

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

February Outings - Tuckerbil

Square Nob

Coleambally



Photos: Rowena Whiting

Mark Robb

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**For the next issue by
Wednesday, 2 April 2008**

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Fax or collection can be arranged.

Glossy Black Cockatoo Count on 15 March - be involved

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MEETINGS ARE HELD EACH MONTH, EXCEPT JANUARY

FIELD TRIPS NORMALLY TAKE PLACE ON THE FOLLOWING WEEKEND.

LEETON MEETINGS SECOND THURSDAY - Seminar Room 1, Murrumbidgee Agricultural Institute at 7.30 PM

GRIFFITH MEETINGS FOURTH THURSDAY - Conference Room, Dept. of Agriculture AT 7.30 PM

INTENDING NEW MEMBERS, GUESTS AND VISITORS WELCOME.

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Leeton	Jan Cameron	6953 2202	Griffith	Bill Moller	6960 1341	
Narrandera	Neville James	6959 2963	Coleambally	John Wilkinson	6954 4129	
Annual Subscriptions:	Family	\$40.00	Adult/Single	\$30.00	Journal only/Concession	\$20.00

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Bird Fair comes to Oolambeyan National Park

Last November 18, on a stormy Sunday afternoon, 18 birdos arrived in a hired bus from Leeton for the Bird Fair's Tour of Oolambeyan National Park.

I arrived with David (Egan) in the afternoon after making an early start from Aldinga Beach, South Australia, joining our fellow DECC colleagues, Colin Killick and David Parker at the Park around 4pm.

The plan was for the tour group to wander around the homestead, other buildings and the gardens before a BBQ dinner and guided spotlight walk in the evening. There was plenty of time for the tour members to bird-watch before dinner, ask questions and to discuss the history of the Park. David Parker talked about Plains-wanderers, which was obviously the main reason for many of the people being here. As with all attempts to go looking for these birds, we made sure everyone was aware the chances of seeing them are quite low.

Just as an aside to the story so far, there was a gentlemen who missed the bus in Leeton, he was obviously so keen to come that he drove himself (I believe at a very fast speed) to make the evening walk at 8pm!

With dinner complete and everyone eager for an evening walk we set off to the northern part of the Park. The conditions had improved, although it was still quite windy! So the 3 leaders (myself, Dave P & Dave E) with our spotlights walked across the chosen area trying to spread out to cover more ground. Within 15 minutes our first female Plains-wanderer was seen; her bright yellow-legs, white-spotted black collar and rufous breast patch was a give-away, and this little bird impressing the group with her cuteness! When the excitement of seeing this bird was over we decided to walk on a little further. After another 10 minutes another female Plains-wanderer was seen.



Plains-wanderer (female) Nella Smith

By the way, I'm not going to boast, but the 2 female birds were spotted by myself, I think they must have known I really wanted them to appear that night !! The boys did make up for their lack of spotlighting prowess by showing the group members various other nocturnal creatures, such as the fat-tailed dunnart, tessellated gecko, curl snake and hooded scaly-foot.

The tour group and the leaders (I might add) were amazed with our luck. I'm sure the long-drive back to Leeton was a happy one for the tour group!

Michelle Ballestrin

TUCKERBIL SWAMP OUTING – 16 February 2007

12 members attended this outing on a fine warm Saturday morning. I was hoping for a sighting of White-backed Swallows at the entrance but none were to be seen. However, Sue did spot one amongst some martins flying over the dam. We had a slow walk around the main dam where there were quite a few different water birds – mainly cormorants and spoonbills with just a few ducks present (see list below). There were also few of the usual raptors about and the resident Swamp Harrier didn't appear whilst we were there.

A couple in the group had to be coaxed over the plank crossing one of the channels but in the end we all managed to circumnavigate the dam successfully. Bill brought along the telescope and we had good views of a group of Yellow-billed Spoonbills and a pair of Black-fronted Dotterels. Another interesting sight was a hovering Brown Falcon – the only falcon to do so. It eventually lined up its target and did a very rapid dive into the grass but it didn't seem to fly up with anything.

After morning tea in the aboriginal interpretive shelter, we dispersed at about 11am as the weather was warming up,



Max O'Sullivan

Bird list:

Hoary-headed Grebe
Royal Spoonbill
Black Duck
Little Black Cormorant
Collared Sparrowhawk
Kestrel
Crested Pigeon
Red-rumped Parrot
White-backed Swallow
Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike
Varigated Wren
Yellow-rumped Thornbill
House Sparrow
Magpie

Pelican
Yellow-billed Spoonbill
Grey Teal
Great Cormorant
Brown Goshawk
Purple Swampphen
Galah
Blue Bonnet
Tree Martin
Willie Wagtail
Yellow Thornbill
Noisy Miner
Starling
Little Raven

White-faced Heron
Australian Shelduck
Little Pied Cormorant
Darter
Brown Falcon
Black-fronted Dotterel
Cockatiel
Welcome Swallow
Fairy Martin
Little Grassbird
Weebill (H)
Zebra Finch
Pee Wee



Photos
Rowena
Whiting



Twitchathon results: a couple of things deserve a mention:-

- Our teams in the Champagne Race came in 4th Out for a Lark with 145 sightings and 5th Happy Wanderers With 143. Not far behind the 3rd placers with 149.
- While the "Rarest Bird Prize" went to a sighting of a Rufous Scrub-bird at Gibraltar Range National Park because it is secretive, has a very restricted range and not the sort of bird you can dedicate a large amount of time to in a Twitchathon; however among the runners up was the Painted Honeyeaters at Binya State Forest (seen by both teams) and the White-fronted Honeyeater seen in Griffith (Happy Wanderers). Out for a Lark were at the same spot soon after (or it may have been before) and it wasn't there.

The cool wind blowing on our faces at the gate was enough to make me remember that we did have a few years in the past that produced some wonderful flora. But I digress...this was a brisk hike to make about a dozen of our hearts work faster. Square Nob is a spectacular hill that makes one wonder how it was formed.

I thought a little of the geological history of how the Narrandera Ranges were formed might be useful here...

Between 450 and 420 million years ago slow earth movement folded the bedrock, pushing back the sea, fusing quartzite and allowing small pockets of granite to intrude. This granite can be seen on the hills just north of Grong Grong.

Large areas of Narrandera Shire were deposited 500 million years ago when the area was covered by sea. Marine sediments accumulated and formed a sandstone and quartzite bedrock. These rocks are identified as quartzite, slate, schist, phyllite, siltstone, sandstone and fine conglomerate. Near my place, just east of Narrandera, there is the headland of the ocean with the layers of sand clearly visible; do you believe me?

Between 420 and 340 million years ago water returned to cover the landscape, sometimes sea water and sometimes fresh. During this period, deep beds of sediment accumulated as the water wore at the land reducing soft rock to sand and harder quartzite to smooth rocks up to 60 cm across. This boulder conglomerate and conglomerate sandstone is referred to as Square Head beds and is the underlying rock type around Square Nob and Mt Benness.

Around 380 million years ago the earth folded again but deposition continued forming a conglomerate sandstone quartzite and shale rock layer. This rock type forms the majority of the hills in the area including the cap of Square Nob.

Approximately 340 million years ago strong earth pressure folded the area once again creating a deep east-west valley under the present Murrumbidgee River east of Narrandera, and the north west south-east line of today's Narrandera Range and Brobenah Hills. Since the formation of these hills, water and wind have eroded much of them creating the deep sediments surrounding the hills and leaving only the harder rock remnants.

Let me tell you, this all happened a while ago and it took a very long time. Too long to see anything happening now, so we looked at the flowers and birds instead.

Longhorn Beetle
Rowena Whiting



Max spied half a dozen Ground Cuckoo-Shrikes at the gate, a great start for the birdos.

Square Nob has Black Cypress Pine some Dwyers Red-gum, with a great shrub and grass layer. Shrubs in flower were Shrubby *Platysace*, *Platysace*, Cough Bush *Cassinia laevis*, and a most wonderful Grevillea, Rusty Spider-flower *Grevillea florabunda*

The Feathery Groundsel *Senecio anethifolius* we had seen previously by the fence around one of the towers is now dead (sprayed?) but there is still some a bit further away. This is a locally rare species as is the Sticky Wallaby Bush *Beyeria viscosa* of which we found a little. Then there was *Lomandra patens* (Irongrass) and a few lovely clump of Blue Pincushions *Brunonia australis*, The Clustered Everlastings *Chrysocephalum semipapposum* and the Sticky Everlastings *Bracteantha viscosa* were small and stunted but were bravely flowering in response to local rain. The dams at the lookout where Patty loves to swing her legs over the edge were all looking as if there had been quite a lot of contributions from the sky.

Square Nob is a communications tower reserve, and if you look up you can see a forest of antennas and towers. Well it is 384 metres above sea level and if you want UHF and phone services you simply have to live with a few sticks on the skyline.

The raptors: Wedge-tailed Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, Hobby and Nankeen Kestrels were all riding the currents maybe hawking for insects – Do birds stalk for leisure and play?



Blue Pincushions

Photos: Rowena Whiting

We were pleased to welcome visitors Sharyn and Douglas who we hoped enjoyed the day as much as I did.

Nella Smith

[Reference for geology - *Remnant Woodlands, Narrandera Range and Brobenah Hills* by Melissa Walsh]

Birdlist

Blue bonnet	Red-rumped Parrot	Australian Raven
Magpie	Ground Cuckoo Shrike [6]	Eastern Yellow Robin
Wee-bill	Chestnut-rumped Thornbill	Rufous Whistler
Red-capped Robin,	Wedge-tailed Eagle	Peregrine Falcon
Nankeen Kestrel	Hobby	

Bioregions – what are they ?

After referring to Bioregions in one of my Plants of the Month articles, Neil raise the questions – ‘What makes Bioregions different from each other’, and ‘What is the Cobar Peneplain’. Good questions deserve answers – so I hope the following fits the bill.

Flora and fauna is always recorded as lists for an area, be it local or for a whole region. Generally the areas are based on man-made features – from small pocket Reserves to a State as a whole. Numerous local lists can be used to elucidate the distribution of single species but do not give any clues to the associations between species. Defining communities results in an intricate mosaic of constantly varying units. However defining these communities takes a lot of surveying work. Only Victoria has undertaken to do this State-wide, all other States are way behind. Yet some sort of grouping is required – its no use lumping semi-arid areas with sub-tropical rainforest and expecting to draw rational conclusions from the data.

Sydney Herbarium like other State herbaria have divided their State up into some sort of geographically logical areas – north, central, and southern coastal regions etc. However when they came to the west of the Divide (two-thirds of the State!) they arbitrarily drew an east-west line roughly dividing the summer maximum rainfall to the south. Later they very arbitrarily divided these two giant areas again with a north-south line.

As each State had their own ideas of dividing up their States none of the areas married up across State borders. Of course nature never recognizes State borders anyway so nationally the system was rather haphazard.

To overcome this Thackway and Craythorn devised and published in 1995 their ‘Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation boundaries for Australia’, now known generally as IBRA bioregions. Each biogeographic region, and there are 80 of them, represents a cluster of interacting ecosystems classified by their most dominant landscape features such as climate, geology, landform and vegetation.

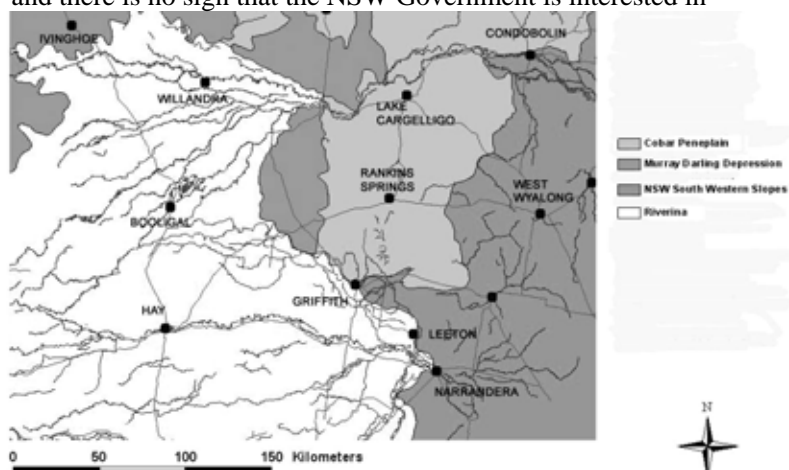
Thus the topologically flat plains of principally clay soils of the lower Murray, Murrumbidgee and Lachan Valleys are recognized as the Riverina Bioregion. The different catchments are separated as sub-regions to add to convenience.

Between Griffith and the Darling River plains past Cobar is a landform of rolling downs and plains dominated by woodlands of Bimble Box, White Cypress Pine, Mulga, Gum-bark Coolabah (*Eucalyptus intertexta* also known as Red Box), Belah and Mallee. This is the Cobar Peneplain and constitutes one of the Bioregions. A peneplain is a geological term for a mountain range that has been eroded down to a low profile of remnant hills surrounded by flat plains. It differs from the Dividing Range in that the latter has been uplifted in geologically recent times with renewed vigour of erosion giving steeper slopes.

The Boundaries of the Bioregions are still only lines on a map drawn from the information then available, hence the first word in the title – Interim. A lot of work on defining communities and their extent is required before the bioregions can be better delineated – and there is no sign that the NSW Government is interested in doing the work! As a pencil line on a

map of say NSW can represent a width of 20km or more on the ground, the given boundaries at the local level get a bit hesitant without the detailed studies. Add on the actual divisions are often gradual unless there is a sharp geological boundary, then it becomes rather hard to say precisely where boundaries run. So Neil (and everyone else) when you travel from one bioregion to another, try to spot any changes in the vegetation (type or habit).

Eric Whiting



New Biodiversity Reserve for Coleambally

Following negotiations between Coleambally Irrigation Cooperative Limited (CICL) and Department of Lands, approximately 1600 hectares of Crown leasehold land in the Coleambally district was converted to form Reserve No. 1013089 for the purpose of environmental protection. The Minister for Lands Tony Kelly MLC, appointed CICL as manager of the Coleambally Irrigation Biodiversity (CIBR) Trust as per the government gazettal notice dated 30 March 2007.

The reserve comprises 11 separate blocks of land predominately located in the north of the Coleambally Irrigation Area. Since taking official control on July 1 2007, CICL has developed a draft Plan of Management which is currently awaiting approval of the Minister. A number of actions prescribed in the plan have already been implemented. These include weed and pest animal control measures on a number of blocks, completed on a priority basis. The majority of funding for the on-ground works will be made available via the Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority's Property Vegetation Plan (PVP) process.

The important decision taken by CICL to manage this reserve will ensure that flora and fauna species of this district are maintained for future generations to see, without the threat of land clearing or overgrazing. A significant number of native plants and birds have already been identified on the reserve including threatened species such as Superb Parrot and Painted Honeyeater, and one Endangered Ecological Community (EEC) also occurs, in the form of Boree (*Acacia pendula*) woodland. At least 3 separate blocks of the reserve also contain mapped habitat of the Plains-wanderer, an endangered ground dwelling bird.

Mark Robb

Biodiversity Officer



Hooded Scaly-foot

Courtesy: M. Robb



Painted Honeyeater

Courtesy: David. Kleinert

A Visit to the Coleambally Irrigation Biodiversity Reserves. Saturday 1st March 2008

Coleambally Irrigation (CI) is the Trust Manager for some 11 blocks of crown land in the Coleambally Irrigation Area (CIA) which Coly Irrigation propose to regenerate as Biodiversity Reserves.

The MFN visited four of these reserves on Saturday 1st March both for a visit and to assess the reserves as potential sites for the MFN to carry out regular surveys to look at changes time.

Arum Tiwari the CI., Manager, Natural Resources and Environment, addressed the Griffith meeting to outline the story behind the reserves and Mark Robb, Biodiversity Officer accompanied us on the day and showed us around four of the blocks.

We met Mark at the Coleambally Lions Park at 9.00am on Saturday and headed for Block 11 where we had a brief look and a photo shoot. This block is heavily degraded through the past agricultural practice that had been carried out there, in fact that was a feature of all of the blocks to a greater or lesser degree, that is to be expected, given that these blocks were previously leased out the farmers



The MFN Team



Australian Hollyhock
Lavatera plebeia

to use as they thought fit.

Fortunately CI has seen some potential (and advantage) in taking over these blocks to be managed for biodiversity regeneration.

There hasn't been much in the physical sense done to these blocks save a little bit of weed control in a couple of the most degraded blocks, but most significantly, they have terminated all agricultural activity (cropping and grazing), which in itself is a major step in the restoration of these blocks. That is not to say that some grazing may be utilised at some time in the future but it would be as a component of a management plan that aims to restore these blocks to a more natural state.

We moved on to Block 10, and went for a good walk to check it out. This block is bordered to the south by one of the CIA's drains which was previously a creek and therefore has a good string of Black Box along it. This was accompanied by some Lignum and a good range of small shrubs and forbes. Away from the creek (drain) there was an open Boree Woodland interspersed by grassland sporting quite a bit of Plainsgrass. *Austrastipa aristiglumis*. There were a few other interesting plants in this block including some Australian Hollyhock, *Lavatera plebeia*, Lambs Tails *Ptilotus exaltatus* and Eryngo *Eryngium plantagineum*.

There were quite a few birds at this site, including the Superb Parrot and Grey-crowned Babbler, two on the threatened list, but it was good to also see the Blue Bonnet, Red-rumped Parrot, and Mallee Ringneck as well as several Zebra Finch, Mistletoebird, Owllet Nightjar, and Striped Honeyeater. (see list below for full list)

We moved on to Blocks 4&5, these are two quite large blocks, they have been variously degraded by grazing and cultivation, but there is some very good vegetation. We stopped near the western end of Block 4 and walked a loop through Blocks 4&5. This was a great walk in that it passed through a large range of vegetation. As we first entered Block 5 we walked through a large stand of Western Rosewood which gave way to Black Box, the odd Wilga, then Black Box with some Yellow Box drifting into White Cypress Pine and Yellow Box, then into Block 4 which was predominantly Boree. It was all pretty open woodland with plenty of grassy understorey.

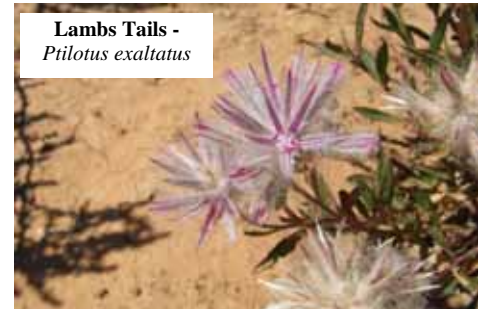
The Blocks have quite a few problems including weeds, rabbits, foxes and lack of recruitment of trees and shrubs. However, these blocks show considerable promise of developing into some valuable near natural areas that will provide some valuable habitat / refuge for the surviving fauna, though with more projects like this you never know we may see the reappearance of a few long lost species.

I am keen to watch these sites as they change over time, especially as we move into a wetter phase (gotta be optimistic)

Many thanks to Mark Robb for giving up his Saturday Morning to show us around.

Bird List Coleambally Biodiversity Reserves 1st March 2008

Block 10	Yellow-throated Miner	Australian Kestrel	Wedge-tail Eagle
Red-rumped Parrot	Striped Honeyeater	Australian Raven	Apostlebirds
Mallee Ringneck	White-plumed	Little Raven	Mallee Ringneck
Blue Bonnet	Honeyeater	Owllet Nightjar	Eastern Rosella
Superb Parrot	Singing Honeyeater	Sheep	Rainbow Bee-eater
Striated Pardalote	Superb Fairy-wren	Red Fox	Pied Butcherbird
Weebill	Grey Butcherbird		Cockatiel
Yellow Thornbill	Australian Magpie	Block 4 and 5	Australian Raven
Mistletoebird	Pee Wee	Crested Pigeon	Australian Magpie
Crested Pigeon	Grey-crowned Babbler	Noisy Miner	Pee Wee
Noisy Miner	Wedge-tail Eagle	Blue Bonnet	



Lambs Tails -
Ptilotus exaltatus



Insect – Red Bug – Family Pyrrhocoridae

Clean – Up 2008

There was a pretty good roll up of MFN members for the clean-up at the various towns on Sunday 2nd of March, certainly a much better roll-up than last year. The Griffith Group (8) worked on the section of Borga road from Jones Road to West Road, (that's the bit that runs past Campbell's & Nericon Swamp). The Narrandera crew (5) did the Rocky Waterholes and the Narrandera Wetlands.

We have been cleaning up these areas for a number of years and it is disappointing that there seems to be more and more rubbish dumped in these areas each year, it is mostly drink cans and bottles and fast food packaging discarded by those that seem not to care how much rubbish is in their space.

However we got the job done in good time and left the areas in much better shape than we found them.

Early morning visit to Binya State Forest: Friday 22 February 2007

I hadn't been to Binya for a month or so and decided to have a brief visit to **Wattle Dam**.

I arrived about 7.30 and immediately a group of Mulga Parrots landed on the water's edge closest to where I'd parked – a good sign, I thought. In the hour I was there, 20+ Turquoise Parrots, 30+ Mulgas, 10+ Red-rumps and an assortment of other birds came in to drink – usually in waves with breaks of about 10 to 15 minutes between visits. Of course, the Choughs just wander in and take over the place for awhile and seem to have complete control over the place – apart from the ever present Willie who is not put-off by anyone!

Also seen at this dam were, Mallee Ringnecks (they landed in the tree above me but didn't come down to drink), Spiny-cheeked, White-plumed, Striped and Brown-headed Honeyeaters, Common Bronzewing, Peaceful Doves and Diamond Doves (2). Dusky Woodswallows, Restless Flycatchers, and Australian Ravens were also sighted close-by.

I then drove over to **Moss Dam** and sat for awhile watching Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters challenging a pair of juvenile Pied Butcherbirds for the prime drinking spot whilst a family of Silvereye bathed nearby and a group of 8 bronzewings wandered in for a drink.

Only one male Turquoise Parrot was seen. On the way out, I met a pair of emu coming in for a drink.

Next, I called into the dam on the Brogden Track and sat for half an hour. Apart from a family of Mulga Parrots, the only other birds coming in to drink were honeyeaters – Spiny-cheeked, Brown-headed, White-plumed, Striped and Singing.

The disappointment was no sightings of Diamond Firetails at any of the dams. I have always seen at least one on previous visits – usually at all three dams but not this time.

This concerned me quite a bit as I had only recently read an article saying how numbers of some woodland birds are dropping dramatically and it is not being monitored. I have written before in the newsletter how high profile birds like the Gouldian Finch, the Swift Parrot, the Orange-bellied Parrot and the Regent Honeyeater have achieved huge funding from all governments and lots of excellent work has been done to study these species closely – even going as far as having captive breeding programs for them. Whereas, equally threatened, but other (less glamorous) species are diminishing in numbers with little understanding of the major causes of this decline. In our area, Diamond Firetails and Turquoise Parrots certainly fit into this category along with any number of other bush birds – Hooded Robin and White-browed Treecreeper are just two that come to mind.

With this in mind I want to organize a survey at (say) five of the dams one morning soon and will contact a few members (particularly from Griffith) to spend an hour – say from 7.30 to 8.30 am just to check if the Diamond Firetails are still about and in what numbers. We could possibly do this a couple of times a year just to see if there is some movement of the birds out of the area at this time of year or is it that there is probably plenty of other water about that the birds don't need to come to the dams at present.

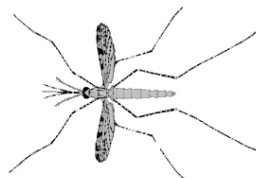
More on this later when a suitable Saturday can be arranged to suit people.

Max O'Sullivan

The Attraction of Mosquitoes

Contributed by **Rowena**

Mosquitoes have been receiving attention in the news lately with the encephalitis in the Griffith area. So why some more than others?



[Reference: Queensland Institute of Medical Research]

detection of Murray Valley are they attracted to people, and to

Apparently it is in the carbon dioxide we breathe out - they use this to find us. Hence a physically active or larger person could attract more of them. Other factors like diet, medications, also play a part and there is a genetic component. However no foods have been specifically identified but some studies have shown you are more attractive to mosquitoes if you have a standard drink of alcohol.

In Australia there are over 300 species of mosquitoes with some types preferring to bite the face while others prefer your feet. Tests involving the taking of Vitamin B have shown no protection against mosquitoes biting. However a couple of mosquito repellents, DEET and Picaridin have been shown to be almost 100% effective in tests carried out by the Australian Army Malaria Institute.

Plant of the Month - Ironbark Communities

To see plant communities in this area which have Mugga Ironbark *Eucalyptus sideroxylon* as the prime dominant one has to travel eastwards from Ardlethan. Each of the hilltops all the way to Temora have almost pure stands of Mugga Ironbark. Unfortunately most have been extensively grazed or otherwise have lost their natural shrub and ground cover. However a walk through Ingalba Nature Reserve will reveal some idea what the natural flora was like (the Reserve was a State Forest until not so long ago).

Several shrubs are common there that are not seen closer to home. Bent-leaf Wattle *Acacia flexifolia* forms a dense cover in that part of the Reserve just north of the main road. It is also frequent as a roadside shrub on the way there. Some of the pea-flowering shrubs eg. Twiggy Bush-pea *Pultenaea largiflorens* and Showy Parrot-pea *Dillwynia sericea* are much more common in these Ironbark communities, as is the Small-flowered Grevillea *Grevillea linearifolia* in good remnants. A special interest for birdo's is the occurrence of small shrub-like *Casuarina diminuta*, a food plant of the Glossy Black Cockatoo.

Mugga Ironbark also forms an extensive community as a co-dominant with Black Cypress Pine *Callitris endlicheri*, notably on the eastern side of the Cocoparra Ranges. Here the community grades in and out of the usual Dwyers Gum – Black Cypress Pine community making it difficult to define boundaries. However there are two parallel linear patches (both about 1km long

and only 50-100 metres wide) north-east of Woolshed Bluff that are clearly defined and almost purely Ironbark. These two areas have been mapped in green for denser woodland on the Lake Wyangan topographic map.

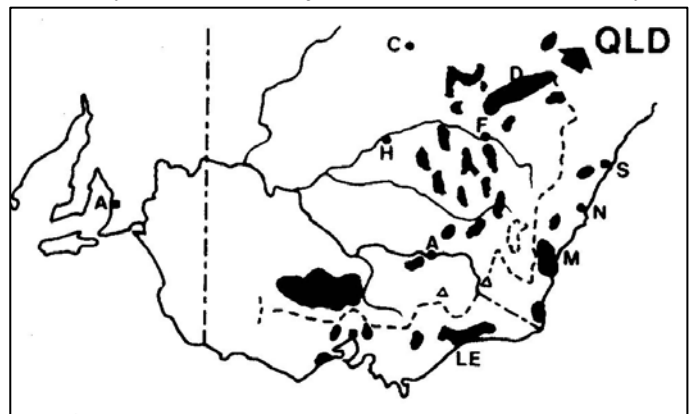
On the western side of the Cocoparras, Mugga Ironbark rarely occurs as a major constituent in sufficiently large enough areas to be mapped as a plant community. It also occurs at lower elevations where Bimble Box forms the major plant community.

The Mallee areas north of Barellan also have Mugga Ironbark in them, but once again not as a major component. The presence here though does represent a link between the Cocoparra and Ardlethan Ironbark communities. However if you draw an east-west line passing through Barellan you will not see naturally growing Ironbark south of that line, including all of the Narrandera Ranges. That line is also the southern boundary of the Cobar Peneplains Bioregion.

Eric Whiting



Drawing by Melanie Brougham



Ironbark Distribution –

Source: Leon Costermans Native trees and shrubs of SE Australia.

In the Mailbox - newsletters from other clubs

Some of the newsletters we receive from birding organisations and field naturalist clubs have their programs for the year: Easter Camps in the Pilaga (Bird atlassers), Goulburn River National Park (Hunter BOC) Birding NSW has a number of campouts coming up over the next few months – Shoalhaven Head, Warrumbungles, Backyamma State Forest (Forbes) and Newnes Plateau (Lithgow). Some are on private property. So if you are travelling or want a weekend break, a chance to explore. Details are in their newsletters which are available at meetings. Hunter contains the annual report of the club for 2007 with info about their activities, covering bird surveys of specific birds and locations and habitat restoration projects.

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc
Held 7.30 pm on Thursday 14 February 2008 Yanco Agricultural Institute, Yanco

Present: Max O'Sullivan, Johanna Botman, Eric Whiting, Rowena Whiting, Sue Allen, Betty Bradney, Neville James, Kath Mahy, Dot Eurell, Bill Moller, Nella Smith & Bill Draper.

Apologies: Roy Wade, Joy Young, Barry Allen, John & Jan Cameron, Phil Tenison, Jan & Garth Strong.

Matters Arising From Previous Minutes: Held over to General Business

Correspondence:

- In:** 1) Environmental Champions Meeting Griffith 27.02.2008 – RSVP date changed.
2) Albury/Wodonga Field Naturalists. Newsletter
3) Friends of Grasslands Newsletter
4) Granite Belt Newsletter
5) Griffith Council Development Application Nericon: acknowledging receipt of submission re proposed subdivision of 53 Torrens Title Allotments Nericon/Lake Wyangan.

- Out:** 1) Griffith City Council: Submission and objections to proposed DA 439/2007
2) Letters to Narrandera, Griffith, Leeton, Carrathool & Murrumbidgee Councils and Narrandera RLPB concerning permission for seed collecting.

Financial Report: Not Available

General Business

- 1) National Parks Association: \$60 membership (join as library – post to Phil).
- 2) CONSTITUTION: Only obliged to notify financial members of Special Meetings.
If members lapse and do not pay subs, after 12 months of being non-financial members are expelled.
ALL CHANGES UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED.
- 3) WEBSITE: Johanna had moved everything from Angelfire to new MFN Website.
What do we want the website for? Who is our audience?
Johanna set out a proforma and offered models for people to write about any particular site. Members are requested to choose a few sites to prepare an entry and send the information to Johanna. MFN website May 2008 Draft has a list of sites, members may add sites.
- 4) Len Beadell Tracks – Kath Mahy. Many photos of typical desert plants. Thanks Kath.
- 5) Eliot Traps: Club to purchase 10 Eliot Traps.
MOVED: Nella Smith SECONDED: Max O'Sullivan & Kath Mahy. CARRIED
- 6) CLEANUP AUSTRALIA: Griffith members to do Borga & Jones Road to West Road.
Narrandera members to do Rocky Waterholes and Lake Talbot.
- 7) MERCHANDISING: Nella brought samples, no interest.
- 8) BIRDFAIR: Letter to Leeton Tourist Place congratulating them on a good fair and suggesting holding the birdfair earlier.
- 9) MEETINGS: The idea to alternate meetings between Leeton and Griffith was deemed to be confusing, therefore all meetings will be at Yanco
- 10) FILM NIGHT: Theme is Seasons, but if you can't use this theme, just make something, PLEASE!!!!

Next Meeting: Thursday 13 March 2008

Meeting closed at 9.40 pm.

Griffith Meeting Minutes 28 February 2008

Present : Patty & Bill Moller, June & Col Sell, Johanna Botman, Neil Palframan, Elio Minato, Nan Simpson, Jan Condon, Arun Tiwari

Apologies : Sue Chittick-Dalton

General Business.

Report on the Yanco Meeting of 14th February.

Website. Johanna outlined a plan for updating the website. She has developed a proforma and offered models for people to write about any particular site. Members are requested to choose a few sites to prepare an entry and send the information to Johanna. Members may add sites.

Seed Collection - a good quantity collected, needs some cleaning yet, sieves purchased.

Cleanup Australia Griffith members to do Borga & Jones Road to West Road. On Sunday 2nd March.

The Short Film / Soup Night – to be held on Saturday 21st June – Johanna to advise re training

Next Meeting – The next meeting in Griffith will be 27th March 2008, Contact Johanna

March Guest speaker – TBA

S I G H T I N G S

Black Swan [3] Not sighted at Narrandera since April 2006	Rocky Waterholes, Narrandera	07/02/08	Neville James
Fantail Cuckoo [immature]	Rocky Waterholes, Narrandera	08/02/08	Neville James
Bronzewing [1]	Euroley	14/02/08	Kath Mahy
Emu [6]	Euroley	10/02/08	Kath Mahy
Goanna [young]	Euroley	12/02/08	Kath Mahy
Hobbie	NSW DPI Murray Rd Hanwood	12/02/08	Bill Moller
Barking Owl [2]	Five Mile, Narrandera	16/02/08	Nella Smith
White-bellied Sea Eagle [2]	Five Mile, Narrandera	16/02/08	Nella Smith
Brolga [4]	Dry Lake, Narimba	16/02/08	Kath Mahy
Peregrine Falcon [1]	Murray Rd. Yoogali	28/02/08	June & Col Sell
Little Eagle [1J]	Binya SF	20/02/08	June & Col Sell
Black-fronted Dotterel [2]	Lake Wyangan Picnic area	20/02/08	June & Col Sell
Royal Spoonbill [11]	Lake Wyangan Picnic area	20/02/08	June & Col Sell
Swamp Harrier [1]	Campbell's Swamp	24/02/08	June & Col Sell
White-winged Chough [8]	NSW DPI Murray Rd Hanwood	21/02/08	Bill Moller
Superb Parrot [3]	Biodiversity Block 10 Coleambally	01/03/08	MFN
Owlet Nightjar [1]	Biodiversity Block 10 Coleambally	01/03/08	MFN
Grey-crowned Babbler [3]	Biodiversity Block 10 Coleambally	01/03/08	MFN
Little Eagle [1]	NSW DPI Murray Rd Hanwood	03/03/08	Bill Moller
Black Kite (1)	Wattle Hill, Leeton (unusual)	04/02/08	Max O'Sullivan
Cockatiels (8)	Wattle Hill, Leeton	18/02/08	Max O'Sullivan
Hobby (2)	Wattle Hill, Leeton (on TV antenna)	25/02/08	Max O'Sullivan
Ground Cuckoo-Shrike (6)	Square Nob outing	24/02/08	Max O'Sullivan
Diamond Dove (2)	Wattle Dam, Binya State Forest	22/02/08	Max O'Sullivan
Mulga Parrot (30+)	Wattle Dam, Binya State Forest	22/02/08	Max O'Sullivan
Wedge-tailed Eagle (4)	Square Nob outing	24/02/08	Max O'Sullivan
Peregrine Falcon (1)	Square Nob outing	22/02/08	Max O'Sullivan
Turquoise Parrot (20+)	Moss Dam (Binya State Forest)	22/02/08	Max O'Sullivan
Cisticola (15)	Fivebough – unusual for so many	01/03/08	Max O'Sullivan

The Waradgery-Murumbidgee Language

taken from "Early Days in Barellan and District" Contributed by Nella

Aboriginal names of places –I like these because they describe the place

Arajoel	Yam that grows on the plains
Argoon	Black ground
Bomen	Deep
Birrego	The dotterel
Berrigan	Bluebush or wattle
Booligsl	Saltbush
Book book	Mopoke or podargus?
Barellan	Meeting of the waters
Berry Jerry	Stunted gum
Buckingbong	Dry swamp or rushes
Brewarrina	Single bore tree
Bundidjarie	Suckers growing on box tree
Binya	Name of a mountain
Bringagee	Standing breast to breast
Ballandy	Far away

More another time

13 March Thursday

Leeton Meeting at 7:30pm in the Seminar Room 1, Block 34 at Yanco Agricultural Institute. Enquiries Jan Cameron on 6955 2202

Guest Speaker: Dennis Moretto – Flowers of Western Australia.

15 March Saturday

Glossy Black Cockatoo count in the Narrandera Hills.

We need all eyes on deck (or at least as many as possible)

As these hills are so very widespread we will go out in teams with someone who knows the location of the dams. Some are on the roadside.

We would like you to record the number of Glossy Black Cockatoos seen, drinking or flying over. Also if they are male or female. You need to settle yourself by the dam and wait quietly until it is almost dark. We would like you to record any other bird or mammal species you see at the dam.

Place/Time: At your allocated dam location prior to dusk (~6:30 ish).

We will gather at Yarrabimbi (Andrew Thompson's property) afterwards for a sausage sizzle and collation of results

Nella and Terry Smith are co-ordinating this evening so please ring them on 6959 1210 if you will be able to participate.

We want to cover as many dams as we can.

**23rd March Sunday**

Bush Walk – so far nothing has been planned

27th March Thursday

Griffith Meeting - 7.30 pm Griffith DPI Conference Room.

Contact Johanna Botman on 6963 4855. Guest Speaker TBA

30th March Sunday

Outing - Ironbark Picnic Area in the Cocoparras National Park

Contact: Enid Atkinson on 6962 1181

2nd April Wednesday

Copy for April newsletter is due

10th April Thursday

Leeton Meeting at 7:30pm in the Seminar Room 1, Block 34 at Yanco Agricultural Institute. Enquiries Jan Cameron on 6955 2202

Guest Speaker: TBA

12th April Saturday

Outing to Galore Hill. Contact: Nella Smith 6959 1210

20th April Sunday

Bush Walk - up Mt Bunganbill

Meet in the Bunganbil State Forest by the dam

Contact: Bill Moller on 6920 1341

24th April Thursday

Griffith Meeting – 7.30 pm, Griffith DPI Conference Room.

Contact: Johanna Botman on 6963 4855. Guest Speaker TBA

OTHER DATES**5-6 April**

BIGnet meeting in Canberra – focus to be conservation - Nella has details

21 June Saturday

Short Film Festival and Soup Night – contact Johanna.

18-19 May

National Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot Survey

Our Website is being rebuilt

I have started a complete rebuild of our website.

Please go and have a look at www.mfn.org.au

At the last meetings at Leeton and Griffith, I distributed a list of places that we visit and asked for volunteers to write about those places. I am still looking for those volunteers and would like to hear from anyone who would like to assist.

I think that our website should be a repository of information about our part of the Murrumbidgee Valley. It should contain details of where to go, what you might expect to see and some details of how to get there. We can gather some of this information as we make our regular visits. I was hoping that some of you may get out to these places more frequently and would like to make a contribution.

As the 'pages' roll in, I will put them up on the web so you can see the progress.

Volunteers can get in touch with me on 0418 625 503 or johanna@griffithgateway.com

Johanna

www.mfn.org.au