

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



"A Wonga Vine with a View" – Scenic Hill

Photo: Neil Palframan

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CONTRIBUTIONS

**For the next issue by
Wednesday, 3 September 2008**

**To Rowena Whiting
Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com
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***Make sure you book
for the Spring campouts
See Coming Events***

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	

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Changes to Species on the Australian Bird List

Contributed by Nella Smith

Since it was published in 1994, Australian birdwatchers have used "The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia and its Territories" as the checklist for Australian birds. The authors, Les Christidis and Walter Boles, have extensively revised their earlier work and published it in their recent book "Systematics and Taxonomy of Australian Birds." (CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne 2008). The book covers the species found in Australia and its territories (Norfolk Island, Lord Howe Island, The Torres Strait Islands, Ashmore Reef, Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Heard Island, Macquarie Island and the Australian Antarctic Territory.

There are two main species concepts used in Australia, Biological Species Concept (BSC) and Phylogenetic Species Concept (PSC). The authors have used BSC to determine species and subspecies. PSC considers subspecies to be full species. Many of the re-classifications have been determined by DNA research which has not only resulted in changes to the status of species and subspecies but also to the taxonomic order of genera and species. The author states that more research is required regarding the status of many species.

The Species Lists include the Main Species List with 852 species as well as 14 which are now considered extinct in Australia. The list includes records of vagrants which have been accepted by Birds Australia Rarities Committee (BARC). There is also a Supplementary List of 34 species which include introduced species which are now extinct in Australia, records no longer accepted and reports of vagrant species still under review.

CHANGES TO SOME SPECIES ON THE MAIN SPECIES LIST

The changes to the common and scientific names of species are too numerous to list so only the changes which effect the status of species found on the Main Species List are included. Many are "Splits" where a subspecies has been elevated to the status of a full species. (I have only listed the ones that we might be searching for).

Australian Swiftlet *Aerodramus terraereginae* - the White-rumped Swiftlet is now considered a full species

Australasian Darter *Anhinga novaehollandiae* - is considered a separate species.

Australian Little Bittern *Ixobrychus debius* - now split from the Little Bittern of the Palaearctic and Africa

Eastern Great Egret *Ardea modesta* Great Egret of South Asia and Australasia is now considered separate to those found in Eurasia, Africa and the New World.

Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus* - The acceptance that there are three species of Osprey means that the Australian birds are a separate species.

Australian Painted Snipe *Rostratula australis* - now recognized as a separate species

Eastern Barn Owl *Tyto longinembris* - separated from the grass owl of southern Africa.

Short-tailed Grasswren *Amytornis merrotsyi* - occurring in the Flinders Ranges, SA, now split from Striated Grasswren

Kalkadoon Grasswren *Amytornis ballarae* - occurring around Mt Isa, split from Dusky Grasswren from the southern NT

Australasian Figbird *Sphecotheres vieilloti* - the figbirds in New Guinea & Australia now recognized as a full species.

Grey Fantail *Rhipidura albiscapa* and **New Zealand Fantail** *Rhipidura fuliginosa* - now treated as separate species.

Scarlet Robin *Petroica boodang* and **Pacific Robin** *Petroica multicolour* - occurring on Norfolk Is and throughout the Pacific, the Pacific Robin is now split from the Scarlet Robin.

Australian Reed-warbler *Acrocephalus australis* - now considered a separate species.

Australasian Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* - now considered a separate species.

Eastern Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla tschutschensis* and **Green-headed Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla taivana* - the numerous forms have been split into the two species listed above.

Unfortunately, with every revision of Taxonomy, there are always some birds that are no longer considered full species and are now lumped **Gould's Bronze Cuckoo** lumped with **Little Bronze-Cuckoo**, **Lesser Sooty Owl** lumped with **Sooty Owl**, **Black-backed Wagtail** lumped with **White Wagtail**

Millers Hill outing 12 July 2008

It was a cold crisp morning when 6 of us gathered at the entrance to Millbrae Quarry wondering if we had enough warm clothes to keep out the cold. We need not of worried as the sun soon warmed the air as we set off for a stroll around the hill which adjoins the quarry. Gloves were discarded as the cameras started clicking.

We had only gone a short distance when we encountered numerous *Acacia decora* with masses of buds. These lower slopes will soon be a blaze of yellow. Over most of the walk there was quite an array of low under storey plants with a few in flower; Urn Heath, *Cryptandra*, Twining *Glycine*, Rice flower, Hedge Wattle, *Podolepis*, *Bursaria*, *Senna*, *Greenhood*. Grasses were also growing well and the soil crust was good



Podolepis

Many of the male Hill Oaks were in flower but only a few female flowers were seen.

Along the watercourse on the eastern side were a couple of thickets of Yarran in which a couple of Thornbill species (Chestnut-rumped & Inland) were encountered.

I always remember Enid being enchanted with finding these on a walk in the early days of the club; that time we were on the adjoining property and the other side of the fence.

Nothing stands out amongst the birds but there were quite a few to be heard and seen. We did check out a couple of trees which have been known to have been Glossies nesting sites – no sign of current activity.



Urn Heath

Although there had been a deluge of water lately with debris piled up against the trunks, only a couple of fungi were seen. A couple of fungi were sighted – an Earth Star and a Bird's Nest Fungus.

Back at the cars for a very late morning tea, would have been lunch if we had it with us, we watched a couple of Wedgies soaring, 4 Pelicans in flight and a Nankeen Kestrel. We were surprised that the walk had taken us three hours. There was plenty of interest for us.

Thanks to the Woods family for allowing us to have access to their property.

Rowena Whiting



Kurrajong



Yarran thicket

Bird List WOODS MILLBRAE QUARRY compiled by Neville James

Australian Wood Duck
Pacific Black Duck
Australasian Grebe
Australian Pelican
Wedge-tailed Eagle
Nankeen Kestrel
Common Bronzewing
Peaceful Dove
Galah
Mallee Ringneck
Apostlebird

Blue Bonnet
Red-rumped Parrot
Striated Pardalote
Weebill
Chestnut-rumped Thornbill
Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater
Striped Honeyeater
Noisy Miner
Yellow-throated Miner
Kookaburra

Brown-headed Honeyeater
Jacky Winter
Red-capped Robin
Eastern Yellow Robin
Willy Wagtail
Grey Butcherbird
Australian Magpie
Australian Raven
Little Raven
White-winged Chough

Our Walk Up Homestead Creek 20th July 2008

The forecast for Sunday 20th wasn't too flash so I wasn't confident that many would turn up for the walk up Homestead Creek. However the morning didn't look too bad and Patty and I had got ourselves organised in good time. We started down the road heading for the Yenda rendezvous when I realised that I didn't have my wallet (include my drivers licence) so I returned to pick it up. Flap time, I couldn't find it, I thought I might have lost it tootling about the farm on the ATV the day before, so I quickly found the ATV and retraced my tracks of the previous day, no luck, it was now getting very late and I had no way of letting those waiting at the rendezvous know I was delayed. Finally I checked the house again and Wallah, as you would have it, I should have seen it the first time, anyhow we got to Yenda late and everyone told me about it – several times.

At least there was someone there waiting when we arrived and it still wasn't raining.

We made our way to Homestead Creek, it was a bit cool so we didn't waste much time getting going. We made our way up the southern arm of the creek, it is a smaller tributary and a little indistinct in the early stages but soon lifted the gradient. I hadn't tested this walk before but had studied the maps thoroughly and knew there was a fair bit of elevation over a relatively short distance, the maps didn't lie, we soon started with the big breaths and the talk quietened down. It was about this time that a very fine misty rain started, nothing to worry about, hardly anything.



The further we went, the steeper it got and the harder the rain got, although it was still only very fine, but it was starting to wet us a bit and it was getting colder. We had a couple of stops on the way up, to eat a bit of fruit and catch our breath. We had finally struggled far enough up the gully, so we crossed the ridge into the head of Homestead Creek proper and found a Cypress tree that offered a modicum of shelter, if you could call it that, so we stopped for morning tea, in the rain which was getting slowly heavier and we were getting slowly wetter, a couple of the smarter of us had brought a shower coat which was donned. Needless to say we didn't linger over morning tea and continued on fairly quickly.

The walk down the creek was very pleasant, though the rain made the rocks very slippery and a lot of care was needed on the bare rock areas.

There was lots of sign of wombats much of it fresh, we found about three fairly extensive burrows and several dung sites with the typical scratching of the wombat. It was obvious that this creek system was the home range of at least one currently active wombat. Can you believe it I didn't take a photo, too much rain



We didn't keep a bird list, there wasn't much activity, probably due to the rain and trying to keep a list in the wet isn't much fun either. There was a few of the usual but nothing out of the ordinary.

Just as we arrived back at the cars it stopped raining so we shed of our wet stuff and had lunch. The rain stopped just long for lunch then returned, that was the signal to vamoose. The roads around Cocoparra tend to get a bit interesting in the rain.

Bill Moller

Scenic Hill, Griffith – Outing Report for 27 July 2008

The first item on the menu was to stand above the Hermits Cave and look down over the three bioregions that meet at a point here. Well the fog put a stop to that.

Scenic Hill, part of the McPherson Range. The town climbs right up to its rocky face. It's so close and yet so often overlooked and undervalued. Imagine Griffith without it!

Enough of standing around up here in the foggy, breezy, 5°C morning waiting for late comers – we followed Johanna on a bush bash downhill toward the rodeo grounds, an easy walk through light groundcover. The wildlife was very quiet, but there was plenty of new plant life sprouting thanks to recent light but recurring rains.

Everywhere we saw leaves of orchids and occasionally flower stalks, Garland and Vanilla Lily, other unidentified lilies, and a host of moss, lichen, fern and liverwort, some sundews and a few flowering greenhoods were found. There was the odd wildflower such as Wahlenbergia, Everlasting (*Helichrysum* sp), Stock (*Blennodia* sp) and Tobacco (*Nicotiana* sp).

Through the Yabbie Ponds and across the road to Adams Track and in this section the hill is thicker vegetated, or was until most of the Currawang died in the big drought, but the dead bush still stands and shelters the regrowth and understorey were Col has found plenty of Leopard Orchid getting ready for spring. Currawang is shooting from seed and some eucalypts that appeared dead from drought have burst from the base.

From the green water tower we travelled back to the Hermits Cave around the face of the hill overlooking town. This is where the hill is at its least natural with legal and illegal interference. The old Rotary Lookout is an unmaintained eyesore, although it is amazing that the wrought iron viewing structure is still in excellent condition and looking good despite neglect and vandalism nearby. There has been plenty of littering and dumping of garden waste in this section, and some of the dumped plants like *Gazania* and *Freesia* have a good hold. The old tip (last used mid sixties?) is still an eyesore from both close up and afar, and probably a dangerous spot for unsuspecting local kids.

But despite the negative human impact, there is plenty of interest in this section. The bush / urban interface is alive with birds, many of the mature hollow bearing Dwyers Gum and Bimble Box on Scenic hill are here, and as we passed we could see that there was plenty of activity around the hollows. Eastern Ringnecks were everywhere and actively mating and popping in and out of hollows. As we watched we noticed that one in particular had the full black head like the Western Ringneck.

Another pair active around a hollow, jumped in alarm as a Miner chased a Starling which dived wildly headlong inside for cover.

There are a couple of good patches of *Eremophila longifolia* along here, and *Lomandra*, and plenty of Hill Indigo and Wonga Vine currently in flower, and everywhere was healthy regrowth of native grasses.

And of course the scenic views along this eastern escarpment are excellent at any time, of the rock formations and urban landscape below, through the orchards and vineyards in the mid distance, rice and dry crops further again, to the hills on the distant horizon – not for nothing is this named Scenic Hill.



Bimble Box shooting



Black headed Eastern Rosella



Dwarf Greenhood patch



Leaves appearing:

Adders Tongue
Ophioglossum lusitanicum (left)

and

Vanilla Lily
Arthropodium sp



All that remained was for June Sell to sprint up the historic and well preserved steps back to the Dudley De Chair lookout and the loop was complete. And there was the view we missed at the start – to the south the obvious pancake flat plains of the Riverina which have been devoured by agriculture but you can still search out small pockets of nature. This is the last hill before the Flinders. To the north the Cobar Penneplain with vast tracts of mallee and mulga amongst the wheat fields, cattle and goats. To the east the last standing hills of the South Western Slopes. To the west if you put up your binoculars you can almost see bits of the Murray Darling Depression approaching.

The wildlife of these three regions travel back and forth and we are lucky to have them visit us here at different times. "When the Currawongs come down from the mountain" as Slim Dusty sang, they get as far as Scenic Hill and no further. Their call is a common winter sound for Ortella St residents. The Glossy Black Cockatoos from the east stop here. The Red Tailed Blacks from the west stop here. This is where the Eastern Rosella says hello to the Major Mitchell Cockatoo from the west. Etcetera, ad nauseum.

Scenic Hill Species List

Australian Magpie	Laughing Kookaburra	Rock Dove	Crested Pigeon
Magpie Lark	Yellow Thornbill	Eastern Ringneck	Grey Fantail
Pied Butcherbird	Yellow-rumped	Blue Bonnet	Rufous Whistler
Common Starling	Thornbill	Eastern Rosella	Goats
Red Wattlebird	Weebill	Striated Pardalote	
Yellow-throated Miner	Australian Raven	Apostlebird	

VARIED SITTELLA *Daphoenositta chrysopyra*

It is such a joy to see and hear these little birds with their constant chip-chip or a succession of hurried warbling notes in flight.

The name "varied" is because the same species varies in different locations, and as these birds are great travellers they interbreed freely where they meet. Quoting Lester Short's and Richard Schodde's 1983 study, "At least (10) ten different morphological characters appear to segregate and recombine independently."

Their appearance is regional with diversity of plumage colour and patterning. In the North-East, a white wing stripe with heavily striated body, *striata*, in the West an orange wing stripe with white underparts and black cap, *pileata*, and in central regions the underparts are striped grey-brown, *chrysoptera* or *leucocephala*.

The birds are rarely terrestrial and forage in the outer mid to upper regions of the tree, mainly eucalypts, constantly scuttling down, up or along the branch in constant motion and turning their body from side to side searching for insects with their upturned beak which they use to lever bark.

The Varied Sittella belongs to a family unit with a breeding male and female pair with all pitching in to feed the young. They group in packs around 12 but this varies. The nest is a work of art. The cup shape nest is placed in the fork of a tree, lined with cobwebs, wool, hair and decorated with lichen and bark which makes it almost invisible, (unless they use the wrong coloured bark!!!)

They have many other names, some being Bark Pecker, Diamond or Woodpecker, Nuthatch, Black-capped, Orange-winged, Striated, White-headed Sittella and Treerunner.

Length 125mm, buff eyes with yellow orbital ring, bill brown with yellow base. legs yellow.

Eggs 3, and vary from lustreless grey-green to blotched or speckled. oval to round shape.

Sue Chittick-Dalton

[Most information and photos from National Photograph Index]



Plants of the Month – Boree Open Woodland Community

So far the vegetation communities I have discussed have all been in the hills and rises of our region. It is now time to turn our attention to the heavy clay plains that characterise the Riverina. Boree *Acacia pendula* is the common tree of the heavy clay soil plains from the Murray River right through New South Wales and into Queensland, however it is not the dominant plant over its range.

The Cobb Highway is roughly the boundary line between Boree woodlands to the east and saltbush country to the west. This line is also the approximate line of the 300mm isohyet and this is probably the limiting factor.

Boree woodlands are classed as Open to Very Open that is the trees are generally spaced 2 to 10 times the canopy diameters. That is the natural state; hundred and fifty years of clearing and grazing has severely reduced the number of trees. So much so that large parts have now been classed as 'derived grasslands' by some mappers. This has produced the curious anomaly of a long straight boundary between 'derived grasslands' and boree woodland on the regional vegetation map.

It is not only the very open structure of Boree woodlands that creates the confusion. The understorey is predominantly grassy. The main types are *Danthonia* and *Stipa* species. Wetter areas characteristically have more *Homopholis proluta* (Rigid Panic).

Herbs are generally well represented except when paddocks are overgrazed resulting in predominantly annual exotic weeds. Chenopod species are very common with Berry Saltbush *Atriplex semibaccata*, Spiny-fruit Saltbush *Atriplex spinibractea*, Climbing Saltbush *Einadia nutans* and Ruby Saltbush *Enchylaena tomentosa* common perennial ground covers. Three types of *Sida* are common – *Sida corrugata*, *Sida trichopoda* and *Sida fibulifera*. The rambling growth of *Convolvulus erubescens* is not always evident unless flowering.

Taller herbs and semi-shrubs often form dense knee high growth between the spaced trees. These may be distinctively spiny (and thereby grazing resistant) like Black Roly-poly *Sclerolaena murienta* and Buckbush *Salsola kali* or quite attractive such as the yellow flowering Woolly Buttons *Leptorhynchos panaetioides*. In the wetter areas the ground may be carpeted with the white flowering Grey Germander *Teucrium racemosum*. The presence of Nardoo *Marsilea drummondii* would indicate areas where rain water would collect and last for some time.

Nowadays there is almost always a gap between the ground flora and the canopy. This is often accentuated by cropping below chest height by the grazing of sheep – Boree is a valuable fodder plant. Medium sized shrubs are few and far between – the occasional Punty Bush, *Senna artemisioides* ssp *zygophylla* or maybe a Spiny Saltbush *Rhagodia spinescens*.

Accounts of early settlers suggested that there were considerable amounts of Old Man Saltbush *Atriplex nummularia* around. These were quickly reduced to occupying the Horse Paddocks then eliminated as tractors took over from the horses.

After so many decades of abuse prime Boree woodland habitat is hard to find. It is so good to see the conservation efforts such as the Coleambally Irrigation Trust paddocks that we visited earlier this year. Maybe some day we will see true Boree woodlands that the early settlers first saw in the mid 1800's.

Eric Whiting



Boree along Krook Road. Coleambally

The Kure Chapter of the Indoor Birdwatchers Society

Recently I rediscovered a folder given to me by an old friend, Colin Hann, concerning the Rules and Regulations of the above illustrious organization. Colin was a member of the British/Australian Occupational Force in Japan immediately after the war. They were stationed in Kure not far from Hiroshima and the above society (IBS) was established in June 1956.

Membership was restricted to just 12 including their illustrious leader the Grand Iggle and must all have the following qualifications:

- Be of the male sex.
- Be honourable.
- Be of officer status.
- Must imbibe alcohol.
- Have an honest and sincere passion for the knowledge of indoor birds and their habits.
- Be equipped with an intelligent sense of humour.

All meetings held periodically at various places called “Roosts” or “Perches” were opened with the society toast:

*Here's to the Bird Watchers, that band with push,
to whom a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush
Here's to the Bird Watchers that wonderful band,
to whom a push in the bush is worth two in the hand.*

Boys will be boys, indeed!

Included in the set of rules and regulations was a list of various types of indoor birds (male and female) that members were required to spot and report on during the meetings:

Extra Marital Lark	Ruffled Spouse	Gimlet-eyed Titwatcher
After Dinner Peewee	Rosy-breasted Pushover	Morning Grouse
Bald-headed Seat-Pincher	Swallow-tailed Snob	Tiddly Winker
Shrilling Chatter Box	Night Flying Playboy	Problem Ducker
Two-faced Back-Slapper	Emerald-throated Dowager	Late Night Capper

Colin worked for Radio Australia as a War Correspondent reporting for both the ABC and BBC. When I first met him he was in his late 70's and he was not always forthcoming about stories of his early career, particularly during the war. However, he would sometimes open-up with fascinating tales of his experiences in Japan, in PNG during the war and of his time in Indonesia during President Sukano's regime. Colin was a journalist at the ABC for most of his life and, at one stage, had Kerry O'Brien as one of his cadet journalists.

Colin was part of the Hann family who helped open-up and established cattle properties in Far North Queensland and the Kimberley in WA – the Hann River at Lakefield NP and the Hann River that runs into the Gibb River in the Kimberley are named after his family around the time the Duracks were so prominent – “Kings in Grass Castles” and all that!

Max O'Sullivan

NSW and ACT Twitchathon 2008 to be held on the 24-25 October

This year the Twitchathon Project aims to raise about \$8,000 for each project, \$16000 altogether. There will be two recipients of our fund raising conservation efforts. The proceeds to go jointly to the Gosford LGA Friends of the Bush Stone-curlew Group and the Hunter Bird Observers Club Mangrove Removal Programme at Milhams Pond, Ash Island.

The Friends Group have sought additional funding to supplement Council's funding for radio-tracking of fledgling and resident birds, provide equipment for on-site management of breeding habitat in the form of shade cloths, fencing, infra-red cameras, petrol, and colour-leg bands, and funds to increase the number of community play-back surveys.

The Hunter BOC Mangrove Removal programme will be centred on Milhams Pond, Ash Island because mangrove encroachment is destroying foraging habitat for shorebirds. The Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project (KWRP) has a permit from NSW Fisheries to remove mangroves from this area. They are seeking additional funds to complete the removal of mangroves from Milhams Pond and install a mangrove propagule exclusion device on the feeder creek during the period of seed dispersal.

Time to start organising our teams. Further details are available from Bill Moller.

On the road to Pulletop

Sunday the 13 July and Neil, Max and Johanna headed to Pulletop Nature Reserve. The road is listed as dry weather only and it was a fine sunny day so what could go wrong? Well we never got there, but we did spend an hour nearby extricating ourselves from a waterhole in the road.

So there is a lesson here - make sure the road is dry before heading that way - near Pulletop the track hasn't seen a grader for years and the potholes are deep. Max still hasn't seen Pulletop.

The fall back was to return south on the Whitton Stock Route along the hills, but again, although most of the track was good, we were finally made to reverse our direction by a good long deep waterhole.



Very few birds came out to help us get out of our bog, but there seemed to be plenty of life along the hills, including Speckled Warbler and Mulga Parrots.

Neil Palframan

BOCA launches BOCA Birding Maps

Bird Observation and Conservation Australia (BOCA) is pleased to announce the launch of BOCA Birding Maps on their website (www.boca.org.au). It is an interactive map that provides consolidated information on bird watching locations and birding organisations throughout Australia. Interactive tools enable the user to zoom in on sections of the map and to search for specific types of information (i.e., birding locations, BOCA Branches, Affiliates and other birding organisations).

Dave Torr, BOCA's Marketing Manager, said "Our aim is to make these maps a key resource for both local and international birders. Many visitors to Australia – or indeed Australian birders visiting other parts of the country – do not know the best places for bird watching or the locations of birding clubs that they might contact for further information. We have consolidated information that is scattered throughout the web on one site and placed the information on a map. Useful for planning a trip or looking for additional information on places to bird.

The new BOCA Birding Maps may be accessed from the main BOCA webpage by selecting "BOCA Birding Maps" from the "Come Birding" menu on the right hand side of the screen or by the URL

<http://www.birdobservers.org.au/BirdingMaps.asp> You will need a reasonably modern web browser with Javascript enabled. There is a lot of data to send to your PC, especially the first time you connect, so a broadband link is recommended.

MFN is an affiliated member of BOCA and there is a link to our website, also under the Griffith and Narrandera locations.

Projects for West Rivers Region

At the July meeting in Yanco, Paul Childs, a wetlands ecologist with National Parks, gave us a very informative presentation about the projects and research which is being undertaken at one of the new parks in the Griffith Region. Yanga National Park covers a large area of 80,000 hectares, comprising Red Gum Forest and saltbush with a considerable length of frontage to the Murrumbidgee River. It is located east of Balranald, mainly on the south side of the Sturt Highway. A major capital work is that at Twin Bridges where 2 timber structures will be replaced by regulators so the water can be controlled, improving the wetlands and hopefully enhance the habitat for the Southern Bell Frog.

Many research projects are in progress studying soils, old river channels, microfossils, seed bank, Southern Bell Frog. The major work is concerned with gathering data for the management of the water and the best way to use environmental water. Extensive modelling is being undertaken.

Extensive fox baiting and weed control is in progress.

Paul finished by showing us a number of photos of the two bridges, these structures are well passed their useful life; even so this loss of our heritage is lamented.

We all enjoyed your talk, Paul, relating first hand what the work currently being undertaken at Yanga. Many thanks for coming over to Leeton.

Camping grounds with basic facilities are in the process of being developed so it shouldn't be too long before it can be opened to the public.

Rowena Whiting (with photo from Paul)



Threatened Species Day September 7

We recognize Threatened Species Day on 7th September.

Narrandera has some significant vegetation areas: Gillenbah State Forest and Buckingham State Forest to the south, The Narrandera and Brobenah Hills to the north and the River Red Gum forests to the east and west. Areas along roadsides and traveling stock reserves can also hold significant vegetation and also threatened species. We are fortunate around here because these areas are relatively large.

Narrandera has some very special threatened species and threatened plant communities because some occur nowhere else. They are threatened because numbers of species are declining, areas of habitat are declining and there are few such communities with all layers intact.

Narrandera is also at the edge of the overlap of eastern and western species of some flora and fauna.

The small numbers of threatened species and the few areas where they exist makes them at risk of catastrophic events such as drought, grazing, weed or fires.

Two threatened ground orchids are found at Narrandera. The *Diuris tricolor* is found here. It flowers from September to November. Clearing the area where it is found accidentally or deliberately could quickly lead to its disappearance. Because it flowers for only a short time, its presence could be missed when assessing areas for development. *Caladenia arenaria* is the other ground orchid found only near Narrandera.

Narrandera also has a few reptiles that are declining and threatened. The Western Blue-tongue lizard is similar to the ordinary Blue Tongue that you may have in your garden but has different colouring. Other threatened animals that could be found here are the Brush-tailed Wallaby and the Koala.

The Narrandera Hills has an isolated population of Glossy Black Cockatoos. These are endangered and this year in particular drought has reduced the availability of their food source and they have been observed going further afield for food. Other threatened bird species found here are Superb Parrots, Barking Owls, Diamond Firetails, Grey-crowned Babblers, Brown Treecreepers, Hooded Robins, Speckled Warblers, Pink Cockatoos, Plains Wanderers and Bush Stone Curlews.

Some birds may be found commonly in an area and found no-where else, so it makes you think that they couldn't possibly be declining. Other birds like Bush Stone Curlews and Parrots are long living, so there appears to be plenty remaining, even though these may be too old to breed successfully. In the near future one would expect a crash in such populations.

Brolga, Australian Bittern, Freckled Duck and Blue-billed Duck are also threatened in this area. These suffer from a reduction of wetlands that they rely on, and more recently a reduction in rice fields.

What needs to be done about threatened Species?

- Landowners and residents need to be aware that we have some special species of flora and fauna living with us.
- Foxes, goats, cats and rabbits need to be controlled.
- Some areas need to be allowed to regenerate by fencing.
- Grasslands need to be retained
- Retention of stick and leaf litter, understorey shrubs, fallen logs and branches.
- Prevent clearing of habitat such as nesting sites and food sources.
- Revegetate with locally native species.
- Remnants and patches need to be linked so that in the event of a catastrophe fauna have somewhere to move.

14 – 16 November

Australian Birdfair – will be held at the Yanco Agricultural Institute

Theme “Climate Change: What Are the Birds Telling Us?”

Seminars and lectures on topics relating to birds, nature, photography, gardening...

Organised Bird Watching Tours

Trade exhibitors Indigenous and local art Music

See the web site for more information www.australianbirdfair.org.au

MFN will be having a similar display to last year, with photos, artifacts to do with Natural History and Environment. If you can add to this in any way please let us know.

S I G H T I N G S

Glossy Black Cockatoo [2]	The Rock Nature Reserve	21/07/08	Angela Seymour
Inland Dotteral [1]	Waradgery Pdk, Oolambeyan NP	29/07/08	Michelle Ballestrin
infrequently recorded at Oolambeyan			
Plains-wanderer [1M, 1F]	Home Pdk, Oolambeyan National Park	14/07/08	M Ballestrin & D Egan
Malleefowl [1]	Loughnan Nature Reserve	22/07/08	David Egan
Chestnut Quail-thrush [4]	Loughnan Nature Reserve	22/07/08	David Egan
2 Females seen, 2 males heard calling			
Black-eared Cuckoo [1]	Hall's Lake, Willandra National Park	22/07/08	David Egan
(was NOT calling)			
Hooded Robin [2 pairs]	Loughnan Nature Reserve	22/07/08	David Egan
Nankeen Kestrel (nesting?)	West Rd, Nericon in tree hollow	08/08	Johanna Botman
White-backed Swallow [4]	Tuckerbill (Koonadan entrance)	23/07/08	Max O'Sullivan
White-backed Swallow	Flying low around the sand quarry	05/08/08	Max O'Sullivan + Ruth & Ivor Graney
Tawny Frogmouth [3]	Yanco Reserve	30/07/08	Max O'Sullivan
Currawong [8]	Yanco Reserve	30/07/08	Max O'Sullivan
(has not seen any in Leeton this winter)			
Noisy Friarbird (2)	Yanco Reserve	30/07/08	Max O'Sullivan
Superb Parrot [3 pairs]	Yanco Reserve	30/07/08	Max O'Sullivan
Superb Parrot [2 pairs]	Euroley Bridge, Yanco	30/07/08	Max O'Sullivan
Superb Parrot [4 pairs]	Euroley Bridge, Yanco	05/08/08	Max O'Sullivan + R & I Graney
(a new bird for Max's friends the Graney's)			
Golden Whistler [1 M]	Euroley Bridge Yanco	05/08/08	Ivor, Ruth & Max
Pallid Cuckoo [3 seen calling]	Binya State Forest	06/08/08	Ivor, Ruth & Max
Black-tailed Native-hen [2]	Tuckerbil Swamp	05/08/08	Ivor, Ruth & Max
the first since last summer			
Brolga [8]	Tuckerbil (flying over)	05/08/08	Ivor, Ruth & Max
Little Eagle [1]	Billenbah State Forest	05/08/08	Ivor, Ruth & Max
Brown Songlark [1M]	Tuckerbil Swamp	05/08/08	Ivor, Ruth & Max
Hooded Robin [1M 1F]	Binya State Forest	06/08/08	Ivor, Ruth & Max
Crested Bellbird [2 calling]	Binya State Forest	06/08/08	Ivor, Ruth & Max

Some sad plant news I was on my way back from Hillston this afternoon with a little bit of time up my sleeve, and I thought "we've had some rain recently ... I wonder how opportunistic our Sturt's Desert Pea on Arcadia Lane has been" as would any self respecting MFN member.

The horror, the horror!

Local council has graded the road AND THE TABLE DRAIN!! There is nothing alive.

I can only hope that the machinery may have buried, or spread, some seed and a later rain event may bring them back up.

Johanna Botman

Subscriptions are now overdue

There are still a few people who have not paid for the current year so if you are one please send your money to the Treasurer, Phil Tenison, as soon as possible - 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.

If you have not paid by 31 August you risk no longer receiving the newsletter.

It would be useful to know if you do not intend to continue your membership.

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

Annual subscription rates are :-

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



Nankeen Kestrel nestling
Johanna Botman



Malleefowl at Loughnan Nature Reserve
David Egan

- 14 August Thursday** **Leeton Meeting** at 7:30pm in the Seminar Room 1, Block 34 at Department of Primary Industry. Yanco Ag Institute **Enquiries** Jan Cameron 6953 2202
Guest Speaker: Mal Carnegie, Lake Cowal Foundation. The Foundation monitors the environment at the Lake Cowal Gold Mine (West Wyalong).
- 17 August Sunday** **Outing – Lake Cowal Gold Mine** guided tour of the Foundation’s projects by Mal Carnegie, maybe the mine site itself, a walk in the surrounding area.
Travel details at the meeting or contact Eric 6953 2612.
- 24 August Sunday** **Bushwalk to Craigie Lee**
Walk will approx - 9 km, no about half on bush tracks & half rough no track, wear strong clothing.
Meet at the Campbells Swamp Carpark 8.30 am.
Bring “play lunch” to carry and lunch for return to cars,
Contact: Bill Moller – 0247 102 673, or email bill.moller@dpi.nsw.gov.au
- 28 August Thursday** **Griffith Meeting** – There will be no Griffith meeting
- 29 - 31 August** **Bush Camp-out Shepherds Hill** (near Round Hill Nature reserve) north-west of Lake Cargelligo. Arrive Friday 29th leave Sunday 31st.
This is a full Bush camp ie. no facilities.
The plan is to make the dinner a joint affair Cost \$20/head for the two dinners (includes food and plonk)but self cater for breakfast and lunch. Please contact me so I have numbers and can give you directions to the camp site. It is looking like being a cool but rewarding weekend. Should be plenty of birds and flowering plants on offer.
PS you will need to bring all of your own water.
Contact Bill Moller 6960 1311 or email bill.moller@dpi.nsw.gov.au
- 3 September Wednesday** **Copy for September newsletter is due**
- 11 September Thursday** **Leeton Meeting and Annual General Meeting** at 7:30pm in the Seminar Room 1, Block 34 at Department of Primary Industry. Yanco Ag Institute
Enquiries Jan Cameron 6953 2202 **Guest Speaker:** TBA
- 19-21 September** **MFN Spring Camp - Kalyarr State Conservation Area (Norwood)**
On the Lachlan River NW Hay. Note this is not the long weekend.
The arrangements will be similar to previous years.
Cost \$50 / head, all meals provided and wine of course.
There will be some beds (mattress only) available in the cottage and plenty of room for tents. If you want a bed you will need to book in early.
Contact Bill Moller on 69 601311, mobile 0427 102673 or email bill.moller@dpi.nsw.gov.au by 14th August.
- 25 September Thursday** **Griffith Meeting** – 7.30 pm, Griffith DPI Conference Room.
Contact: Bill Moller 6960 1341 **Guest Speaker:** TBA

OTHER DATES / EVENTS

- 3 – 5 October** **Birds of the Bush and Spring Market Fair** at Rankin Springs. Activities include bird watching tours on the Saturday; one a bus tour of the Cocoparra National Park and MFN members are invited to join this tour or meet them there.
See their website www.birdsofthebush.com for more details. It is being updated as events are confirmed. They would like to hear from anyone who would be able to act as guides for the bird tours. Contact is Jenny Caughey, phone 02 6965 3384
- 25 - 26 October** **Twitchathon – start thinking about your teams.**
- 15 November** **Superb Parrot count**
- 14 - 16 November** **Australian Birdfair – will be held at the Yanco Agricultural Institute**
Theme “Climate Change: What Are the Birds Telling Us?”