

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



May 2015 - Issue #226

Journal of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc.

PO Box 541, LEETON 2705 ISSN-1327-1172

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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



Yellow-billed Spoonbill with a yabby,

photographed by Ben Kschenka

At the Narrandera Wetlands on 26 April, Ben took a series of shots of it juggling with the catch, eventually managing to make it inactive before swallowing it.

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Wednesday 3 June**

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***Cocoparra and Murrumbidgee
Valley National Parks are the
locations for outings this month.***

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 AND SECOND WEEKEND AFTER INTENDING NEW MEMBERS, GUESTS AND VISITORS WELCOME.

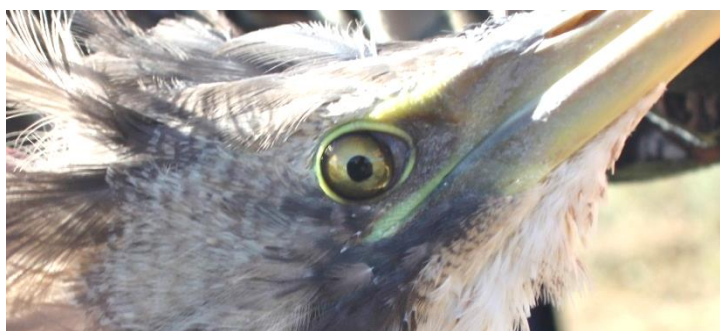
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Annual Subscriptions:	Family	\$45.00	Adult/Single	\$35.00	Journal only/Concession	\$25.00

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

Image preview of articles in this issue

The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the MFN.



Clockwise from above left:
Kalinda Road bush – Cypress Pine and Miljee – Rowena Whiting;
Probably the Yellow Red-rumped Parrot Neil Palframan;
Bat's Wing Fern, Tender Brake Fern and Yellow-stainer Mushroom – Rowena Whiting;
Robbie just prior to release – Matt Herring



A Double Header Excursion - 26 April 2015

McCann Rd

It was our first excursion to this overlooked patch of bush, and a glorious, chilly but sunny morning for the ten or so in attendance, including young Archie - was this his first MFN excursion? As we head along Lakes Rd all eyes are to the east which has views of the lake, the clubs, the camping area and the picnic area, but to the west we ignore the patch of 'scrub' which is almost untouched native vegetation, a Crown Reserve of The soil is sandy loam. The vegetation is park like with a tree mix of acacia, pine, hakea and casuarina. There is a groundcover of grasses, and a grove of planted eucalypts marks the point where a pipeline empties out into a channel. Many of the acacia had very healthy mistletoe in flower, and on other occasions this area has been alive with the calls of Painted Honeyeaters.

The parcel lies across the road from the almond orchard and there is a constant traffic of birds back and forth. The channel runs along the north and west edges and provides water for most of summer, while the lake is also nearby. Across the channel is dry cropping, and a view down and across to the creek that feeds



Above: Box Mistletoe *Amyema miraculosa* in flower
Left: Yellow Red-rumped Parrot
By Neil Palframan



Tharbogang Swamp if there is heavy rain to the north.

The area remains surprising free of rubbish given the amount that is dumped in other such patches, and the other disturbance is the use of the area for motor sports.

We collected a decent list of birds, the most unusual being a pale yellow Red-rumped Parrot, while a couple of its mates were also pale ... could it be aviary escapes having an influence, or natural variation? Occasional calls of wrens failed to materialise into sightings.

Fauna List

Australian Raven
Yellow-throated Miner
Bluebonnet
Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Australian Magpie
White-winged Chough
Grey Fantail
Great Cormorant
Welcome Swallow

Singing Honeyeater
Noisy Miner
Australian Ringneck
Crested Pigeon
Magpie Lark
Whistling Kite
Willie Wagtail
Pelican
Fox

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater
Red-rumped Parrot
Yellow Thornbill
Common Bronzewing
Mistletoebird
Black Kite
Galah
Grey Butcherbird
Cat

Kalinda Rd

The second stop of the day, this area of bush has seen some disturbance in the past but is in relatively good condition, and it tends to be more heavily timbered with pine most dominant and also plenty of rosewood which must have been much more common prior to land clearing. This plant is most common north of Scenic Hill and rarely south. It can still occasionally be found in Griffith gardens but tends to die by either over watering, or from being pronounced ugly. Maybe it has suffered particularly by liking the same land that farmers like.

This block is airport land, and is made of two adjacent areas, the northern section heavily used by motorbikes and 4WD's and rubbish dumpers, while the southern section has been relatively untouched thanks to more secure fencing, although on this visit it appears the little wire fence is being increasingly breached.



The striking thing on entering the block is the huge drain to be negotiated, built following a flood in 1956 that came across from the airport and swamped the houses and farms.

Maybe due to being later in the day, the birding was sparse, but the highlight of the day was to come with close views by the whole group of a Golden Whistler who remained whistleless, and soon after the many small bright red spiders along the return track had us intrigued – are they spiders or mites or ... someone with better eyesight than mine managed to count eight legs.

I don't have a book of spiders, but a later search of Mr Google came up with a similar critter on the Uni of Wisconsin website which BugLady calls a Red Velvet Mite, "...a somewhat generic term for a bunch of often-unrelated mites that happen to be red ... in Class Arachnida, the home of the eight-legged ... the family (probably) Thrombidiidae (you need a side-view of the mouthparts to confirm their family ... and in the genus (maybe) Thrombium (which prefers moist, organic soils). At about 5mm long, it is considered a giant among mites ..." Most other mites are described as pinhead size. Read more about this bug including their benefits and a clearer image at this website.



https://www4.uwm.edu/fieldstation/naturalhistory/bugoftheweek/red_velvet_mite.cfm

List for Kalinda Road

- Double-barred Finch
- Yellow-rumped Thornbill
- Yellow Thornbill
- Pied Butcherbird
- Golden Whistler
- Red-capped Robin
- Babbler sp
- Singing Honeyeater
- Australian Hobby
- Red Velvet Mites



**Top: Stand of Rosewood along track – Rowena Whiting.
Middle: MFN's newest recruit enjoyed the morning
Above: Red Velvet Mite (left and Crushed Easter Egg – Neil Palframan**

Addition to Previous Outing Report

Those present at McCann Rd noted the appearance of a large balloon in the sky to the north-west, and also noted that unusually, the balloon was making very little progress across the sky despite the windy weather. It was suggested that it might be a weather balloon which was high enough to be in a different wind pattern. Johanna's research has found an even more exciting answer, from Wallops Island, Vancouver.

Go to the mentioned website for the full story, but it was a NASA super pressure balloon on a test flight at 110 thousand feet (almost 40km high) and at the time of our spotting it had been detected as having developed a leak and was soon after issued with "flight termination commands", coming to earth near Sturt National Park after 32 days afloat. Why could we see it when it was so high? Because it was made from 22 acres of material (sorry for the Yankee measures) and inflated it is the size of a football stadium (American football stadium presumably). Those at the outing certainly got a bonus with this one.

<http://www.nasa.gov/feature/nasa-concludes-most-rigorous-super-pressure-balloon-flight-to-date>

Neil Palframan

Fungi Workshop at Wagga Wagga

The Fungi workshop held in the Wagga Wagga Botanic Gardens on 12th April would have to be a highlight in my life thanks to Rowena Whiting who I travelled with.

The workshop was run by Alison Pouliot, a personable and dedicated lady who carried you away with her enthusiasm. She is an ecologist and divides her time between Australia and Europe pursuing the quest for the 15000 varieties of Fungi.

Tables at the centre were covered in many varieties of edible, dangerous, deadly and hallucinogenic specimens grouped in their particular sections. The major groups were: AGARIC (gilled), BOLETES (fleshy pore fungi), GASTEROMYCETES (puffballs), PHALLOIDS (stinkhorns), CALVARIA (coral fungi), HYDNOID FUNGI (spine fungi), POLYPORES (woody pore fungi), JELLY FUNGI, ASCOMYCETE (cup fungi or flask fungi).

From a bird-watcher's head angle, (always upward), I think the axis will be changing to self discover this new world that I've been introduced to.

Sue Chittick-Dalton

Fungi – A Curious Kingdom

Sue and I arrived early at the Fungal Workshop and Sue was able to show Alison a specimen from her garden, a name was immediately forthcoming and it was appropriately placed amongst Alison's excellent display of specimens. It is called a Purple-spored *Calvatia lilacina*, it is quite rare and not in our fungi books. [You may remember some photos in the February issue. Sue now has another.]

Alison began her presentation with a little history of how fungi are believed to be a very ancient group dating back to the Palaeozoic (Devonian) era of 350 million years ago when they were forming symbiotic relationships with plants and lichens. About 95% of plants (those of a metre or more in height) need an association to enable them to absorb nutrients and water from the soil. Grevillea and Banksia are two groups that don't. Soil is an important factor and their hyphae (hair like structures) bind soil particles and create space for water retention and drainage. Fungi don't like compacted soil.



Purple-spored *Calvatia lilacina*
(in its later stage) Rowena Whiting

They have a number of roles and uses which include decomposition of wood, litter and animal remains, associations with plants (mycorrhiza), food and shelter for animals and food and medicine for humans. Mycorrhizas form between fungi and the roots of plants from which both benefit. This hyphal underground network can cover a wide area which I find is quite fascinating. The fungus effectively extends the root system of the plant allowing it to exploit greater volumes of soil and hence maximising access to nutrients and water. In return the plant supplies the mycelium with carbon compounds produced during photosynthesis - amino acids, vitamins and other nutrients. It also protects the fungus from other soil microorganisms. This phenomenon of symbiosis explains why particular fungus species are always associated with a particular plant species. Much like the way some plants are pollinated by specific insects.

Like animals and plants fungi have preferences for habitat; some only grow on dead wood, others on animals faeces or at the base of a particular tree species, in moss beds or forest floor humus, in dry bare earth and some occur only after fire.

There was quite a bit of focus on the edible/non-edible with stories of people falling sick and instances of death from the Death Cap; this looks the same a Chinese species that is edible; hence them picking and eating it in Australia. There are often signs of them being nibbled so maybe animals or insects can process its toxins. Unlike European and other countries where knowledge of what is/isn't poisonous has been passed down through generations, this is not available in Australia. In Switzerland they have the Pilzkontrol (mushroom police) who check people's baskets and ensure the dangerous ones are thrown out. People often go to exotic forests or pine plantations to foray. I should add that Alison spends the northern Autumn there.

For identifying - we were all given a mushroom and proceeded to feel, smell, pull it apart. It's stipe was fibrous, gills brown, shape convex. Most of us were surprised that what had seemed to be a field mushroom was actually a Yellow Stainer – the key factor being the yellow tinge that appeared after rubbing/bruising the surface though a couple of people could detect an unpleasant odour like hospital disinfectant). This is caused by the presence of phenol in the mushroom. A case of better safe than sorry; Sue can vouch for the latter. We have had a number of these yellow-stainers in our garden this last week.

The workshop was organised by Murrumbidgee LandCare and an ideal location as we were able to go for a short walk in the botanic gardens in the afternoon and find some specimens. A very informative day for us all enhanced by Alison's lively, warm and amusing stories. Fungi are essential for keeping our soils healthy and providing plants with nutrients; an intricate part of the ecosystem cycle.

A curious kingdom it certainly is.

Rowena Whiting



**Left: Workshop lunchtime - from right – Joanne, Sue and Rowena with Alison.
Right: Rowena photographing a Stinkhorn – photos Joanne Tarbit**



In Pursuit of Cockatoo Photos

An email enquiry through the club asking if any member could help with locating Major Mitchell's Cockatoos resulted in a visit by Tony Pridham from Victoria. Unknown to me at the time, I'm embarrassed to say, Tony is a well known artist who has in recent years published the book on Grass Finches of Australia. A book that Nella won as part of the 2012 Twitchathon prize. I was aware of the book and all the paintings of the finches but didn't register who had illustrated them for the book.

Having logged onto Tony's website – www.tonypridhamfineart.com – if you are interested to check, I realised just why Tony wanted to get the cockatoo photos either drinking at a waterhole or else on the ground.

He arrived after lunch on the Monday and we went to Fivebough before trying Graham and Dione Russell's place along Colinroobie Road opposite the Leeton Walnut Farm around 4 in the afternoon. I had done a quick trip there on the Sunday evening and located 6 or more Pink Cockies roosting in a dead tree beside the road. They were very quiet and were inspecting hollows so I felt certain we would get them again on Monday. Not so! Like all birds they don't always do what you expect when you want them to. We did hear them calling from the walnut orchard but none showed.

Tony felt we should try the dam on the property early the next morning so we arrived about 7.30 as Dione had seen them around that time on previous days. Sitting by the dam in the cool of the morning proved very frustrating as the birds did appear on the hills between the Russell's and the quarry. They eventually gave us a wide berth and flew into the walnuts about 8.30 – bother!!

I then suggested we check out the Griffith Golf Course so we headed up there and arrived by 9.30. Not a sign on first driving down towards the airport but when we stopped we could hear them and eventually saw them so we drove back around to where they landed near the pine trees beside the road. There would have been well over 50 on the greens and under the trees so we walked amongst them marvelling at their acceptance of us at close range. At one stage I saw Tony with his camera aimed at some in a dead tree nearby whilst there were 20 or so around his feet! He almost had to kick them away to move! They were feeding on the

fallen pine cones and squabbling over particular ones that obviously still contained nuts. Tony said it felt like we were in a bird park. (See photo)



After an hour or so Tony had taken plenty of shots – not at water as he would have preferred but on the ground nonetheless and at close range – like too close sometimes. Needless to say he probably won't be painting them on green golfing fairways but he got enough photos of some on bare ground to get their feet rather than having them hidden by grass as they waddled about.

One very noticeable thing was that on most of the birds some of their comb feathers were missing and even their body feathering looked worn. I commented that they looked a dusty pink rather than the vibrant colour you normally see around Spring breeding time. So possibly they are still moulting last year's feathers. It did seem late though as most birds moult in late Summer after the breeding season.

There were also very approachable Blue Bonnets and Red-rumped Parrots but they too were difficult to get on bare dirt – they look legless when photographed feeding on the fairways and always in the shade!! Mallee Ringnecks and Eastern Rosellas were also hanging about and reasonably quiet.

From the golf course, we headed to Wattle Dam in search of Turquoise and Mulga Parrots but being close to mid-day, we had no luck there.

I had already arranged with Andrew Thompson to go to his place that afternoon to wait for the Glossy Black Cockatoos to come in to his dam. We arrived at the dam around 5pm and waited. Eventually we heard the tell-tale call and Tony had already settled himself in a makeshift hide Andrew had constructed close to the water's edge. Andrew and I sat well back and watched as 6 cockies came in just after 5.20. Their usual habit is to alight in nearby trees checking out the place before eventually going down to drink. By this time the light was fading but Tony did manage to get some good photos of them at the edge of the water. (Photo)



Above: Major Mitchell's Cockatoos at the Griffith Golf Course
Glossy Black Cockatoos at Yarrabimbi
Photos: Tony Pridham

We thought he would have been able to get excellent shots of them in a dead tree beside the dam but unfortunately he was in such a position he couldn't get a clear shot of them without making his presence known and they would have been frightened off – so he missed getting close shots of them in the trees – pity!

Thanks to Graham and Dione and Andrew and Ana for helping locate the birds, not to mention Ana's dinner afterwards.

Max O'Sullivan

Robbie's Amazing Journey!



The Bitterns in Rice Project has reached a new and exciting phase with the first bittern fitted with a satellite tracking transmitter. The bird, a young male born on a Coleambally rice farm early this past breeding season, possibly January, was netted and fitted with the tracking device around 22 April.

Matt Herring has had Mark Robb from Coly as his constant assistant and bittern spotter ever since the project first began in the 2012-13 rice season. So the first bittern caught was appropriately named in honour of him – Mark is a little more sedentary compared with Robbie as you'll soon learn.

The transmitters have been made possible from last year's Crowdfunding campaign where over \$70,000 was raised. Catching a bittern is not an easy task as no doubt Matt and Mark have found.

Robbie was netted in Coleambally on a rice farm that had already been harvested and the bitterns were crowded into the toe drains beside the rice bays where there are still lots of frogs and tadpoles for them to feed on.

Interesting numbers of the birds have been recorded post harvest in April with 26 birds counted on just two farms in the Griffith area (this number represents 1% of the world population!), 8 on a Leeton farm and 18 on one farm at Coly – amazing numbers for such an elusive species.

The transmitter attached to the back of Robbie is programmed to switch on every 48 hours in order to extend the life of the battery over a longer period. When on, it shows Robbie's movements for 8 hours at a time.

During the first few days Robbie stayed around the Coly area moving from one farm to another but on 1st May Robbie had moved 88km from the rice farm he was last recorded at and heading south towards the Victorian border. During the transmission period Robbie flew on for another 180km – keep in mind this is a 4 month old bird!

The next transmission found Robbie at a wetland just outside Mount Gambier – 557km from home!

Quite a remarkable journey for such a young bird. Unfortunately as yet, Matt doesn't know if he was flying alone or with some other adult bird(s) to show him the way or if instinct led him to the coast in South Australia.

On 6th May, Robbie was at the Pick Swamp which is part of the recently restored Piccaninnie Ponds Karst Wetlands Ramsar Site – smart bird! The people responsible for the upgrade of the wetlands are chuffed that Robbie has arrived in their wetlands. The presence of an Australasian Bittern there justifies the need to maintain all wetlands for the protection of such a threatened species.

Whilst following the satellite transmission on 6th, everyone watching had a bit of a fright when Robbie was recorded flying several kilometres out to sea in a strong wind. Much relief all round when he finally made it back to the coast and was later recorded at a coastal swamp safe and sound – phew!

Robbie's epic journey has provided some very worthwhile insights into just where the rice-breeding bitterns go after the harvest in April and Matt is hoping to net another bird before they all depart for the winter – we'll keep you updated.

You can follow Matt's bittern study and frequent reports on Robbie's whereabouts on his recently launched website at www.bitternsinrice.com.au

Max O'Sullivan



Top: Robbie walking off with satellite transmitter - Matt Herring
Above:Australasian Bittern with Growling Grass Frog – Peter Menkhorst

Ferns of the Northern Riverina, Part 6 – Four Rare Species

To complete this series on the ferns of the Riverina I have included four species that are restricted to very few sites or have been reported as being present in the past. Taxonomically they have nothing in common apart from being recognisably ferns. Each one is in a different family.

Bat's Wing Fern, *Histiopteris incisa* occurs at two well documented sites in the Cocoparra Ranges, Falcon Falls and Goat Creek Falls. It requires very moist and shady sites that one would expect to find higher up the slopes of the Dividing Range and further East. As such the Cocoparra sites are very much on the extreme of its range. Fears that the drought last decade would bring about the demise of our plants were fortunately unfounded. At least one plant struggled through all be it much diminished at Goat Creek. At Falcon Falls the story is much more remarkable. The soak that was the fern's home not only regularly dried out but when wet was severely degraded by goats. It was with great relief to find it growing again this year.

Bat's Wing Fern has pale green 2-3 pinnate fronds with the pinnae deeply divided almost to the midrib into well-separated, broad-based lobes. The shape of the pinnae gives rise to an alternative common name – "Oak Fern". The name Bat's Wing comes from the shape of the two lowest lobes of each pinna. The fruiting bodies – sori – are marginal along the lobes and are protected by an in-folded flap. Another distinguishing feature is the occurrence of a pair of much smaller pinnae at the base of the otherwise triangular outline of the frond.

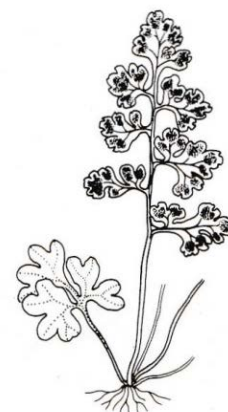
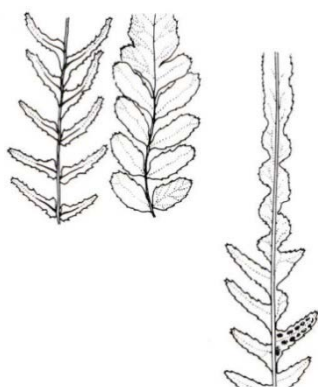
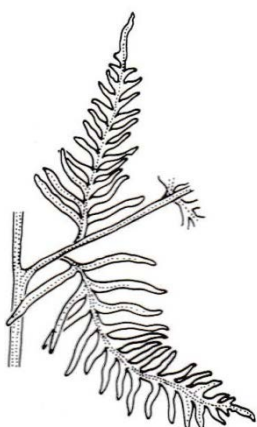
The joy of finding the Bat's Wing Fern again at Falcon Falls was greatly added to by finding good growth of Tender Brake *Pteris tremula*. This fern also has 2-3 pinnate fronds but here the pinnae are narrow oblong to linear in shape giving a regular lacy look to the fronds. Sori are developed on separate fronds and form extended strips along the lower margins of the pinnae that are noticeably narrower than on infertile fronds. Fertile fronds were not seen on the Falcon Falls specimen so identification was not 100%. Confirmation of the identity is a must as the nearest other record is over 100km away. This is a fantastic extension of range when expectations of climate change predict a great decline in range. The generic common name 'Brake' is derived from the Old Norse for fern – 'brakni' thence to Swedish 'bräken' and Danish 'bregne' and of course the European 'Bracken' *Pteridium aquilinum*. Austral Bracken once thought of as a variety of the European species but is now a separate species *P. esculentum*.

I have not seen the other two species. Both were recorded (and painted) by Pat Weare. *Doodia caudata*, Small Rasp Fern has simple pinnate dark green fronds that have a more leathery feel to them. Each pinnule is long and narrow and attached to the main rachis by its midrib only. Fertile fronds are taller than infertile fronds and have separated sori in one row alongside the midrib of each pinnule. The Flora of New South Wales (Supplement to Part 1) only records the distribution as rainforest to open rocky sites in coastal or tableland areas. Pat however lodged a specimen with the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney so the record has been authenticated. Her record only states the location as 'Goat Creek 1982'. Like the above ferns it likes moist sites by streams or amongst boulders or in rock crevices – all possible locations in the gorge part of Goat Creek.

The last species of this series is a rather small delicate fern, Annual Fern *Anogramma leptophylla*. It is usually less than 7.5cm high and as its common name suggests only grows fronds from its underground rhizome each year. The fronds are short lived – any hot weather soon desiccating them. Each frond has a few deeply lobed pinnae that are glabrous and membranous. Think of a small delicate hairless Blanket Fern, which has the same site preferences of shaded rock crevices. It is rare even in its recorded areas of the western slopes and tablelands. Pat's record is 'Woolshed Flats 1984'.

It would be tremendous to find either or both of the last two ferns. The search is on!

Eric Whiting



Illustrations from Flora of New South Wales – Editor Gwen Harden, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney
From top clockwise: Bat's Wing Fern, Annual Fern, Small Rasp Fern, Tender Brake,

Keith Hutton's April Survey for Fivebough and Tuckerbil Wetlands

The following are some interesting changes for Keith Hutton's quarterly bird counts at Fivebough and Tuckerbil for the past two quarters:

Fivebough Wetlands	29/12/14	28/04/15	Tuckerbil	27/12/14	29/04/15
Black Swan	4	65	Australian Wood Duck	0	13
Australian Shelduck	5	34	Grey Teal	850	230
Australian Wood Duck	8	20	Black Duck	27	49
Grey Teal	292	199	Pelican	30	1
Eastern Great Egret	16	1	Eastern Great Egret	50	0
Cattle Egret	118	4	Cattle Egret	28	0
White-faced Heron	5	30	Glossy Ibis	55	0
Purple Swamphen	21	52	Purple Swamphen	1	10
Black-winged Stilt	27	240	Black-winged Stilt	60	4
Red-necked Avocet	0	27			
Red-kneed Dotterel	0	11			
Golden-headed Cisticola	1	29			
Australian Reed Warbler	15	3			
Little Grassbird	2	16			

Fivebough Wetlands notes

The planned work on upgrading the pathways and building more hides at Fivebough will commence about the 13 May and continue until the end of June.

The planned work on upgrading the pathways and building more hides at Fivebough will commence about the 13 May and continue until the end of June. Melva Robb, Group Leader Natural Resources & Property Services, Griffith, has sent the following:

"At last we see some progress in relation to the proposed Track Upgrade and Bird Hide Replacement and New Hides with works commencing next week.

Boots Construction will close off the footbridge and commence initial track upgrade works proposed to take 4 - 6 weeks. In conjunction with this, Steve Bellchambers will commence bird hide demolition and reconstruction. Fivebough walking tracks will be closed until end June 2015."

There is also a public announcement appearing in the local newspapers alerting the general public to this closure.

I was concerned that the replacement of the old hide overlooking the settling ponds would be a waste of money as the ponds have been dry for about 6 months. However, I have spoken to the engineer at the Leeton Shire Council who informed me that the ponds will be eventually filled again even though they won't be part of the water treatment that will eventually make its way into Fivebough. They will just be used for excess run-off from rain and from the treatment plant.

The major financial concern for all councils is to ensure that the treatment of water from these plants must pass strict EPA guidelines as to the purity of the water being released back into the environment – be it directly into the river system as in Narrandera or into a wetland as is the case in Leeton. The chemical analysis of the outflow must be in line with EPA regulations and this applies mostly to the amount of Phosphorus still in the released water. Councils are charged if they exceed the maximum amount allowed and Leeton has had in the past being fined up to \$70,000 for breaching those levels.

Not only is Phosphorus a problem but algae is also a big No! No! when it comes to the discharge of treated water. Now whilst we birdos love seeing ducks in the settling ponds at Fivebough, they do contribute greatly to the buildup of Phosphorus and the development of algae in the water. So ducks play a pretty large part in the chemical composition of the water in the settling ponds.

I have been assured by the engineer at the Council that water will be eventually put back into the two large settling ponds so the ducks can return. I pointed out that ducks like the rare Blue-billed, Musk and Freckled Ducks require deeper water to feed in and that without the settling ponds, we will not see these duck species again. Council is very concerned about that and will, hopefully, ensure the two large ponds are maintained at a level that the ducks will be catered for – let's hope so. I need to make further approaches to Council to ensure this is actually carried out.

Max O'Sullivan

MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

These sightings are from members' observations. Please check with the relevant person before quoting any record.

This list has been compiled by Max O'Sullivan

Little Friarbird [10]	'Mountain Dam' Colinroobie Rd Leeton	23/03/15	Graham Russell
Graham thought there were up to 8 juvenile birds in the flock – the first time he's seen so many together.			
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [12]	'Mountain Dam' Colinroobie Rd Leeton	26/03/15	Graham Russell
Double-barred Finch [2]	William's block Petersham Rd Leeton	28/03/15	Penny Williams
White-breasted Woodswallow [50+]	Brady Way Leeton on power lines	07/04/15	Max O'Sullivan
Wood Sandpiper [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	08/04/15	Max O'Sullivan
Grey Fantail [2]	Melbourne St Narrandera	08/04/15	Betty Bradney
This is the first time Betty has recorded the fantails in her garden.			
Blue Bonnet	'Mountain Dam' Colinroobie Rd Leeton	09/04/15	Graham Russell
Pallid Cuckoo [1]	Cocoparra National Park	09/04/15	Max O'Sullivan
Emu [over 400]	Between Renmark and Hay	10/04/15	Joanne Tarbit
Joanne reported that she had never seen so many beside the Sturt Highway. There were other reports over over 80 sighted between Jerilderie and Narrandera on 20 April.			
Buff-banded Rail	Fivebough Wetlands	11/04/15	Max O'Sullivan
Wedge-tailed Eagle [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	13/04/15	Max O'Sullivan
Brolga [14]	Fivebough Wetlands	13/04/15	Max O'Sullivan
Spotted Pardalote [male]	Galah Dam Binya State Forest	15/04/15	Max O'Sullivan
Black Falcon	Irrigation Way near Whitton turnoff	15/04/15	Max O'Sullivan
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [50+]	Griffith Golf Course	21/04/15	Tony Pridham
Glossy Black Cockatoo [6]	'Yarrabimbi', Colinroobie Rd, Leeton	21/04/14	Tony Pridham
Pied Currawong	Narrandera – first report for this year	25/04/15	Ben Kschenka
Golden Whistler [male]	Bushland adjacent to Griffith airport	26/04/15	Group outing
Ground Cuckoo-Shrike [2]	'Yarrabimbi', Colinroobie Rd, Leeton	27/04/15	Andrew Thompson
This is the first time Andrew has recorded this species on his property.			
Brown Quail [9]	Fivebough Wetlands	28/04/15	Keith Hutton
European Goldfinch [30]	Gibbs Rd, Fivebough	28/04/15	Keith Hutton
European Goldfinch [35]	Sewerage Ponds Fivebough	28/04/15	Keith Hutton
European Goldfinch [25]	The Basin Dam Koonadan/Tuckerbil	29/04/15	Keith Hutton
Freckled Duck [1]	The Basin Dam Koonadan/Tuckerbil	29/04/15	Keith Hutton
Brolga [19]	Fivebough Wetlands	01/05/15	Max O'Sullivan
Swift Parrot [6+]	Livingstone NP via Wagga	03/05/15	Max O'Sullivan
Scarlet Robin [female]	Livingstone NP via Wagga	03/05/15	Max O'Sullivan
Flame Robin [male]	Livingstone NP via Wagga	03/05/15	Nella Smith
Dusky Woodswallow [30+]	'Yarrabimbi', Colinroobie Rd, Leeton	05/05/15	Andrew Thompson
Flame Robin [female]	Koonadan Historic Site	07/05/15	Max O'Sullivan
Flame Robin [male]	Fivebough Wetlands	07/05/15	Jean-Baptiste
Superb Parrot [4]	Tombullen area, Sturt H'way	08/05/15	Jean-Baptiste
Scarlet Robin [male]	Brobenah Hall Rd via Leeton	08/05/15	Jean-Baptiste
Golden Whistler [male]	Brobenah Hall Rd via Leeton	08/05/15	Jean-Baptiste

Jean-Baptiste was a visiting young French (really!!) birdwatcher who contacted me for local information. I met him on Friday morning and we went in search of Superb Parrots – hence the Tombullen trip.

From Jan Condon, Binya

Restless flycatcher – 11th/12th April Bilbul. I have not seen this bird in my garden before. Its call alerted me as 'scissor grinders' were part of my growing up on the then outskirts of Sydney.

The other creature I have had the pleasure of seeing is a house centipede (*Scutigera coleoptrata*). Appeared on Tom's neck as he walked into our ensuite and so ended up in the sink. Tom is nearly paranoid about white tailed spiders so was relieved to find out these centipedes love eating white tailed spider. I relocated it to the garden telling it that it wasn't cold enough to come inside yet. It was a spectacular creature with all its waving feelers.

**** COMING EVENTS ****

Fivebough Wetlands

From the 13 May the tracks will be closed for a period of 6 weeks or so to enable work for the 'Track Upgrade' and 'Bird hide Replacement and new Hide' to proceed. Work will also be done on the culverts to improve water control. See Max's piece on page 10.

14 May Thursday

Monthly Meeting in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7.30pm.

Topic: Members' photo night – bring along your latest shots.

Contact: Penny Williams 6953 3524

Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

16 May Saturday

Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater Survey

BirdLife Australia's Threatened Bird Network are looking for volunteers to help survey Swift Parrots and Regent Honeyeaters across Victoria, NSW, ACT and Queensland in 2015. These surveys provide critical long-term data on the movements, habitat use and population size of the Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater.

For more information about the surveys see [Birdlife Australia's Woodland Birds for Biodiversity project page](#).



17 May Sunday

**Note change
of Location**

Ironbark Picnic area, Cocoparra National Park

Also to the Woolshed falls to check for ferns.

Meet at Yenda PO at **8:30am**. Or at the Ironbark Picnic Ground
Bring morning tea and lunch.

Contact: Eric Whiting if attending on 6953 2612.

Note permission to visit Tom Bullen Water Reserve was not forthcoming

31 May Sunday

Dunnoon Lagoon National Park part of the Murrumbidgee Valley National Park

Meet at the intersection of Kidman Way and Murrumbidgee River Road just north of Darlington Point at **9am**.

Bring morning tea and lunch.

Contact: Max O'Sullivan if attending on 6953 4726

3 June Wednesday

Copy for the June newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.

Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com. Phone: 6953 2612.

11 June Thursday

Monthly Meeting in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7.30pm.

Topic: TBA

Contact: Penny Williams 6953 3524

Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

13 June Saturday

Galore Hill Reserve near Lockhart

Meet at the Narrandera Information Centre at **9am** to pool cars.
Bring morning tea and lunch.

Contact: Max O'Sullivan if attending on 6953 4726.

18-19 July Sat/Sun

Grevillea Planting at the Round Hill Nature Reserve

It is anticipated that there'll be about 70-90 *Grevillea illicifolia*'s to plant back into Round Hill Nature Reserve.

Activities would include: digging holes, planting, watering, cutting wire mesh to create "cages" to help protect the young plants.

Further details will be given in later newsletters.