

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



Melanie
Brougham

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CONTRIBUTIONS

**For the next issue by
Wednesday, 6 May 2009**

To Rowena Whiting

Email: ewhiting4@bigpond.com

Phone: 6953 2612

**Be part of the
Koala Count at Narrandera**

Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

President:	Bill Moller	6960 1341	Editor:	Rowena Whiting	6953 2612
Vice President:	Nella Smith	6959 1210	Committee:	Colin Sell	6962 1864
Vice President:	Eric Whiting	6953 2612		Max O'Sullivan	6953 7376
Vice President:	Joanne Tarbit	6962 9441		Betty Bradney	6959 2901
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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.

Membership enquiries:

Leeton	Eric Whiting	6953 2612	Griffith	Joanne Tarbit	6962 9441	
Narrandera	Nella Smith	6959 1210	Coleambally	John Wilkinson	6954 4129	
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.

Any friends wanting the WA experience? Wildflower Tour to Western Australia

Hi Folks,

I had planned to make 2008 the last WA wildflower tour but I have been prevailed upon by Quadrant to run the tour again for a group from New Zealand.

We do have spare seats and I would really like to have some Aussies to help point out the common Aussie plant families that are not often seen in New Zealand. Tour date is 13 to 29 September ex Perth -

Please tell them to get in touch with me or Moira for details of the 2009 tour. It is not exactly the same as the 2008 version but it will still cover a multitude of flower species. Fitzgerald River is a "new" Nat Park for 2009, also the Hyden and Wave Rock area – new to me. email for contact is pandsmetcalfe@bigpond.com

Peter Metcalfe

[Nella went on one of these tours last year so contact her if you'd like more information.]

The draft **Barren Box Wetland Rehabilitation Plan** has been developed over two years by Murrumbidgee Irrigation with input from MIA community members and a team of technical experts.

The Plan will be on display for public perusal and submission of comments from April 2 to April 30, 2009. If you wish to comment these must be received in writing to Murrumbidgee Irrigation no later than COB April 30.

Please address to: Murrumbidgee Irrigation, Attention Karen McCann, PO Box 492 (Research Station Rd), Griffith, NSW 2680.

I will forward a copy to the MFN. A copy of the plan will be posted on the Murrumbidgee Irrigation website www.mirrigation.com.au, at the MI Leeton and Griffith offices and at the Leeton and Griffith Libraries.

If you have any questions regarding the Plan, please contact me on 02 6962 0200.

Karen McCann

Stanthorpe Field Nats have advised that their April newsletter is available at <http://www.granitenet.com.au/groups/environment/fieldnats>.

If you are travelling that way – some useful contacts and places to visit.

Outing to Mejum State Forest and Mount Wammera

Choosing Mejum State Forest as the venue for the March excursion was rather a matter of desperation. Summer heat dictates locations by water bodies (locations?) i.e. down by the River but one can't keep doing that month after month. March is a gamble – it could still be too hot for a forest venue especially if there are any hills to climb.

As it turned out the weather was really pleasant, even a bit cool early on. After parking the cars in the forest just north of the Mt. Olive Road, we took an easy stroll up the track just in from the Kamarah Road, letting the keener birdo's rove to either side in their quest to get that better view.

Mejum scored a downpour just a few days before. It was too recent for the vegetation to show a response. The mosses were an exception as they only take a few minutes to change from dry drabness to fresh green.

The downpour must have been very heavy. The banks of washed up litter were astounding, as were the various ripple and flow patterns as the water washed the track clean.

The surface flows showed up the very slight rises and falls along the track and we came to realise just how these almost imperceptible changes affect the make up of the forest – Yellow Box predominately in the dips and Grey Box on the rises. I had taken Mejum as just a mixed forest before.

When the birdo's pointed out that they were seeing none when closest to the road, I decided that the return route might profit by being back along the western edge. Unfortunately the paddocks this side had been ploughed and thereby rather poor habitat. We therefore arrived back at the cars a bit late for morning tea but too early for lunch. Nevertheless we sat around for morning tea.

Most ended the excursion at this point, the remaining four drove up the road to Mount Wammera for a climb to the top for the views (and change of scenery). Mount Wammera is private land and we were grateful for the permission from the owner to enter the property.

The final throw of an easy but pleasant trip was to sit in the shade to eat our sandwiches under the watchful eye of a Red-capped Robin.

Eric Whiting

Mejum State Forest outing compiled by Max O'Sullivan

Crested Pigeon
White Cockatoo
Laughing Kookaburra
Eastern Yellow Robin
Grey Fantail
Speckled Warbler
Chestnut-rumped Thornbill
Mistletoebird
White-winged Chough

Common Bronzewing
Yellow Rosella
Red-capped Robin
Grey Shrike-Thrush
Grey-crowned Babbler
Yellow Thornbill
White-plumed Honeyeater
Striated Pardalote
Grey Butcherbird

Galah
Red-rumped Parrot
Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike
Willie Wagtail
Variegated Wren
Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Silvereye
Magpie-lark
Australian Raven



Photos: Rowena Whiting
Above: Grey Box & Cypress Pine
Group morning tea
Below: Views from Mount Wammera
Red-capped Robin - David Kleinert

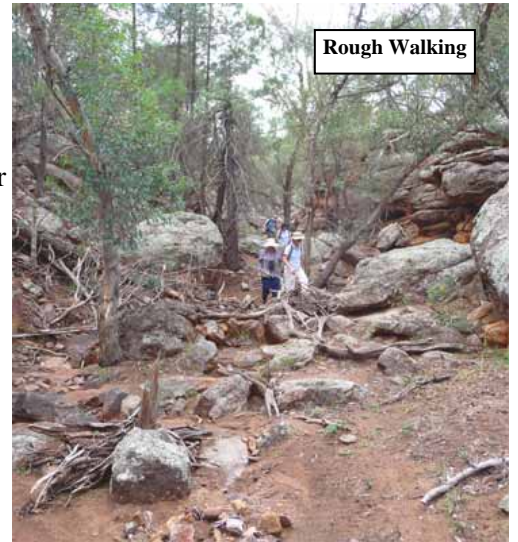


Homestead Creek – 22nd March 2009

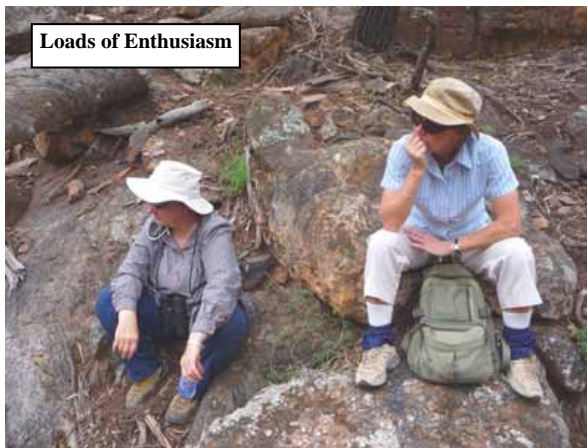
The walk up Homestead Creek on Sunday was met by better weather than last time (those that were there last time wound up just a little soaked) in fact it was near perfect. Cool and overcast with a hint of a breeze to keep us cool. The walk as advertised is classified as a hard walk, not because it is overly arduous but because there are no tracks, for most of the way it is through “bush” and over broken rocky ground, it is about 8-9 km in length and climbs 200 metres.

We stayed in the creek bed for most of the walk which means you are constantly watching your feet and where to put them. Fortunately on this occasion it stayed dry, or almost so, so we didn't have to contend with slippery rocks.

It was very evident in walking down Homestead Creek on the return journey that there had been quite a bit of water flowing just a week or two ago, I guess the storm that had hit Rankins Springs recently also



Rough Walking



Loads of Enthusiasm

dropped a good sload on at least this part of Cocoparra National Park.

As dry as it was while we were there it didn't seem to be too dry as there had been quite a bit of germination happening, mostly weeds but a tinge of green all the same.



Another Spell

The thing I found most interesting was the sheer amount of Wombat bonghy along the way, always left in a prominent place, with several examples exhibiting the typical scratch marks left by these chunky herbivores. We also came across a couple of significant burrows with multiple entrances the last of which appeared to be currently active.

We kept the walk moving at a pretty brisk clip as some of the team were off to the Opera of all things so We had a deadline to meet.

Max had declined to walk the creek and had opted to bird in the flat woodland at the start of the walk. It appeared he had a wonderful time and racked up a pretty useful total for the day. In all he recorded some 41 species.



Wombat Bonghy (Scat)

Birdlist Cocoparra National Park – Homestead Creek - 21/03/09

Wedge-tailed Eagle (4)	Aust. Raven	Yellow-plumed	Blue Bonnet
Emu (10)	Australian Magpie	Honeyeater	Red-rumped Parrot
Splendid Wren	Peewee	Speckled Warbler	White-eared
Yellow Thornbill	Jacky Winter	Red-capped Robin	Honeyeater
Yellow-rumped	Hooded Robin	Grey-crowned Babbler	Willie Wagtail
Thornbill	White-browed	Grey Butcherbird	Spotted Harrier
Chestnut-rumped	Woodswallow	Brown Treecreeper	
Thornbill	Southern Whiteface	Rufous Whistler	
Double-bar Finch	Spiny-cheeked	Eastern Yellow Robin	
White-winged Chough	Honeyeater	Silvereye	
Apostlebird	Singing Honeyeater	Crested Pigeon	
Aust Ringneck	Striped Honeyeater	Common Bronzewing	
Mulga Parrot	White-plumed	Dusky Woodswallow	
Galah	Honeyeater	Yellow-throated Miner	

Bill Moller

The Inaugural MFN Mini Twitch

The Mini Twitch was designed to be a fun filled few hours to teach potential Twitchathon participants how it is done.

The hours were fun filled and there were a few new faces keen and eager to learn. So we achieved our goals.

But that doesn't really describe the event itself. If nothing else, it was a chance to set a benchmark for describing the birds that were around on that day. There were 146 different birds seen in total (which coincidentally is the winning figure for both our teams in the 2008 Twitchathon).

For some it was the chance to camp out overnight to see the stars and hear the night birds. For others it was an opportunity to really look and see what was in their backyards. And for some it was a chance to 'get their eye in' after too long away from the binoculars.

Sites covered included Fivebough, Binya Forest, Barren Box, Stackpoole, Lake Wyangan and the Griffith Sewage Treatment Works. Oh! And of course, the Griffith Golf Course for the Tawny Frogmouths, Major Mitchell's and Eastern Rosellas.

If participating in these twitch-like events has taught us anything, it is that we really do need to do some reconnaissance in the weeks leading up to the event. Easier said than done, to be sure, but necessary if you want to get a look at a range of birds and a decent count. This time, there were very few of us who knew that there was no water in either Moss or Wattle Dams.

We have also learned to listen to the chatter about where birds have been seen recently. Max, and his team of Penny and Phil, identified many birds along the Whitton Stock Route north of Woolshed Flat. Max knew there was a fair chance of scoring there because he had been out there the week before in a non-participatory role for the 'fast walk'.

And we have learned that if you want to get a decent number of birds, you should be 'out there' at a site at start time, not just getting yourself out of the shower and still packing the car at 6pm, as the Nonkeen Nericons discovered.

Most importantly, I think, the lesson to be learned about the Mini Twitch is that it is about teams and the better the team the greater the number of birds. BUT, the important lesson about building up a team is that getting rid of your weakest link weakens your team. Strengthening your team members strengthens the whole team. These Twitching things are about fun and enjoyment and learning and birds. Yes, people who get high numbers may think that have 'won'. There are other ways to win.

There is a complete list of birds seen available. Ring me or send me an email and I will get it to you.

Thanks to Enid, Joanne, Michelle, David, Sue, Melanie, Bill, Nella, Max, Penny, Phil and Neil for a great weekend. Someone should organise another one some time.

Johanna Botman

Brown
Treecreeper
(left) and
White-plumed
Honeyeater

Photos
Phil Williams



BIRD OF THE MONTH - MISTLETOEBIRD *Dicaeum hirundinaceum*.

The letters hirundi in it's Latin name doesn't suggest a connection with the Swallow, except that it's wings and rapid flight are similar.

This amazing little bird has an extremely complex digestive system so very unlike other aves. As mistletoe berries are it's main source of food, they are passed through the alimentary canal and the vitrious coating adheres them to the branches where they germinate and become a new plant. Quoting Allen Keast, "The muscular stomach has become a blind sac with a sphincter at its opening enabling the berry food to be shunted directly from oesophagus to intestine. The insect food on the other hand is diverted into the gizzard and its chitinous remains are ultimately ejected from the bird's mouth."

The Mistletoebirds are solitary except during the breeding season when they mate and although the female only makes the pear-shaped nest of soft fibres, wool and spider webs, he is always close by her either serenading, or vociferously encouraging her in her efforts. He does help with the feeding of the chicks and the pair stay together until fledging time.

These birds are found throughout Australia except Tasmania and are rather nomadic following the food chain which is mainly mistletoe berries, saltbush berries, fruit, nectar and insects.

Statistics: 110mmlong, short tail.

Male; head, upper parts wings and tail glossy blue/black. Throat and upper breast red, lower breast and abdomen grey to white with vertical black centre line, bill and legs dark grey-brown.

Female; head and upperparts grey, underparts creamy grey and blotched, undertail coverts dull pink, bill grey and legs dark.

Immatures; similar to female, bill lighter.

Voice; variable, mostly high and 'squeaky gate,' warble and mimicry.

Sue Chittick-Dalton



Photo from National Photograph Index of Australian Wildlife.

Mini Twitch at Barren Box March 2009

The highlights of our minitwitch were the first 30 minutes.

As we neared towards Barren Box a Black Falcon showed itself. We were lucky that a Brown Falcon was nearby so we were able to compare the darker Black Falcon with no face markings to the Brown Falcon. A little further along a Spotted Harrier was cruising low over the stubble.

A Whistling Kite helped us open the gate fast.

A majestic White-bellied Sea Eagle riding the air currents at Willow Dam could not let the others steal the show.. as if.....

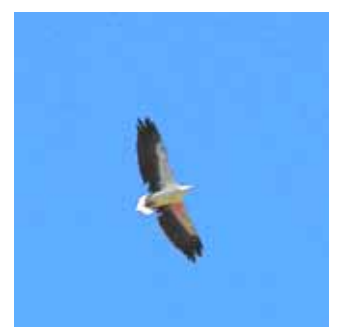
Over at the poplars a cloud of thousands (and I mean thousands) of little birds were Tree-Martins and interspersed with these was a huddle of White-breasted Woodswallows.

When we turned to the water a Brown Goshawk was seen, being harassed by Pee-Wees (Did I include the Pee-wees on the list?)

As we made our way along the channel bank a Swamp Harrier drifted low over the water in search of a late catch. Five Wedge-tailed Eagles were sitting astride partly submerged branches and Kestrels were still hawking at this time. More Whistling Kites further along made this place quite amazing for raptors.

And Johanna's place had a Collared Sparrowhawk but we didn't count him.

Nella Smith



Nella's White-Bellied Sea Eagle

Newcastle trip report 16-21 March 2009

Neville James and I arranged with Nella's sister Lorna to visit the Newcastle area for a spot of birdwatching.

The long 10 hour plus trip took us via Temora, Young, Cowra, Bathurst, Sofala, Kandos, Denman and then onto the New England Highway near Branxton and then into Maitland and on to Seaham where Lorna and husband Graham live. The drive was quite good and started to get greener and greener as we moved north. Morning tea at a roadside stop north of Young indicated they had had some good rain recently and we were told by another traveler that they had got 50mm on the Friday before – the time when Narrandera got 17mm and Leeton just a spit!

Lorna's place is on a well planted block (acreage) with plenty of native trees and shrubs to attract birds. Their complaint was that the place has been taken over by a group of Little Wattlebirds and few other birds get much of a chance to feed there. They have a bower of a Satin Bowerbird and we saw several females but no males during our stay. The garden was visited most days by a pair of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo which fed on the banksia cones.

Day 1 - Tuesday

We met up with members of the Newcastle Bird Observers Club at Tomago wetlands where they were going to do a survey of the wetland area prior to a trial release of salt water back into the wetlands. The area had long been drained and used for farmland, mainly dairying, but that has long since ceased. At this spot Lorna wanted to look for Southern Emu-wren and we were successful in having reasonable views of 3 female birds drying themselves out on a twig above the grass. At this spot we had good views of a Spangled Drongo, a Shining Bronze-cuckoo and several Tawny Grassbirds.

We left the group to continue their survey and moved onto Ash Island near Hexham where we had good views of waterbirds and waders – it was interesting to see huge numbers of Chestnut Teal with virtually no Grey Teal to speak of.

The next birding spot was right in Newcastle at the ocean baths where we had close views of Sooty Oystercatcher, Ruddy Turnstone plus Crested and Common Tern. Out at sea we could see hundreds of shearwater and could only reasonably identify Wedge-tailed Shearwater.

Lunch was had at Stockton just over the bridge and we got excellent views of Mangrove Gerygone, Grey-tailed Tattler and Golden Plover – the latter in various stages of breeding plumage - we were also delighted to have a fly-over by an Osprey.

Next was a quick visit to the Shortland Wetlands a wonderful place for water birds as well as the smaller land birds, particularly honeyeaters. We went there to see the Magpie Geese and also ticked-off a number of honeyeaters including Scarlet, Yellow-faced, White-cheeked, Brown and Eastern Spinebill. Our final stop for the day was at the Walka Waterworks where we saw 15 Great Crested Grebe.

Day 2 - Wednesday

Graham drove us into the hinterland area towards Gloucester Tops. We called into several rain forest areas and located and heard many rainforest species including Green Catbird, Bassian and Russet-tailed Thrush, Paradise Riflebird, Logrunner, Superb Lyrebird and Pale-yellow Robin. Birds weren't easy to locate and the rainforest was remarkably quiet in a lot of places. We did come across a fruiting fig tree at one stop where we watched hundreds of Topknot Pigeon gorging themselves on the fruit.

Day 3 – Thursday

We had a very early start and left Lorna's in thick fog at 6.30 to head north to Taree, first to visit a small rainforest pocket at Wingham right in the middle of town on the river. It is a spot that Lorna and her Twitchathon Team visit to get particular birds – mainly Emerald Dove (only heard by us) and Regent Bowerbird. The forest is the daytime roost for a huge colony of Grey-headed Fruit Bats and we had to run



Grey-headed Fruit Bat
Lorna Mee

the gauntlet to get past the screeching multitude – needless to say I copped a shower as I walked under the squabbling mob – I’m pleased I didn’t look up! Is being pooped-on by a fruit bat good luck!! We did get a female Regent Bowerbird and White-headed Pigeon here as well as a White-bellied Sea Eagle roosting in a tree beside the river.

We then headed towards the coast at Harrington and came to a screeching halt when Lorna spotted a Black-necked Stork (previously known as Jabiru) in a swamp beside the road. On close inspection we found an adult bird and two brown juveniles (on our return that afternoon, we found a third juvenile but still only one adult bird). At Harrington beside the Manning River, we located a number of waders including Pacific Golden Plover in full breeding plumage (such an incredible change from their usual summer plumage here). We also saw Eastern Curlew, Whimbrel, and both Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwits also in full breeding plumage. Whilst scanning the mudflats, a Brahminy Kite flew across and landed in a tree beside its mate.

At Harrington, there is a small rainforest area beside the beach and a walk through that produced Rufous Fantail and Spectacled Monarch.

On the return trip home, we stopped at Swan Bay where we located a roosting group of small waders that included Red-capped Plover, Red-necked Stint and a few Double-banded Plover (the first arrivals from their New Zealand breeding grounds).

Day 4 – Friday (already!!)

Graham again did the honours driving and we first headed to the Kurri Kurri/Cessnock area to a swamp where Lorna had seen Jacana a week before – this was at Jack Brown Lagoon and we located 2 birds almost immediately. Other stops that day were at drier areas including the Wollemi and Yengo National Park areas. We picked-up a number of good birds including Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Little Lorikeet, White-naped and Yellow-faced Honeyeater as well as a number of Wonga Pigeon at a quick stop at Old Brush Brinkerville.

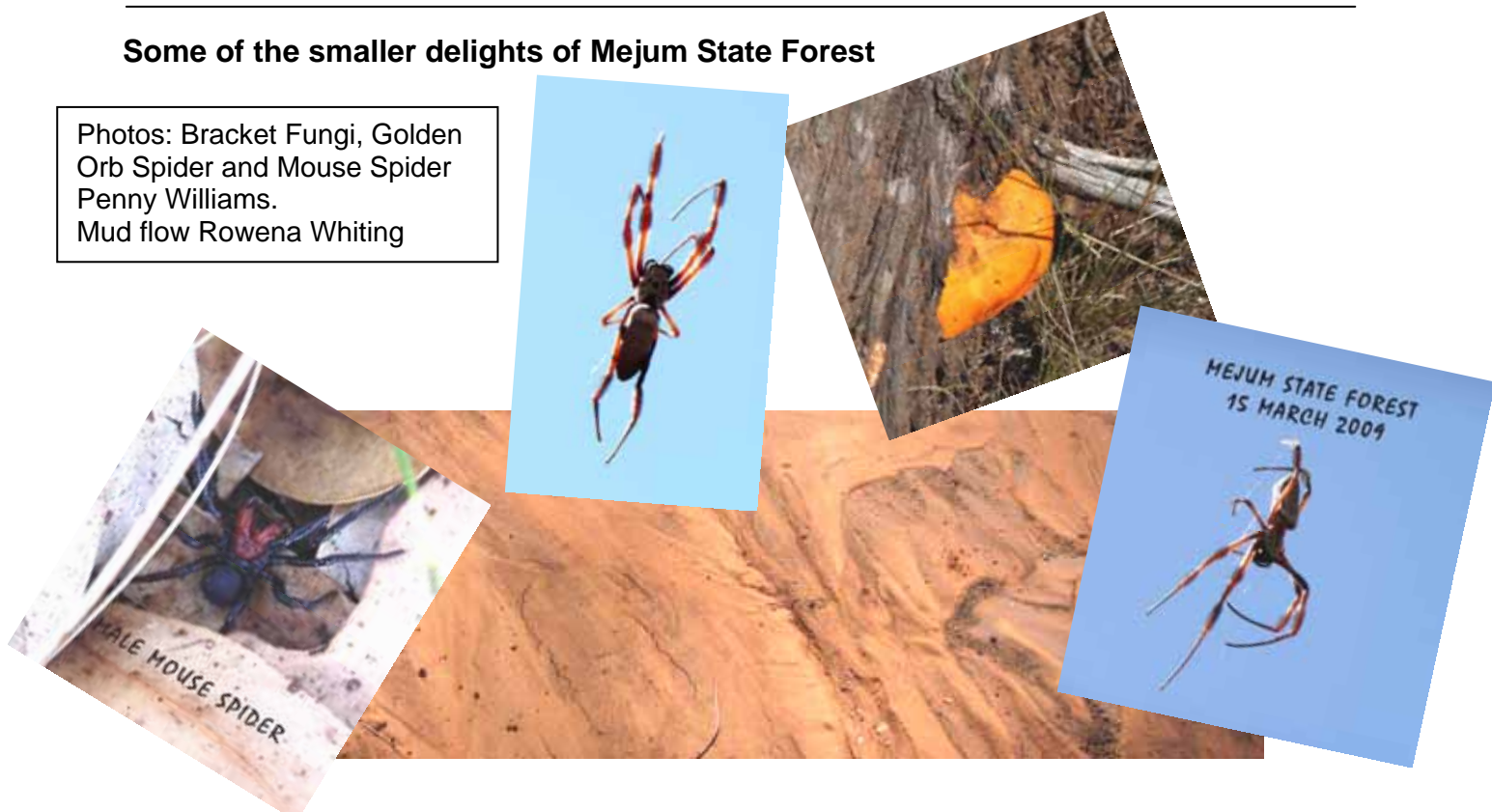
That evening, we planned to dine out in Newcastle and on the way we called into Ash Island at dusk to try to get the resident Grass Owl. After being chased out by mossies, we dipped on the owl but we were more than compensated by a close-up look at a White-throated Nightjar resting on the road in front of the car.

In all we saw or heard close to 180 species for the trip and this certainly added a good number of “new” birds for Neville’s and my 2009 year-list. Thanks to Lorna and Graham for their hospitality and guiding and we both had a most enjoyable time. I think that 4 days plus two full days driving was quite sufficient for the two aged but keen birders and I’m sure we exhausted Lorna who catered so well for both the outings and the domestics!

Max O’Sullivan

Some of the smaller delights of Mejum State Forest

Photos: Bracket Fungi, Golden Orb Spider and Mouse Spider
Penny Williams.
Mud flow Rowena Whiting



Nature study in New Zealand is a real mixed bag. Now I know that we have a poor record in Australia but the land clearing in NZ is near total and they seem to have all our feral pests, and more. As for the 'clean and green' image, the clean is more a result of the wind and rain off the southern ocean blasting the landscape, and green is just a colour. On the other hand the south west is relatively untouched and understandably the focus of tourism. And of course the scenery can be second to none.

Pre-trip research on birds and birding rang alarm bells. When I took the "extinct", "rarely seen", "feral", and "only found on such and such islands" out of the bird lists there wasn't much left to go looking for. And mentions of good birding sites left gaping holes on the map. So I decided to leave my bins at home.

Our trip started in Christchurch and was a loop down the east coast, around the south, up the west coast, and across the Alps back to Christchurch.

The Canterbury Plain is totally cleared and drained and put over to sheep and dairy with plenty of money recently spent on spray irrigation and it is difficult to spot any remnant vegetation. Not even roadside vegetation is spared – and all farm trees are replaced by trimmed pine hedgerows, pretty but barren.

Feral birds ruled in the continuous open farmland, mostly imports from England. (Sparrow, Yellow Hammer, Goldfinch, Redpoll, Silvereye, Mallard and occasional sightings of Australian Magpie, Greenfinch, California Quail, Chaffinch) Local birds could be found

on the fresh and coastal waters (Paradise Shelduck, Scaup, Pukeko, Masked Lapwing, Oystercatchers, Gulls). Two locals that could be seen almost everywhere were the kite-like NZ Harrier and the large Black Backed Gull. Hedgehogs were the preferred road kill with the occasional fox and cat.

In the far south patches of natural bush started to appear, and with it some of the native birds. I managed to chat with a Tui, and had plenty of NZ Wood Pigeons sailing and looping overhead. It was possible to spot a Tomtit, Robin or Rifleman when you step into the bush, and Grey Warblers were heard everywhere but not often seen. With the bush came the appearance of the possum road kill, and the hedgehogs were no more.

The Tui, a honeyeater, had the best vocals. Sometimes notes like a Willie Wagtail or Grey Shrike Thrush, or some of the sweeter honeyeaters – clear and musical – sometimes harsh cackles and gratings like wattlebirds. But sometimes they had a fantastic electronic sound which I first mistook for one of those silly car horns. They are imitators so that might explain the car horn.

Two more bush birds made an appearance just when I thought I had seen all I could expect. Catching my breath and wiping off the sweat at the top of the first big hill north of Haast I was approached by a Fernbird who stayed around long enough and close enough to be photographed and introduced to Johanna and a German couple. And at Hokitika we spotted a weka and froze so as not to scare it away – but it came right along to us on the narrow track and walked past as if we weren't there, which I can prove from my photos, we were.

Unlike the paucity on land, there was quite a deal of wildlife along the coast, with seals and sea lions everywhere, Hector's Dolphins, a smattering of ducks, waders, penguins, albatross, shearwater, cormorants, spoonbills, and even Cape Barren Geese.

What with the cold and wind and rain and mist and cloud, we didn't get much in the way of big scenic views but I am told they are there! By all means visit NZ but be warned – the weather can be perfect but it can also be terrible and the locals don't even pretend to be sympathetic – "It will be refreshing!" we were told of a persistent drizzly rain as we got off the bus in the middle of nowhere!

Neil Palframan

Photos: from top White Fronted Terns, Fernbird in the ferns. Weka on the track, A close experience with the local wildlife



A look into the past

Have you ever wondered how our area looked like before settlement? Generalised maps have been drawn based on theoretical reconstructions of pre-1788 vegetation. There is much debate over the density of growth of the woodlands and forests around here – were they all ‘parkland-like’ where horses could easily be galloped under large, widely spaced trees, or was there a denser shrub layer. The truth probably lies between the two with the land being a veritable patchwork.

But what about further back in time – way back in geological time?

Our oldest rocks date back to late Ordovician times, about 440 million years ago. Australia then was not as large as it is now. There was no land east of a line from Mildura to Cape York. I say east although in that period the orientation would have been north – and our latitude would have been around 30° North! Also Australia was just part of the massive single super continent Pangaea. So our rocks were laid down as sediments in a fairly deep ocean. There was no life on land then anyway, the atmosphere then had very little oxygen in it and consequently no ozone in the upper parts to screen out the damaging UV rays from the sun.

The earth’s crust is always in the state of movement somewhere and the instability set in here during this era. Mountain building folding occurred in an offshore belt resulting eventually to a shifting series of islands up the eastern edge of the continent. However we seemed to remain under the sea right up to Mid-Devonian times c 370 million years ago. The only rocks we have from this period of geological unrest are the Mid-Silurian granite intrusions at Grong Grong and northwards to Ardlethan.

It is not until the late Devonian period c 365 million years ago that we get more sedimentary rocks. These survive as the sandstone, siltstone and conglomerate ridges of the Cocoparra and Narrandera Ranges. By that time plants were beginning to invade the land, albeit rather restricted to the edges of water bodies. Australia (and Pangaea) was by now on its southward migration, rotating as it travelled so that we were then 40°S. The climate was hot and humid (it had been under arid desert conditions during the Early and Mid Devonian periods).

The first land plants are believed to be Green Algae or the symbiotic combination of algae and fungi we know as lichens. Algae dominated the seas, and still do from microscopic single celled plants to the largest of the seaweeds. However it was probably the mosses that had the physical structure to grow larger than a mere coating of the waters edge. By Mid-Devonian times evolution had rapidly progressed with the increasing possibilities of habitats and most of the main groups of Higher Plants were now represented – the spore producing Lycopods (Club mosses), Articulates (Horsetails) and Ferns, as well as Seed-ferns and the fore-runners of the Gymnosperms.



Fossilised ripple - Jacks Creek, Cocoparras

Our ranges are largely built of river deposits brought down from the then high mountains of Central Australia. Unfortunately the combination of plants being mostly of soft tissues, poor environments for fossilisation (active high energy streams give little chance of material being gently covered to form good fossils), and subsequent earth movements have resulted in an extremely sparse fossil flora being found here.

The earth movements just mentioned gave rise to the many major and minor folding of the Devonian strata as they were uplifted into mountain stature – mountains that ever since have been slowly eroded back to the present isolated ridges. There is no further evidence of deposition since the Late Devonian times right up to the Tertiary era beginning 66 million years ago.

The 300 million year period saw Pangaea split into Gondwanaland and the Euramerican lands, the Australian part of Gondwanaland began to rotate, and drift further south over the South Pole and then steadily northwards again. The journey over the South Pole coincided with a great Ice Age (Early Permian era c280 million years ago) – with a devastating effect on flora and fauna.

Eric Whiting

Commercialisation of National Parks

There is considerable concern about the commercialization of and in National Parks. See NPA (www.npansw.org.au) for more details concerning the danger commercialization could have on National Parks. Write to your parliamentary member Dawn Fardell or Environment Minister, Carmel Tebbutt at dp.office@tebbutt.minister.nsw.gov.au about these concerns.

S I G H T I N G S

Latham's Snipe [1]	Narrandera Wetlands	25/02/09	Neville James
Peregrine Falcon	Narrandera Quarry	07/03/09	Neville James
Eastern Rosella [2]	Jarrah Street, Leeton	12/03/09	John Cameron
(Feeding off Pencil Pine seeds for 3 weeks now)			
White-plumed Honeyeater	Jarrah Street, Leeton	12/03/09	John Cameron
(Feeding off flowering shrubs for 4 weeks now)			
Diamond Firetail	Five Mile, Narrandera	08/03/09	Phil & Penny Williams
Brown Treecreeper	Five Mile, Narrandera	08/03/09	Phil & Penny Williams
White-bellied Sea Eagle	Five Mile, Narrandera	08/03/09	Phil & Penny Williams
Hobby	DPI, Griffith	12/02/09	Bill Moller
Major Mitchell Cockatoo [36]	Binya Street, Griffith	17/03/09	Neil Palframan
White-winged Cough [8]	Binya Street, Griffith	18/03/09	Neil Palframan
Major Mitchell Cockatoo	Golf Course, Griffith	Most days /03/09	Sue Chittick-Dalton
Peregrine Falcon [1]	Yenda	02/03/09	MFN Group
Swamp Wallaby [1]	Ski Beach, Murrumbidgee R. (Leeton)	21/03/09	Joanne Tarbit
Wedge-tailed Eagle [pair]	Jacks Creek, Cocoparra Nat. Park	21/03/09	Johanna Botman
Birds seen during the Mini-Twitch on 27-28 March			
Great Crested Grebe	Lake Wyangan	1st reported by June Sell	
Bush Stone Curlew	Griffith Cemetery	Leeton Loonies	
Pallid Cuckoo	Stackpoole to Griffith	Nella and Bill	
Crested Bellbird	Cocaparra NP	2 teams reported it	
Buff-rumped Thornbill	Stackpoole SF	Bill and Nella	
Caspian Tern	Lake Wyangan	Neil and Johanna	

Fivebough earthworks update

It would appear that the earthworks at the deep settling ponds at Fivebough are completed, as the earthmoving equipment is no longer there.

Both ponds have two major banks across them – wide enough for a truck to drive over – the ducks love it as a resting area! In the back pond there have been sluice gates installed into the banks that would indicate the banks are there to stay. However, so far, there are no gates in the front pond.

Another thing of note is that there has been an, albeit token, attempt to cut out the catheads that are everywhere on the walking track – particularly around the two main shallow ponds. It is not a pleasant place to walk around at present unless you have a sturdy pair of old boots! - such a pity when you consider it is Leeton's premier birding spot.

Birds of note are listed in the sightings for the month with Brolga and Plumed Whistling Duck being the most interesting birds there at present.

Max O'Sullivan

Photos: Rowena Whiting



COMING EVENTS CALENDAR

- 9 April Thursday** **Leeton Meeting** at 7:30pm in the Seminar Room 1, Block 34 at Department of Primary Industry. Yanco Ag Institute
Presenter: Bill Draper will show some of his photos including recent field trips
Enquiries: Jan Cameron 6953 2202
Remember your Show & Tell
- 11 or 12 April** **EASTER - Possible outing if people are interested**
Saturday or Sunday **Contact:** Eric or Rowena Whiting 6953 2612
- 19 April Sunday** **Bush Walk in the Cocoparra National Park**
Woolshed - Duncans Hill Circuit.
Few tracks, walk approx 8-9 km with c200 metres climb
Bring a snack to carry and lunch for the walk's end.
Meet at Yenda PO at 8:30am
Contact Eric Whiting 02 69532612
- 23 April Thursday** **Griffith Meeting** - Meet at DPI Conference Room 7.30pm
Guest Speaker TBA
- 26 April Sunday** **Annual Koala Count at Narrandera Common.**
Meet there at 9:00. Follow the signs from Lake Talbot canal bridge (just before the swimming complex)
Concludes about 12:00 noon with a sausage sizzle and drinks available at minimal cost – courtesy Narrandera Rotary
Leaders required from MFN to keep out of towners on track.
Contact: Nella Smith 6959 1210
- 6 May Wednesday** **Copy for May newsletter is due**
- 14 May Thursday** **Leeton Meeting** at 7:30pm in the Seminar Room 1, Block 34 at Department of Primary Industry. Yanco Ag Institute
Guest Speaker: Lee Baumgartner from Narrandera Fisheries
Enquiries: Jan Cameron 6953 2202
- 17 May Sunday** **Outing – to be decided.**
Suggestions are for a look at geology or may be fungi (if there is more heavy rain). Bring any other ideas to the meeting.
Details next Newsletter
- 24 May Sunday** **Bushwalk – to be decided**
Details next Newsletter
- 28 May Thursday** **Griffith Meeting** - Meet at DPI Conference Room 7.30pm
Guest Speaker TBA
- 11 June Thursday** **Leeton Meeting** at 7:30pm in the Seminar Room 1, Block 34 at Department of Primary Industry. Yanco Ag Institute
Guest Speaker: from Leeton Shire
- 20 June Saturday** **Short Film and Pasta (or maybe Curry) Night –**
Don't forget to get your Short films organised, liaise with Johanna email Johanna@griffithgateway.com or phone 69 634855.