



Canberra Nature Map newsletter

Volume 3 Issue 3: September 2025



Whistling Kite capturing a Silver Gull: Photo by RodDeb

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Canberra Nature Map Association - please join

An association of Canberra Nature Map users and moderators has been established to facilitate social and educative interactions, and to provide administrative, supervisory and collegial support for our volunteer moderators. Ideally we would like all moderators and as many contributors as possible to be members of the Association and for some of you to assist in running the Association and social events. To become a member and vote at the AGM you need to send a 'yes I want to be a member' message to secretary.cnnm@gmail.com

For various reasons a proposed AGM of the Association, which was planned for October has been postponed until late February or early March 2026. As a confirmed member of the Association you will receive direct but periodic correspondence about the Association's activities.

The Association does not have any involvement with the running or funding of the NatureMapr platform. That is the role of Aaron Clausen's private company. Association activities are likely to include the publication of the newsletter, field visits, social events, identification nights for particular categories, school and other community events and moderator group get togethers. The Association is also able to apply for funding for environmental education and conservation management purposes. Funded activities could include organising site recording visits to particular properties (Bioblitzes), funding of a supervisor within a biological institution to support new moderators, or targeted surveys for particular species.

The Association needs members to put their hands up for committee and organising positions. The committee membership and positions will be up for re-election at the AGM. Further information will be sent out to members later. The list of people who are on the current committee are: President: Michael Bedingfield, Treasurer: Michael Mulvaney, Secretary: Emma Collins. Other Committee members: Kim Pullen, Ian Baird, Stuart Harris, Ciaran Ernst-Russell, Yumi Callaway.

Note that this committee also represents the Canberra Nature Map website community and the Canberra Nature Map ParkCare Group. At this stage the most important thing for people to do is to register as mentioned above if you wish to be a member of the new Association.

Michael Mulvaney

Citizen Science photography card

Canberra Nature Map members may be interested in obtaining a Citizen Science Photography Card. It is an aid to photographers doing pictures of small things, to give a person viewing those photos a clear idea of size and colour etc of the subject. It would be especially good for some insect photography. It is small and practical and costs only \$6. It is designed for use on biodiversity platforms such as NatureMapr.

Visit:- <https://habitatfornature.com.au/citizen-science/>

Michael Bedingfield

White-bellied Sea-Eagle over Lake Burley Griffin

A sighting which gripped my imagination recently was one of a White-bellied Sea-Eagle catching a fish from Lake Burley Griffin in the middle of Canberra City. The photo series was taken by Tim Leach, who is one of CNM's very talented photographers. White-bellied Sea-Eagles, *Ichthyophaga leucogaster*, have found a home in the Canberra region and sightings are a regular occurrence. How amazing to see a large eagle catching it's dinner in the middle of our big city!

But to add to the spectacle, in the background are the Russell Offices with the Australian-American Memorial, a monument with an eagle atop of a tall pillar.



Congratulations to Tim for this great photo series.

See his sighting at:

<https://canberra.naturemapr.org/sightings/4688234>

Michael Bedingfield

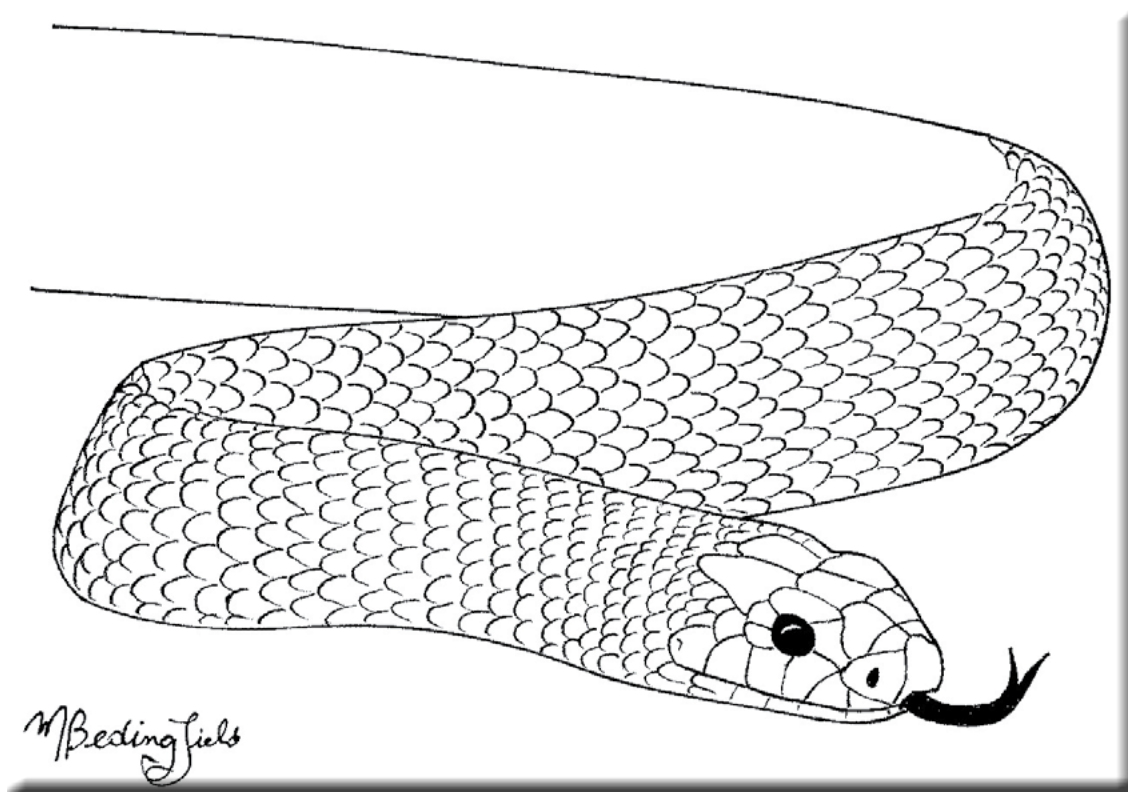
Editor: *Tim commented that this was taken hastily with a macro lens.*

Eastern Brown Snake, *Pseudonaja textilis*, the one you're most likely to see

Snakes have been feared and revered throughout the centuries. Their toxic venom and secretive behaviour creates anxiety in many people. A person who is called a 'snake in the grass' is one who is regarded as being treacherous but who hides his true nature. In the modern world where we live in a largely urbanised society and are separate from nature, the mystery and mystic of serpents and their value is not broadly appreciated. However, for some, the simple habit snakes have of shedding their skin makes them a symbol of rejuvenation. The medical doctors' symbol is a winged staff with two snakes curled around it, and for some Australian aboriginal communities the Rainbow Serpent is an important mythical creature or deity from the Dreamtime. It shaped the earth with its movements, creating the mountains and rivers. It can be seen when there is a rainstorm in the beautiful arch of a rainbow, as well as in the night sky in the majestic curves of the Scorpio constellation.

The most common snake to be seen at lower altitudes in the ACT is the Eastern Brown Snake, with the scientific name of *Pseudonaja textilis*. The head is small and bullet-shaped and the body slender. An adult can grow up to about two metres





in length but the average is around 1.5 metres. The chosen habitat is grassland, woodland or dry forests. During spring and summer it will venture into urban areas on the edge of town but doesn't stay long. Its normal colour varies from pale brown to grey, but occasionally the colour can be dark brown, blackish or orange. Juveniles are often black on the top of the head with a bar behind the head, and may be banded or partially banded.

For food the Eastern Brown Snake will seek out vertebrate animals such as small mammals, birds, frogs and other reptiles as well as eggs. It is fond of introduced rats and mice. Generally it will strike the animal swiftly, then move away to a safe distance until it dies from the venom. The meal, which may be much larger than the snake's head, is swallowed whole and snakes have a specially designed jaw to assist. The upper and lower jawbones are connected by elasticated ligaments and the skin nearby is quite elastic too, allowing for the mouth to be opened very widely.

These reptiles hide away during the cooler months and go into a torpor. They may come out occasionally and briefly on warmer days. In spring they become active and begin to breed. Males compete for receptive females in ritual combat, wrestling and intertwining tightly until one is able to overpower the other. Sometime after mating the female lays her eggs in a burrow or other safe place, with an average number of about 15. The clutch of eggs is left unattended and incubation takes quite a while, varying considerably depending on the temperature. At 25° C it takes about 95 days. In the ACT hatching happens from late January and through February.

If the Eastern Brown sees an intruder at a distance it may remain stationary hoping to avoid being seen or it may retreat rapidly if given the chance to do so. However, it is an alert and nervous species and can react quickly if surprised, putting on an aggressive display. When it feels very threatened it will adopt a classic snake defence posture of lifting the front part

of its body into an 'S' shape, then lunging forward toward the intruder with mouth wide open.

Snakes have a reputation for being dangerous, but there is a great variation in how dangerous they can be depending on the species. The factors involved are the degree of aggressiveness, length of the fangs, venom potency and the amount of venom delivered. This species is quite aggressive, but has short fangs of about 3 mm, which make biting through a heavy cloth more difficult. It has a medium venom yield but its venom is very poisonous. There have been occasional human fatalities from this snake's bite. By comparison the Red-bellied Black Snake *Pseudechis porphyriacus*, has longer fangs but it is relatively shy and not aggressive and its venom is less toxic. It is found mostly near rivers, swamps or other moist habitats. Overall, the Eastern Brown is considerably more dangerous than the Red-bellied Black.

The Eastern Brown Snake is widespread through eastern Australia, becoming less common as you move west into South Australia and the Northern Territory. It is absent from Tasmania but occurs in Papua New Guinea and Indonesia. I've provided a drawing of the front part of the body for illustration. Next time you see a 'snake in the grass' it may well be an Eastern Brown Snake!

References

Reptiles & Frogs of the Australian Capital Territory, Ross Bennett, National Parks Association of the ACT Inc., 2011

<https://australianmuseum.net.au/learn/animals/reptiles/eastern-brown-snake/>

<https://australianmuseum.net.au/learn/animals/reptiles/red-bellied-black-snake/>

(This article was previously published in the Friends of Grasslands newsletter for March–April 2020.)

Michael Beddingfield



Austral Adder's Tongue, *Ophioglossum lusitanicum*

To accompany the story about the Eastern Brown Snake here is something about the Austral Adder's Tongue, or simply Adder's Tongue, *Ophioglossum lusitanicum*. It is a tiny plant and easily overlooked, but it is a favourite of mine.

The Adder's Tongue is a primitive fern that is perennial and prefers damp open sites. Growth occurs in late winter or early spring and arises from an underground rhizome. The plants typically produce one to three leaves and these are actually sterile fronds. Locally the leaves grow to 2–3 cm long and the erect tongue-like shapes are fertile fronds that grow up to about 7 cm tall. These tongue-like stems contain the spore producing structures at the top. Adequate rain is required for their growth, however, and the ferns soon wither as the hot weather of summer approaches.

The scientific name is *Ophioglossum lusitanicum*. The genus name reflects the meaning of the common name and derives from the Greek 'ophio', meaning 'a snake', and 'glossa', which means 'a tongue'.

Apart from their diminutive nature, another reason why you may not have seen one is that they are only moderately common and tend to disappear under normal grazing conditions. However, they are quite widespread in Australia and occur in all states.



I've included a simple drawing of the Austral Adder's Tongue and a photo of a patch of them to give a clear picture for you. I hope readers can keep a lookout for this little fern. It is a special surprise to find it and I hope you do so in your favourite patch.

Reference

<https://bie.ala.org.au/species/https://id.biodiversity.org.au/node/apni/2897211>

Michael Bedingfield





One of many beautiful orchid photos by RobG1, of the [Blue Fingers orchid, *Caladenia caerulea*](#):

There are lots more lovely orchid photos on [RobG1's pages](#).



An exquisite photo of the tiny [Gasteruptiid wasp \(*Gasteruption* \(genus\)\)](#) by new member Debbie05, on this sighting:

See more of her excellent sightings on the [CNM web site](#).



CNM Committee

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[Ian Baird](#)

[Yumi Callaway](#)

[Ciaran Ernst-Russell](#)

[Stuart Harris](#)

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[Alison Milton](#)

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Editorial team

Michael Bedingfield

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

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