

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



June 2008 - Issue #150

Journal of The Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc.

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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



On the plains



In the ranges



Photos: Rowena Whiting, David Kleinert, Neil Palframan

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CONTRIBUTIONS

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

**To Rowena Whiting
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Remember

**Subscriptions are due - 30th
Short Film Night - 21st**

Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

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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	\$45.00	Adult/Single	\$35.00	Journal only/Concession	\$25.00

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

Cicadas – deafeners and sprayers

Why do they deafen and spray on us?

They are well known for their distinctive calls and produce these sounds by vibrating a pair of drum-like organs called tymbals, which are located at the base of the abdomen. Male cicadas primarily sing to attract a female. Different kinds of cicadas each have a unique song so they only attract a mate of their own species.



The crescendo of some species can reach 120 decibels, which is loud enough to damage the human ear. As to the spraying and a tree can appear to be raining when large number of cicadas are on it. They are simply urinating as they feed on the tree. They have a rostrum, which is like a mosquito's proboscis, that they put into the tree and they take that basically and, because it is very low in sugar, they have to take in a lot of it and then have to shunt it out fairly quickly in order to get the amount of nutrients they require.

Female cicadas lay their eggs into small slits, which they cut into branches or stems using their ovipositor. On hatching nymphs drop to the ground, following cracks into the soil and digging deeper to reach a suitable spot to construct an air cell. Here they seek the nearest root, which is often one penetrating their cell and begin feeding on the sap. Depending on the species, nymphs may remain feeding underground for a few months up to several years.

When conditions are favourable, fully developed nymphs make their way to the surface where they climb a vertical object, usually the trunk of the tree they have been feeding on. They fasten their claws into the bark and shed their outer skin to emerge as a fully winged adult. Most cicada nymphs emerge from their final nymphal skins on warm evenings, often after rain in late spring and early summer.

There are about 250 species of cicadas described and likely to be as many as 750 to 1000. Each species has a specific type of song, that is, a specific rhythmic pattern and a specific frequency - it is often possible to identify a species by their song.

The larger species are underground for many years, there's one in Australia that's underground for seven years after they hatch in the eggs, and then they are only up around for a few weeks to a couple of months to mate.

Cicadas have been around for a long time, fossils have been found dating back to the Triassic period (250 to 199 million years ago). However the noisy cicadas would have first appeared a bit more recently than that.

Rowena Whiting

Sources; University of Queensland and CSIRO.

Outing to 'Yarrabimbi' in the Brobenah Hills

11 May 2008

A comfortable temperature, just enough cloud in the sky to moderate any sun glare, and a good bit of bush – what more do you want for a nice easy ramble. Well a bit more moisture in the soil, but somehow we have got used to being without that. Eight members participated in the May Sunday afternoon walk over Andrew's place.

From his BBQ area we headed straight up to the ridge, noting the changes from the Green Mallee into the Dwyers Gum/Cypress Pine communities. Unlike last year when the dryness seemed to have shriveled everything, there was plenty of evidence of new growth and even a sprinkling of flowers. Tracking over the ridge we soon came to the waterfall – dry of course, it only flows after heavy rain. Unfortunately we were too late in the year and only saw the fruit of the Garland Lilies there. What we did see on the ridge though was a group of Autumn Greenhoods.

Keeping the walk to the intended stroll, we back-tracked to follow down the ridge to the track that passes through the saddle. And lo and behold – more groups of Greenhoods.

Finally it was back down the track to the BBQ area for a late afternoon cuppa before the sun went down and the plummeting of the temperature.

Cannot say we saw too much to get excited about apart from the Greenhoods. The bird list was also a bit sparse (but what a beautiful view of that Red-capped Robin). Nevertheless it was a delightful way to spend an afternoon.

Eric Whiting

Bird List compiled by June Sell

Pied Butcherbird
Galah
Striated Pardalote
Red-capped Robin
Inland Thornbill
White-winged Chough
White-plumed Honeyeater
Crested Pigeon
Yellow Thornbill
Weebill
Peaceful Dove (heard)
Australian Magpie
Australian Raven
Grey Shrike-thrush (heard)
Rufous Whistler

Photos, clockwise
from top left

Dry Waterfall

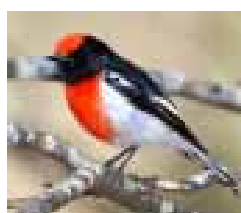
Wonga Vine

Butterflies coupling

Sunset from the
barbecue area

Smooth Goodenia

Autumn Greenhoods



Red-capped Robin
David Kleinert



Tombullen Storage 29th May 2008.

A look at Tombullen Storage was a first for most of us and we didn't quite know what to expect, I for one expected a ho-hum visit, I had been to the inlet regulator before and there wasn't much to see, few birds in the channel but not much else.

Everyone seemed to arrive early so we stood about kicking clods for a while waiting for Mark Rob to arrive, (who was actually on time), in case you don't know Mark is a Biodiversity Officer with Coleambally Irrigation.

The Tombullen Storage is controlled by State Water, it is an off-river storage that is used to temporarily store surplus river flows for later release. It was opened on 10th October 1980 by the then Minister for Water Resources, The Honorable Lin Gordon MP.

Fortunately Mark had a key to one of the gates and took us around to the bottom end of the storage near the outlet. Don't get too excited, the storage was empty and had been for quite some time, but I guess that was one of the good things about the day, we could actually walk about the floor of the storage.



There were a few holes in the bed of the storage still holding a bit of water. It looked as though they were borrow pits, sites where they had taken clay to build the walls during the construction phase. These sported a couple of waterbirds including the Australian Pelican, Australian Shelduck, Black Fronted Dotterel, Pacific Black Duck, and Grey Teal. There was also a White-breasted Sea Eagle cruising about keeping them on their toes.

We had a good walk about the floor of the storage, there were areas that were relatively clear sporting only a few very large trees and areas that had been quite dense with trees (all River Red Gums and all dead of course), not quite true there were a couple of trees still alive but they were at points that were pretty shallow and may have been regularly out of water.

The trees were all water marked by the depth of water and it was eerie to look at the trees with the high water mark some distance above our heads.

There had been a couple of germinations of forbs over the summer and the odd Red Gum seedling having a go.

There were quite a few birds about (see below for the list) and it was pleasing to see quite a number of Superb Parrots and Red-rumped Parrots judiciously examining potential nest hollows, looks like a bit of serious breeding action getting under way.

We had walked a loop through the centre of the storage and returned along the western bank past the overflow and the release regulator. The River Red Gum was in very good shape to the west of the wall and there were a few bird treats on offer. We got a great sighting of a brilliant male Flame Robin and Golden Whistler, neither of them particularly shy, hanging around to make sure we all got a good look.



Some of the team left at this point but the rest of us finished the day with a look at the inlet regulator and lunch on the bank of the Bidgee, watching the meagre trickle of water that constituted the river flow at the Whitton Punt Reserve, as meagre as it was it was very pleasant.

Tom Bullen Bird List May 28, 2008

Australian Shelduck	Common Bronzewing	Weebill	Restless Flycatcher
Pacific Black Duck	Peaceful Dove	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Magpie-lark
Grey Teal	Galah	Yellow Thornbill	Grey Fantail
Hoary-headed Grebe	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Little Friarbird	Willie Wagtail
Little Pied Cormorant	Cockatiel	Noisy Miner	Pied Butcherbird
Great Cormorant	Crimson Rosella (Yellow)	White-plumed Honeyeater	Australian Magpie
Australian Pelican	Eastern Rosella	Flame Robin	Australian Raven
White-faced Heron	Red-rumped Parrot	Grey-crowned Babbler *	White-winged Chough
Whistling Kite	Superb Parrot*	White-browed Babbler	Australian Kestrel
White-bellied Sea Eagle	Laughing Kookaburra	Golden Whistler	Apostlebird
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Brown Treecreper*	Rufous Whistler	Tree Martin
Black-fronted Dotterel	Striated Pardalote	Grey-shrike Thrush	Welcome Swallow

Bill Moller (Birdlist by Nella Smith)

Red Gum Forests and Travelling Stock Routes Campaigns

The National Parks Association is asking for support for these campaigns –both are relevant to our area.

Red Gum Forests - following a successful campaign last year in which a challenge resulted in a legal settlement. This requires Forests NSW to prepare Environmental Impact Statements to assess the impact of logging. Until this EIS is complete they must reduce the size of patch-clearfells and reduce the size limit of trees. They must avoid logging high conservation value areas and negotiate logging schedules with NPA. A further requirement is for NPA to have access to forests to conduct ecological surveys.

A camp was held in February in the heart of Millewa State Forest, an area with good condition habitat that is earmarked for logging. These surveys found 13 records of five different threatened species, including the Yellow-bellied Sheathtail Bat, Large-footed Myotis (or Fishing Bat), Koala, Hooded Robin and Gilberts Whistler. It also recorded more than 10 regionally significant species including rapidly declining woodland birds such as the White-browed Babbler, Crested Shrike-tit and Southern Whiteface and a number of bat species.

The vulnerable Yellow-bellied Sheathtail Bat has never been recorded in the Red Gum forests before, and was recorded on a total of seven occasions during the survey. These are very significant findings. They highlight the paucity of previous survey work by the NSW Government in these forests, and the irresponsibility of intensive logging without environmental impact assessment by Forests NSW.

The surveys have highlighted the outstanding importance of River Red Gum forests for bats generally with over 13 hollow-using species being recorded. Clearly, River Red Gum forests represent a vital refugia for bat species, as a moist habitat in a mostly semi-arid region, as a result of their proximity to water, and due to the provision of hollows in a heavily cleared landscape. Past research in Red Gum forests in Victoria indicates that the FNSW habitat tree retention rates are grossly inadequate to prevent adverse impacts from logging and patch-clearfelling on bat species

A recent media release has highlighted an alarming rate of approvals for logging of Red Gum on private land. Some allowing industrial scale logging and patch-clearfelling in sensitive wetland areas

There is an article "Red Gum Forests Deserve Better" in the latest journal from NPA – this will be at the next meeting. For more info: <http://www.redgum.org.au>

Travelling Stock Routes – the NSW Government is currently conducting a review of their management and there is concern that it may decide to sell off the TSR network. [The Queensland Government has done a similar assessment and announced it will not sell or lease its stock route network.] Many Field Naturalist and Bird Groups have joined the Stock Network Coalition. Objectives of this coalition includes the recognition and protection of the conservation values of the routes, and take into account biodiversity benefits.

Travelling Stock Routes are an integral part of Australia's rural history. From about 1830 onwards, drovers used the routes to walk stock long distances between properties and markets. Their routes were set aside in public ownership. These connected strips of land, totalling over 3.6 million hectares, have high social and conservation values. Many still retain native vegetation such as endangered box woodlands. They enable wildlife to migrate and adapt to climate change and in the future may provide a cheaper option for stock transport. Such an extensive network of connections in the landscape does not exist anywhere else on earth.

Letters and information on both these campaigns will be tabled and discussed at the club meeting.

Plants of the Month – Mallee Woodlands

The low undulating remnants of the Cobar Peneplain generally have poor sandy red earth soils. Tree growth is usually as a low open woodland with Pointed Mallee *Eucalyptus socialis* and Congoo (or Dumosa) Mallee *Eucalyptus dumosa* predominating. Other common mallees found are Mallee Gum *Eucalyptus gracilis* and Narrow-leaved Red Mallee *Eucalyptus leptophylla*. White Cypress Pine can be interspersed or even locally dominant as in Stackpoole State Forest. The mallee areas north of Barellan (and up to Taleeban Mining Reserve) often have frequent taller Mugga Ironbarks *Eucalyptus sideroxylon* scattered through to give a slightly different looking woodland. In other areas Belah *Casuarina cristata* makes its appearance – there are



Mallee at Pullitop

some lovely old stately ones at Stackpoole.

Shrubs are usually diverse and in many cases fairly abundant. The various



Spiny Mallee-Pea

species often occur as patchworks with some being common here then abruptly changing to another species or species complex. This variability makes the mallee woodlands so spectacular especially in spring when many of them flower profusely. Broombush *Melaleuca uncinata* can form some dense thickets just right for sheltering the smaller birds. Another *Melaleuca erubescens* can leave you waist deep in pinky-mauve flowers.

Peas and Wattles are plentiful and compete for space with Waxflowers, Hakeas and Daisy-bushes. Closer to ground level can be found the deep metallic blue flowering Mallee Blue-flower *Halgania cyanea*. Who would have thought that it was in the same family as Patersons Curse! The Mat-rush of these areas is the



Mallee Blue-flower

Scented Mat-rush *Lomandra effusa*. It is aptly named but watch out for the pair of very sharp points at the end of each leaf.

Grasses are usually scarce except for one – Porcupine Grass *Triodia scariosa*. Look out for the ring formations as the centre of clumps die out.

Some mallees have little in the way of ground cover or smaller scrubs. In fact they can be rather species poor, especially in periods of drought. Even so they have their charm and are worth visiting. Nombinnie Nature Reserve is probably the easiest location to see this type of mallee.

The mallee woodlands are so diverse that I have been able to mention only a few of the plants found in them – my plant list for Stackpoole State Forest has over 150 names. Twelve of them are acacias, all in that relatively small area.

Eric Whiting

Contributions, Condolences, Congratulations and travelling

Contributions for this issue of *The Murrumbidgee Naturalist* have been great and I hope you all enjoy the variety of topics, pictures and writing. However I didn't receive anything special for the 150th issue. Bill Moller did try with a couple of files of photo collages, however they were too large to be included. So many thanks to all those who have contributed and look forward to an even better selection next month.

Members will be very sad to hear that Dawn James, Neville's wife passed away last week. Dawn was a sweet, gentle person devoted to her family and a great supporter of the Northcote Society in Narrandera. She will be greatly missed. Our condolences to Neville and his family.

Our congratulations to members Heidi Magner and David Kleinert who 'tied the knot' last month. They are now living in Bendigo but still in touch with folk here. See the picture on David's photographic website. davidkphotography.com.au

Many members are heading off or are already away – Sue Chittick-Dalton has returned from Europe, Max O'Sullivan is in Tanzania, the Camerons are in the UK, the Allens are going to WA and up to the Kimberley, the Smiths embarking on another Desert Discovery trip. So there will be plenty to hear and talk about in the coming months.

Rowena

My Trip to Sabah (Borneo) August 2007

Borneo has been a fascination for me since childhood – very exotic with tales of “the wild men of Borneo” made it a must see place. This was realized in August last year when as a group of 12 birdwatchers I spent 2 weeks in the Malaysian state of Sabah.



Sabah occupies the northern part of Borneo with Sarawak (Malaysia), Brunei (Sultanate) and Kalamantan (Indonesia) the other states making up the country. We flew from Kuala Lumpur to Kota Kinabalu the capital on the western side of country.

The first two days were spent in the Crocker Ranges in the south-west where the famous Rafflesia flower is found – it is a flower that emerges from underground stems growing in the rainforest – the flowers come out as huge balls that grow until they split open to a giant smelly flower about a metre in diameter – needless to say we were there when no blooms were out but we did visit the information centre with plenty of information and displays of this very unusual and rare plant.

A flight to Sandakan in the north-east part of the coast was highlighted by a visit to the Australian War Memorial where the details of the infamous Death March up the mountains to Ranau were vividly displayed.

At Sandakan, we boarded a launch that took us along the coast and up the Kinabatangan River to a number of lodges where we spent the next 4 days birding and animal watching. Of course, we all wanted to see the Orang-Utan in the wild and had come to this part of the country to achieve just that. We did have contingency plans to visit the Sepilok Centre where young Orang orphans are nursed back to good health and gradually released into the wild but I hoped to see the “real” thing somewhere along the river.

All trips were done in small canoes that held about 8 people and were propelled by outboard motors as well as smaller electric motors that were used to move quietly in the side streams and lakes so as not to disturb the birds and animals too much.

Birds seen were many and varied, the highlights for me being the excellent views of various hornbill species as well as several kingfishers and woodpeckers. The river is permanently muddy as a result of the excessive logging of the rainforest and the heavy rain that causes massive run-off and mud slides. The continuous stream of barges carrying rainforest logs speeding down the river to the coast as well as the many herds of elephant along the river is causing massive erosion of the bank thus adding to the muddy state of the river.

The elephants, by the way, are descendants of the Asian Elephant that had been introduced into Borneo many centuries ago – they are now referred to as Pygmy Elephants – although, up close, they are not too small! We saw a herd of about 20 feeding beside the river and got quite close to the group for photos, . . . and more photos . . . and more photos!! (Just how many elephant photos do you need!!)

A side trip into an ox-bow lake took us to a group of Orang-Utans feeding in a tree beside the lake. There was much relief and jubilation in our group to actually see these highly threatened animals in the wild – there were 2 females with young and another adult – no males were with the group. They seem to spend most of their time alone until breeding time. The massive deforestation in all of Borneo is rapidly decreasing the rainforest areas for these creatures to survive and the poaching of them to get babies for the illegal pet trade is causing massive decimation of the Orang numbers. One of our guides mentioned that there are more millionaires per square kilometre living in Kota Kinabalu (all Malaysian Chinese we were told) than anywhere else in the world – all as a result of raping the rainforest, exporting the timber and replanting the area with massive palm oil plantations – just horrific when seen at first hand.

The next part of the trip was by coach. We went first to the Gomantong Caves to see the massive numbers of edible nest swiftlets that nest there – apart from the smell it was quite interesting to see the masses of birds and bats hanging from the roof of the cave. There are two types of swiftlets that build the nests in the caves that are considered a delicacy by the Chinese – the birds that build the “white” nests are the most prized and the “black” nests aren’t considered as tasty!! (Bird’s nest soup anyone?!!)

From the caves, it was a long 4 hour trip to the isolated Danum Valley in the south-east part of the country. On the way into the valley, we counted over 60 logging trucks coming out of the forest laden with huge trunks – we were told this is a constant parade that goes from 6am until 10pm every day of the year – terrifying!

The Danum Valley is a privately owned birding lodge set amongst a massive protected section of rainforest. The birding here is considered the best in the country and we spent 3 days along the forest tracks looking for different species. Being thick rainforest though makes for difficult birding and our best sightings were from

the road into the valley. My great “would love to see” bird was here and we had excellent views of a male bird – a Helmeted Hornbill with a massive length of 1.25 metres. It looked like a prehistoric bird when it flew over us and it has a most amazing call – a slow cackle that builds up to a loud raucous laugh, not unlike a Kookaburra – amazing!

Next we went via Sepilok to see the Orang-Utan centre and then onto Mount Kinabalu. The change in temperature and weather was amazing. At just over 4,000m, the mountain is often shrouded in cloud and mist and it rains frequently there – as we found out! Thank goodness we had warm clothes and wet weather gear.

The final destination was to an island just off the coast from Kota Kinabalu where we spent a night in absolute luxury chalets in order to see the Tabon Scrubfowl. This bird is like our Orange-footed Scrubfowl of Far North Queensland and builds a huge mound to incubate its eggs. There just happened to be such a mound right behind my chalet so it was possibly the easiest, even though one of the rarest, birds to see on the trip.

In all I saw over 200 species and 80 of those were new for me – I had seen most of the others in previous trips to South-East Asia.

Animals seen included many species of monkey – Leaf Monkeys, Langurs, Proboscis (amazing and numerous), Macaques, Gibbons (my favourite) and Orang-Utans. Squirrels are also common and easy to see and we did see a Common Palm Civet with young but no cats were seen. The only deer was a Greater Mouse-Deer in the Danum Lodge gardens.

Max O’Sullivan

Helmeted Hornbill



Orang-Utan



Rafflesia flower



\$49 000 Wetlands Bridge for Narrandera

A new pedestrian bridge at Narrandera Wetlands is among 14 NSW projects to share a \$6 million State government funding package. They are funded under the Community Development Fund as part of the joint \$135 million NSW and Australian Governments’ Achieving Sustainable Groundwater Entitlements.

The \$49 000 Narrandera grant will pay for a bridge over the wetlands stormwater outlet and link, via the existing walkway with a second bridge. The second bridge is a World War II Bailey Bridge which is now being renovated by member Terry Smith and other members of the community at his Pine Hill shed.

Terry had the specifications sent to him for the Bailey bridge from the School of Military Engineers at Moorebank. The bridges were built for the army in World War II. They were meant to be easy to assemble on site and push into place. The side sections could be carried by six soldiers and everything was designed to slot into holes.

They were originally built 4 metres wide for tanks and military trucks. However this bridge will be made half that width for pedestrians. The Bailey Bridge will be built by volunteer sweat and the cost of the other bridge will come from the grant.

Subscriptions are due

As noted last year we have changed to a common renewal date of the 30th June and that time has rolled around again ever so quickly.

Please send your money to the Treasurer, Phil Tenison, promptly to PO Box 541, Leeton, NSW 2705 or make a bank transfer to the MFN’s bank account. It is the Commonwealth Bank, BSB 062 564, A/c 10039396. Don’t forget to note your name so Phil can identify it on the Bank Statement.

Any queries Phil can be contacted on Wk 02 69 530649 Hme 02 69 534869

Annual subscription rates were increased at the last meeting and are now :-

Family - \$45, Adult/Single - \$35, Journal only/Concession - \$25

ANTHROPOMORPHISM OR REINCARNATION?

It is most intriguing to notice the similarities between humans and birds. They have particular traits that are too pointed to be dismissed.

Take the female **FAIRYWREN**. She is pretty and cute and all the boys love her, she's out there for all to see with her extended family, hopping around, singing and chatting and on the whole a joy to see, but the unfortunate bloke that takes her as his so called monogamous mate, gets a bit of a shock to find she is still flirting and having the odd affair which keeps him busy warding off the opposition and protecting his interests. We have all met a girl like that.

Conversely, we have the **BITTERN**. Solitary, crepuscular, unattractive(?), secretive, only occasionally living communally. Mostly a mating pair keeps a reasonable distance from their like. The voice is not a joy to behold and mostly it is easy to forget they exist. Surely you have forgotten someone like that.

Then we have the **SATIN BOWERBIRD**. He epitomises the bachelor gay. Has a first class pad. Only the best decorations and colourful ornamentations available. Even picks pretty flowers to place in his bower with one only view in mind. Seduction! The poor female hasn't a chance against this predator. She is so taken with this suave, sophisticated and handsome creature she hasn't a thought of escape and therefore becomes another victim who is chased out of the love-nest to build her own nest and rear her young unaided, while he is busy repairing the mess the last female made in his precious house in preparation for the next conquest. We've met him!

The salt of the earth are the **GREY-CROWNED BABBLERS**. They are wonderful family members and good citizens. Always busy and industrious, and are the builders of the bird world. They are such a joy to watch. They play and forage as a tight knit group, everyone helps in the house and nursery, and around breeding times, they are so busy building nests will often build more than required which become leased by the Blue-faced Honeyeater. Guess you would liken them to the 'Good average Citizen'.

The bird totally devoid of responsibility is the female **EMU**. She enjoys her mate for around five months and has been known to lay up to 20 eggs, but mostly between 7-11. Once the laying is complete, she's gone! But in fairness to this girl, her mate is so possessive of these eggs she may feel unwanted and takes off. Never-the-less, the maternal instinct isn't very strong. Not every woman wants to be a mother.

For intelligence, the **RAVEN** is hard to beat. They are selfconfident, well groomed, with a well structured lifestyle. They mate for life and between them patrol their particular territory. They are fearless, defensive and selfsatisfied with a strong sense of responsibility. The type of bloke you want on your Council.

Now for the ferals of this world, the **SPARROW**. Not at all fussy about their abode as there is no definite structure site. Could be in a Fairy Martin's nest, hole in a tree, under the eaves of a building, anywhere out of the weather. They get around in gangs and seem to be squabbling among themselves. Would prefer a dustbath rather than the water type, and gang-rape is the order of the day. A real ghetto lifestyle.

Sue Chittick-Dalton

My information is from personal observation, the Reader's Digest and the National Photographic Index of Australian birds.

WHY OUR BIRDS ARE SINGING LOUDER

Birds are having to sing louder in towns or risk having their love lives ruined by traffic noise. Scientists have discovered robins, great tits and nightingales have turned up the volume. Great Tits like to show off their lower vocal register in the breeding season to attract a mate. If they cannot be heard they fail to attract a mate. But house Sparrows and Cuckoos are being driven out of cities because they cannot make themselves heard or hear the natural world's alarm calls warning of danger.

From a UK paper.



Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc

Held 7.30 pm on Thursday 8th May 2008 Yanco Agricultural Institute, Yanco

Present: Roy Wade, Neville James, Betty Bradney, Barry Allen, Sue Allen, Phil Williams, Penny Williams, Nella Smith, Max O'Sullivan, Eric Whiting, Rowena Whiting, Dot Eurell, Bill Moller

Apologies: John Cameron, Jan Cameron, Kath Mahy

Matters Arising From Previous Minutes:

Elliott traps have been purchased

Website is being worked on by contributors and Johanna Botman

Correspondence:

In: NCC Newsletter,

World Environment Day nominations for outstanding environmental effort or campaign

HBOC Newsletter, IBOC April & May Newsletter Woollongong

The Granite Belt Naturalist- Stanthorpe

News of Friends of Grasslands. Albury Wodonga Field Naturalists

Narrandera Urban Landcare Group

Liz Lawrence from Narrandera Argus about the bird trails and Hills book.

Out: Email to Richard for dropping off the mail

Clubs who receive exchange newsletters reminding them of change of address.

Application for Wildlife Licence

Reminders to some members about payment of overdue fees

Financial Report: Presented by Phil Tenison

Membership fees are due at the end of June

Term deposit invested for 8.19%

It was decided to increase fees by \$5 to \$45 for family, \$35 for singles, and \$25 for newsletter and concession

Moved Phil Tenison, seconded Barry Allen.

General Business

1. Rankin Springs group requesting to join us as a group. Bill suggested that groups be accepted as newsletter subscription rates if there is no exchange of newsletters. Bill to discuss with Jenny Caughey.
2. Congratulations on newsletter for the range of contributions and articles. Short articles are often needed though.

3. Some discussion about the clash of meeting evening of Fivebough and Tuckerbil trust. Some members would be interested in attending both meetings but are unable to due to time.

4. 150th newsletter-Suggestions to celebrate: A special edition, add on an extra page, eg a collage of sightings, most memorable excursion, anecdotes, achievements of the club.

5. Recording of Sightings, In order to reduce the list of sightings suggestions were, to include significant sightings, interesting sightings, endangered species, first time in the area for the year.

It was decided to appoint Max to review the sightings every month. Any questionable sightings are to be referred back to the observer for clarification.

Sightings are to be submitted to Max by the last week in the month after the Griffith meeting.

Birds in Backyards is a site run by Birds Australia where you can submit backyard sightings.

6. Narrandera Birding Hotspots to be finished soon.

7. Short film night contributions to be given to Johanna by 16th June.

8. Activities program was a draft for guidance and a few ideas

9. National Parks have acquired the property to the south of Kalyar-Norwood. This almost doubles the size of Kalyar-Norwood. This will extend the area of exploration for this year's campout.

10. Narrandera Range Plant Book, a date was set to meet with Eric about its progress.

11. Murray Catchment Management Authority Wildlife booklet – West Corugan Wildlife, the area extends from Oaklands to Rand, down to Corowa and across to Mulwala, outlining the results of surveying done over time in these areas-a fine publication by Matthew Herring Hugh McGregor, Jessica Herring, David Webb and Alexandra Knight.

12. The poor management of noxious weeds at Fivebough Swamp was raised, Bathurst Burr being the main issue at present.

13. 25 captive-bred regent Honeyeaters with tracking devices have been released at Chiltern. Members are encouraged to assist with the monitoring and tracking.

Next Meeting: Thursday 12 June 2008 at 7.30pm. Meeting closed at 9pm.

The Meeting was followed with a talk by Max O'Sullivan about his trip to Borneo last year. Thank you, Max..

S I G H T I N G S

Peaceful Dove	Wattle Hill, Leeton	06/05/08	Max O'Sullivan
Yellow-rumped Thornbills	Sycamore St car park shrubs, Leeton	07/05/08	Joy Young
Black Kite [14]	Lake Talbot, Narrandera	30/04/08	Neville James
Black Kite [40+]	Lake Talbot, Narrandera	29/04/08	Betty Bradney
Soaring above Lake Talbot, seen from lookout.			
Koala [8]	1 st & 2 nd Beach, Narrandera Common	30/04/08	Betty Bradney
Zebra Finch [20+]	Karri Road, Leeton	07-08/05/08	Barry Allen
Brolga [60] in flight	Karri Road, Leeton	01/05/08	Barry Allen
Grey-crowned Babbler [10]	"Alambie", Brobenah	28/04/08	Bill Draper
Koala [11]	Narrandera Common	30/04/08	Phillip Williams
Barking Owl [1M 1F]	Five Mile, Narrandera	02/05/08	Nella Smith
Noisy Friarbird	Pine Hill Narrandera	03/05/08	Nella Smith
Flame Robin	Tombullen Storage	25/05/08	MFN Group
Golden Whistler	Tombullen Storage	25/05/08	MFN Group
White-bellied Sea Eagle	Tombullen Storage	25/05/08	MFN Group
Grey-crowned Babblers	Tombullen Storage	25/05/08	MFN Group
Superb Parrots	Tombullen Storage	25/05/08	MFN Group
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.			
Common Sandpiper	Lake Wyangan, Griffith	22/03/08	Neil & Johanna
Red-capped Robin	Lake Wyangan, Griffith	04/05/08	Neil & Johanna

Tracking the Honeyeaters at Chiltern

On the 18th May I ventured out on a cold wet day to drive to Chiltern to see if I could be of any assistance in tracking the movements of the 27 captive bred Regent Honeyeaters.

I had contacted Eileen Collins who had given me all the information I needed to locate the locals.

Initially the weather was no better than Leeton but it stopped raining and warmed up a bit during the course of the day.

As I drove into the park I found Dean and his team tracking some birds, I soon discovered it was no easy task tracking these birds as a few had lost their radio transmitters and the ones that still had them didn't seem to want to sit still long enough, for an amateur like me to go close to identifying their bands.

Dean explained how the Radio trackers worked and kindly gave me a try, I am sure it was the bird I was tracking and not my skill as a tracker which meant that we walked for ages as well as round and round in circles, a very elusive bird that one.

I then met up with Keith who was co-ordinating the tracking operations for the day, we split up into teams and continued the tracking. The trackers were seeking to get both a morning and afternoon record of each bird and were looking to confirm the radio signal with visual confirmation. Each bird has a unique frequency emanating from its transmitter and has a year band on one leg and two colour bands on the other leg. The trackers set the frequency in the receiver, hold up the antenna and away you go. Keith offered me another go of the tracking device, but I thought in the interests of science it was best left in the hands of an expert.

I met Eileen after lunch and we set about the afternoon sightings with each team eager to out do the others. The "Keith team" we were legends, we saw wild Regents as well as Flame Robin and heaps of Wattle birds.

I had a great time and appreciated very much the time and effort. Eileen, Keith and Dean all put into helping and guiding me, thank you very much.

They are doing a fantastic job and I wish them every success with the project. I am sure they would appreciate any assistance any members could provide.

You can follow the project via the Friends of Chiltern website : friendsofchiltern.org

Phil Tenison



Regent Honeyeater
Dean Ingwersen
Friends of Chiltern

COMING EVENTS CALENDAR

- 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
Guest Speaker: David Parker - Swift Parrots, volunteers and the national surveys.
- 14 June Saturday** **Outing to Gillenbah State Forest**
Meet at the Narrandera Tourist Office at 8:30am.
 Bring morning tea, lunch optional. More details at the meeting.
Enquiries: Nella Smith 6959 1210.
- 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 - at the Conference Room, DPI, Griffith.**
Time: 6:30pm
 Volunteers are sought to provide the soups and bread as last year. Please contact Johanna on 0418 625 503 to check what is required.
- 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** **Bush Walk – Cocoparra National Park –**
Walk will head up Macgregors Creek and return down Store Creek.
Meet at the Yenda PO at 8.30 am.
 Bring “play lunch” to carry and lunch for return to cars,
 Contact: Bill Moller – 0247102673, or email bill.moller@dpi.nsw.gov.au
- 2 July Wednesday** **Copy for July newsletter is due**
- 10 July Thursday** **Leeton Meeting** at 7:30pm in the Seminar Room 1, Block 34 at Department of Primary Industry. Enquiries Eric Whiting 6953 2612
Guest Speaker: Paul Childs, Wetlands Ecologist, National Parks and Wildlife Service. Topic: Work Project for West Rivers Program
- 13 July Sunday** **Outing – Location to be decided**
- 24 July Thursday** **Griffith Meeting** – 7.30 pm, Griffith DPI Conference Room.
 Contact: Bill Moller 6960 1341
 Guest Speaker: **Paul Childs, Wetlands Ecologist, National Parks and Wildlife Service. Topic: Work Program for West Rivers Project**
- 27 July Sunday** **National Tree Day - Tree Appreciation Day**
- OTHER DATES**
- 2 – 3 August** **National Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot Survey**
- 15 November** **Superb Parrot count**
- 14-15 November** **Australian Birdfair – will be held at the Yanco Agricultural Institute**
Theme “Climate Change: What Are the Birds Telling Us?”

Our Website

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

Please check it out and 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.

www.mfn.org.au