

# The Murrumbidgee Naturalist

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## Objects of the Club

To facilitate and promote the knowledge of natural history, and to encourage the preservation and protection of the Australian natural environment, especially that of the Murrumbidgee River Valley



Photo: Bill Moller

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## Important Notice

**The Annual General Meeting (AGM)**  
will be held at Leeton on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2005  
preceeding the monthly meeting

## CONTRIBUTIONS

For the next issue by  
Wednesday 3 August

Mail: 6 Cypress Street Leeton 2705

Email: [ewhiting@inet.net.au](mailto:ewhiting@inet.net.au)

Phone: 6953 2612

Fax or collection can be arranged.

## Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

<b>President:</b>	Nella Smith	6959 1210	<b>Editor:</b>	Rowena Whiting	6953 2612
<b>Vice President:</b>	Bill Moller	6960 1341			
<b>Vice President:</b>	Phil Tenison	6953 4869	<b>Committee:</b>	Betty Bradney	6959 2901
<b>Vice President:</b>	Wendy Ives	6959 1168		Enid Atkinson	6962 1181
<b>Secretary/Treasurer:</b>	Richard Faulder	6955 7039		Dot Green	6953 6143

MEETINGS ARE HELD EACH MONTH, EXCEPT JANUARY **FIELD TRIPS** NORMALLY TAKE PLACE THE FOLLOWING WEEKEND.

**LEETON MEETINGS** SECOND THURSDAY - Uniting Church Family Centre, Church Street AT 7.30 P.M.

**GRIFFITH MEETINGS** FOURTH THURSDAY - Conference Room, Dept. of Agriculture AT 7.30 P.M.

INTENDING NEW MEMBERS, GUESTS AND VISITORS WELCOME.

### Membership:

<b>Leeton</b>	Richard Faulder	6955 7039	<b>Griffith</b>	Bill Moller	6960 1341	
<b>Narrandera</b>	Neville James	6959 2963	<b>Coleambally</b>	John Wilkinson	6954 4129	
<b>Annual Subscriptions:</b>	Family	\$30.00	Adult/Single	\$25.00	Journal only/Concession	\$15.00

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## A little bit of Difference

Being British, I just love a bit of rain, and the last few years in Australia have taught me never to take it for granted. When it finally (much to the relief of farmers) rained last weekend, I thought a bit about those indicators of seasonality that are so different in Australia to my homeland.

Take hibernation for instance. Come October in my home county of Leicestershire, every self-respecting hedgehog and squirrel is packing on the pounds ready for the big sleep. Every year many unfortunate hedgehogs are accidentally roasted during our November 'Guy Fawkes' celebrations, due to their predilection for hibernating in bonfire heaps. Australian animals such as the brush-tail possum and brown snake do not truly hibernate, but rather slip into torpor, so an unusually warm day in winter means exercise caution when lifting sheets of tin.

Whilst skiing for the first time in Victoria in 2003, I thought nothing of mile upon mile of leafless Snowgums adorning the mountaintops, but Graham was shocked at the extent of damage from the recent bushfires. In my neck of the woods, snow does not equal green leafy shrubbery. A couple of weeks back a Canadian friend remarked that if she finds a rare pile of plane tree leaves during a Wagga autumn she just dives right in, a nostalgic habit that recently gave her a back injury.

Following heavy rain, farmers in the Riverina will now be waging war on agricultural weeds using chemicals with names like 'Attack', 'Conquest' and 'Grenade', but here at Oakvale we take pleasure in observing many green forms of life. Australia is truly coloured by periods of alternate green and brown. Yesterday morning I was delighted to see the first chocolate lilies (*Dichopogon strictus*) coming up in our dew-blanketed native garden, and am constantly amazed during wintertime that it could *ever* have reached forty five degrees for days on end. If my memory was wiped by aliens and they beamed me back to England, chances are it could be a day in March, October or May and I'd never know, but it would still rain anyway.

Speargrasses (*Austrostipa spp.*) are at once both an endless source of irritation and fascination to me. Although one tires pretty quickly of hopping around the paddock swearing whilst attempting to extricate the pointy little seeds from my socks, they have a response to moisture truly worthy of a David Attenborough piece. The mechanisms by which species here take full advantage of occasional rain are worlds apart from my country, where we just try to avoid going mouldy. Any liquid added to a dry speargrass seed will cause it to 'unwind', thus propelling it upright and promptly screwing it into the ground. I do not envy sheep, as once the seed is caught in the animal's fleece, its moisture causes that pointy little arrow to burrow in, only to be seen again at shearing time.

I thank my lucky stars that I've moved to a part of Australia that experiences seasonality, and boy does that happen in a spectacular manner. As going 'troppo' up near Darwin does not really appeal, I think I'll light the fire, pinch Graham's hot chocolate, get my ugg boots on, enjoy a nice frosty night or two and think of English summers, blackbirds and strawberries.

**Rosie Smith**

**RIP Jim Dalton** - Jim passed away on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> July after a brave struggle.

It is with great sadness that we register the passing of Jim Dalton, he will be sadly missed by Sue and family as well as his many friends.

## Plant of the Month – Shrubby Platysace

The only fresh green shrubs to be seen on our recent excursion to Mt Brogden was that of Shrubby Platysace *Platysace lanceolata*. All the other shrubs had dried and shrivelled from the prolonged drought. Platysace is a member of the carrot family Apiaceae, a family of mainly herbaceous plants not readily known for drought resistance. The genus Platysace is an endemic Australian one of c25 species. All except Shrubby Platysace are coastal or at least montane species often as small spreading undershrubs.

So has the evolution of Shrubby Platysace been one of adapting to drier conditions allowing the spread into the semi-arid zone or has the adaption allowed the species to remain in the locality whilst the continent slowly dried out after the Tertiary period? There are several examples of the latter with the Cabbage Palm surviving in Central Australia being the extreme example. Only fossil evidence can give the answer, and fossils are very rare out here!



The leaves of the Shrubby Platysace are usually narrow elliptical, although variable over its distribution. Plants nearer the coast have more rounded leaves, much more in common to the family trend where not deeply divided (as in the carrot). The apex is generally distinctly pointed but not always. The leaf surfaces in most cases are glossy but can be dull. This variation can make Shrubby Platysace difficult to separate from Slender Rice-flower *Pimelea linifolia* plants when flowers or fruiting heads are absent. One has to look carefully at the young stems. In Shrubby Platysace the stems are minutely hairy whereas in Slender Rice-flower they are completely hairless and often a yellow-brown to reddish-brown colour.

As typical of the Apiaceae family the flowers are borne in umbels, in this case dense compound umbels. Although each individual flower is small the full inflorescence is quite prominent at the summits of the stems. The five petals are white and star-like when open but the buds are brown or pink. Sepals are absent but bracts at the base of each part of the umbel add brown star-like intricacies to the whole.

The fruits are disc-shaped comprising two broad-winged seeds with wrinkled surfaces. The name Platysace is derived from the Greek platy = flat and sace = shield referring to the shape of the fruits.

Shrubby Platysace is rarely grazed by stock, even apparently by goats. Perhaps that is another reason why these plants stood out as the only greenery.

**Eric Whiting**

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### The Fruit of the Flax Lily

We have just read the June issue and thought we could reply to Eric's article about Flax Lilies. He asked if anyone had eaten the fruit. Well we've tried the fruit of *Dianella revoluta*. We didn't experience any ill effects and the taste is quite neutral, neither sweet nor sour.

The article also reminded us of a tale that always creates amusement in our group when this subject arises.

During a field trip someone asked our local naturalist guru, Howie Marshall; 'Would they die if they ate the berries?' Howie replied; 'You certainly will.' Which evoked the response; 'So they are highly poisonous!' Howie; 'No they're not, the berries wont kill you, but you will die eventually.'

Over the last few years Spreading Flax Lily fruit has attracted Silvereyes to our garden.

The ripening of the fruit coincides with fledging of the young birds and their parents are kept very busy relaying a supply of fruit.

We always enjoy reading your very interesting and informative newsletter.

Regards to all at Murrumbidgee Field Nats.

Gary and Lisa Deayton  
Numurkah

**Broken Creek Field Nats.**

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### Stackpool – David Egan

Thought I'd let you know what Stackpool SF was like last weekend. (5-6-2005)

As expected, dry. There were a few birds about, probably the highlight was 4 species of honeyeater (singing, white-fronted, white-eared & spiny-cheeked) hawking for insects across the fire trail on the western boundary in the late evening. I was interested to see if Shy Heathwrens still occurred where Mick Todd saw them three years ago - managed to located a pair & a single bird but only after resorting to call playback, in the north-western part of the reserve. Good to know they're still hanging on despite the prolonged dry. I'm not so confident about southern scrub-robins & malleefowl, that used to be recorded several years ago.

Generally it was better than expected but that may have been because my expectations were low. It's probably worth visiting after a bit of rain.

**David Egan**

## Koalas in Narrandera

(The essence of the address by John Sullivan to the Leeton Meeting in May – material prepared by John)

Following the gazettal of the Narrandera Nature Reserve No 42 in 1966, the area was prepared and fenced to enclose 73 hectares on part of the Narrandera Common (445 hectares) on the northern banks of the Murrumbidgee River. Between 1972 and 1974 a total of nineteen Koalas were released in the reserve, four from Tucki Tucki Reserve, five from Victoria and ten from French's Island. After becoming acclimatised the Koalas were allowed to move out and form further colonies, on the Common and on private property both upstream and downstream, on both sides of the Murrumbidgee River.

At our annual head counts each year approximately 100 people find an average of 40 Koalas on the reserve and Common area.

A colony is usually one male and five to seven females. The mating season in our area appears to be from September through the summer, with gestation period being thirty five days.

The newborn koala is the size of a jellybean and climbs up its mothers fur from the birth canal to the downward facing pouch, following the smell of the mother's milk and attaches itself to one of two teats. At six months it frequently emerges from the pouch and at seven months it is riding on the mothers back. At eighteen months the juvenile is forced from the colony to make its own way and allow the parents to raise another family. After the male reaches full maturity at four years, he endeavours to attract females to form a new colony.

The propagation of Koalas at Narrandera has proved to be a most successful exercise, where they thrive on River Red Gum (*E camaldulensis*). It all came about due to the foresight of Rotarian and Alderman, the Late Ken Kiesling, fully supported by the Rotary Club of Narrandera, Narrandera Shire Council and National Parks and Wild Life Service.

**John Sullivan**



## Wasteland to Wetland

(The essence of the address by Roy Wade to the Leeton Meeting on June 9<sup>th</sup> ad tour on Sunday 12th – material prepared by Nella Smith)

The project concerns the conversion of a disused 3.5ha borrow pit into a wetland to improve the quality of urban runoff from Narrandera. The pit lies to the west of the Newell Highway between the Murrumbidgee River and the main Irrigation Canal.

Urban runoff from some 80% of Narrandera township is siphoned under the main irrigation canal. It then enters a minor drainage line before entering Bundidgerry Creek. Consequently the waters are contaminated. A gross pollutant trap or boom will be installed to detain material such as bottles and leaves, located within the current sedimentation pit upstream of the siphon.

Once the runoff enters Bundidgerry Creek, it will be conveyed by the natural channel to a low bund that diverts the low, medium and a proportion of high flows into the wetland. The water will then pass through the wetland, enabling wetland processes such as contaminant precipitation to occur. The wetland design also includes deep pools that allow settling of coarse sediment.

The aim is to treat the wetland as part of a chain of ponds, with all flow except in the wettest few days of the year, to be diverted through the wetland. The entry and exit will be via open channels.

Additional components of the plan include planting of riparian and aquatic vegetation along the creek line and on the island feature, to enhance ecological biodiversity. Further planting around the entry area will create a significant feature at the Newell Highway entrance to Narrandera.

A visually attractive setting will encourage public use of the area.

Many thanks to Roy for his talk and for directing us around the wetland.

**Nella Smith**

## Sad News from the Stubbings

Dear Bill,

Peter and I hadn't been in touch with the Field Nat's Group for a while and now I have to tell you the sad news that Peter died on Monday of last week. While he had had a serious medical condition for some years, he had enjoyed improvement last year after a stem cell transplant and was making progress for some months. However, he went downhill again rapidly in the last few weeks and the end, though expected, was sudden.

We had 6 happy years in Bundanoon, enjoying the climate, the peaceful village life and the wonderful access to Morton National Park which is on the doorstep. We went down there regularly, keeping track of the animal and plant life. While he was still active and walking we were able to join in the activities of the Southern Highland branch of the Aus. Plants Society, Nat. Parks Assn field days, and birding with the local U3A enthusiasts. He never lost his passion for nature and the environment.

We missed Leeton and the MFN. Group but kept up with all your doings through the newsletters. I see that Eric and Rowena are away so I am sending this to you. Please pass on this news to the others. I am sure Peter is still watching birds somewhere else.

Best wishes to you all.

**Jean Stubbings**

## Woolshed Bluff 12-6-2005

Everyone had a win on the long weekend, the Weather Bureau had been predicting rain for the weekend (Saturday about 20+mm) for about a week, the farmers and those in the rural community that rely on them, were preying for it for some considerable time and Patty & I had planned to walk up to the Bluff (Woolshed Bluff at Cocoparra NP) on the Sunday of the long weekend.

Whooska, 25mm rain on Friday night and Saturday morning, bit of a strange happening out here lately, but like clockwork fined up on Saturday afternoon and Sunday, what a magic day, you know dear reader you really do have to go and look at the calendar to check it is June.

Sunday, we rose early (ish), packed a couple of backpacks with a flask and a sandwich and off to the Pines (Woolshed Falls) We left the truck at the car-park and started up the track to clime the hill at the falls.

The plan was to clime up to the ridge and follow the ridge along the escarpment to Woolshed Bluff. The toughest part of this walk is the first couple of 100 metres, the clime up the hill to the ridge top. We managed to get to the ridge top amid some puffing, snorting and wheezing, accompanied with the lactic acid burn in the big leg muscles. Thankfully the gradient flattened a little once we negotiated the initial climb and the rest of the trek was an easy steady climb along the escarpment. Actually be both managed the walk pretty easily, we had just returned from a month over at North Arm Cove where "flat" is the exception rather than the rule.

We poked over to the edge of the escarpment a couple of times to enjoy the view of the valley.

There were a few birds about but that wasn't the main attraction on this day, the most striking thing about the walk was the lichens, these had literally come to life overnight, it is amazing the transformation a bit of rain can bring to such a desiccated landscape. Two other things were also very noticeable, firstly the tread on the ground was soft, each step on the dampened soil felt like walking on a cushion, and when you touched a branch or trunk of a tree, the touch was soft, it had lost the hard scratchiness that had been so characteristic of so many of our other walks during the dry times.

Are you getting the impression that I (we) were enjoying this walk. We hadn't done a good walk in the park for some time and to get a day like this one, well they don't come any better.

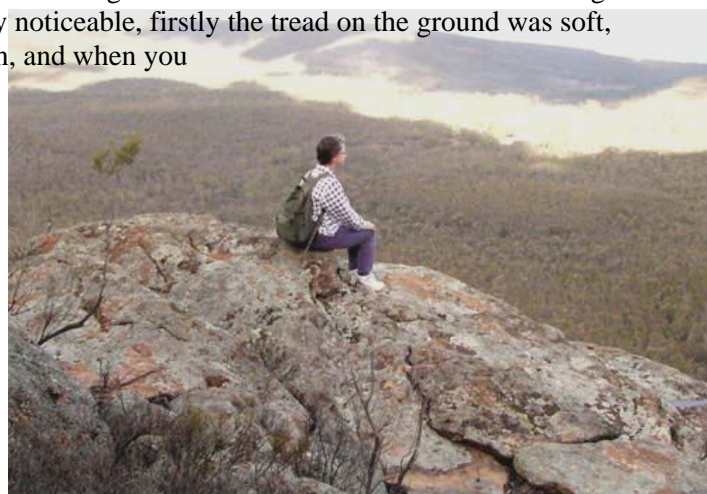
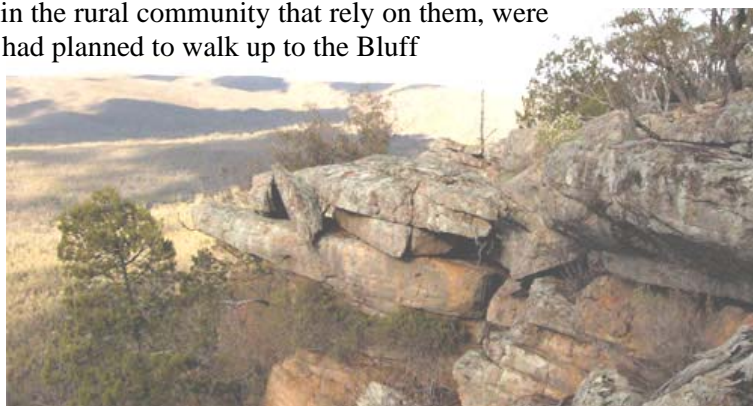
You know dear reader while we were walking up the hill, we could hear a constant background Stsssssss, it took me a while to sort out what it was, it was the sound of the plants sucking up the water, ha ha.

We eventually arrived near the pointy end of the bluff and found a bit of bald rock overlooking Woolshed Flats. It was here that we settled for a time to soak in the sight, enjoy the day and have a cup of coffee and some lunch, it is a relaxing peaceful place, well worth the walk.

For the return trip we decided to walk around the Bluff to the eastern side and make our way down the creek via Eagle Falls, you need to be careful descending on the eastern side for one, if you go down too near the bluff you end up in a smaller creek and miss the Falls, you need to stay above the escarpment and go quite a distance around to the north-east, then pick a gap to descend, that can get a bit exciting. Then it is all downhill albeit doing a bit of bush bashing through the small pines and Hill Teatree. It wasn't as bad as it had been, the drought has done a bit of sorting out up there, quite a few dead shrubs and a few trees, the going was a bit easier. We eventually found the creek and followed that down. Getting down Eagle Falls is a bit exciting also, you need to be a bit sure footed. Eagle Falls is a fairly impressive drop (for the Cocoparras ), I live in hope that one day I might see a reasonable quantity of water cascading over this lot.

The rest of the walk was to follow the creek until it had taken a turn to the west then cut south to pick up the fire trail and back through the camping grounds to the Pines

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



**Strangers in our Midst - Coastal visitors for the Anzac Weekend**  
22-25 April 05 Central Coast Birding NSW Anzac Weekend

Alan was planning the annual activity list for Central Coast Birding NSW when he said, "Margaret, I think it is time you arranged with your rels for us to do a "Riverina Camp-out". It was all arranged with a few phone calls and a letter or two. The shearing would be finished and in a few weeks lambing would commence, if we timed our visit for the Anzac Weekend.

Even the weather was unseasonably warm and calm. Some excellent summer rainfalls had been followed by plagues of locusts that had devoured most green things.

Twelve members, and a Sydney visitor, made their separate ways to "Willow Grove" by 8.30am on 23rd April 2005 and camped at the shearers quarters. John and Glenis Nevinson were our guides. They led us south to the Delta Creek (dry) and after a short walk through blue bush and cane-grass the first of a flock of about 15 Blue-winged Parrots was disturbed. John and Glenis's son, Robert, and his two little sons joined us there. Robert is a skilled birder used to leading tours. Brilliant Orange Chat, White-fronted Chat, several Wedge-tailed Eagle, Brown Songlark, Brown Falcon, White-winged Wren and Black-faced Woodswallows were soon added to our list. Banded Lapwing, Richards Pipit, several Emu, Zebra Finch and Mallee Ringneck were near the clump of ancient River-red Gum that sheltered our morning tea spot.

Next we went via Cobb Highway to Booroorban and were joined by David Nevinson and his son and daughter, who live at "Parkview". David had spent several hours unsuccessfully searching for Bush Thick-knees and Chestnut-crowned Babblers which are seen there from time to time. Near the creek in a clump of grey box the calls of hundreds of woodswallow- White-browed, Masked and Black-faced could be heard as they flew, fed and rested. Common Bronze-wing, Peaceful Dove, Weebil, Spiny-cheeked, Singing and White-plumed Honeyeaters were recorded along with Red-capped Robin, Black Kite, Blue Bonnet, Southern White-face, White-winged Chough and Little Raven. We lunched on the timbered sandhills at "Double Huts". Two Pallid Cuckoo, Jacky Winter, Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo and Black faced Cuckoo-shrike were nearby. As we drove back to "The Ranch" 3 Ground Cuckoo Shrike were seen and a Black Falcon flew by. Robert Nevinson's keen eyes located a White-necked Heron feeding in the drain of a distant dam.

Phil Maher came along for the night-search and John, David and Robert brought their crated utes. Robert N. located a beautiful female Plains Wanderer and we all had excellent views. For many of us this bird was a first sighting. Many Richard's Pipit, several Singing Bushlark and a Brown Songlark took wing in the spotlights, but a male Stubble Quail, a pair of Inland Dotterel and several Banded Lapwing held so we could see them clearly. It was a very early and successful night in perfect warm weather.

24 April 05.

We left for Deniliquin early and just north of Pretty Pine 15 colourful Superb Parrots were seen feeding in eucalypts close to the road. In Deniliquin's Waring Gardens, Phil Maher was waiting for us. We saw Yellow Thornbill, Blackbirds, Long-billed Corella, Yellow Rosella, Black Duck and Hundreds of Rock Pigeon. Riverina Field Naturalist Members had discovered a Bustard at the airport paddocks the previous day. It was still there for us to see. A rare sight in the Riverina now days. Next stop was in Gulpa S.F where White-breasted Woodswallow, Golden Whistler, Varied Sittella, Striated Pardalote, Superb Wren, White-browed Scrubwren were seen but Gilberts Whistler would not answer to repeated taped calls.

A special family barbeque had been arranged for the Nevinsons and Pointers so Phil Maher very capably lead the birders for the rest of the day.

At "Willow Dell" we saw Hoary-headed and Australian Grebe, Black-tailed Native-hen, Dusky Moorhen, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Red-kneed Dotterel and Cattle Egret. In the garden there were 8 Apostle Birds. It was pleasing to see so many in the flock in an old haunt that for several years had only three members.

25th April 2005

Except for 1 member, who had to leave early, we all met at Wanganella Park for Conargo Shire Anzac Day Service. The service was inspiring and the morning tea spread in the hall amazed the visiting birders. Those birders who remained went to Wanganella Weir, Billabong Creek, where a Whistling Kite watched from a perch above the creek. A flock of Grey-crowned Babbler, White-plumed and Singing Honeyeater, Rufous Whistler, Weebil, Brown and White-throated Treecreeper, Yellow-throated Miner and a unfortunate dead Barn Owl were listed.

With only 6 birder visitors left we drove out to the "Zara" Sandhills, a Riverina.Field.Naturalist fenced Reserve. Western Warblers sang beautifully. We saw our first Tasmanian Silvereyes in the hop scrub. Other birds for our list were Yellow-rumped and Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Rufous and Golden Whistler and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater. As we headed back to camp, we saw a lone Pelican on a small dam at "Avenel" and 40+ Banded Lapwing on "South Ranch". John and Glenis took us over to some old Grey Box trees near "The Ranch" HSD. John scraped the bark on a trunk with a stick and out flew an Owllet Nightjar. The poor thing was immediately set-upon by Noisy Miner, but found another hole and peered out while cameras clicked. A Barn Owl flew out of another tree.

So ended a great weekend. It was a pleasure for me to be able to show our Central Coast friends my old home territory and introduce them to some of my family who are a bird club on their own.

**Margaret Pointer**

## The Pied Anteater

I was walking to work the other day and I seen this Pied Butcherbird picking something up from the ground and eating it. I couldn't see that there was anything on the ground for the bird to eat so I thought I should take a closed look.

There was nothing there except dust and the odd ant, so puzzled (that is a fairly common state for me these days) I continued on my way.

About two days later whilst at work I looked out the window and there were three Butcherbirds (two adult and one juvenile) picking something up from the bitumen road outside the station's main office and eating it. Again I couldn't see what it was they were eating, I happened to have a pair of binoculars in my office so I quickly retrieved them and had a close look. Meat Ants the buggers were eating Meat Ants, one by one as they patrolled about the bitumen looking for what ever ants look for.

I would have thought this behavior a little strange. They would have to spend a heap of time to get a crop full. If they were that desperate for a feed of Meat Ants there are a couple of big nests about the place that would give them better density than the road.

This doesn't seem common fair to these pied procurers, they are either very hungry (and they don't look it), or there is nothing else about (not true there are plenty of prey birds and dried grapes about) or the ants have suddenly started to taste very good, who knows???

I had a bit of a look on the internet for any reference to Butcherbirds eating ants and found none, only the odd reference to them eating large insects.

Dear readers have any of you seen anything similar? Let me know.



Bill Moller

## Vines growing in the local area (a series)

Vines are a well known feature of rainforests, but there are a surprising number of plants with this growth form in the local area. Most show their ancestry in rainforest families: the commonly found gargaloo and wonga vine are both from mainly tropical families. Each is the sole arid adapted species in their genus in NSW.

Vines have an interesting growth habit. While many are woody plants they do not have enough wood in the stem to be self supporting. They climb up other plants to reach the light above the canopy, and so in a way are parasitic: they gain an advantage from another plant and compete against it for light.

One of the interesting local vines is the native pear *Marsdenia australis*. Other common names are bush banana, doubah, Austral doubah and cogola bush. This inconspicuous vine twines up fences, shrubs and small trees, in sandy habitats in mallee, belah-rosewood and white cypress pine communities. The leaves are lanceolate and a soft olive green colour. There are sprays of creamy white flowers in late spring to summer. Last summer I located two large vines when a little friarbird that was feeding on the flowers and calling noisily flew from one vine to the next. These vines were growing to the top of currawang wattles on the McPherson range. The fruits quickly swell in late summer, and grow to 4- 10 cm long, but hang on the vine all year until the next summer when the pods split and the seeds are carried away on long silky plumes.

As well as the names above other indigenous names are kukula, curcula and wirra. There must be many other names given to this plant by indigenous people across central Australia because this vine is a widely distributed native food plant. AB & JW Cribb (1974) in *Wild Food in Australia* quotes an observation by Sturt 1844-46 that the Aborigines ate the seed and discarded the fruit while Sir Thomas Mitchell observed that the whole fruit (and seeds) was eaten, the Aborigines preferring it roasted. J.H Maiden (1889) in *Useful Native Plants of Australia* recorded that the milky unripe fruit was eaten. My experience is that the whole fruit can be eaten when it is young and soft, even though it exudes a milky sap, but when the outer case is hard the green seeds are edible but the white plumes are very fibrous. Another use recorded of the plant was by Lassak & McCarthy (1983) in *Medicinal Plants of Australia* who reported that the dried and ground seeds were used as an oral contraceptive (by Aboriginal people in Western Australia), but its efficacy was doubtful.

Native pear is a member of the family Asclepiadaceae, composed mainly of tropical vines. As well as having many common names this vine has had a series of botanical names, being called at various times *Leichhardtia australis*, and *Marsdenia leichhardtia*. Ludwig Leichhardt was the explorer who made an exhausting journey from the Darling Downs to Port Essington (NT) in 1844-5 and later disappeared without trace trying to cross Australia.

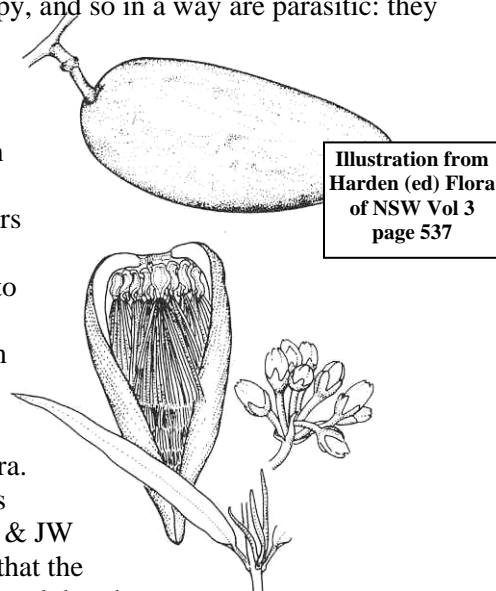


Illustration from Harden (ed) Flora of NSW Vol 3 page 537

John Brickhill NPWS

## Binya State Forest Again – 26-6-2005 (But this time after rain!)

It was back to Binya SF again for this months walk and not too unhappy about it were we. Things certainly change with a bit of rain after such a prolonged dry spell. As far as vegetation goes we didn't see much more than last time except that the Lichens and mosses were all puffed up and aglow with what looked like vibrant colour (at least it looked that way after such a long period of drab colours). The forest floor had a green glow from the germinating plants, all too small the make any sensible guess at species, but you can guess that most would be annual weeds, but no doubt there are some native species in there and it looks like there may be at least a hope of some interest come spring.



White-winged Chough Nest  
Photo by Dennis Moretto



Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater  
Photo by Dennis Moretto

That aside, the walking was great if a little cold, bit of a south-westerly blowing felt like it started about 300km south of Mawson, but the birds were great, as you can see by the list below we found plenty 43 species, most of them regulars, but a few specials including the Varied Sittella and Speckled Warbler, and it is always great to see the Mulga Parrots. The other treat was the number of honeyeaters there were heaps, seven species, the Spiny-cheeked, Striped, Singing, Brown-headed, White-eared, White-plumed, Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters. Other notables included the Brown Goshawk, and a few Cockatiel.

We also found a few Gum-barked Coolibahs *Eucalyptus intertexta* over on the western boundary, getting a bit south for them.

It was a great walk and a pleasant change from the dusty sorties we had been doing for the

past many moons.

### Bird List Binya State Forest 26-6-2005

Crested Pigeon	Singing Honeyeater	Yellow-throated Minor	Grey Shrike-thrush
Grey Butcherbird	Superb Fairy-wren	Varied Sittella	Silvereye
Australian Magpie	Pied Butcherbird	Apostlebird	Australian Goshawk
Common Starling	Common Bronzwing	White-winged Chough	Yellow-plumed Honeyeater
Peewee	White-browed Babbler	Southern Whiteface	White-plumed Honeyeater
Galah	White-eared Honeyeater	Chestnut-rumped Thornbill	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Australian Raven	Yellow Thornbill	Inland Thornbill	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Willy Wagtail	Yellow Robin	Splendid Fairy-wren	Crested Bellbird
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Brown-headed Honeyeater	Mistletoebird	Straw-necked Ibis
Striped Honeyeater	Mulga Parrot	Speckled Warbler	Nankeen Kestrel
Red-capped Robin	Red-rumped Parrot	Cockatiel	<b>Bill Moller</b>

### Griffith Meeting Minutes 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2005.

**Present :** Bill & Patty Moller, Dennis Moretto, June & Col Sell, John Austin, David Egan, Michelle Ballestrin, Petra Suelmann, Louise Harrison **Apologies :** Enid Atkinson, Johanna, Neil Palframan, Brian McCann, Sue Dalton

#### General Business.

**NPWS Advisory Committee Meeting** - was held at Oolambeyan, Bill reported that some works have been completed on a substantial BBQ area since we were last there. Michelle Ballestarin is now the Ranger for the Park and will be responsible for Park Management and Plains Wanderer habitat management. Currently there are no sheep on Oolambeyan due to most areas being sufficiently grazed to optimise Plains Wanderer habitat

**Spring Weekend outing** – The Spring Weekend outing will be on the October Long weekend at a venue somewhere in the south-western riverina, to be announced next month.

**Guest Speaker** was Louise Harrison, who gave us a very interesting presentation with photographs of her recent trip overseas to India, Laos, Tebet etc.

**July outing** – Store Creek Cocoparra NP - meet at the corner the Yenda Post Office 8.00 am contact Bill Moller 69 601341

#### October Long Weekend Trip. To YANGA

The spring outing has now been changed to the October long-weekend (30<sup>th</sup> Sept to 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct), a 3 or 4 day affair. The venue is to be YANGA the recent acquisition by National Parks. The property is some 80,000ha just this side of Balranald, it includes several dry lakes and many km of Murrumbidgee River frontage with heaps and heaps of River Red Gum with all sorts of habitat in between.

I don't have too much detail yet but need some indication of who would like to come. The situation will be similar to the trip to Norwood, Drive yourself, there will probably be some beds and ablution facilities. I anticipate that the cost will again be about \$50/head for food etc.

Give me a call or Email pronto if you want to come. My details - Bill Moller 69601341. Work 69601311  
email bill.moller@dpi.nsw.gov.au

# Minutes of the Leeton meeting of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc.

which opened at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2005, in the Family Centre of the Leeton Uniting Church, Church Street, Leeton.

Present: Nella Smith, Mike Schultz, Phil Tennison, Ruth Smith, Dot & Phil Green, Betty Bradney, Roy Wade, Andrew Thompson, and Richard Faulder

Apologies: Eric & Rowena Whiting, Neville James and Wendy Ives.

**Minutes of the previous meeting:** Accepted by acclamation.

## Matters Arising from the Minutes:

1. Continuing surveillance of the Narrandera Hills is intended. However, given the dry conditions up to date, this will only be at the middle of each season.. **Phil Tennison** will assist.
2. In response the minutes of the Griffith group, a new Web site for the association, with a new domain name, was supported.
3. **Eric Whiting**'s Flora book will not be available until February 2005 because he was unable to take many of the photos required because of the drought.
4. Many goats have been removed from the Narrandera Hills, but some are still roaming. The NPWS has decided that a helicopter is required for these.  
The Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists support the intentions of the NPWS to the Narrandera Pastures Protection Board.
5. The Ian Oag Memorial Stump awaits further work, starting with slicing off the top. **Terry Smith** has volunteered to slice off the top, but we still need a dendrochronologist.
6. As part of her work on accumulating a bank of native plant seeds **Rosie Smith** became aware of a lack of roadside surveys in the Narrandera Shire. That raised the question as whether shire councils are obliged to have a policy on roadside environment surveys, at least over those roads over which they have jurisdiction  
The association wrote to the Narrandera Shire Council asking that they organise environmental surveys of the roadside environment. There was no meaningful response, so **Rosie Smith** was asked to write again.
7. A Narrandera Wetlands Committee, including **Neville James**, has been constituted. The proposed wetlands will be for water treatment, which raises the problem of water availability. Nether the less the local indigenous group is on one side, and earthworks are complete.
8. Wagga Wagga's Society for Growing Plants are contemplating a field trip to the Rock, but probably not until spring, considering how dry it is currently.
9. The placing of articles in *The Irrigator* and *The Narrandera Argus* was suggested. It was pointed out that *the Irrigator* would expect to be paid.
10. The next Glossy Black Cockatoo count was organised. Observers were to be in place around various dams by 6:30 am. Six cockatoos turned up.
11. The Nature Conservation Council plans to hold a regional conference in this area
12. Steel sheets have been donated by Lysaght to make protective collars for trees with artificial nests. Four collars have been made so far.

## Correspondence:

### In:

1. From the NSW Field Ornithologists Club, the June issue of *Birding NSW*.
2. From the Broken Creek Field Naturalists Club, the May 2005 issue of their newsletter.
3. From the Nature Conservation Council of NSW:  
Nothing.
4. From the Southern Riverina Field Naturalists the winter 2005 issue of *The Boree 'Leaflet'*.
5. From the Stanthorpe Field Naturalist Club, the May 2005 issue of *The Granite Belt Naturalist*.
6. From the Australian Naturalists Network, the June 2005 notice of the next get-together, High Country in the Alpine spring.

**Out:** Nil

**Financial Report** for 12 May to 8 June 2005.

<b>Opening balance</b>	\$18,590.82		\$ 80.80	\$18,671.62
<b>Income:</b>		<b>Expenditure</b>		
Memberships	\$ 22.73	Recoups to A & T Smith	\$ 159.09	
Bank interest	\$ 55.80	GST input credits	<u>\$ 15.91</u>	
GST	<u>\$ 2.27</u>		\$ 175.00	\$18,496.62

**Richard Faulder** moved: - That the financial report be accepted and all payments endorsed

Seconded by **Barry Allen** **Carried**

## General Business:

1. Envelopes have been prepared for Anna Wilson of the Catchment Management Authority to inform members of an upcoming Seed Collection Workshop.
2. The field trip has been delayed to Sunday

The meeting closed at 9:30 p.m.

The next meeting will start at 7:30pm on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2005 in the Family Centre of the Leeton Uniting Church, Church Street, Leeton.

