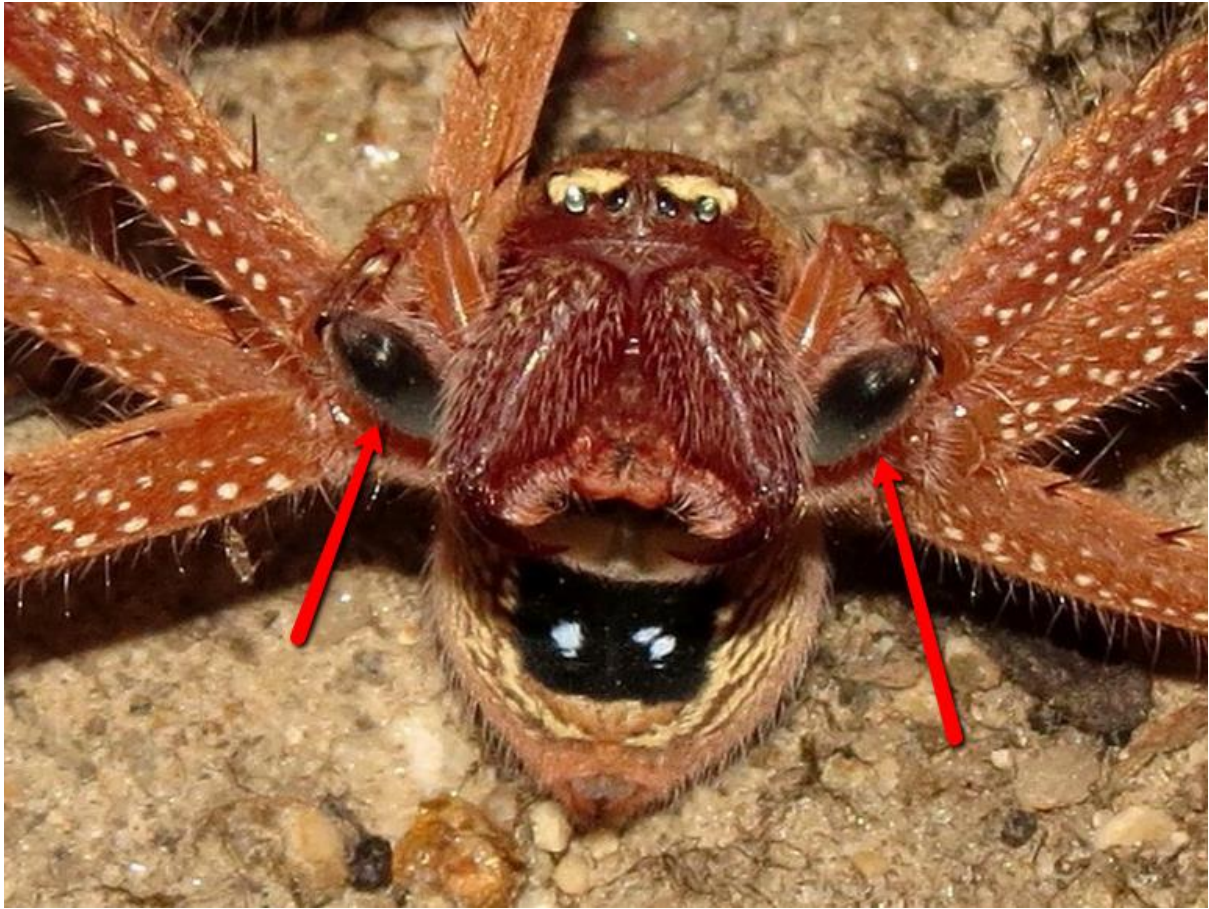


Photo by Frank Pierce.

Haveagoodweekend

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)