

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



November 2014 - Issue #221
Journal of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc.
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Objects of the Club

To facilitate and promote the knowledge of natural history, and to encourage the preservation and protection of the Australian natural environment, especially that of the Murrumbidgee River Valley

Our Twitchathon Teams



Carefree Curlews - Sue Chittick-Dalton, Virginia O'Brien, Michelle Ballestrin (with Archie) and Melanie Baulch



Out for a Lark - Phil Tenison, Nella Smith, Neil Palframan and Johanna Botman



Silly Galahs - Max O'Sullivan, Penny and Phillip Williams

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Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

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MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THE SECOND THURSDAY EACH MONTH, EXCEPT JANUARY, AT THE Yellow Room, Leeton Library, Sycamore Street at 7.30 PM

FIELD TRIPS NORMALLY TAKE PLACE ON THE FOLLOWING WEEKEND.

INTENDING NEW MEMBERS, GUESTS AND VISITORS WELCOME.

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

Mt Bingar Walk

As there was only Nella, Sue Chittick-Dalton, Wendy and I, we decided to drive to Mt. Bingar to look for flora and fauna.

The walk along the rough 4WD track at the top of the Mt. Bingar towers proved to be very successful with finds of the last Spider Orchids, Pink Fingers (only 1), the last of the Midget Greenhood Orchids and a patch of the Red Rustyhoods *Oliochaetochilus lingua*. We saw many small ground cover plants including the Twining Fringe Lily, Pink Bind weed, Nodding Blue-lily, Blue Pincushion and many more. There was the Rusty Spider-flower Grevillea, Cotton Fireweed, Currawang (*Acacia doratoxylon*) shrubs, Common Fringe Myrtle, Hill Teatrees, Urn Heath, and several varieties of hop bushes, plus others!

We were so engrossed with our finds that we missed out on our morning tea! Instead we drove to Jack's Creek, had an early lunch as the day was getting rather warm and we wanted to walk the track. We walked up and over the gully and hill, finding it was getting quite warm (the hottest day, 37°C, since last summer) and the going was slow. We made it back to the rest area with tongues hanging out for another cuppa!

There was disappointment in the air as we didn't find any orchids there at all! The flora was made up of ferns, some everlasting daisies, Heath Myrtle along with weeds but little else due to the dry spring weather. By that time of the day the birds were only small in number and mainly LBB's

Virginia O'Brien.



Top left: Red Rustyhood
Top right: Thelemitra megacalyptra
Above: 4 girls at Jacks Creek
Photos Nella Smith

The Brogden Trip

When we phoned Nella to ask how many takers for the trip she had, she said one other person had called. We decided it was still a goer, half hoping more would turn up at the Yenda meeting place. They didn't, so Nella, Allan McLean, Rowena and myself proceeded to the Binya Forest Picnic Ground and commenced up the track to the top of Mt Brogden.

It was new to Allan but the rest of us had done it several times before. The weather was just right for the walk, thankfully as it had been rather hot leading up to the weekend, and the track is a steady incline all the way.

The hot spell had reduced the number of flowers out but there was still enough to interest us. Like the Snowy Mintbush with pale lilac flowers instead of the normal pure white (hybrid with Oval-leaf Mintbush?).

The second great find was the number of *Pomaderris cocoparrana* seedlings we found all around the top of the gully



Pomaderris:

The NSW Scientific Committee established under the Threatened Species Act have just made a Preliminary Determination to support the listing of *Pomaderris cocoparrana* as Endangered. Its numbers and restricted range (Cocoparras from Binya to Washpool Creek in very distinct habitats and one occurrence near Ardlethan) means that it is at a very high risk of extinction in the near future. That is of course if a 'do nothing' approach is taken, but hopefully that will not be the case.



The third point of interest was the number of galls on the leaves of the Currawang. Big 1-1.5cm round green spheres. I took a couple home to cut apart to see what was inside – thrips. See separate article.

Above top: Snowy Mintbush - Photo: Eric Whiting
Left: Clustered Everlastings – seen all along the track– Photo: Rowena Whiting
Below: View from the top - Photo: Rowena Whiting

The view from the top is always worth the climb and this day was exceptionally good as the air was so clear.

Return is back the same way – but quicker! So we were back at the cars for an early lunch before calling it a day.

Eric Whiting



A correction for the last issue for the Hunthawong birdlists the Eastern Rosella wasn't seen but a Grey-fronted Honeyeater was as Phillip Williams' photo showed. It was in the Nombinnie section.

Thrips

Thrips are small insects (the Giant Thrip is all of 15mm long!) in their own Order. Generally they are plant chewers or sap suckers, and some are important crop pests. Primitive species feed on fungi but most others are pollen or flower feeders. Some cause the formation of galls on plants; Australian species have a particular affinity for Acacia but not Eucalyptus species. In most cases one thrip species causes a particular shaped gall on one or a few related plant species.

Thrips have a cylindrical body of a head, thorax and abdomen typical of insects. The body is always cylindrical and elongate. Adults have two pairs of wings that are membranous and fringed with long hairs.

Eggs are laid on or in plant tissue. The young are similar to adults but lack wings. They undergo around four moults before entering prepupal and pupal stage, still retaining their adult appearance.

Although there are something like 740 Australian species in five families, nearly all are only found in the Eastern States, with none in the deserts or Western Australia. So far only 27 species are known to induce gall formation in Australia, the galls are usually on leaves and in the form of rolls, tubes or pouches.

Eric Whiting

Club and member news

Get well wishes to our president, Max O'Sullivan, who is currently on the sick list having undergone surgery last week. We wish you all the best, Max, for a speedy recovery and trust you will soon be raising the binoculars again and contributing the sightings page!

Bunyip Bird Project

The Environmental Grants Committee met last week to consider the 2 projects for funding and approved the funding of the project submission to fund the Bunyip Birds project for \$2500. This means we have the naming right to one of the bitterns.

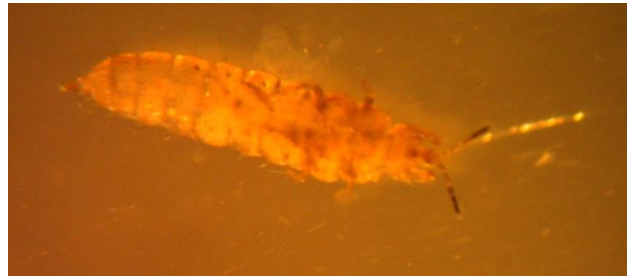
This crowd funding campaign was launched on 17 September --to raise \$50 000 to track, using satellites the endangered Australasian Bitterns and has now concluded. It attracted over 300 supporters. The target was not only reached but exceeded by \$13,000. This will enable an extra 2 bitterns to be tracked. [Crowd funding is 'pozible' through accumulating small donations from a wide range of people who believe in the project.]

For more information, the latest news, project updates and publications: visit Matt Herring's web site www.murraywildlife.com.au or follow the link to pozible's website (<http://www.pozible.com/project/186259>)

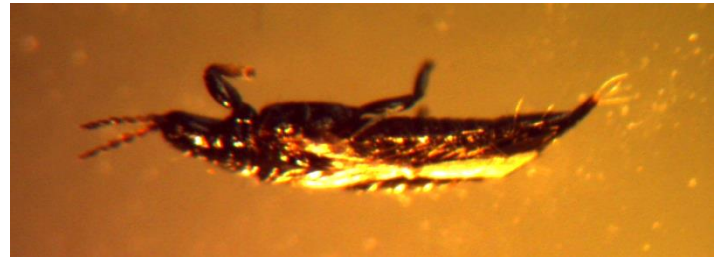
Native game bird management in NSW - Barry Allen drew my attention to the changes which came into effect earlier this year. Unfortunately space doesn't permit me to include this detailed information which is for landholders but a brief summary

- Landholders are not required to provide harvest returns
- Licensing arrangements for harvest of native game birds are similar to previous years.
- Landholders, members of their household or their employees are now required to have a game hunting licence and have passed a WIT course if they wish to harvest game birds.
- Costs associated with the game hunting licence and WIT will be waived
- Significant landholder support provided by NSW DPI Game Licensing Unit.

More information can be found on their website www.dpi.nsw.gov.au July 2014 Primefact 1352 .



Above: Thrip - larva ex gall
Below: Adult Thrip



Twitchathon 2014

This year's event was held in very hot conditions with dust and thunderstorms; it isn't surprising that the number of bird species was down. However 2 of our teams are well up in the preliminary results for the Champagne Race and the other around the middle:

Out for a Lark – 5th with 136 species
Silly Galahs 6th with 132 species
Carefree Curlews 118 species.

By their accounts of the birds they had expected but missed they were very close with another team seeing them at the location with little difference in the time.



Group at the finish – enjoying nibbles and discussing their results Photo: Phillip Williams

If you haven't already done so please show your support for one or more of our teams by making a donation to their fund raising. This will be going towards the Bird Conservation Portal project, to complement the Birdlife Australia Bird Atlas Project. The Bird Conservation Portal will draw together structured bird monitoring, the synthesis and analysis of bird data and biological, ecological and conservation reporting for Birdlife Australia, into one place. A downloadable and user-friendly native (free to user) App (Android and iOS) will be developed which will allow volunteers to record and submit data. The specific focus of the portal is to encourage repeat surveys of fixed sites needed to support bird conservation

You can send your money to the Treasurer, Phil Tenison, to PO Box 541, Leeton, NSW 2705 or make a bank transfer to the MFN's bank account. It is the Commonwealth Bank, BSB 062 564, A/c 10039396. Don't forget to include 'twitch' and your name so Phil can identify it and give you a receipt. Donations are tax deductible.

Read on to find out where they went, what they 'ticked' and what was 'not ticked'.

Rowena.

Out for Lark – Twitchathon report

Neil thought we should call our team "Out for Lark" just to keep us merry and grounded. It also saw the wheel turn as one of the teams in our first Twitchathons was called that. Neil Palframan, Johanna Botman, Nella Smith, Phil Tenison and Kathy Tenison comprised the team. We decided to begin at Fivebough Wetlands so we could do a rekie before we started. Phil said to bring gumboots and a shovel but we needed neither. I am embarrassed to say that we saw no waders and not much mud and no snakes. (Is that why we needed the shovel Phil?)

Fivebough however gave us two crakes, two wrens, two duck and a partridge in a pear tree.



Nankeen Kestrel

Photo: Phillip Williams
The Mullumbidgee Naturalist

Leeton Ski Beach was hard to find but we did find a piece of river and a Dollarbird. We had to go to the Yanco Common to get the Superb Parrots to fly out, (they're everywhere you know except when there's a twitchathon) .

Tuckerbil is usually good for raptors and waterbirds and sometimes Blue-winged Parrots and Fairy-wrens. We found none of these nor the White-backed Swallows nor the Red-backed Kingfisher that is always there. But we did hear a Little Bittern which made the walk up the hill worthwhile. The raptors were scarce everywhere, none of our teams found a Wedge-tailed Eagle!!

It was getting late by the time we got to Wattle Dam and the Curlews were there having their champagne while we set up camp for the night and Johanna cooked a fabulous kangaroo hamburger. This meant that the

twitchers could get on with the job before the nightbirds and we fell asleep.

The dawn chorus amounted to some very loud Jacky Winter and Kookaburra calling. The Turquoise Parrots finally came to drink but the other bush birds were hard to find. A mixed twitter of little birds produced a crowd of mixed thornbills. The male Splendid Fairy-wren was really showing his colours.

We sailed off to the winery after a sumptuous breakfast again supplied by Johanna leaving us to get on with the job at hand.

The winery supplied the usual suspects. It was then through Griffith to the golf course and as usual the Major Mitchell Cockatoos were busy elsewhere, but the Tawny Frogmouth was still where Neil left her last week (sitting on her flimsy nest).

Blackbirds, Goldfinches and Rainbow Lorikeets just flew over on our way to the Beelbangera Store for a Superb Coffee break.



Mistletoebird (female)
Photo: Phillip Williams

The Griffith SWT was good for ducks, Blue-billed, Musk, Hard Head and Pink-eared but no Freckled.

You know that the early bird gets the worm, well Neil was the early bird for the key to Barren Box. Now we knew that our opposition was in trouble as THEY had no key and WE DID.

The White-bellied Sea-eagle was perched on a structure and one lone Caspian Tern was about but we did look at Whiskered Tern carefully just in case they got mixed up with something else. The 8 or 10 Orange Chats were what made the day. Neil cycles out on the Goolgowi road and he knew there were Banded Lapwing out there, and you know they were just waiting for us together with the White-fronted Chats, the Brown Songlark and the Bushlark.

Thanks to the Carefree Curlews and the Silly Galahs FOR SOME STIFF COMPETITION. Remarkably we didn't encounter any of them.

Nella Smith

The Silly Galah's Twitchathon in 2014

The Silly Galahs, Max, Phillip and Penny (myself) again assembled for the Twitchathon. Max has only recently returned from a trip to Queensland but was able to do some scouting before the big day.

This year we started at the Koonadan Historic Site, ticking off a few water birds. However we missed out on seeing the White-backed Swallows. This set the scene for the rest of the Twitchathon.



We headed to Andrew's place. At the entrance to his property a Spotted Harrier posed for us. Ticks at Andrew's include Striated Pardalotes, Double-barred Finches, Brown Tree-creepers and Mulga Parrots. Hoey Lookout revealed Brolgas a long way off. The day ended with tea at the Williams and a tally of 77 birds. It had been a hot afternoon and we felt the birds were scarce.

Next morning we set off before day break. The forecast was for a hot day and we needed a lot of different birds to pass in



Max at the helm
Diamond Firetail - photos Phillip Williams

front of our eyes/binoculars. Around Leeton we spotted the Dollar Bird at Euroley Bridge and the Little Friarbird at Turkey Flat. Here we saw an impressive sunrise, however no time for photos today.

We headed to Griffith. A search in the vicinity of Wattle Dam finally gave us the Eastern Yellow Robin, Jacky Winter and Red-capped Robin we were looking for. Galah Dam was worth a visit to see a Turquoise Parrot with his spectacular colours come down for a drink. There were Plumed Whistling Ducks at the Yenda Sewerage Ponds just as Max had predicted from his scout a couple of days before.

Darter
Photo: Phillip Williams



Penny Williams

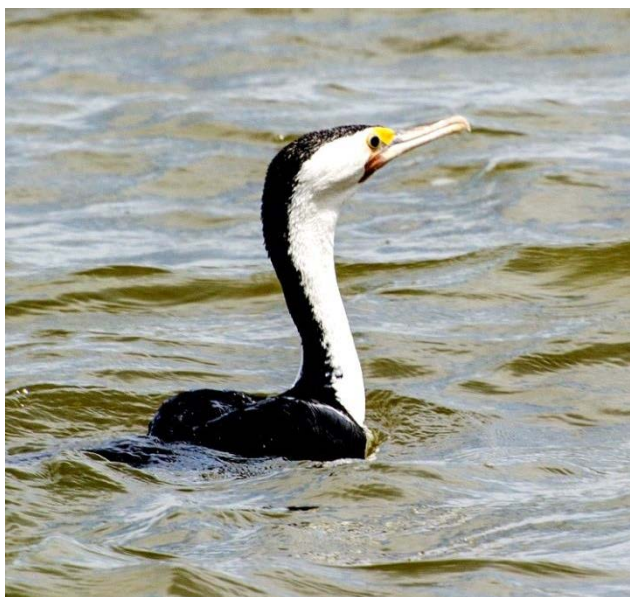
In Griffith we stopped by the channel near the showground for lunch but our hopes of seeing the Rainbow Lorikeets there were dashed. Their calls and they were absent. (Well at least the hot day predicted by the forecast did not eventuate, so it was quite pleasant in the shade of the trees.)

We visited the Griffith Golf Course to see the Tawny Frogmouth, this year perched on a nest, and then onto Campbell's Swamp. At the Lake Wyangan Causeway we were able to add a Darter and Great Egret to our ticks.

We were aware of our 4.00pm deadline at Lake Wyangan. Mmmm..... dilemma here, our number of ticks were still not to our liking but really time had run out. After a cruise around the grounds at Lake Wyangan we headed for Eric and the finish line. Our final tally was 132 birds, the lowest we had recorded over the 4 years! We had missed out on the Silvereye, Major Mitchells, Rainbow Lorikeets and Cisticola as well as others. We also were pipped at the post by the "Out for a Lark" (Nella Smith, Neil Palframan, Johanna Botman, Phil Tenison) with a tally of 136 birds!! Never mind there is always next year.

CAREFREE CURLEWS

Carefree was certainly the optimum word to describe the members of Carefree Curlews. The team work was great with Melanie Baulch and Michelle Ballestrin with the bins, Virginia O'Brien with shark eye and sharp pencil doing the recordings and me doing the driving. We covered 299.3Ks and found treasures wherever we went. The Bee-eater and Turquoise parrot turning up on cue at Wattle Dam, the Musk Duck at the sewerage works, the Glossy Ibis and Brolgas at Koonadan, the Dollarbird at Euroley and a big Thank You to Tori & Lawrence Salvertrin and Julie & Doug McWilliam for allowing us to invade their beautiful gardens for the Tawney Frogmouth and Sacred Kingfisher.



Melanie, Michelle and Virginia provided yummy food and drinks and I got us around without an accident! It all worked very well...thank you team, it was a load of fun.

Sue Chittick-Dalton

Pied Cormorant (left)
Rufous Whistler (right)
Photos: Phillip Williams

What's going on in the Red Gums?

The State Forests between Narrandera and Darlington Point were declared National Parks in 2010. This meant that there was a change to managing the forests for environment and not for resource extraction. This should mean that together with environmental flows the river and the forests will be a lot healthier for all to enjoy including wildlife.

The National Parks and Wildlife Services want to encourage visitation to the parks and to this end NP&WS are implementing projects in River Red Gum Areas.

Projects are in 2 categories which include enhanced access and new visitor infrastructure.

The road system has been modified which includes an upgraded main access road which will cater for two wheel drive vehicles. Culverts have been put in where needed and some roads have been re-shaped and gravelled. All access roads to your favourite areas from the main road will be retained. But to save you from driving around a bit to find your way out some of the forestry roads have been closed.

Visitor facilities have been established at Turkey Flat Wetland and McCaughey's Lagoon, (near Yanco Agricultural School). A car park, interpretative signage, a walk/bike loop, a shelter and picnic tables and a bicycle stand have been installed at these sites. A bird hide with wheel-chair access at the Turkey Flat Wetland is a great facility when there is water in the wetlands. Water levels at Turkey Flat and McCaughey Lagoon will be managed through installation of new water management devices which will enhance water bird management. Some environmental water will be made available for the wetland. At the moment I see that there has been a flow.

We are truly really lucky in this area between Narrandera and Darlington Point because there are large numbers of reserves that you are still able to enjoy a bush camp and a fish with your own family group with generally few other visitors. And we also have the Narrandera Nature Reserve set aside for Koalas and a scarce area of Red Gum that has not been grazed.

A map and a leaflet produced by NPWS showing these are available from the visitors' centres.

There are no fees to camp in Red Gum Reserves and you can still camp at your favourite spots. Bush camping is what is allowed on the Murrumbidgee. Pets are not allowed in National Parks but are allowed in State Conservation Areas near towns and you must take your rubbish with you. (The Narrandera State Conservation Area off the Leeton Road is an example of this)

Restrictions on fires will be from September to March when no solid fuel fires are allowed but gas type barbecues are permitted. During Total Fire ban days NO fires are allowed.

Recreation Shooting in National Parks and Regional Reserves is being trialled in some National Parks near us but will be highly regulated and will follow National Parks regulations.

Nella Smith



Magnificent pre-white settlement Gum tree. Hollows in Red Gums are an important habitat



Family enjoying a picnic in the National Park

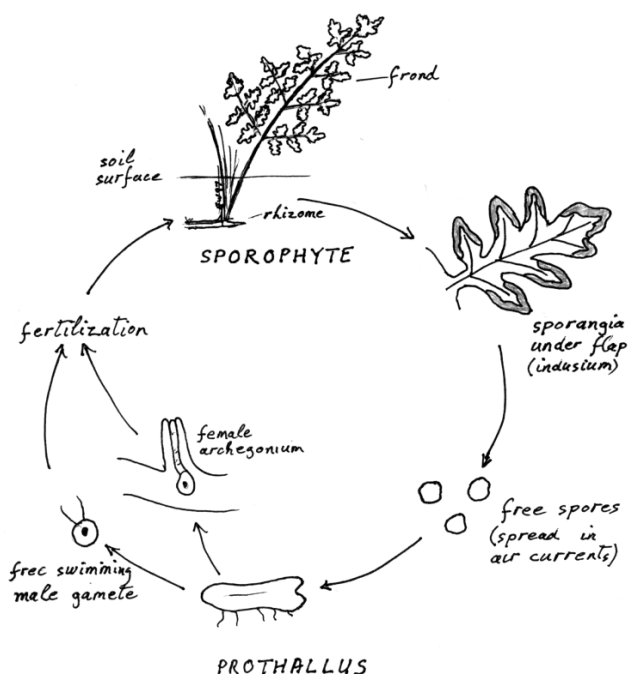
Ferns of the Northern Riverina – Part 1 Cheilanthes

Cheilanthes species are often known as resurrection ferns due to their ability to withstand drought. The fronds can dry right out yet still respond to the first reasonable rain to regain the green growing condition in a very short time. Usually locally desiccation is intense enough each summer for the fronds to completely disintegrate, to be replaced by new ones from the buried stems.

There are four species of Cheilanthes in New South Wales (16 in Australia and over 150 in the world). One of them *Cheilanthes lasiophylla*, Woolly Cloak Fern only occurs in arid regions and not in the Riverina.

Mulga Fern *C. sieberi* is the species we generally come across in the Riverina. It is quite common on the rocky hills, the Box woodlands of the slopes and out into the mallee. It does not like the heavier soils of the flood plains but can be found on the sand dunes marking the lines of prior streams.

The fronds are typical of the genus, 2-3 pinnate with the



Life Cycle of a Typical Fern

The differences being in the Rock Fern having translucent scales near the base of the stipe and sparsely on the underside of the wider (to 10cm) fronds. Another difference is that Rock Fern stems are generally horizontal so that fronds arise singly and not in dense clusters. Rock Fern also has a preference for moister and/or shadier sites. It is therefore more common eastwards on the slopes of and on the Great Dividing Range.

Reports of toxicity to stock from Cheilanthes species seems to imply only Mulga Fern is responsible, but due to the frequency of mis-identifications in the past the situation is far from clear. It is fortunate that they are not very palatable and never contribute much bulk in available greenery.

Eric Whiting

final pinnules rounded. Spores are generated in linear marginal bodies (sori) on the lower sides of the pinnules and partly covered by the recurved margin of the pinnule.

The main stalks of the fronds (stipes) are red brown to dark brown and shiny. There may be a very fine covering of hairs on the stipes but are usually glabrous. Stipes arise from the underground mostly vertical stems in a dense cluster. The fronds are generally less than 5cm wide and can be up to 35cm high.

Bristly Cloak Fern *C. distans* is similar to the Mulga Fern except it has stipes with a moderately dense covering of brown ribbon-like scales. (Woolly Cloak Fern has stipes with a dense covering of white or golden brown scales which also occur on the undersides of the fronds.) Bristly Cloak Fern prefers drier areas but apparently not the real arid areas, and is only seen occasionally in the Riverina.

The fourth species the Rock Fern *C. austrotenuifolia* also has similarities to the Mulga Fern. In fact the two were taken as a single species (*C. tenuifolia*) for many years.



Above top: Mulga Fern,
Above Rock Fern

Diary of a Bird Photographer Part 2

Continuation of Graham and Dionea Trip to Dorrigo. First part was in the September issue.

Family Event in Bellingen – Agenda: Trip to Dorrigo, bush walking, bird watching & catching up with Family.

Day 5 Upon leaving Lisnagarvey B&B for a day's walking in Dorrigo National Park. Photographed White-browed Scrubwrens and Little Wattlebirds in the garden. On route to national park saw a King Parrot fly over, much to my disappointment, no photo was taken.

After a big breakfast for two at the Dorrigo National Park Restaurant (and it was a big breakfast, more than we could eat and very good) it was time for some walking. The Park was very busy as it was school holidays (Dionea says that I must be getting old because I complained about all of the kids) so birds were hard to see. Photos taken - Bush Turkey, White-browed Scrubwren, Yellow-throated Scrubwren, and Brown Cuckoo-Dove. It was another hard days walking almost 6 km and over 150 meters down then back up again but even with all of the people and not many birds it was still a good day with plenty of other interesting things to look at.

Day 6 Visiting friends in Grafton

Day 7 Leisurely breakfast on the veranda of Windfell Gardens, rewarded with photos of White-browed Scrubwrens, and Red Wattlebirds.

First stop for the day, Bellingen Island, an Island in the middle of the Bellingen River, in the middle of town (also known by the locals as Bat Island, apparently fruit bats roost there often). The designated trail is hard to follow

but is still an interesting walk and not too strenuous and that suited us just fine. Photos taken: White-headed Pigeon, female Regent Bowerbird and female Golden Whistler.

Next stop Tuckers Rock on the southern edge of the Bong Bong National Park via North Bank Road. Stopped to photograph a Black-winged Kite hunting and a Brahminy Kite circling over the Bellingen River at Repton. On arrival at Tuckers Rock not birds but whales to be seen so lunch/afternoon tea was had sitting on the beach watching two whales. The closest was only just behind the breakers maybe 150 m out. When the whales finally swam off it was a quick walk in the scrub behind the beach. This yielded photographs of Lewin's Honeyeater, Rainbow Lorikeet, Little Wattlebird, White-cheeked Honeyeater, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Noisy Friarbird. Finally we ended the day with fish and chips at Urunga watching the Pelicans land. This was a good way to end a relaxing day that

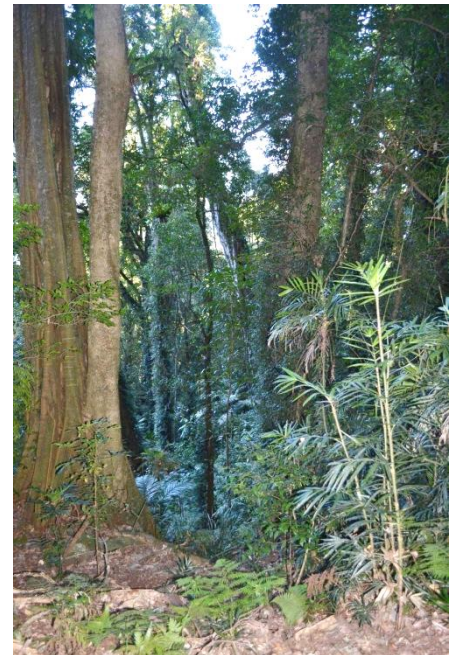
yielded 5 new species photographed for my collection.

Day 8 Family day that had given us the excuse to have the week off

Day 9 On the final morning before we left our cabin I photographed Eastern Yellow Robin, Red Wattlebird, Pied Currawong, Fairy-wren, White browed Scrubwren, Eastern

Spinebill, Lewins Honeyeater, Little Wattlebird also saw (but no photo) a male Satin Bowerbird after having heard it all morning.

The trip back to Tamworth and then home was punctuated by a walk at



Above from top: Dorrigo National Park
Whale at Tucker Rock
White-browed Scrubwren
Left: Red-browed Treecreeper

Cathedral Rock National Park and has definitely wetted our appetite to go back and stay a bit longer. Photos taken - Brown Thornbill, Red-browed Treecreeper, another Fairy-wren, Eastern Spinebill, White-throated Treecreeper.

Altogether 10 days away from home with three days walking and two other short excursions whilst travelling yielded 15 new birds for my photograph collection and our first sighting of a whale. The weather for the time that we stayed in Dorrigo was perfect, cool mornings and sunny days and according to the locals this is the norm for June/July so with all the things that we didn't have time to look at I can see another trip to Dorrigo (with less family) in a not too distant a winter.

Graham Russell

Reminiscences of Twenty Years of MFN

I had no idea what response I would get from putting an advert in the Irrigator in 1994 calling for interest in starting a Field Naturalist Club. Twenty two came to the meeting I called. We filled the little room at the back of the Community college premises in Church Street, Leeton.

The room soon proved to be too small for the numbers, especially when Pat Whittacker gave us a talk on local reptiles including a not so docile Brown Snake! So in February 1995 we moved to the Soldiers Club also changing the night from Friday to Thursday.

Those early years were really active times. Right from the start excursions followed the meeting nights and soon doubled in numbers when Bill and Patty moved to Griffith in 1996 and created the Griffith branch. The joy of it all was the finding of so many places to go and be able to share them with like-minded people. It was not all meetings and excursions. In the first ten years we played an important part in the community by running projects (Fivebough/Tuckerbil, Campbells/Nericon and the Hills projects), a plant workshop, Bird Conferences and a Roadside Remnant Vegetation Survey, together with other community events. The one I particularly like taking part in is the annual Koala Count.

The most pleasing aspect is the respect of the community for the club that has built up, and not only locally. Members may not realise it, but the Club is recognised throughout the State as the resource of knowledge of the Natural History of the Riverina.

The crowning achievement of the first decade was undoubtedly the acceptance of Dr David Lindenmayer to be the guest speaker at our 10th Anniversary Dinner. Together with a contingent of Cumberland Bird Observers we filled the banquet hall of the Historic Hydro.

But Nature has ways of testing those on a high. For us it was how to survive the prolonged drought. How we struggled to keep finding interesting venues for our excursions. How we battled the despair of seeing less and less in our natural bush. But survive we did if with fewer numbers (it was almost impossible to attract new members), and with what we are coming to realise, ten years older to test our bodies. Gosh, did we regularly take pack lunches and go all day on our excursions!

What a relief it was to see the Murrumbidgee in flood again, but what a surprise to have to cancel the March 2011 meeting because members could not get through flood water.

We now seem to be in one of those periods that hit all clubs at some stage, that is one where a generation turnover needs to take place. I am hopeful that the camaraderie we have built up over the years will see us through. It would be a pity and a great loss to the community to see the vast cumulative knowledge and understanding of our country inherent in the Club dissipate for want of rejuvenation.

Eric Whiting



Phil Green, not known, Dot Green, Rowena Whiting, Mary White. Richard Faulder and Mike Schultz – identifying our finds from a fungi foray in the Bogolong hills in May 1996 – Photo: Eric Whiting

**** COMING EVENTS ****

- 13 November Thursday** **AGM and Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton, commencing at 7:30pm
Presentation by David Egan -
‘The Red-lored Whistler Save Our Species Project’
Contact: Penny Williams 6953 3524
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com
- 15 November Saturday** **Unfortunately it has not been possible to organise the Art and Photography Display for this date.**
- 16 November Sunday** **Outing to Fivebough Wetlands (morning) and the Brobenah Hills (‘Yarrabimbi’) (afternoon).**
This will be a repeat of the club’s very first outing in October 1994.
Meet at the Petersham Road car park at 8:30 am.
Leader: Keith Hutton (who led in 1994)
Bring morning tea.
Lunch will be a sausage sizzle at Yarrabimbi (a small charge to cover cost)
Contact Eric or Rowena Whiting if intending to come for catering purposes, phone 6953 2612
- 29 November Saturday** **Christmas Break up**
This will take the usual form of an afternoon walk followed by a meal
We will be having nibbles, cold meats, salads, deserts/slice to share.
BYO drinks.
Venue: “Yarrabimbi” – Ana and Andrew’s place
Contact Penny Williams, if intending to come on 6959 3524 or preferably
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com
- 3 December Wednesday** **Copy for the December newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**
Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com. Phone: 6953 2612.
- 6-7 December -** **Challenge Bird Count 2014**
The 2014 Challenge Bird Count will be held on the 6-7 December and anyone is welcome to take part. All you have to do is get a few friends together and have a fun day, or spend an hour or two seeing how many species you can record in your area.
For information about the weekend, the rules and forms to complete see the Birdlife Australia website [www,birdlife.org.au](http://www.birdlife.org.au) – what’s on – challenge count.
- 11 December Thursday** **Evening outing to Turkey Flat Wetland, River Road, Yanco**
A picnic area with shelter and tables and bird hide in the Red Gum National Park
This will replace the December meeting
Contact: Penny Williams 6953 3524
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com
- 16 January** **Summer Campout at Cabramurra**
Friday to Sunday Please contact Penny Williams if you are interested in going.
Phone: 6953 3524 Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com