



## Bush Picnic - Pollinators and Plants

On 16<sup>th</sup> Sept, naturalist Eric McCrum led 23 interested people to John and Mary Squire's property about 30kms NW of Mukinbudin.

Within seconds of alighting from the bus, Eric was drawing pictures on the ground, as he explained why plants had certain leaf shapes, and different methods of pollination. Following a narrow track through a teatree/sheoak thicket, we encountered sundews, orchids, hoverflies, wood white butterflies, plus many brown honeyeaters fussing through the flowering shrubs.

On the granite rock we looked at the plants attached to it – the lichens and mosses, how they got there and what purpose they serve. Next we were transfixed around a crystal clear rock pool, as an hour passed like magic while we went from large tadpoles through to tiny crustaceans' sex lives, back swimmers with two sets of eyes, water ferns, algae and algae-eaters – if we'd had a microscope we'd still be there! Also living on the rock were dragons, grasshoppers, cockroaches and spiders. We also listened to weebills, red wattlebirds and grey shrike-thrush, watched a wedge-tailed eagle and observed an active malleefowl mound.

On the way to the sandplain we observed the dense white flowers of the Nungarin triggerplant, *Stylidium nungarinensis*, which is pollinated by a very large fly. It was very hard to believe that the sandplain area was once cropped, it was such a beautiful display of colour and diversity. A highlight was the truffle beetles, which smell the truffles (underground fungal fruiting bodies) then dig down to lay their eggs on them, leaving a mound of soil at ground level. There were many small birds nesting among the shrubs.

We had a splendid picnic lunch (provided by the Mukinbudin café) while sitting at the base of a limestone ridge. It was densely covered with plants and insects which kept us intrigued until it was time to head back to town to view slides and listen to Eric talk on pollination, which was most informative and captivating.

I'd like to thank everyone who participated and helped on the day – hope you enjoyed it as much as I did!

Heather Adamson