

February 2019

Volume 2, Issue 1

Inside this issue:

Summer Watch	1
Show & Tell	2
Inspired to Journal	4
Introducing Nature Guide Backyard Edition	5
Jacob's Adventure	6
Track & Scat Study	7
EchidnaCSI Big Scat Hunt	8
Nature Watch Chart	9
Animal & Track Scavenger Hunt	10
Track & Scat Nature Walk Note-book Pages	11



Summer Watch

Summer's scorching, steaming days are pounding on us and we're taking refuge in air conditioned homes, swimming pools, rivers and ponds. There's nothing like a splash on a hot day to bring relief from summer's relentless heat and the worry of bush fires. The humid days attract moths like the Emperor Gum Moth and winged ants.

The low tides provide exciting opportunities to explore rockpools and platforms for the sea creatures washing in like the toadfish and bluebottles. Larger fish are patrolling the beaches as they feed on easy treats while hunting.

The Red Flowering Gum and Crimson Bottlebrush explode with blooms which attract hoards of butterflies and nectar feeding birds. Lady Beetles are thriving on aphids and mealybugs.

Swifts feed on flying ants and echidnas prowl for ant nests while Kites prey on mice and grasshoppers. Predatory bugs such as mantids, wasps and spiders abound as the insect population flourishes. Wasps begin building mud nests and spitfire grubs of the sawfly hatch.

Dragonflies and tadpoles thrive in ponds, lakes and rivers while tree frogs croak and squeak. Snakes, lizards and geckos continue to bask on rocks and logs.

Summer gives us the perfect opportunity to investigate the surreptitious realm of insects. We'll be investigating the domain of ant nests and how they have a remarkable symbiotic relationship with plants and insects like the Blue Lycaenidae caterpillars, aphids and mealybugs. If you haven't already,



Lady Beetle

Coccinellidae

**"Ladybird,
ladybird,
fly away home."**

Australian Animal Track and Scat Links:

[Survival Tracking and Awareness](#)

[Identifying Tracks, Scats, Burrows and Other Signs](#)

[What Scat is That | ABC Science](#)

[Watching Wildlife: A Beginner's Guide](#)

[Why Do Wombats Make Cubic Poos? | Australian Geographic](#)

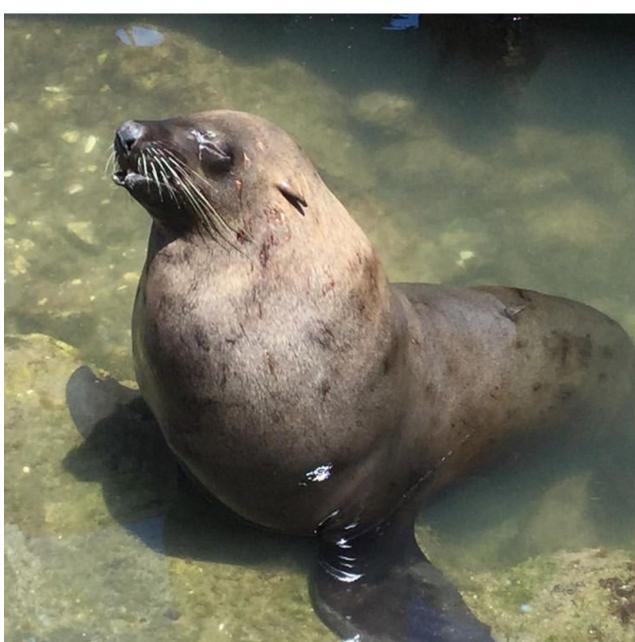
Show & Tell



Rebecca's daughter ponding.



Nini and family planted a forest of sunflowers. Aren't they magnificent? The sunflowers have attracted hoards of honeybees.



Jo's family exploring in Port Fairy. They sighted seals and rock pooled for ocean treasures like shells and crab skeletons.



Joanna sighted an elusive cicada.



Shelleys was impressed with the magnificent nacre on the mussels.



Reuben found an injured Mutton bird. He gently took care of it by tucking it safely into the dunes. He has such a tender heart.

Show & Tell



Renae's family happened upon some awesome sightings while exploring. Above is a Western Bearded Dragon (*Pogona minor*), Above right is a Sea Dragon. It's thought it may be the common *Phyllopteryx taeniolatus* and a crab.



Rebecca is loving the wildlife fluttering in her backyard.



Anne's daughter discovers seaweed in Yanchep.



Sharnn Watts heard rustling outdoors and found an echidna exploring her yard.

Jacob is doing amazing things with his photography. He found a birds skull and turned it into a work of art.



Inspired to Journal



Miranda was inspired to sketch a Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike which she sighted in Tasmania.



Courtney's family has taken refuge from scorching summer days to journal critters seen in their yard during early morning explorations. This is a fantastic drawing by Miss 5 of a Fire-tail Finch.



Kirsten's Tree Study turned into an everything study. It's wonderful to see inspired children enjoying their adventures and recording them.

Introducing the Australian Nature Study Guide Backyard Edition

Now Available

Step outside and discover

* Ants * Ladybugs * Grasshoppers

Native Bees * Summer Flowers * Grasses

* Eucalyptus Trees

* Willy Wag-tails * Geckos

* Daddy Long-legs



The Australian Nature Study Guide | Backyard Edition is **family orientated** and **inspires** children to **explore** the outdoors.

It will encourage **OBSERVATION, EXPLORATION, DRAWING, PAINTING, RESEARCHING, WRITING, READING, CREATING, ADVENTURE, DISCOVERIES, COMPARISONS, DISCUSSIONS, EXPLANATIONS, NOTATIONS, NATURE JOURNALING and WONDER.**

Immerse the children in nature study and learn science the **wild, free and fun** way.

Dip your feet in or dive in. The choice is yours! There's **no pressure** to do it all. The only requirement is to **enjoy and connect** with nature.

Join us as we venture into the Aussie backyard this summer and follow natural cycles through the season.

You'll be **surprised** and **inspired** to capture **memories** and knowledge through nature journaling.

Come along! Walk with me.

Nature Study Guide Reviews

"We have really enjoyed the program this term. We have gotten outside more often and the children are definitely taking more notice of things when we are out. Having a place to share what we have done and seen has been an encouragement to keep it up. I sometimes felt like we could spend longer on some topics as they were so interesting but that is probably just my obsessive "we must cover everything now" problem." 😊

~ Sally

"We began our homeschool journey this year keen to explore all that nature study entails. I had searched the web for weeks to research what we would use as our framework. I cannot describe the elation I felt when I came across an AUSTRALIAN nature study guide! Marie has done all the hard work and put together a wonderfully elaborate resource for all ages. You can dip your toe in or dive right into all the ideas and links. There's so much here we could spend all week doing nature study, and often we do." ~ Rachel

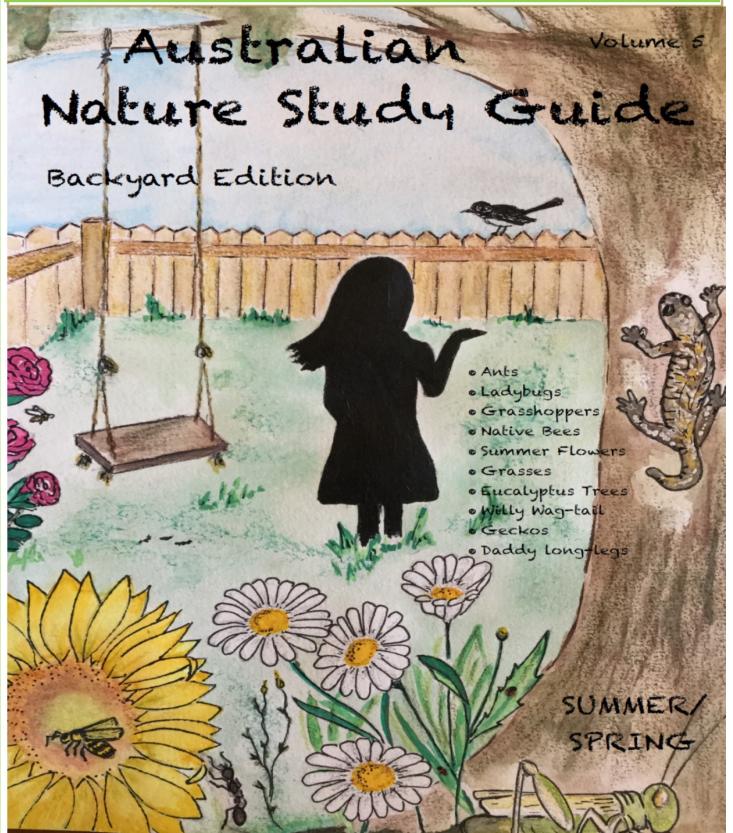
"Absolutely love the activity books. My whole family can learn together and it's Australian based. Highly recommend."

~ Sarah K

"So much exploration! And not enough time to do it all. You can really tailor to your child . Loving it."

~ Sarah R

Please leave a review for the Nature Guides you've used. It's an encouragement to me :-)



Jacob's Adventure

MEETING A WILDLIFE ECOLOGIST AND PHOTOGRAPHER

Late last year, I went to an Annual Bush Picnic which was organised by a local Landcare group. I was really interested because the Guest Presenter was a Wildlife Ecologist and photographer....Chris Tzaros.

Chris was staying in the local area conducting some surveys on the Bush Stone Curlew, which is endangered in Victoria. He demonstrated how he attracts them by playing their call, which was really loud! (He was using a megaphone).

We learnt about the importance of the type of vegetation to attract woodland birds and keep them safe from aggressive territorial birds. Small and dense local native plants are the best choice.

Afterwards, we had a meal and got to know some of the locals, who were very funny. One man brought along his homemade mozzie spray, which he called "Knock em down, super duper, mozzie killer". It was made up of baby oil, methylated spirits and a couple of other things....I decided I didn't want any!

I got to meet Chris personally and chat with him about birds. I learnt lots from him and then I gave him a signed copy of my Birds Of Cussen Park book, which I had published last year. Chris thought it would give his son some inspiration to produce a book on Reptiles of the Warby Ranges in Victoria. (Chris's son loves reptiles).

At the end of the evening, one of the men took a few of us to a nesting box nearby which he had built. He mounted a camera in each of the nesting boxes. He showed us some footage from one of the boxes, which was hilarious because it was a reversing camera and you could see the coloured guidance lines for reversing....they had got a good deal on camera purchases. They are a good camera for the nesting boxes because they have infrared for night vision.

It was a really great night!



Take a Quiz at:

[Honey Bees](#)

[Stumpy-tailed Skinks](#)

[Amphibian Metamorphosis](#)

[Summer Ponding](#)

[The Ecology of a Tree](#)



Jacob is an inspiring young man. He's taken his passion for photography and birds to create a Bird Field Guide for his local Bushland, [Cussen Park](#). Visit his [website](#) and [Facebook Page](#), [Digital Journey Photography](#).

Interested in Backyard Nature Observations?



[Download](#) February 2018 Nature Journal for inspiration and encouragement.

Jo shared her phenology wheels with us last year. Join her [here](#) and take a look at the end result to be inspired [here](#). Why not create a Phenology Wheel this year? [Here's how.](#)



A Mini Track & Scat Study

Animals, birds and insects write diaries with their feet and we can read those diaries to determine who wrote them. Indigenous Australians, relied upon their ability to read the stories in the sand told by footprints and scats to direct them towards food sources.

It is difficult to distinguish tracks at first, but once the skill is mastered they are a valuable source of information. Tracks don't last very long as they're either smudged, or the wind and rain erase the evidence of animals in the area.

Tracks will tell us if the animal was running, leaping, hopping or walking. As we investigate, we may notice that the creature stopped and changed direction. We may wonder why? Or as we're following the track, we may come upon an obstacle and we can investigate to find out how the creature overcame it.

The intriguing thing about tracking is that we don't know what we'll find at the end of the trail. A burrow perhaps? The size of the track will also give us an idea of how large the animal is.

Scats, faeces, poo whatever you call it, is full of information about the creature who dropped it if you're able to read it. The study of scats known as scatology aids in the study of animal populations, diets, genetics and behaviours. Scats reveal what animals eat, where they go and how they live. Amazing right? All this information just from poop.

Examine the scats you find. If they're warm and steaming, the creature just left. If they're soft and fresh the scat was dropped not long ago. Should the scat be light and dry, then it may be a few days old.

Break the scat apart and probe inside. Is the creature a herbivore or a carnivore? Carnivore scats are smelly and you may find bits of bone, skin and hair, while herbivore scats don't smell so bad and you'll notice bits of grass and leaves.

Fun Activities:

- Visit a playground where children have played. Follow one person's tracks to discover where they came from, if they walked or ran and where they were going to.
- What kind of tracks would your hands and feet make in mud? Find out!
- Read the stories of the animal tracks and scats you found and share it with a friend.
- Make play dough and convince your pet to create a paw print for you.
- Watch different birds walk in your yard or park then follow them, investigate the traces and sketch them in your nature journal.

Read Aloud Story:

[Animal Tracks by Arthur Dorros](#)

You may be interested in [Reading Tracks by Margaret James](#). The stories are based on Aboriginal tracking and hunting culture.

Animal Track Art:

[Budgerigar Footprints](#)

Enjoy a Walkabout:

Step into your nature detective shoes and explore outdoors for animal traces. They can be tracks, scats, nests and burrows.

What can you tell about the creature who left the traces behind? What does it eat? Where was it coming from and where is it going?

In what kind of habitat is the animal or bird living in and how many more tracks and scats can you find? How many creatures of the same species live in this area?

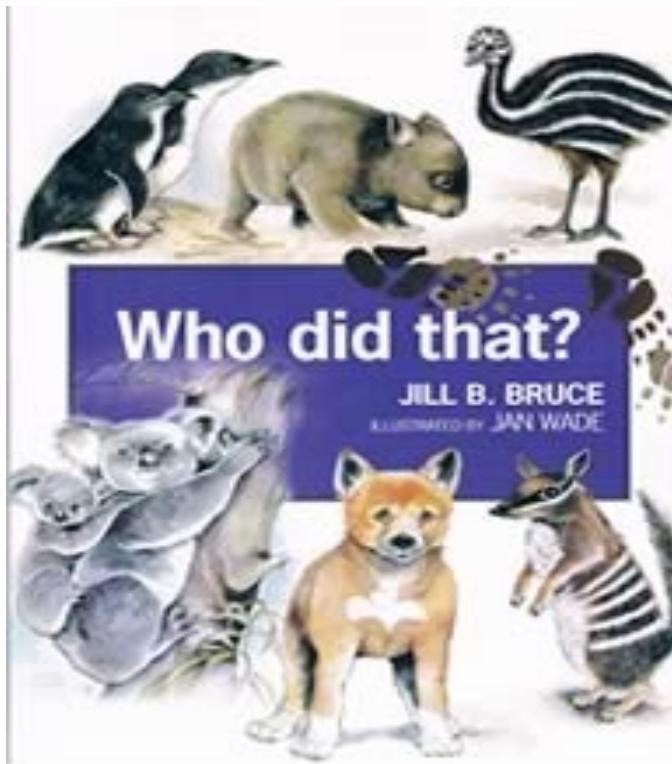
Measure the track or scats and sketch them into your nature journal along with your observations.

Get Creative:

Create a sand pad in the pathway of animals who frequent the area you explore by loosening the soil, dampening it with water and gently packing it down again. Patiently visit your sand pad often to see if an animal or bird has passed by. Identify the tracks.

Break a scat apart to determine what creature it belonged to and what it ate.

If it's a macropod you'll find bits of grass and if it's carnivorous, you'll find hair and bone.



If you'd like to order a copy email Jill B. Bruce at jillbbruce@bigpond.com



Do echidnas frequent your area?

Get busy searching for scats

and be apart of the

EchidnaCSI Big Scat Hunt

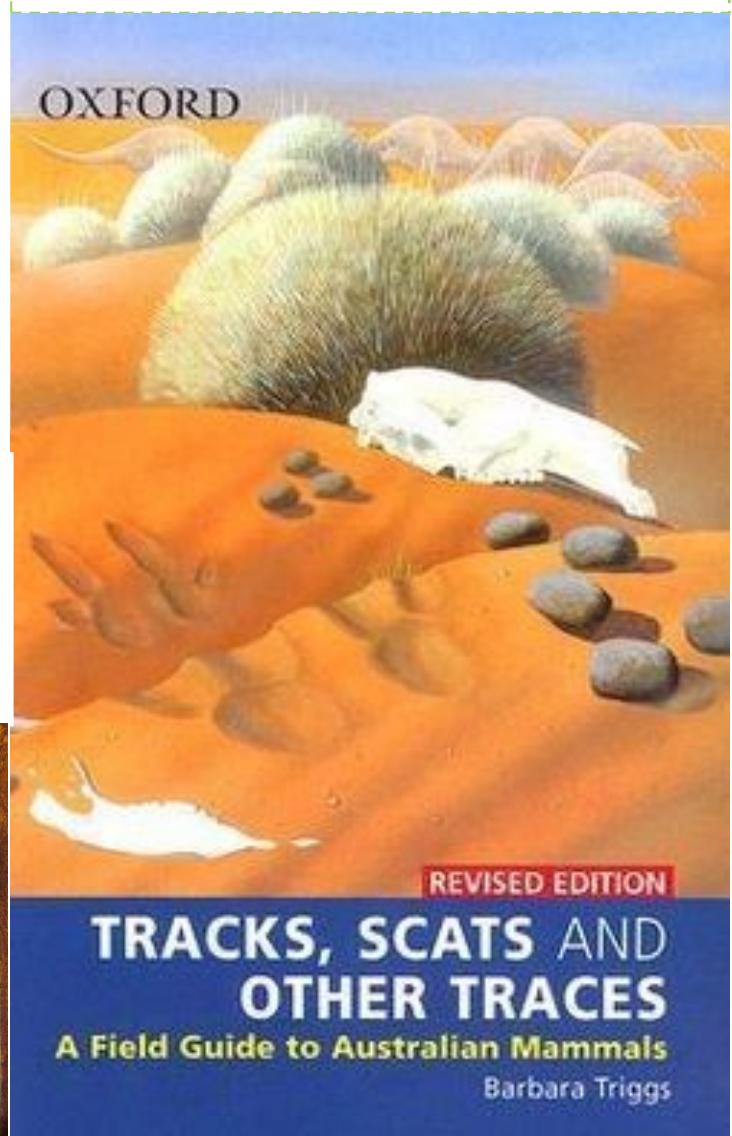


Identification Challenge

What creature does this track belong to? Let me know by email at: marie@naturestudyaustralia.com.au.

Who will be the first to guess and receive the book

Who Did That? By Jill B. Bruce



February Nature Watch Chart

Use the simple ideas in this chart to encourage outdoor explorations.

Can you spot a Red Flowering Gum Tree? 	Search a pond or river for tadpoles. 	Keep an eye out for echidnas hunting ant nests. 	Who's visiting the Crimson Bottlebrush? Go see! 
 Investigate foliage for Fiddler Beetles.	Are there Xenica butterflies fluttering about? 	 Pardalote nestlings are leaving nests? Can you hear them?	Duck Orchids emerge. Can you find them? 
 Wattle seed pods are ready for harvesting. Collect some.	Research why ravens are flocking now. 	 Which summer plants are flowering this month?	Observe wasps building mud nests at a safe distance. 
Listen! Can you hear tree frogs? 	Explore your area for stag beetles. 	 And longhorn beetles.	 Find a mantid.

Watch for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blue Bottles Tern Chicks Mud Crabs Grass Yellow Butterfly Gum Tree Grasshopper Gum Emperor Moth Pollinating Bees 	Investigate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pollination Honeybees Photosynthesis Phototropism Skinks Amphibian Metamorphosis 	A Nature Journal Idea: There are many insect species buzzing about so practice your art skills by enhancing your insect sketches. John Muir Laws shows you how here .
		A Challenge: Hot days don't inspire exploration in the outdoors, but I challenge you to step outside for a minimum of five minutes to observe wildlife in your backyard in the cool of day. Make a quick sketch or start an insect timeline indoors.

An Animal & Track Scavenger Hunt



A Cat | B Cat Tracks | C Wallaby | D Wallaby Tracks | E Echidna | F Echidna Tracks | G Kangaroo

H Kangaroo Tracks | I Rabbit | J Rabbit Tracks



A Track & Scat Nature Walk



Track	Scat		<p>Weather:</p> <p>Track of:</p> <p>Measurements:</p> <p>Track Direction:</p> <p>Scat of:</p> <p>Shape:</p> <p>Approx. Age:</p> <p>Scent:</p>
<p>Animal/Bird/Insect</p>			
Date:	Time:	Place:	
<p>My Observations:-</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>		<p>Scat Material:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	



A Track & Scat Nature Walk



Track

Scat

Animal/Bird/Inset

Track of:

Track Direction:

Track Measurements:

Scat of:

Scat Shape:

Approx. Age:

Scent:

Scat Material:

Weather:

Date:

Time:

Place: