

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



Mount Bunganbil - David and Michelle enjoy the view

Bill Moller

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**For the next issue by
Wednesday, 4 June 2008**

To Rowena Whiting

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Fax or collection can be arranged.

**Wanted
Contributions for the
Short Film Night**

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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, Block 34 at Dept. Primary Industry at 7.30 PM

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

INTENDING NEW MEMBERS, GUESTS AND VISITORS WELCOME.

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Annual Subscriptions:	Family	\$40.00	Adult/Single	\$30.00	Journal only/Concession	\$20.00

Opinions expressed by authors are their own and do not necessarily represent the policies or views of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc.

Wildlife Booklet & Waterbird Poster Launch

From the press release

Two *NSW Murray Catchment* Wildlife Booklets were launched last month at Urana and Savernake for the West Corugan and Central Riverina Wildlife Survey. They summarise the results of the Murray Catchment Management Authority's (CMA) extensive Wildlife Survey and feature local information on wildlife and the different habitats they are found in.

Working with Murray Catchment Management Authority and a team of wildlife experts, local wildlife ecologist Matt Herring coordinated the study and said that more than 200 species of bird, mammal, reptile and frog had been found during the year-long study, despite the very dry conditions.

"Some of the mammal highlights include the Squirrel Glider, Sugar Glider, Red Kangaroo and 12 bat species, whilst significant reptiles included the Curl Snake, Dwyer's Snake, 3 "Ctenotus" skink species and 4 gecko species. " Mr Herring said.

"A range of locally rare birds were found like the Leaden Flycatcher and Fork-tailed Swift, as well as threatened species like the Brolga, Magpie Goose, Bush Stone-curlew, Powerful Owl and Black-chinned Honeyeater. "

The West Corugan and Central Riverina wildlife surveys have built on other community wildlife surveys conducted over the past 7 years across the New South Wales Murray Catchment. Together they have included over 280 farms and directly involved more than 3000 landholders.

They have also produced a fab waterbirds poster - *The Waterbirds of the NSW Murray Catchment* which features 66 species, ranging from the tiny Red-necked Stint- (a migrant from Siberia) to the rare Freckled Duck.

Copies of the poster and booklets are available free of charge at the Murray CMA offices in Deniliquin, Berrigan and Albury CMA offices as well as on the Murray CMA website at <http://www.murray.cma.nsw.gov.au/>

Welcome to our newest member – Jenna Ann Tarbit

Jenna Ann was born on the 17 April, weighing in at around eight pound ten ounces.

Joanne hopes little Jenna will be able to come and meet you guys at a MFN meeting soon!



Koala Count

13 April 2008

Narrandera Nature Reserve is one of the few areas that have been set aside for conservation of River Red Gum communities. The river red gum community includes River Red Gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* Yellow Box *Eucalyptus melliodora*, River Cooba *Acacia stenophylla* and other medium trees River Oak *Casuarina cunninghamiana* and White Cypress Pine *Callitris glaucophylla*. The understorey has some introduced and native shrub and grass species. Actually the part that has been fenced off to exclude horses (which are agisted in the adjoining common) has a large part native grasses and forbs.

The first Koalas released into the Narrandera Nature Reserve in 1972 were 4 individuals from Queensland. (five additional koalas were released some time later). Another ten were released in 1974 from French Island in Victoria perhaps to re-establish a natural colony.

Since the koalas were released their numbers have increased and there are now sufficient numbers to ensure the health and viability of the colony. They are now to be found all over the common, as far west as Yanco Weir and east in "Carraman" as well as at the Narrandera Wetlands.



The count is conducted by National Parks and Wildlife Service every year. This year 124 volunteers counted 52 healthy koalas in the Narrandera Common and Nature Reserve. This was the second highest tally in 10 years. The highest (72) was recorded last year. I sometimes wonder if the highest counts have been because the trees are poorly clothed with foliage in the last few years.

Field Naturalists and The Koala Regeneration Committee led teams of volunteers to selected areas. To ensure koalas aren't counted more than once a yellow biodegradable ribbon is tied around the tree in which they are found.

Visitors from Germany, England and Scotland participated. Members from Griffith, Leeton and Narrandera boosted the numbers of leaders and counters well. Narrandera Rotary Club provided lunch and drinks for the many spotters.

Col Killick area manager for NPWS co-ordinated the count and also brought a generous supply of chocolate koalas for every koala spotted? Thanks to Col for spending the day at Narrandera, to Narrandera Rotary Club for the barbecue and to members who attended.

Nella Smith

BIRD OF THE MONTH...

LITTLE RAVEN *Cirvus mellori*

If you live in the Riverina, are a bird enthusiast and spoiling for an argument, wait for someone to mention 'CROWS'. There are no crows in this area. Probably none all the way to Melbourne. The nearest crows are north west of Hillston and they sound different to our Ravens. For example, the Little Crow's call is a prolonged nark-nark- nark. The Torresian Crow has high pitched uk-uk-uk- or ok-ok-ok- .

The Little Raven is distinctive to the Australian Raven in several ways. Firstly it is slightly smaller, flies faster, joins nomadic flocks, shuffles it's wings when it calls and settles. It does not extend hackles when calling as the Australian Raven does. It eats insects, grain and carrion, but has never been seen killing lambs as its beak is too slender.

A few statistics. length.. 50cm
colour.. black with green gloss (juveniles breast feathers sooty brown)
sexes.. similar
eyes.. white (juveniles..brown)
legs and beak black
voice.. monotone kar-kar-kar-kar-kar. (no decending notes)
nesting.. depends on climate..usually August-September later in Alpine regions
eggs.. four or five and pale green and brownish blotches (similar to Australian Raven)

It is found to South East Australia and King Island.



Picture from Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds

Sue Chittick-Dalton

Bunganbil Walk - 20 April 2008

If you want a bit of a story about a walk up Bunganbil you should look back to the April 2007 Newsletter. The walk this year was essentially the same as last year, with a slightly different crew.

But having said that, I never lose my enthusiasm for a walk up this Mount. In my mind it is without doubt the best hill walk in the area, it is just all payoff, spectacular views, interesting rock formations and always a surprise with the plants. This year it was finding a couple of tenacious specimens of Downy Zieria - *Zieria cytisoides*, this a delightfully aromatic plant, rarely encountered in our region (and would you believe it dear reader, I forgot to get a photo)



Other plants encountered included the also aromatic Long-leaf Wax Flower - *Eriostemon myoporoides*, and Oval-leaf Mintbush - *Prostanthera ovalifolia*, topped off with a single clump of Autumn Greenhood, *Pterostylis revoluta*.



The climb to the top is a good aerobic exercise, heart rate's up, breathing is up and leg muscles having a whinge, good exhilarating stuff. When you get to the top there is panoramic views everywhere. The camera just cannot capture the magic of the view(s) from the top, you really have to go there.

On this walk we took a pretty direct route down, that got rather exciting also, but we all made it down in one piece.

Oh and we found this fascinating piece of rock formation at the top (see photo- one I did remember to take), you have to wonder what is going to happen to the rock above when the leg finally weathers away.



Bill Moller

Thinning white cypress for the future

Bush Telegraph magazine Autumn 2008 – Howard Spencer Public Affairs & Media, Coffs Harbour

Forests NSW is gearing up to ensure households around New South Wales have access to the highly regarded white cypress timber 40 years down the track.

That will be about the time that the cypress being thinned over the next year will be ready for milling, as this hardy and termite resistant species is extremely slow growing.

"Western Region of Forests NSW manages about 530000 hectares of white cypress pine forests throughout the western slopes and plains of NSW in accordance with the principles of Ecological Sustainable Forest Management," said Forests NSW Western Region operations and protection manager, Don Nicholson.

"An essential element of the management of productive white cypress forests includes thinning of the dense natural white cypress regeneration, to permit growth of trees and enhance forest biodiversity.

"If it is not thinned the cypress regeneration remains very small and dense, of little use for timber production and too dense for natural wildlife habitat."

Forests NSW has engaged contractors to participate in a mechanical 'non-commercial thinning' of cypress regeneration using chopper rollers towed by tractors in strips to remove about 40 per cent of the thick cypress regeneration.

Larger trees of all species are avoided and retained.

The 'bays' of thick regeneration left standing will be thinned using the traditional method of brushcutting to a six metre by six metre spacing.

"This year Western Region expects to treat about 4000 hectares of white cypress pine forest in Baradine, Dubbo, and Forbes forestry centres," Don said.

The first phase of the thinning operation is expected to be finished by June. The overall program is expected to continue for a further two years.

Moss Dam – Cold Windy and Drizzly

27 April 2008

The day didn't look too bad at the start as we made the rendezvous at Yenda and tootled off to meet Max at Wattle Dam in the Binya State Forest.

Max was looking a bit glum, the only thing he could report seeing while he waited at the dam was a pair of Galahs, that wasn't the start we were hoping for.

We moved on to Moss Dam, there was a little water in the dam, but not much using it, a pair of Mulga Parrots perched in the top of a dead pine, although, great to see their brilliant colouring, they were all that was about, we stood about for a while and although we heard the odd call nothing came anywhere near the dam, so we tooted up and went for a walk.



We walked along a track north from the dam and within a couple of hundred metres heard some small birds in the shrubbery. We managed to identify a Speckled Warbler, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Weebill, Yellow Robin and Red-capped Robin.

We moved on inspecting the vegetation and discussing various plants, but let's face it, there was bugga-all to see, we were reduced to discussing the colour of White Cypress Pine and the growth form of some Yellow Box. There was a rather interesting mallee specimen. That was actually in the Cocoparra National Park, we had crossed into the park for a short sortie. (I did actually

manage to take the odd photo with the mobile phone camera, so don't look too close).

I was planning on walking a loop to the west and back to the dam, but before long the very fine drizzle that had been intermittently falling, started to get a bit serious and the temperature (probably apparent temperature, because we were getting a little wet) seemed to drop. There wasn't much of interest either seen or heard to distract us so we made a bee-line for the dam and the warm cuppa that it (or rather the vehicles) offered.

You could add an Australian Raven, Crested Pigeon, Grey Butcherbird, Mallee Ringneck, Striped Honeyeater and possibly one or two others to the list but that was about it, it seemed that the birds were staying huddled and quiet to weather the cool change.

We may not have seen much, but I enjoyed the day, I always enjoy a walk in the bush particularly in overcast drizzly weather and John Austin was in town and came along so we were able to chew the fat a bit.

Bill Moller

Griffith Meeting Minutes 24th April 2008

Present : Patty & Bill Moller, June & Col Sell, Dennis Moretto, Enid Atkinson

Apologies : Sue Chittick-Dalton, Patty Moller, Johanna Botman, Neil Palframan, Joanne Tarbit, Nan Simpson, Jan Condon

General Business.

Website. Johanna has completed the web entry "Places to Visit" for Pulletop NR as an example and has requested that members consider adding suitable sites in the same format.

The Short Film / Soup Night – to be held on Saturday 21st June – Johanna to advise that the training is May 3rd not May 1st as in the previous newsletter, The films are to be delivered to Johanna by the 16th June so she can get them ready for the 21st.

NPWS Licence. Details of the members to be included on the licence were finalised.

Next Meeting – The next meeting in Griffith will be 22nd May 2008, Contact Johanna - Johanna@griffithgateway.com Or phone 02 69 634855

May Guest speaker – Judi Norman. Judi was one of the judges in Griffith's recent Water Wise Gardens Competition. She will speak about the Water Wise Gardens program and about latest thinking in approaches to native gardens.

June Guest speaker - Michelle Ballestrin. She will talk about her recent trip to the US.

Bird Interest Group Network (BIGnet) Report

The BIGnet meeting was held at the Australian National Botanic Gardens, Canberra on Saturday and Sunday, April 5 and 6, 2008. I attended as representative of the MFN group and found it to be a most interesting and informative gathering of like-minded organizations. Groups represented were from Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG), Birding NSW, Hunter Bird Observers (HBOC), Far South Coast Bird Observers (FSCB), Illawarra Bird Observers (IBOC), Cumberland Bird Observers (CBOC), Blue Mountains Bird Observers (BMBO) and Birds Australia's Birds in Backyards. As well there were representatives from Birds Australia (BA), Bird Observation and Conservation Australia (BOCA) and the NSW Wader Study Group.

MFN has been a member of BIGnet since its inception and has several Important Bird Areas (IBAs) included in the list for concern – Fivebough and Tuckerbill, Campbells and Nericon, and the River Red Gum forests along the Murrumbidgee to name those I can remember.

The meeting got underway at 1pm and the main thrust of the afternoon was a major session entitled "Speaking up for birds – improving advocacy and conservation outcomes" chaired by Alison Russell French, President of Birds Australia.

Major issues discussed related to how organizations such as ours can have an effective voice in shaping national policies to protect all birds and their continually threatened habitat. One big argument was for the rationalisation of the many and varied environmental organizations all working for basically the same outcome but working independently and often in isolation. We don't have to look too far afield to see that happening in our area with several organizations trying to achieve similar goals to the MFN but often working in competition rather than in a cooperative to benefit the very things we are all trying to assist – namely birds and habitats that are continually being threatened by human encroachment of one form or another.

Another discussion point was how we as a group could best influence the decision makers at a local, state and national level for the benefit of the environment. One suggestion was to engage a well know conservationist such as a Tim Flannery to lobby the various policy makers to consider the environment more when making decisions that affect or often destroy bird habitat.

No resolutions came from this session except for all the clubs represented to be more active in letting as many people as possible know what they are trying to achieve in their local area. An important acknowledgement came from BA and BOCA to be more cooperative in future and not to appear at odds with each other as seemed to be the case in the past – the major concession being that BA's Bird Atlas project would be improved so that a single web site would be set-up to include all bird sightings in the one national list.

The last guest speaker was Dr Adrian Manning from ANU's Fenner School of Environment and Society who spoke about the Mulligan's Flat/Goorooyarroo research project on the western border of the ACT near Gundaroo. Adrian spoke about the project so that we could all appreciate the work being done by his team from ANU when we all gathered at Mulligan's Flat next morning at 7am to see the proposed project in its early stages. Jon Stanhope, the Chief Minister of the ACT, also attended to add his weight to the importance the Territory Government places on the project.

Back to the Canberra Botanical Gardens for the remainder of the day at 10am and we started with a report from Phil Straw (NSW Wader Study Group). A news item I heard before going to Canberra on the Friday indicated the perilous state of migrating waders with up to a 75% drop in some species in the past decade. Phil's talk certainly reinforced that concern with dramatic drops in all species since records were taken. Numbers of Curlew Sandpipers, for example, have plummeted in the past 10 years and it is not only because of the habitat loss on the migration routes outside Australia, such as in China and South Korea, but it is equally so here. Whilst Australia was one of the first signatories of the Ramsar Convention and nominated large numbers of sites in Australia, including our IBAs in the Riverina, very little has been done to protect those sites since the initial signing and, as a result of this neglect, large numbers of wader species are no longer going to areas where once they were numerous – again Fivebough is a good example of this with numbers of visiting waders no longer stopping here over the past few years. Of course, there are many reasons for this and certainly the drought has played a major part in this decline, however, there are many instances of poor management of some of the Ramsar sites that directly relate to the drop in wader numbers over recent years and this should be of major concern to all of us.

The final major talk was given by Lauren Van Dyke who is the Project Facilitator for The Kosciuszko to Coast Project (K2C). She spoke about the "Scottsdale" property south of Canberra purchased by Bush Heritage Australia in 2006 and the plan to link the highland areas with the coast emphasising the protection of pockets of native grasslands and woodland areas and to encourage local farmers to join them in achieving this.

Max O'Sullivan

Exploring Hattah-Kulkyne and Gluepot

On 14 April, Nella, Terry, Warwick and myself left for a week of birding in north-west Victoria and into South Australia. The purpose was to try to locate a number of difficult species – like the Mallee Emu-Wren at Hattah-Kulkyne National Park (Victoria) near Mildura and the Red-lored Whistler at Birds Australia Gluepot Reserve near Waikerie in South Australia – needless to say that we dipped on both – such is the plight of desperate birders!

Our first stop-off point was around Lake Tyrrell – a large salt lake. A few good birds were sighted including Buff-rumped Thornbill. The lake had some water with birds but they were too far away to get any clear identification – someone left the scope behind!

Our first night camp was at a roadside reserve called Bronzewing about 18 km south of Ouyen on the Sunraysia H'way – a great spot for camping and birding. There was a small dam close to our camp which attracted a big group of Mulga Parrot as well as the black “clinking” form of the Grey Currawong (which had us puzzled for a while).

An early morning walk over the sand dunes covered in mallee and spinifex produced good numbers of honeyeaters – Fuscous, Yellow-plumed, and White-fronted being of particular interest. Both Spotted and Striated Pardalote were in big numbers and a Chestnut Quail-Thrush flew in to add more interest.

From Bronzewing we moved up the road (about 70 km) to Hattah-Kulkyne NP and set-up camp by early afternoon. I had heard that the lakes had plenty of water in them and this proved an excellent way of viewing one of the target species – the Regent Parrot which came into drink in large numbers in the late afternoon – great close views were had of a flock of 20 birds on the ground beside the lake – the males were brilliant yellow showing their black and pink wings clearly – such a beautiful bird and quite different from its greener cousin in Western Australia – the males being a duller olive green.

The evening produced a group of 25 Year 11 students arriving in the camping ground all laden with backpacks – groans all round about a hoped for quiet night. However, we were all shocked when we didn't hear any sounds after 8pm – it turns out the group had a 20 km trek to do the next day and they were up and away by 7am with hardly a sound.

Nella and I had a frustrating pre-breakfast search for the Emu-wren in the area where a bird group from Melbourne saw 5 different pairs at Easter – we didn't hear a peep!

After eating, we all went to another spot where the ranger said we should/would find them – but again no luck but we did see a Shy Heathwren to compensate. There were lots of Fairy Wrens hopping about – blue tails with red eye markings – we settled on Splendids but didn't ever see a fully coloured male the whole time.

A late afternoon walk produced lots of Thornbills – Inland, Chestnut-rumped, Yellow-rumped and Buff-rumped and two pairs of Pink Cockies flew over.

Next morning Nella and I went back to the Shy Heathwren site to look for emu wrens but again we dipped – we did get good views of a Spotted Nightjar in low flight heading for its roosting spot in the mallee debris nearby. After breakfast, we packed-up and left for Renmark (shopping for fruit and veg that we had to surrender at the border at Yamba – Terry donated our f&v to some caravaners heading east so it wasn't wasted!

We all had showers – at last! And headed out of Waikerie for Gluepot where we planned to spend the next 3 nights. There were only 2 other people in the campground so we had a very peaceful few nights watching the moon gradually come into its full glory on the last night. The other campers came from Portland and knew mutual friends of the Smiths from their Desert Discovery trips and me from my Canning Stock Route trip of a few years back – small world!

Nella and I did the early bird trip next morning only to discover that “my” Red-lored Whistler site from previous trips had been totally

decimated by bushfire (the summer before last) and the mallee was recovering but not sufficiently to entice the birds back.

We then proceeded up the track where the fire hadn't touched and walked amongst 6 to 8 Southern Scrub Robin dashing around us at



close range – very nice.

Back at camp we found Terry cursing the gas burners – both the portable one and the one in their van weren't supplying gas to the burners so he decided a trip into Waikerie was necessary as you are not allowed any open fires at Gluepot at any time.

Nella and I did the Whistler track – about a 4 km walk to a bird hide and raised water trough where we sat for awhile hoping for some exciting visitors – only honeyeaters came in but we did have a family of Chestnut-crowned Babblers come close to us. On the way in we caught a glimpse of a grasswren scurrying between spinifex tussocks – the Striated Grasswren had been sighted there a few days before our visit so we presumed that is what we saw. Gluepot is THE place to see Black-eared Miners but Nella and I didn't see any miners the whole time we were there – Terry did see some on an early morning walk and he felt they were the Black-eared form

– a walk on the same track next morning didn't produce any but we had great views of Chestnut Quail-Thrush (3 together walking close to us) and what turned out to be a Gilbert's Whistler – good but a Red-lored would have been more appreciated.

Our final stop was at Poojinook Reserve just north of the Murray about 20 km east of Waikerie – Neil and Johanna had recommended a visit as they found it more productive than Gluepot when they visited it a few years ago. Alas, not for us though as it too had been devastated by the bushfires and about one-third of the northern part had been affected. However, a drive round the perimeter produced a male Malleefowl on the road that allowed us to view it for sometime before it disappeared into the mallee near its mound - so that was excellent to see.

Warwick and Terry discovered a “warren” of wombat tunnels and a long vigil at dusk by Terry and at dawn the next morning by Warwick didn't result in a sighting even though there were fresh tracks everywhere.

On the Monday morning (21st), Warwick and I hit the road and headed east and Nella and Terry stayed on to eventually go to Adelaide for Anzac Day.

Max O'Sullivan

Gluepot Birdlist 17-19 April 2008 - Nella Smith

Boobook Owl Owllet Nightjar Mallee Ringneck Southern Scrub Robin Hooded Robin Red-capped Robin Brown Treecreeper White-browed Treecreeper Crested Bellbird many Chestnut-crowned Babblers many Yellow-plumed Honeyeater Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater Red wattle Bird Brown-headed Honeyeater Striated Pardalote many Hobby Weebill Inland Thornbill Chestnut rumped Thornbill Golden Whistler Rufous Whistler Gilberts Whistler Splendid Fairywren Variegated Fairywren Jacky Winter many Grey-shrike Thrush Restless Flycatcher Dusky Woodswallow Southern Whiteface Welcome Swallow Australian Raven Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike White-backed Magpie Chestnut Quail Thrush many Grey Fantail Mulga Parrots White-browed Babblers many Striped Honeyeater Emu Willy Wagtail Brown Goshawk Sittella Grey Currawong



Mulga Parrot plucking up the courage to drink at the elevated drinking troughs at Gluepot
Warwick Smith

Southern Bell Frogs breed



A crucial Southern Bell frog breeding event is underway on the Lowbidgee Floodplains with hundreds of young frogs observed. Yanga and a private property near Maude are the proud hosts following targeted environmental water releases.

The lowbidgee floodplain is home to NSW's most significant population of the endangered Bell Frog. However most of the floodplain has been very dry in recent years.

The Lower Murrumbidgee wetlands received 8300 megalitres of environmental water between December and March which sustained the necessary habitat for the Southern Bell Frog. The flows also provided drought refuge habitat for other wetland dependent species such as water birds and turtles. It has also rejuvenated vegetation and improved the health of the floodplain environment. The water release, delivered after significant rain, used water set aside for the environment, so did not effect the water allocation for local irrigators.

Charles Sturt University Scientist Dr Skye Wassens is monitoring the response of the Southern Bell Frogs at a number of wetlands between Maude and Balranald on the Lowbidgee Floodplain.

Weekend at Wollemi

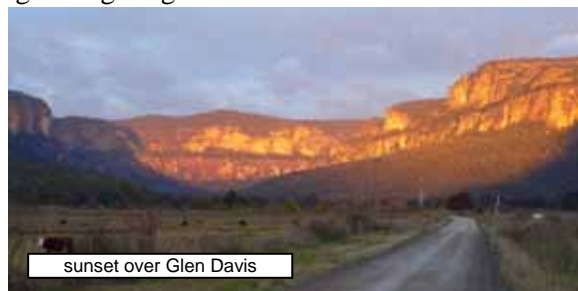
Neil and I spent the 2008 Anzac Day Long Weekend at Glen Davis, a once thriving shale oil mining town between Lithgow and Mudgee. Camping was free, and the facilities included hot water in the amenities. If we had booked by the Tuesday, we could have joined in with the local community for their baked dinner Saturday, but we managed instead with our Thai Chicken Curry, a great view of the space station passing overhead, and a Sugar or Squirrel Glider in the trees above us.



foggy sunrise

What made us go there, you may ask. The town is on the banks of the Capertee River and if I had mentioned the name of Capertee in the heading for this article, you would have immediately thought of Regent eaters and looked for braggings of sightings and not read the details of our weekend. So, no. No Regent sightings.

The valley itself is on the western edge of the Blue Mountains and features the same layers of sheer rock face and dry sclerophyll forests. The drive in past the Gardens of Stone National Park are worth the trip alone. The town of Glen Davis is situated at the point where the river runs into the gorges for which the Wollemi National Park is famous. These cliff faces are stunningly beautiful in sunset.



sunset over Glen Davis

We also managed to see them as we started on the famous Pipeline Track to Newnes. The track is well maintained and easy to follow if a bit steep at times. In the floor of the valley the fog was thick and soupy, but as we climbed, the fog thinned and the rock faces revealed themselves above the forest. The Newnes track is 9km one way, but we really only walked until we reached what we thought was the saddle.

You don't get much bushwalking done when you are birdwatching, but that didn't bother us. There were many of the usual suspects to be seen, and, as usual, some birds that would call and fly and never sit still for long enough to identify. So patience is needed and good peripheral vision.

Neil was in front of me on the track when he stopped for what turned out to be a Chestnut Rumped Heath Wren. He halted and then watched and waited and quietly followed it to ensure identification. I didn't and couldn't see a thing so sat on a rock to wait. And with mission accomplished, we started off through the gully again. This time I did see something dark sidle down the embankment of the gully and disappear into the undergrowth. But I'd had enough of sitting or standing and waiting so I held my counsel and followed.

20 paces later and some movement caught my eye. I can't even tell you what movement. And of course, whatever was making the moves stopped and pretended to be part of a dead log near a cycad. I could see the head and the white eyebrow and was describing its position to Neil. There was no way I was going to take the binoculars away from my face. And then Neil started describing what he could see. A white underbelly with some grey and speckling. Neil could not see its head, and I could not see its body, so cryptic was this little creature. A Spotted Quail-Thrush. A new Lifer.

There was plenty to see in and around the town. Wollemi National Park formed one boundary with a track that held the promise of more exploration. There are many remains of houses from the days when the town thrived, and plenty of bush to wander in.

What disappointed me was the lack of information available. Our sources had promised information at both Capertee Village on the highway and at Glen Davis. Neither existed. So with no maps and just a sense of adventure we followed our noses and explored. There were less adventurous people also taking advantage of the free camping, and it reinforced, for me, the need to make available good, reliable and appropriate information for visitors to the area - something we are trying to do for our area through our website.



Campsite, Glen Davis and Sydney sandstone

Other natural highlights were : a duel between a Kestrel and a Black Shouldered Kite / the racket of the combined roost of Currawong and Sulphur Cresteds / King Parrots / Azure Kingfisher / Brown Treecreepers all over the campsite / White Throated Treecreeper / Weebills feeding a nest / Crested Shrike Tit / Yellow Tufted Honeyeater / Rock Warbler up the Pipeline Track doing exactly what the guide book said it would do / the mist and sunrise through the forest.

Johanna Botman

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc

Held 7.30 pm on Thursday 10th April 2008 Yanco Agricultural Institute, Yanco

Present: Nella Smith, Betty Bradney, Neville James, Bill Draper Phil Tenison, Roy Wade, Max O'Sullivan, John Cameron, Phil Williams, Penny Williams

Apologies: Jan Cameron, Bill Moller, Barry Allen, Sue Allen, Eric Whiting, Rowena Whiting, Kath Mahy

Matters Arising From Previous Minutes:

Bird Trails Brochure Two quotes, one from Griffith, one from Narrandera, it was decided to publish 5000 at Griffith. Narrandera and Leeton also need a Bird Trails brochure. Many sites are on private property and permission would need to be gained.

Website: Neville sent information about the Narrandera Wetlands

Nella Sent information about 5 mile and Gillenbah State Forest

Elliot Traps to be purchased

Narrandera Range Plant Book is getting closer to being ready

Correspondence:

- In: 1. Birding NSW newsletter
2. IBOC news
3. National Parks Association: biodiversity weekend at South-West Rocks
4. Bush Telegraph from Forests NSW
- 5 State Library of NSW newsletter
- 6 BOCA - newsletter
7. Margaret Nightingale – membership

Financial Report: Presented by Phil Tenison

General Business

- 1) Max attended – the BIGnet meeting.
Main items were to try and co-ordinate all efforts towards the conservation and environment amongst all interest groups and agencies. Shorebirds visiting Australia has dropped by 75%. Maybe due to other countries draining their wetlands and Australia is not doing enough to protect and enhance wetlands
Important Bird Areas- We have 6 of 204 sites in our areas.
- 2) Elliott Traps- Bill will get quote for freight and put in an order.
- 3) Application for a scientific licence requires members listed: Bill, Nella, Terry, Neville, Dennis, Warwick
- 4) Newsletter articles- Articles for the newsletter required from a range of sources and people to maintain standard integrity.
- 5) Koala Count 9.30-12noon. Sunday 13th April
- 6) Better Bush on Farms Seminar- corridors must link large patches to be effective. Effectiveness of the fencing of remnants is reliant on the quality of the remnant and the seed bank that remains in the soil. Grazing can be used as a management tool effectively on some remnants carefully. The effects of fertilizers outweighs any grazing impact on biodiversity.
- 7 Australian Geographic has a report about the Birdfair with MFN members photographed.
8. We endeavour to make sure that all articles put in the newsletter have the approval of the author
9. Our change of address has not been noted by some clubs, they will need to be informed

Penny and Phil Williams new members then showed us a wonderful presentation about Kangaroo Island. It made us want to go there. Thanks for that Penny and Phil

Next Meeting: Thursday 8th May at 7.30pm

Meeting closed at 9.40 pm.

Black Kite influx in Narrandera

From Nella: around the middle of April Max came to Narrandera and got splattered with a great plague of locusts. Over 200 Black Kites converged on Henry Mathieson oval daily for at least 10 days to feast on these insects. Here is the balance of nature at work.

Black Kites are mostly seen in small groups but have been known to flock in numbers of 50-60 by some of our members. Large flocks like this have not been seen in Narrandera although many have often been seen circling at the tip.

From Max: June Sell was contacted by a young reporter from the Narrandera Argus reporting large numbers of Black Kites on the oval near the silos on the way out to Nella's place. He also called Warwick the next day (22 April) and claimed there were over 200 on the ground on the oval – again the grasshopper plague would have brought them in but the large number is incredible considering that we only see them in singles or pairs but not in large numbers. Warwick didn't see them and nor did I when I looked around on the Thursday.

S I G H T I N G S

Wattlebirds [4]	Narrandera	09/04/08	Roy Wade
Tawny Frogmouth	Berry Jerry State Forest	09/04/08	Nick & Phil Tenison
Diamond Dove	Yanco Reserve	05/04/08	Neville James
Tawny Frogmouth	Narrandera Wetlands	07/04/08	Neville James
Koala [3]	Narrandera Wetlands	07/04/08	Neville James
Superb Parrot [12]	Pinehill Road, Narrandera	08/04/08	Nella Smith
Grey-crowned Babbler	Pinehill Road, Narrandera	08/04/08	Nella Smith
Noisy Friarbird	Pinehill Road, Narrandera	04/04/08	Nella Smith
Variiegated Fairy-wren	Melbourne Street, Narrandera	08/04/08	Betty Bradney
The first in years – what has changed?			
Brolga [50]	McCracken Road, Leeton	03/04/08	Max O’Sullivan
Brolga [~ 50]	on wing above Brobenah Road, Leeton	04/04/08	Barry Allen
Grey Kangaroo [large]	Binya Street, Griffith	14/04/08	Neil Palframan
(Neil reports it was travelling at a comfortable speed up the middle of the road, and without pausing at the give way sign, it hung a left up Illiliwa St, towards the hill.)			
Mallee Ringneck [2]	NSW DPI Murray Rd Hanwood	24/04/08	Patty Moller
Double-bar Finch [10]	NSW DPI Murray Rd Hanwood	for past 3 months - 04/08	Patty Moller
White-bellied Sea Eagle [2]	Lake Wyangan	22/04/08	June & Col Sell
Black Swan [50+]	Lake Wyangan	22/04/08	June & Col Sell
Hobbie [1]	Campbell’s Swamp	24/04/08	June & Col Sell
Brown Quail [4]	Campbell’s Swamp	24/04/08	June & Col Sell
Greenshank [1]	Lake Wyangan	22/04/08	June & Col Sell
Peregrine Falcon [1]	Mt Bunganbil	20/04/08	MFN Group
Downy Ziera, <i>Ziera cytisoides</i>	Mt Bunganbil	20/04/08	MFN Group
Autumn Greenhood			
<i>Pterostylis sp. B</i>	Mt Bunganbil	20/04/08	MFN Group
Rufous Whistler [1M]	Wattle Hill, Leeton	30/04/08	Max O’Sullivan
Brolga [12]	Wattle Hill (flying over)	30/04/08	Max O’Sullivan
White-faced Heron [12]	Tuckerbil (roosting)	03/05/08	Max O’Sullivan
White-fronted Chat [20+]	Tuckerbil	03/05/08	Max O’Sullivan
Superb Parrot [2]	Wattle Hill (not common these days)	03/05/08	Max O’Sullivan
Ground Cuckoo-Shrike [5]	Fivebough Swamp	04/05/08	Max O’Sullivan
Chestnut Quail-thrush	Hattah NP (Vic) and Gluepot (SA)	April ‘08	Max O’Sullivan
Regent Parrot [30+]	Hatta-Kulkine NP (Vic)	April ‘08	Max O’Sullivan
Fuscous Honeyeater	Bronzewing Reserve Ouyen (Vic)	April ‘08	Max O’Sullivan
Gilbert’s Whistler [1M]	Gluepot (SA)	April ‘08	Max O’Sullivan
Malleefowl [1M]	Pooginook NP (SA)	April ‘08	Max O’Sullivan
Grey Falcon	Nr Sir Dudley de Chair Lookout, NE Griffith	19/03/08	Colin Richardson

David Egan, National Park Ranger at Willandra reports: the summer rains have germinated some interesting things out at Willandra – especially the grasses, mostly natives, and revealing some of the northerly components. Curly Mitchell grass and scattered Queensland Bluegrass around Hall’s Lakes have been some of the interesting things to make an appearance.

Brolgas still about in numbers.

Further to my report of over 60 brolgas at Fivebough in the last newsletter, they are still there. On a visit on 26 April at 4.30pm to Hooley Road lookout, I noticed over 30 and whilst counting them a number of birds flew off so I followed them and eventually counted 54 birds feeding in a paddock close to the canal on McCracken Rd. They were possibly feeding on the plague of grasshoppers that have come into the area over the past month. Max

Currawongs return.

Terry Smith noted a few Currawongs at the Narrandera Common at the recent Koala count (13 April 2008). On a visit to Narrandera on 24 April, they were quite obvious in the town. However, they don’t seem to be in Leeton so far this winter.

A clarification

re the photo and text attributed to Louise Harrison in the March issue of the newsletter this was not contributed by her. They were received by email from a third party.

COMING EVENTS CALENDAR

- 8 May Thursday** **Leeton Meeting** at 7:30pm in the Seminar Room 1, Block 34 at Department of Primary Industry. Enquiries Eric Whiting 6953 2612
Max O’Sullivan will talk about his trip to Borneo.
- 11 May Sunday** **Outing to Yarrabimbi – enjoy a leisurely walk in the Brobenah Hills**
Meet at the Leeton PO at 2 pm. Bring afternoon tea
Enquiries: Eric Whiting 6953 2612.
- 18 May Sunday** **Bush Walk – Goat Creek - Cocoparra National Park**
Meet at the Yenda PO at 8.15am
Bring “play lunch” to carry and lunch for return to Spring Hill Picnic area.
Contact Bill Moller – 0247102673, or email bill.moller@dpi.nsw.gov.au
- 22 May Thursday** **Griffith Meeting** – 7.30 pm, Griffith DPI Conference Room.
Contact: Johanna Botman on 6963 4855.
Guest Speaker: **Judi Norman** - Judi was one of the judges in Griffith's recent Water Wise Gardens Competition. She will speak about the Water Wise Gardens program and about latest thinking in approaches to native gardens.
- 25 May Sunday** **Outing – Visit to Tom Bullen storage**
Griffith travellers meet at NSW DPI carpark, Leeton and Narrandera meet at Tom Bullen. Enquiries Nella Smith 6959 1210
- 4 June Wednesday** **Copy for June newsletter is due**
- 12 June Thursday** **Leeton Meeting** at 7:30pm in the Seminar Room 1, Block 34 at Department of Primary Industry. Enquiries Eric Whiting 6953 2612
Speaker: To be advised
- 14 June Saturday** **Outing – Location to be finalised A Fungi Foray if the weather is wet**
- 18 June Wednesday** **Short Film deadline – Johanna needs to have it today** contact Johanna to arrange collection/delivery on 0418 625 503 or johanna@griffithgateway.com
- 21 June Saturday** **Short Film Festival and Soup Night – contact Johanna** on 6963 4855.
Volunteers are sought to provide the soups and bread as last year.
- 22 June Sunday** **Barrenbox Swamp** – Meet at Murrumbidgee Irrigation Office in Banna Avenue 8.30am
- 26 June Thursday** **Griffith Meeting** – 7.30 pm, Griffith DPI Conference Room.
Contact: Johanna Botman on 6963 4855.
Guest Speaker: **Michelle Ballestrin**; she will talk about her recent trip to the United States.
- 29 June Sunday** **Outing - to be advised**
Contact: Bill Moller on 6920 1341

OTHER DATES

- 18-19 May** **National Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot Survey**
- 2 – 3 August** **National Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot Survey**
- 15 November** **Superb Parrot count**

www.mfn.org.au

Our Website

The rebuilding of our website is happening at www.mfn.org.au

There is an entry “Places to visit” for Pulletop Nature Reserve and Johanna would like members to have a look at this and consider adding other suitable places in the same format.

Please get in touch with Johanna re comments and/or contributions on 0418 625 503 or johanna@griffithgateway.com – she would love to hear from you.