

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



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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



MFN Group at the Mount Brogden Lookout, Cocoparra National Park
photograph by Rowena Whiting

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CONTRIBUTIONS

For the next issue by
Wednesday 5 August
To Rowena Whiting

Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com.

Phone: 6953 2612

national tree day
Tree planting at Griffith
on Sunday, 26 July

Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

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Secretary:	Penny Williams	6953 3524	Web Co-ordinator:	Johanna Botman	6963 4855
Treasurer:	Phil Tenison	6953 4869			

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.

Membership enquiries:

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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.

Fungi seen on the Brogden Track and in the Binya State Forest



From left:

A stalked puffball – this is what remains after the cap has disintegrated. The stem is woody, about 18cm tall.

Earthstar – about 3cm diameter.

Bracket fungi on Cypress Pine.

A cluster at the base of a tree.



Cabramurra Calling - Melanie Baulch



Melanie recently held an exhibition of her art at the Griffith Regional Art Gallery.

In her words:

"I'm a Murrumbidgee Field Naturalist member and in January this year a group of us spent the weekend at Cabramurra - the highest town in Australia. We shared a wonderful weekend of bird watching, plant identification, bush walking, kite flying and a Saturday night cricket match under the full moon. These paintings are filled with a riot of colour, wind, chilled air, March flies, bird song, fun, laughter and fellowship, as was the weekend."

Well done, Melanie.

Image: *Playing Cricket Under the Full Moon*

Galore Hill Outing 13 June 2015

The outing to Galore Hill was quite a disappointment from the point of view of both plants and birds of interest. It has in the past been a wonderful haven for birdlife and often the plantings always have some flowering trees and shrubs of interest. However, this time there wasn't a great deal to get us too excited, although, eventually the birds did begin to show just as we were about to leave. The most interesting part of the morning was at morning tea at the playground area where up to 6 **Brown Treecreepers** came all around and even took food from us. They were so close that Roy and Rowena had difficulty getting them in focus to photograph.



The playground area was always a good spot for robins and eventually a pair of Flame Robins finally made an appearance. There was no sign of any Scarlet Robins this time, however.



Again the reserve is always a reliable spot for Diamond Firetails and it wasn't until we were leaving and stopped near the entrance before we spotted one feeding on the ground.

Eastern Yellow Robin - Phillip Williams (left)
Brown Treecreeper – Eric Whiting (above)

Max O'Sullivan

Birdlist:

Common Bronzewing	Galah	Red-rumped Parrot
Eastern Rosella	Laughing Kookaburra	Brown Treecreeper [6+]
White-throated Treecreeper	Speckled Warbler	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Chestnut-rumped Thornbill	Inland Thornbill	Yellow Thornbill
Weebill	White-plumed Honeyeater	Noisy Miner
Grey-crowned Babbler	Golden Whistler	Rufous Whistler
Magpie (white-backed form)	Australian Raven	Peewee
Willie Wagtail	Apostlebird	White-winged Chough
Grey Fantail	Jacky Winter	Red-capped Robin
Flame Robin	Eastern Yellow Robin	Diamond Firetail

Rocks and flowers

Despite there being a lack of the usual observations we did turn our attention to the rocks with a sandstone outcrop visible in the view from the saddle (just above the playground picnic area). We were able to see these close up along the track down to Morgan's Cave.

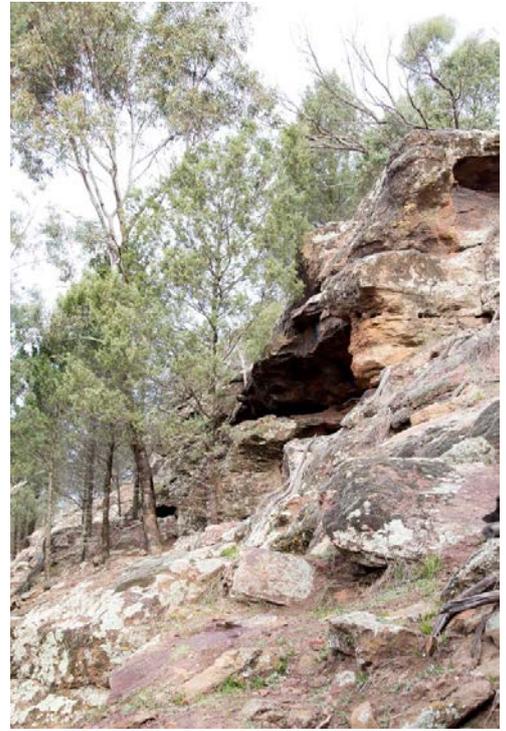


View of the southerly peak from the saddle showing a sandstone outcrop Photo: Rowena Whiting

The photos show some of the banding (previous page) and different textures would tell a lot about the conditions in which they were laid down.



The ground was quite bare and along this there were only 2 small patches of green; one of climbing saltbush and the other an isotome; the latter are usually quite prolific here along this track.



However there were a few of the introduced native plants in flower; mostly wattles but there were a couple of hakeas and eremophilas, one bush had cream and red flowers.

Rowena Whiting

Sandstone cliffs and a conglomerate layer above the sandstone (above)
 Hakea francisiana (left) and Acacia gladiiformi (below) – Rowena Whiting



MFN participating in last year's tree planting



Event Details

Griffith City Council are hosting National Tree Day at Citrus Road, Collina, (north of Calabria Road) on Sunday 26 July 2015 from 10am - 12pm

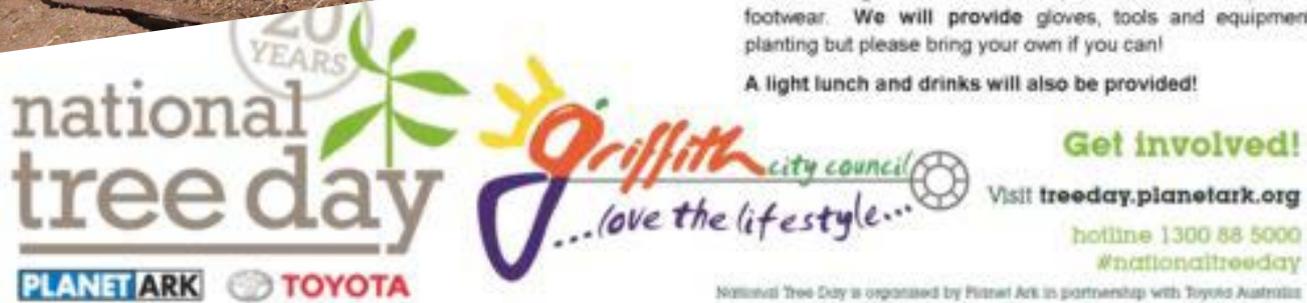
On the day, we will be planting locally native woodland trees, shrubs and groundcovers to create a biodiverse wildlife corridor and valuable habitat for our woodland birds and fauna. This will be a great opportunity to learn about our native plants and meet other members of our local community.

Please bring warm clothes, sun protection and sturdy enclosed footwear. We will provide gloves, tools and equipment for planting but please bring your own if you can!

A light lunch and drinks will also be provided!

Get involved!
 Visit treeday.planetark.org
 hotline 1300 88 5000
 #nationaltreeday

National Tree Day is organized by Planet Ark in partnership with Toyota Australia



Mount Brogden Walk - 27 June 2015

Ten members made up the group to tackle the Mount Brogden track and the first obstacle we found was the road in after the recent rains. Of the three cars that braved the muddy road into the picnic area at the start of the Mount Brogden walk, Nella was the leading vehicle and there were a number of very hairy



puddles to navigate through with a few slips into deeper ones on the way. However, all was well and we made it okay with a very muddy vehicle and a few frayed nerves. The thought of the drive out was an ever present concern on the climb up the hill to the lookout, though.

The climb was very easy and there were lots of indications of native orchids all along the track. Melanie located a flowering Dwarf Greenhood much to the delight of everyone. With the recent rains, all looks encouraging for a good year for native orchids this season. We said that last year but the dry Spring put paid to that. This year, however, the rain has come later and more of it so the prospects look good for this year's crop.



On the way up, Nella heard the rustling of feathers and discovered an emu running off. The big surprise was to find that HE was sitting on a nest with 9 eggs – placed precariously on the edge of a rock face with a close drop over the edge! On the way back Rowena and I upset the brooding male again and he ran off but hopefully once the group passed he would have come back fairly soon and the eggs would have remained warm. It was such a strange place to have a nest when you consider how most emus we see in these parts are associated more with flat country and nest on the bare ground right out in the open.

Along the track: lichen and moss covered rock, Dwarf Greenhood, Emu eggs
Photos Rowena Whiting



The weather was very foggy to begin but eventually cleared briefly when we all made it to the top. Mount Binya and beyond to Yenda and Griffith was very clear until the clouds moved in and the day turned quite unpleasant so after lunch at the cars we

made a quick walk to the base of Mt Binya before facing the drive out. Fortunately, we all made it relatively unscathed and were pleased when we got back onto the Whitton Stock Route Road and headed for home.

Max O'Sullivan

Bird list:

Emu (sitting on 9 eggs)
Splendid Fairy-Wren
Weebill
Golden Whistler
White-winged Chough
Eastern Yellow Robin

Mallee Ringneck
Speckled Warbler
White-browed Babbler
Grey Shrike-Thrush
Apostlebird

Common Bronzewing
Yellow Thornbill
Varied Sitella
Australian Raven
Grey Fantail



We questioned the 'hard' grade but then it did take us 3.5 hours – not bad for Field Nats

A Mount Brogden Alternative

Having been up the walking track to the top of Mount Brogden, the last time not so long ago, I excused myself from the main party and took myself on an exploratory route. Not to the summit but to traverse underneath the cliffs that the regular path skirts around. I had often stood at the lookout near the summit, looked down and wondered what was below.

So I headed east from the picnic ground to where a prominently marked watercourse comes straight down from the summit. The reason being was to check out the mosses and lichens in the gully. The recent rains had opened up the mosses to show a bright green carpet across the forest floor. Usually they are tightly curled up and indistinguishable from the leaf litter and bare earth. A long time ago Enid told me that when she was young the usual way up to the summit was a direct attack from the south – steep but short.

The gully I followed started as a barely depressed line running through scarcely sloping ground, but as I followed it up it got deeper and craggier. The recent rains had left some pools of water though the flow had long ceased, probably not very long after the rain stopped. Unfortunately for me the mosses and lichens were much as I had expected to find.

As I progressed the ground got steeper and steeper until just below the summit I was confronted by massive outcrops. I was a little bit to the east of the summit and it was clear that there were several routes round the outcrops. To get to the top would have been easy enough – if you don't mind 45° slopes!

The top was not my objective though. I turned westwards skirting just below the crags. I was looking out for those ferns and the like that favour rock crevices. I soon found the **Common Blanket Fern *Pleurosorus rutifolius*** and satisfied myself it was not the related Clubbed Blanket Fern that I had discovered at Woolshed Falls and Galore Hill. Greenhood leaves were evident in patches, probably mostly of **Dwarf Greenhood *Pterostylis nana***. There were also a couple of patches of larger leaves, unmistakably Greenhoods, but which one?

After considerable searching below rock face after rock face, I found a liverwort that looked new to me. Subsequent examination at home revealed it was a first for me. The photograph in the dry state shows



Photos show *Plagiochasma rupestre* in its dry and wet states

why I had not noticed it before! Like nearly all liverworts it does not have a common name. Its scientific name is quite telling though – ***Plagiochasma rupestre***: plagio = oblique, chasma = opening and rupestre = rock. It is found in a rock crevice.

I continued westward till I reached the spur on the opposite side of the gully to the spur the walking track uses. At the head of the gully is a known site of *Pomaderris cocoparrana* and my main reason for skirting the crags was to look for this endangered plant (endemic to the Cocoparra's with the exception of one locality near Ardlethan). Here on this spur I found one lonely plant, barely 15cm high.

It was now gone eleven. Time I thought I should head back to the cars. I did not want to get back long after the main party did, and was still bush-bashing. I headed straight down the spur, finally angling off to meet the track very close to the point it enters the National Park. To my surprise no one was there and to my frustration so it was for another hour! Oh well better early than that late.

Eric Whiting

PEACEMAKER OR NOISE CONTROLER (?)

Cats act like Felines and dogs act like Canines and horses act like Equines but the Aves act like people. There are no typical persons and there are typical Aves, but there are characteristics they commonly share. For a few short examples, the Satin bowerbird typifies the “Batchelor Gay” who constructs a classy pad, has his wicked way and sends her packing, or the Grey-crowned Babbler, the “Tradie” who is always busy building or Sparrows who are the Ferals, but the Australian Magpie is the noise controller or peace keeper. Not sure which.

This extremely intelligent bird is a problem solver. I have witnessed on several occasions where there is a squabble among birds, the Magpie turns up. On one occasion a pair of Apostlebirds were fighting on the ground surrounded by their supporters and all making a terrible din. Next thing a Magpie swoops over them snapping his beak and broke up the commotion dispersing the mob.

Continuously during the long flowering season of the Umbrella Tree with its long brackets of red flowers, the Honeyeaters and Rainbow Lorikeets arrive in droves and the arguments between them is horrific. Down comes the Magpie snapping and swooping and birds scattering in all directions.

My friend, Jan, tells the story of a pet Magpie she once had that took exception to two separate visitors who were unable to exit their vehicles for fear of attack. One wonders if the vehicles made a particular sound the bird differentiated from others and took exception to or was it aware they weren't welcome?? We know they have incredible hearing as it is noted that they can hear beetle larvae and worms move through the soil, so is possible certain noises aggravate them or are they out there to protect and keep the peace?



Sue Chittick-Dalton

An Unusual Visitor

On that very wet day at the end of June, I noticed what I thought was a thin brown strip of vegetation on the mat by the back door – another bit of garden litter brought in on some ones shoes. As I bent down to pick it up I noticed it was moving with a slow gliding motion. I peered closer – a flatworm! Back for my camera.

Flatworms are a very primitive kind of worm. The front end features tiny eye-spots and hardly anything else. You could not really call it a head. Even the mouth is a third of the way down the body and it leads into three blind sacks. They do not use muscles for getting around, the underside is a single layer of cells covered in cilia: minute hair-like projections that beat to give motion. There are muscle fibres which can make the body twist and turn, but even these are not in definable structures.



Even though they are so simply structured they are formidable predators. They can detect the slime tracks of slugs and follow them to hunt them down. How do they know which way the slug went? On finding the slug, or any other prey that size, they curl up around it at the same time coating it with lethal slime. The slime also contains enzymes to dissolve the prey to be sucked up via an eversible pharynx protruding from the mouth. Astonishingly they can successfully attack creatures much larger than themselves. The one I saw was barely 2mm wide at the most, though about 10cm long.

I can't give a name to the one I saw. Apparently flatworms that look the same can be completely genetically different ie. not the same species, specimens that are genetically the same look entirely different. Nothing is simple in biology.

Eric Whiting



Provenance, a workshop sponsored by CSIRO Local Land Services, Royal Botanic Gardens and run by Australian Native Plant Conservation Group funded by Environmental Trust.

Contributed by Nella Smith who attended the workshop

To meet vegetation improvement targets you need a quality increase in structure of species and genetic diversity and self- sustainability.

But with what, where, how and when? And where did the seed come from. This is Provenance.

Provenance is the place of origin of a collection area containing a population of species that is assumed to be genetically distinct. It can mean up to 100km distance. Even if you know where the seed came from that doesn't define how genetically representative that seed is of that area.

Local populations can exhibit local adaptations to environmental conditions, diseases and pathogens herbivores and pollinators.

It can capture evolutionary potential. **Why is Provenance Important?**

The geographical scale over which seed can be moved can cause:

Maladaptation (can't survive new conditions)

Outbreeding depression (poor offspring)

Superior fitness eg Cootamundra Wattle

Inappropriate timing of flowering (pollination time lag)

Local plants do better.

We have a few problems when we have disturbance: because we are in changing times for plant diversity we have resultantly an irreversible loss of genetic diversity and small and more isolated populations.

Because of this we can have elevated inbreeding which impacts seed production and quality.

In small populations you can get low seed set.

Some species are not self- compatible for pollination.

Land clearing can have the effect of increased hybridisation because you have reduced population size.

Pollen movement will be from scattered trees, restored trees and from long distance pollination. There is a significantly higher genetic diversity in scattered trees, the few scattered paddock trees. Unfortunately the remaining scattered trees are not expected to survive more than 100 years.

Therefore it is urgent that seed is collected from these scattered trees to mix with seeds from other sources in order to retain the biodiversity of genes in the species. You still have to be careful not to take **too much** seed from wild trees.

Therefore when collecting seed it should be done from larger populations of different species, collecting from areas not too close together. (No more than 10% of any one individual)

When there is habitat degradation organisms can adapt, move or become extinct. If they adapt we know that the population size and diversity is good. If they move or we move them they must be capable of dealing with competition and changed conditions.

Extinction we are trying to avoid. One example is the planting of *Grevillea illicifolia* which will be done at Round Hill Nature Reserve soon. I hope the genetic diversity is sufficient to allow recruitment. We know that the provenance is right.

Ecological restoration aims to recover structure, dynamics and evolutionary potential of an ecosystem. Provenance of seed can be a way of defining biodiversity and should be done carefully when seeding.

Writers comment: Another way to do ecological restoration is to fence off areas that are pretty good to reduce grazing and to reduce the competition of weeds (by weeding). Each one of us could take on a project like this on roadsides or reserves near us.



MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

Compiled by Max O'Sullivan

Golden Whistler	Five Mile Narrandera	06/06/15	Nella Smith
Superb Parrot	Coolamon	07/06/15	Nella Smith
Superb Parrot [2]	Narrandera	07/06/15	Roy Wade
Pied Currawong	Narrandera	07/06/15	Roy Wade
Diamond Firetail [1]	'Myalstone' Rankins Springs Rd	08/06/15	Melanie Baulch
Superb Parrot	Carrathool Rd via Griffith	08/06/15	Neil Palframan
Banded Lapwing	Carrathool Rd via Griffith	08/06/15	Neil Palframan
Common Skylark	Carrathool Rd via Griffith	08/06/15	Neil Palframan
Pied Currawong [10+]	Wattle Hill, Leeton	10/06/15	Max O'Sullivan
Red-capped Robin [male]	Wattle Hill, Leeton	10/06/15	Max O'Sullivan
Musk Duck [1]	Riverina Beef, Yanco	10/06/15	Ben Kschenka
Magpie Goose [20]	Riverina Beef, Yanco	10/06/15	Ben Kschenka
Bush Stone Curlew [calling]	Murrumbidgee area Narrandera	10/06/15	Roy Wade
Plumed Whistling-duck [100s]	Coleambally	10/06/15	Neil Palframan
Freckled Duck	Coleambally	10/06/15	Neil Palframan
Turtle eggs [unearthed]	Lake Talbot, Narrandera	11/06/15	Nella Smith
Plumed Whistling-duck [pr]	McCaughey Park pond, Yanco	11/06/15	Max O'Sullivan
Nankeen Night Heron [4]	McCaughey Park pond, Yanco	11/06/15	Max O'Sullivan
Flame Robin [2]	Sandigo via Narrandera	18/06/15	Peter Draper
Glossy Black Cockatoo [2]	Bill Draper's property via Murrami	18/06/15	Peter Draper
Spotted Nightjar [1]	Bill Draper's property via Murrami	18/06/15	Peter Draper
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [11]	Walnut orchard Colinroobie Rd Leeton	18/06/15	Peter Draper
	I counted 9 the next afternoon feeding on the ground in the Russell's property opposite the orchard.		
Tawny Frogmouth [2]	Peter's place on Koonadan Rd	18/06/15	Peter Draper
	Peter has been hearing them regularly in the evenings around his house.		
Little Corella [200+]	Flying over Vance Rd, Leeton	20/06/15	Max O'Sullivan
Australasian Bittern [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	21/06/15	Max O'Sullivan
Flame Robin [3 males]	Fivebough Wetlands	21/06/15	Max O'Sullivan
	I went to check on the progress of work only to find nothing has been done – the end of July is now proposed for the opening.		
Superb Parrot [6]	Five Mile via Narrandera	21/06/15	Nella Smith
Golden Whistler [male]	Five Mile via Narrandera	21/06/15	Nella Smith
Spotted Pardalote [male]	Five Mile via Narrandera	21/06/15	Max O'Sullivan
Little Eagle	'The winery' site Binya State Forest	23/06/15	Max O'Sullivan
Cockatiel [5]	Whitton Stock Route Rd on wires	23/06/15	Max O'Sullivan
Emu [4]	Irrigation Way beside the road	23/06/15	Max O'Sullivan
Double-banded Plover	Fivebough Wetlands (Hooey Lookout)	23/06/15	Keith Hutton
Red-capped Plover	Fivebough Wetlands (Hooey Lookout)	23/06/15	Keith Hutton
Emu (sitting on 9 eggs)	Mount Brogden walk	27/06/15	Group outing
Golden Whistler (male)	Mount Brogden walk	27/06/15	Group outing
White-winged Chough [6]	Fivebough Wetlands	28/06/15	Max O'Sullivan
Brown Goshawk [female]	Fivebough Wetlands	28/06/15	Max O'Sullivan
Brolga [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	28/06/15	Max O'Sullivan
Brown Quail [4]	Fivebough Wetlands	28/06/15	Max O'Sullivan
Grey-crowned Babbler	McNabb Cres, Griffith	29/06/15	Sue Chittick-Dalton
King Parrot (male + juv)	McNabb Cres, Griffith	01/07/15	Sue Chittick-Dalton
Striped Honeyeater	McNabb Cres, Griffith	01/07/15	Sue Chittick-Dalton
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [50+]	'Myalstone', Rankins Springs Rd	02/07/15	Melanie Baulch

**** COMING EVENTS ****

Fivebough Wetlands

Remember the tracks are still closed, the period has been extended until the end of July. Maybe be longer with the more recent rain. This is to enable work for the 'Track Upgrade' and 'Bird hide Replacement & new Hide' to proceed. Work will also be done on the culverts to improve water control.

9 July Thursday **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**,
Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7.30pm.
Topic: Solomon Islands – Meredith & Peter
Contact: Penny Williams 6953 3524
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

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.
Please reconfirm with Penny Williams if you are still able to come to help on this weekend.
Contact: Penny Williams 6953 3524 or via the club email by the 12 July for planning purposes for Allan McLean

26 July Sunday **National Tree Day**
Griffith City Council are hosting National Tree Day at Citrus Road, Collina (north of Calabria Road)
Time: 10am – 12 noon
A light lunch and drinks will be provided.

They will be planting locally native woodland trees, shrubs and groundcovers to create a biodiverse wildlife corridor and valuable habitat for our woodland birds and fauna.

Contact: Joanne Tarbit on 02 69 628 140

Visit <http://treeday.planetark.org/> for more information



5 August Wednesday **Copy for the August newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**
Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com. Phone: 6953 2612.

13 August Thursday **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**,
Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7.30pm.
Topic: Pest Management – Mike Spinaze
Contact: Penny Williams 6953 3524
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

16 August Sunday **Geology of Narrandera and surrounds**
Meet at Narrandera to pool vehicles
Bring morning tea and lunch.
Contact: Eric Whiting if attending on 6953 2612.

Other events:

23 July Thursday **Save our Species Seminar at Griffith**
An opportunity to hear about the program and discuss the management of threatened species.
Contact: Penny Williams, murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com if you would like to attend. For more insight into the 'Saving our Species' program go to the OEH SoS website pages, [Threatened species | NSW Environment & Heritage](#).