

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



October 2008 - Issue #154

Journal of The Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc.

P.O.BOX 541 LEETON 2705

ISSN-1327-1172

Website: www.mfn.org.au

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 Spring of flowers

Photos: Eric, Rowena
and Neil



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CONTRIBUTIONS

For the next issue by
Wednesday, 5 November 2008

To Rowena Whiting

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Coming up – the Twitchathon and the Birdfair

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.

Annual General Meeting

At the Annual General Meeting, last month, there was one change made to our office bearers. Johanna did not re-stand for Vice President and we welcome Joanne Tarbit to this position.

I would like to thank everyone for the magnificent bunch of flowers I received, courtesy the Moller's garden. As I said it is all your wonderful contributions that make the newsletter great.

Rowena



WHAT A DIFFERENCE A HEARING AID MAKES

Who would have thought what a difference a hearing aid would make to a bird watcher, after all these years with different people on field trips saying can you hear that bird Neville (I could name names but I won't) I decided to have my ears tested so just before I headed off to the UK I fronted up for an appointment & was told one should make quite a difference. After returning they were all ready for me so the next day it was my day for the bird survey of Narrandera Wetlands and what a shock I got I did not know how noisy it was down there.

The Clamorous Reed Warblers nearly deafened me (pardon the pun) the Magpies nearly made me jump out of my boots and I could hear the Little Grass Bird clearly. Straight away I was off to a good start I could hear some little birds twitting away in the distance so on investigating I found 3 Buffed-rumped Thornbills a new sighting for me and also walking around the Wetlands that day was like going to a new area hearing so many new things but hearing so much better now also has created two new problems for me. (1) It takes me so much longer now to do Bird Survey of the Wetlands or any other place as I have to find out what all these little noises I am hearing that I didn't hear before and (2) I will have to learn all these new bird sounds, I had enough trouble with the ones I could hear before.

I would recommend any one who has hearing difficulties to try a hearing aid it has certainly made a difference to my bird watching.

Neville James

Travelling Stock Routes

The recent media coverage of the change in management of Travelling Stock Routes has prompted a lot of correspondence on the National Parks Association web forum. The network is important for its natural and cultural heritage and needs to be protected as public land. It is significant for its biodiversity, by providing critical resources for migrating birds, and its retention of original vegetation, a major source of native seed.

A number of scientists have been stating why they are so significant and how important it is that these icons should be protected. They provide corridors of native vegetation in a highly cleared landscape.

What can we do to rescue this important natural and cultural heritage icon?

To read more go to www.npa.org.au The site also has information about what is going on with regards to the Red Gum Forests crisis – another national icon.

Kalyarr State Conservation Area (Norwood) 19 to 21 September 2008

It was with a good deal of trepidation that we approached the visit to Norwood this year, I had scheduled the visit for mid September as previous visits on the October long weekend were a couple of weeks too late for the spring flowers. However, as it turned out, it wouldn't have mattered when I had scheduled the outing, there just hadn't been enough rain in Autumn and Winter for anything to produce much in the way of flowers.

It looked like being a pretty bleak weekend particularly for the flora orientated members of the group, but there was plenty to keep us interested, and it gave us a great look at mother nature doing a bit of a sorting out. I must admit, I was stunned by the amount of trees; Black Box, River Cooba and River Red Gum that were dead on the river bank and that included trees within only a couple of metres of the bank, (river bank might be a bit of a strong description, the Lachlan is not what you might call a big river at this point)

I had visited this place in 2003 when it was first acquired by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), it was wall to wall

flowers and lush, I have been coming back every couple of years hoping to experience again the beauty I know it is capable of, but this dry spell is hell bent on persisting.

Given the above dose of gloom the weekend was far from gloomy, there was in fact still quite a lot to see and experience.

The cottage is a great venue for the not so rustic camp-out we have become accustomed to for the regular Spring outing. It has a couple of bedrooms, a great well appointed kitchen that was adequate for our group (15 on this occasion), a good sized lounge dining room and a great covered deck only metres from the bank of the mighty Lachlan and plenty of room for those that wanted to camp in a tent.

A few of the group had turned up on Thursday afternoon to get some preliminary setting up done and were joined by a couple more later in the evening. We spent a good bit of time on Friday morning surveying the sites to determine a plan for the balance of the weekend and visited a few of the dams.

The first impressions were a bit of a shock, as I mentioned earlier, but it opened up other opportunities, there was plenty of opportunity to study the soil types for instance and to see the formwork of the country without too much of its adornment to obscure the detail, it is an opportunity that doesn't come along very often, most would say and thank goodness, but this is Arid Australia, and it doesn't like the imposition of the European agrarian system that has been imposed on it, the results of the significant climate swings is quite evident all around us but on this occasion was starkly evident on the drive from Hay to Norwood. We as a community have a lot to learn about how to get along in relative harmony with this great Country. (Getting a bit carried away.)

Other areas of interest included interpreting the tracks in the dust, and an appreciation of some of the sign of the past aboriginal presence in the landscape.

Birds, they turned out to be the main focus for the weekend, we studied carefully any plant that had managed to struggle into existence and produce a feeble flower, but the birds managed to attract a majority of our focus.

At the outset it looked like it was going to be a struggle to come up with a marginally respectable list and Nella had set a hopeful target of 75 before we could go home, (a target she was sure was going to keep us going for well after the weekend) however, we just kept finding more and with out making them up, so Nella had to eventually review the go home tally. In the end the final count was 89 with an additional four at Kalyarr National Park (Darcoola)

I was a bit keen to have a look at Mallawa, (a new acquisition that adjoins Norwood to the south), to see what the addition would add. The vegetation looked reasonable (note that comment is necessarily relative) at least compared to some of the other properties along the way, in some places it looked downright lush



(figuratively speaking) but none of us were prepared for the scene at the home site. We drove through the gate at the cattle yards into a moonscape, a massive claypan, with a feeble dwelling sitting in the middle of it. I understand that the Homestead had burned down some time ago in a bushfire, I have no idea how long the claypan had been there but it must have been a depressive place to live.

On the positive side though, it appears there had been attempts made to reclaim this scald by constructing a series of ring ponds, a technique developed by the CSIRO, I think, the idea is to trap any rain water and hold it for long enough for it to soak in and to trap wind-blown seed, it looks like it may be making some progress, but this series of low rainfall years aren't doing it any favours.

We finished the weekend with a visit to Kalyarr National Park (Darcoola) on the way home. The vegetation is a little higher at Darcoola and it looked quite good. We spent a little time looking through the vegetation surrounding the homestead, we didn't find much but added a Wood Duck and Black Kite to the tally. We



Claypan re-vegetation at Mallawa



Pigface *Disphyma clavellatum*
a Jewel in a sea of brown

moved on to spend a bit of time looking over the sand hills in the hope of seeing the Pied Honeyeater but alas they were nowhere to be seen. It is always interesting to take a walk over these sand hills you invariably see something different. The Australian Bugle *Ajuga australis* was struggling into flower and Eric found a Knead Darling Pea *Swainsona oroboides*. The claypan towards the centre of the



dunes had a small water hole still holding some water and there was a couple of White-winged Fairy-wrens nesting in the African Boxthorn surrounding the waterhole. The only two additional birds sighted in the sand hills were the Collared Sparrowhawk and some House Sparrows.

We had lunch under a Peppercorn Tree with the Ranger, Adrienne, then headed home.

Birdlist - Kalyarr State Conservation Area (Norwood) 19th to 21st September 2008

Emu	Crested Pigeon	Yellow-rumped	White-bellied Cuckoo
Pacific Black Duck	Diamond Dove	Thornbill	Shrike
Grey Teal	Galah	Yellow Thornbill	Ground Cuckoo Shrike
Australasian Grebe	Little Corella	Southern Whiteface	White-winged Triller
Darter	Cockatiel	Striped Honeyeater	Olive-backed Oriole
Little Pied Cormorant	Crimson Rosella	Little Friarbird	White-breasted
Great Cormorant	Blue Bonnet	Blue-faced Honeyeater	Woodswallow
Australian Pelican	Red-rumped Parrot	Noisy Miner	Masked Woodswallow
White-faced Heron	Horsfield's Bronze	Yellow-throated Miner	White-browed
White-necked Heron	Cuckoo	Singing Honeyeater	Woodswallow
Great Egret	Tawny Frogmouth	White-plumed	Grey Butcherbird
Nankeen Night Heron	Australian Owlet-	Honeyeater	Pied Butcherbird
Australian White Ibis	nightjar	White-fronted Chat	Australian Magpie
Whistling Kite	Laughing Kookaburra	Jacky Winter	Australian Raven
Grey Goshawk	Sacred Kingfisher	Red-capped Robin	Little Raven
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Brown Treecreeper	Grey-crowned Babbler	Little Crow
Little Eagle	Superb Fairy-wren	Grey-Shrike Thrush	White-winged Chough
Brown Falcon	Variiegated Fairy Wren	Rufous Whistler	Australian Pipit
Australian Hobby	White-winged Fairy	Restless Flycatcher	Welcome Swallow
Nankeen Kestrel	Wren	Magpie-Lark	Tree Martin
Dusky Moorhen	Striated Pardalote	Grey-Fantail	Fairy Martin
Black-tailed Native	Weebill	Willie Wagtail	Clamorous Reed-
Hen	Western Gerygone	Mistletoebird	Warbler
Banded Lapwing	Inland Thornbill	Black-faced Cuckoo	Common Starling
Masked Lapwing	Chestnut-rumped	Shrike	
Common Bronzewing	Thornbill		

In addition we had Wood Ducks, Black Kite, Collared Sparrowhawk and House Sparrows at Darcoola

Bill Moller

Comments from others of Norwood

The main comments were about wonderful company, good food, from the children - Bella wrote: 'I liked the food and the fire, I will come again. and Jules wrote; 'I liked the fire'. Nella wrote her visions while walking around the place, 'everyone thought I was adding millions to the bird list'.



What a man will go thru to get a marshmallow toasted for his son
Photo: Neil Palframan

Visions of Norwood 2008

Magenta pigface struggling on the roadsides,
an occasional bearded dragon sitting with its chin in the air
putting its life in danger on the windswept road.

The Lachlan so brown and narrow, surrounded by
multistemmed gnarled blackbox flowering sweetly, nearly
white.

amongst red-stemmed long narrow leafed spindly Kooba
regenerating in places on the floodplain of the self-
mulching grey soil.

Lignum drew back its life to survive the dry.

It was hard to imagine the canoe-tree on the edge of a
swamp.

Surrounded by the ruby saltbush, studded with the rubies
that are their fruit.

Chirring nightjars and the ooomming frogmouth in the
night,
the love sick willy that sang to the moon kept us company
all night, and roused at daybreak by laughing kookaburras.
Amongst the starving red gums, impoverished and poorly
clothed you could hear the crisp, sharply defined tuxedoed
pee-wees warbling regardless.
And the gurgling of the babblers scanning every tree.
Near the river that just flows silently by.

Ramblings at Norwood

Poverty Bush purple, Poverty Bush red
Spiny Saltbush wind blown and nearly dead

Black Bluebush more black than blue
Green bushes seldom in view.

Black soils grey for want of a dew
All around the plants are of a drab hue

Lovely Hairy Fissure Weed crumbles to a dust
Covering soil bound by enduring crust

Gone the Satiny Saltbush shining bright
No daisies with their brilliant white

Farmer battling the endless drought
Walks off with ere a clout

Paddocks long ago grazed bare
Not enough to feed a hare

All life is a struggle on the plain
Waiting, waiting for that rain.

Eric Whiting

From Neil

My special sightings from the Norwood weekend
Grey Goshawk (Norwood), Blue-winged Parrot (Booligal
Gunbar Rd) and a flock (9) of Gull-billed Tern (flock of 9)
at Gunbar.

John Cameron relates a close encounter

On the Sunday morning of the trip to Kalyarr, Jan and I were making our way along the Lachlan river, peering into the trees and shrubs in an attempt to locate the elusive Bee Eater or Kingfisher, when I put my left foot on something that was soft and shifted my foot forward. I hadn't thought that it might be a snake until I stepped over it then looked and the one word "S!!!!T" was uttered, at which time I just stood stock still, not daring to move. A 4 foot Tiger Snake was moving around my feet. I was expecting to be bitten on my left leg but it settled down and moved away a few feet, stopped to have a good look at both Jan and I and then, as I moved it got angry again so I stood still and it moved further away. Strangely I felt calm the whole time despite the prospect of being bitten by a rather healthy and magnificent Tiger snake – its markings were clear and beautifully coloured. I was more worried about the one I couldn't see (which wasn't there). At the time I was carrying a First Aid kit that included bandages, whilst not being proper compression bandage, would still have served the purpose in the event of a bite.

The real moral of the story, though, is to watch where you are walking and it would seem if you do get into the situation, don't panic, stand still to reduce the risk of a bite and the snake will usually move away. Appropriate dress for bushwalking – long legged trousers and boots will help also.

[Many people are fearful of going into the bush because of the possibility of encountering snakes. Over the years almost all of our field trips have been snake free and this encounter of John's is an exception. ED.]

The Goose and Emu show
Photo: Neil Palframan



The Road Less Followed

At the road out of Darcoola Johanna and I went left instead of right – unusual for us to go the other way I know!

Up to the river, right to the renovated One Tree, left to Booligal Pub for an ice cream, and right to Gunbar.

I wouldn't normally bore you with our itinerary, but there were a couple of interesting sightings along the way.

Between Booligal and Gunbar we stopped for some lbb's and found white wing wrens on both sides of the road. The country was looking much better here from earlier rains, and there was grassland as well as chenopod.

We came to a lush low lying area where there was pigface to the horizon so I stopped for a photo. As soon as we started up again the car disturbed a few parrots and I said "what are they" and Johanna said "red rumps" and I said "I don't think so". We left slide marks in the dirt and after a closer look we found they were Blue Wing Parrots. Rising and settling in the grass, then rising and flying high and back. We saw about ten.

Between Gunbar and the Carrathool turnoff "What are they Johanna?" No response. I hit the skids. A flock of nine Gull Billed Terns working up and down and up a ploughed paddock. Then across the road and up a grassed paddock. They didn't find anything to stop for tho. A first sighting for me.

The rest of the trip home was edgy, expecting every sparrow to be a Torresian Crow or something just as unlikely.

Neil Palfaman



Stopping for Pig face and Blue-winged Parrots

3 Day Birding Experience 14 -16 September 2008

A visit by Allan Richards prompted a few days of heavy birding whilst he was here.

On Sunday 14 September we met up with Neville James at Fivebough. He was keen to try out his new scope and binoculars that he bought in Singapore on his return from his recent UK visit.

All was pretty quiet on the large ponds from the hide apart from a pair of Musk Duck and a few resting Teal so we headed for the more open areas to look for a better selection. Using Neville's scope we located 2 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (my first returned waders for the season) and a low flying Swamp Harrier put up a whole group of birds in the distance including 12 Pacific Heron and about 20 Glossy Ibis (again the first for the season). Also flying over the wetlands were Whiskered Terns (I had recorded them a week or so before). Black-tailed Native Hen were also seen and Spotless Crake called from the reeds beside us.

The next day, we arranged to meet Neville at his place to drive down to Yanko Creek near Jerilderie to show him the Painted Finch. After hanging out my washing (a big mistake!) we headed south along the Newell Highway to be met by a huge dust cloud just near Gillenbah and as we traveled further south the situation got worse by the kilometre. We were even tempted to return home but pressed on to the finch site and saw them sitting outside the nest hole as soon as we stopped – Neville hadn't got his bins out of their case but fortunately the birds remained for about 10 minutes before the male flew off with great difficulty against the strong wind and the female went back into the nest – neither to be seen again for another hour. In the meantime several Victorian birdos who had been on a camping weekend at Cocoparra called in to see the birds. Two lots got them but the third missed out – fortunately he had seen them on his way to Cocoparra on the Friday before. After the male bird returned and disappeared into the nest we decided to hightail it out of the place and return home to a clothes line full of dirty washing!

On the Tuesday Allan and I went up to Binya for a leisurely trip. On the edge of the southern side of the State Forest along the Whitton Stock Route Road, we found several Painted Honeyeater feeding on the mistletoe as well as a male Splendid Wren and a couple of Speckled Warbler.

At Wattle Dam nothing came in so we went for a walk around the area and Allan spotted a Red-backed Kingfisher that posed for quite awhile giving great views of its red back. Bill Moller tells me they have been seen there before but it is the first time I have recorded them at Binya. A couple of pairs of Mulga Parrot were seen but no Turquoise Parrot or Diamond Firetail.

In all, over the 3 days we managed over 110 species so, hopefully, this may augur well for the forthcoming Twitchathon.

Max O'Sullivan

Plants of the Month – Saltbush Communities

“For those that love it and understand,
The saltbush plain is a wonderland.
A wondrous country, where nature’s ways
Were revealed to me in the droving days.”

Droving Days by Banjo Patterson

Those of us who went to the Norwood campout may be forgiven for thinking that they are not so wondrous. However as Bill has said, they are much better when seen before the ravages of the drought.

Although widely referred to as saltbush plains the correct name for these plains is chenopod shrublands – chenopod from the predominant family of plants and shrublands to designate the vegetation structure. The Chenopodiaceae family is a big one with most species well adapted to semi-arid and arid conditions and not surprisingly some dominate their particular habitats. Thus there are several different communities recognisable under the general shrubland grouping.

Most of Norwood is classified as a Bladder Saltbush community with *Atriplex vesicaria* the dominant (by frequency not always by height) species. Unfortunately grazing of this perennial has often led to its replacement with annual Eastern Flat-top Saltbush *Atriplex lindleyi*. Another of the winners grazing is Streaked Poverty Bush *Sclerolaena tricuspidis*. Cuspid is defined as ‘tapering to a rigid point’ and the three long spines on the fruits all up the stems of this species ensures that it remains after all else is eaten.

A whole suite of plants is associated with Bladder Saltbush, from the highly colourful Satiny Bluebush *Maireana georgei*, the plainer grey looking Slender-fruit Saltbush *Atriplex leptocarpa* to the ground trailing succulent Small Ice-plant *Mesembryanthemum nodiflora* (in the Pigface family).

A slight change in the consistency of the soil can lead to dominance with the taller Black Bluebush *Maireana pyramidata*. This is often closely associated with Pearl Bluebush *Maireana sedifolia*. Both of these species were seen to be surviving reasonably well under the horrid conditions we saw at Norwood. Bushes are fairly compact – good habitat for Fairy-wrens – but are typically well spaced from each other as they require wider root areas than leaf cover to access sufficient moisture. Assisting the moisture collection is the presence of the cryptogam crust between the bushes that sheds any rainfall excess to its own use off into the root zones of the bushes. The loss of the crust (hooved feet can quickly break and destroy it) is detrimental to the whole community. Typically damaged Bluebush communities are prone to wind erosion resulting in large bare scalds.

Where moisture is not so restrictive like closer to the floodways other often larger chenopods like Nitre Saltbush *Chenopodium nitrariaceum* or Spiny Saltbush *Rhagodia spinescens*. Remember these two are often understorey plants in Black Box communities. As would be expected the associated plants in these saltbush communities are similar to related Black Box communities and considerably different to communities of the drier plains.

The tallest chenopod shrubland is that dominated by Old Man Saltbush *Atriplex nummularia*. Unfortunately little of this community remains intact – Old Man Saltbush is very palatable to stock.

Perhaps these were the wondrous country of the drovers. Unfortunately they did not understand the delicate balance required for their sustainability.

Eric Whiting



Saltbush Communities
In 2004 (top) and 2008 (middle taken in evening light) and bottom)

Yellow-plumed Honeyeater *Meliphaga ornata*



Photograph from National Photographic Index.

The Yellow-plumed Honeyeater is a constant in our Mallee and surrounding areas. This vociferous creature is heard before its seen mainly because of its squabbly nature. If its not arguing amongst his own group, then it's all out war with other birds that want to share the tree its feeding on, or if other groups intrude into their territory. Sometimes the argument causes the battlers to drop to the ground and the fight continues!

They are often seen flying vertically while calling then dropping suddenly to their perch. The call of this bird is usually the first bird-song of the morning. Maybe all that agro has made it a restless sleeper?!!

The Yellow-plumed Honeyeater is normally sedentary but has been known to follow a food chain which is nectar and insects.

It normally nests low to the ground up to about three metres on the outer branches of a drooping Mallee tree. The nest is made of bark strips, grass and decorated with cobwebs and spider egg sacks. Two to three oval beige spotted eggs are laid between July and January. The nest may include an egg from the Horsfield Cuckoo.

Identification; 180mm, crown olive, face dark with fine yellow line under eye, bright yellow neck plume, breast beige heavily striped with dark grey, black beak and dark brown legs.

Voice is variable with loud harsh notes, or chip or rattling trill.

Other names are Graceful Honeyeater, Mallee Honeyeater.

Distributed along southern parts of Australia.

Sue Chittick-Dalton

Lake Brewster Open Day

The Lachlan Catchment Management Authority, along with numerous other bodies, have been working on a plan to improve the efficiency and efficacy of Lake Brewster as a water storage area and held an open day recently to brag about what they are doing. If I tell you that the changes in storage management are similar to Barren Box, you'll get the overall idea.

The issues with Lake Brewster were to do with the shallowness of the storage, the evaporation rates, the algal problems, the inability to utilise the last 30% of the water and the poor quality of the water returning to the Lachlan River.

The diagram shows the plan for the Lake. The lake will be divided into three cells. The first cell is the inflow wetland designed to increase water quality of the water on its way to the second and deepest cell.

A second wetland will be used to further enhance water quality of the flows back to the river through deepened outflow channels.

Work is at about the half way point and the project is estimated to be completed by this time next year. Public access is non existent at the moment, but there are plans for public access to the permanent wetlands when the project is completed. Many of the locals at the Open Day were looking forward to the return of the pelicans.

Johanna Botman



S I G H T I N G S

Brolga [2]	Lake Coolah, Narrandera	07/09/08	Nella Smith
Superb Parrot [8]	Pine Hill Road, Narrandera	31/08/08	Nella Smith
Tawny Frogmouth [nesting]	Rocky Waterholes, Narrandera	16/09/08	Neville James
Tawny Frogmouth [nesting]	Narrandera Common	17/09/08	Neville James
Whistling Kite [2]	Lake Talbot, Narrandera	18/09/08	Neville James
The kites were having a dogfight with a Marsh Harrier			
Tawny Frogmouth [nesting]	Narrandera Common (Another site)	19/09/08	Neville James
Buff-rumped Thornbill	Narrandera Wetlands	24/09/08	Neville James
Little Buttonquail [1F]	Willandra National Park	30/09/08	David Egan
Inland Dotterel [1Juv]	Willandra National Park	30/09/08	David Egan
Indicating recent breeding event.			
Crimson Chat [1M]	Willandra National Park	18/09/08	David Egan
Ground Cuckooshrike [2]	Willandra National Park	18/09/08	David Egan
Spotted Harrier [3]	Willandra National Park	21/09/08	David Egan
Black Falcon [1]	Willandra National Park	21/09/08	David Egan
Olive-backed Oriole [1]	Wattle Hill, Leeton	09/09/08	Max O'Sullivan
Cockatiel [8]	Wattle Hill, Leeton	26/09/08	Max O'Sullivan
Red-backed Kingfisher [1]	Binya State Forest	16/09/08	Max & Allan Richards
Black Honeyeater [1]	Binya State Forest	28/09/08	Max O'Sullivan
Eastern Rosella [1]	Wattle Hill, Leeton (my 1 st record)	29/09/08	Max O'Sullivan
Diamond Firetail [1]	Binya State Forest	28/09/08	Max O'Sullivan
Baillon's Crane [1]	Tuckerbil (1st for the season)	28/09/08	Max O'Sullivan
Grey Goshawk	Norwood	21/09/08	Neil Palframan
Blue-winged Parrot [10]	Booligal Gunbar Road	21/09/08	Neil Palframan
Gull-billed Tern [flock of 9]	Gunbar	21/09/08	Neil Palframan
Banded Plover	Griffith Airport (behind)	05/10/08	Neil Palframan

Sad update on the Painted Finch at Yanko Creek.

On Friday Johanna arrived at our campout at Norwood with the news that the nest of the Painted Finch had been "violated" by someone or some animal on the Thursday. David Parker reported it on Birding-aus and a barrage of speculation as to who the culprit was followed on the chat site. It had been clear to me on the couple of visits I made that people had been walking right up to the nest site as a track in the grass was clearly visible. Whether this made it obvious to a predator or whether there was human interference is unknown but the nest was empty and had been broken open – possibly a fox or a goanna could have been the culprit!

David later reported that the birds were still in the vicinity a few days later so, hopefully, they might try again.

Birding-aus had some pretty strong arguments against reporting any such unusual sightings in the future in order to prevent a repeat of the Painted Finch mishap.

Max O'Sullivan

Observations along Nelson Road 6 September 2008

Johanna and I did a detour 'on the way home' after visiting the Sunday morning markets. We went to have a look at the Tabbita Reserve, which turned out to be a reserve for some one to run their cows – a bit over grazed and just the usual suspects to see.

Stopped at Bassett's Hill on the return to check the mulga – it was alive and well but no sign of any action in the bud or flower or seed department. Quite a few flowers and orchids behind the shelter of the trees though.

Then back to Nericon via Nelson Rd and at the top of the hill here was our biggest reward. Where the road bends right across the contour was a smorgasbord of flowers and orchids. Daisies, everlastings, peas, fringe lilies, greenhoods, massed patches of spider orchids and pink fingers, and other things that you would need Eric to help out with.

It was the biggest concentration of pink fingers I have seen. Why so? Maybe it has never been grazed – the other side of the fence in the Tyson block was obviously grazed and fairly devoid of flower.

Neil Palframan



COMING EVENTS CALENDAR

- 9 October Thursday** **Leeton Meeting cancelled due to holidays**
- 11 October Saturday** **National Waterhole Count** - a survey of birds, mainly finches and parrots to assemble some decent data on the population and distribution of mainly seed eating bird species.
Max O'Sullivan is co-ordinating this event so if you would like to participate phone him on 6953 7376 or email me on maxosul@hotmail.com .
 We would like to cover as many watering spots as possible.
Binya State Forest would be a perfect place for members to have a leisurely breakfast and count birds at the same time – so please volunteer your time.
- 19 October Sunday** **Bushwalk, - Bogolong Hills, Narrandera**
Meet at the Narrandera Tourist Information Centre 8.30am.
Contact: Nella Smith on 6959 1210
- 23 October Thursday** **Griffith Meeting** – 7.30 pm, Griffith DPI Conference Room.
Contact: Bill Moller 6960 1341 **Guest Speaker:** TBA

25 - 26 October **NSW and ACT Twitchathon 2008**

Event - this is an annual event where teams of two or more compete to sight the highest number of bird species in a 24 hour period (4pm Sat. to 4pm Sun.). So far the club has 2 teams entering so if you'd like to join a team or form your own team contact Max O'Sullivan on 6953 7376.

Sponsorship - this is a fund raising event so please sponsor one or more of our participants or teams. The money raised is used to further birding research programs and this year will go to a Bush Stone Curlew Group at Gosford for surveying equipment and the Hunter BOC to further their mangrove removal program to improve bird habitat. Again Max can give you more information.

Celebration Barbecue - John and Jan Cameron will be co-ordinating the catering for the finishing celebration of the Club Twitchathon to take place at the Smith's, Narrandera, on Sunday 26th from 4pm. Numbers are required for catering purposes, so if you intend joining in the occasion, please let them know on 02 69532202.

5 November Wednesday **Copy for November newsletter is due**

- 13 November Thursday** **Leeton Meeting** at 7:30pm in the Seminar Room 1, Block 34 at Department of Primary Industry. Yanco Ag Institute
Speaker: TBA **Contact:** Jan Cameron 6953 2202

14 - 16 November **3rd Annual Australian Birdfair – 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...
 Guest Presenter: Stephen Moss from the United Kingdom. Stephen is a television producer, writer and broadcaster who specializes in British wildlife especially birds.

Organised Bird Watching Tours Children's workshops and activities

Trade exhibitors Indigenous and local art Music

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

MFN will be having a similar sort of display to last year, with photos, artifacts to do with Natural History and Environment. Ideas for this are welcome. If you can add to this in any way please talk to Nella 69591210. Volunteers to man these displays will also be required – name your time. .

- 27 November Thursday** **Griffith Meeting** – 7.30 pm, Griffith DPI Conference Room.
Contact: Bill Moller 6960 1341 **Guest Speaker:** TBA

29/30 November **Christmas break up is being planned at a bush location.**

January 2009 **Australian Alps in Summer**
 A weekend towards the end of the month is being planned if accommodation can be arranged. If you are interested please contact Nella 6959 1210.