

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



October 2016 - Issue #242

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

**Major Mitchell's
Cockatoo;
taken on the
Spring campout
at
Rankins Springs
by
Phillip Williams**



IN THIS ISSUE

| | |
|---|----|
| Office Bearers and Subscriptions..... | 2 |
| Images of this month..... | 2 |
| Wildflower Walk around Narrandera | 3 |
| Why are orchids so hard to see? | 3 |
| Spring campout at Rankins Springs (Max) | 4 |
| Wildflowers from the Spring campout (Virginia)..... | 6 |
| Mungo National Park Presentation | 7 |
| BIGNet Report | 8 |
| Fivebough Wetlands Tree Planting..... | 9 |
| Members' Sightings | 10 |
| Members' Observations | 11 |
| Coming Events Calendar | 12 |

CONTRIBUTIONS

For the November issue by

Wednesday 2 November

To Rowena Whiting

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***Twitchathon - it is time to
organise your team for this
year's competition
on 29-30 October***

Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

| | | | | | |
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| Treasurer: | Phil Tenison | 6953 4869 | Website Co-ordinator: | Phillip Williams | 6953 3524 |

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.

Membership enquiries:

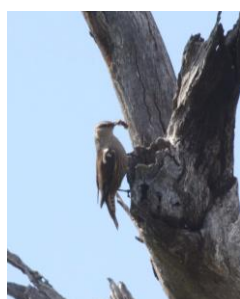
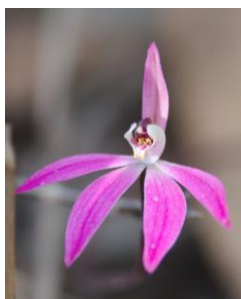
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| Narrandera | Nella Smith | 6959 1210 | Coleambally | John Wilkinson | 6954 4129 | |
| Annual Subscriptions: | Family | \$45.00 | Adult/Single | \$35.00 | Journal only/Concession | \$25.00 |

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

Images for this month



Waxlip Orchid - Rowena Whiting
 Fivebough Wetlands – Tree planting day - Rowena Whiting
 At Rankins Springs –
 Jane leaps the waterway – Penny Williams
 Through the fence – Penny Williams
 Pink Fingers & Everlasting– Dione Russell
 Brown Treecreeper about to enter its nest to feed
 Young – Graham Russell
 Mungo – Saltbush plain and Woolshed – Rowena Whiting



Wild Flower Walk - September 2016

It was nearly a fine day when we met in Narrandera to go orchid hunting with Nella, who has entered all the best spots into her GPS so she can actually find them again next year. We began with a quick little drive down the Newell Highway to view the floodwater, which was quite impressive and then set off up the Old Wagga Road. Orchids like stony ridges because the drainage is excellent not because it is usually dry. In this very wet year there were hundreds of tiny spider orchids in spots where we saw just a dozen last year. It was hard to walk without treading on exquisite tiny flowers.

As well as spider orchids there were still a few donkey orchids, greenhoods and pink fingers to be seen. Another site had a brilliant display of waxlips in just the best shade of blue. Another result of the wet year was a proliferation of *Drosera* – sundews. Many were still a circle of sticky fly traps, while others had already put up a flower stalk. Bulbine lilies buds were scattered through the bush and in one little spot they were in flower producing their own patch of sunshine.

The small stand of Yarran *Acacia homalophylla* near the road down to Rocky Waterholes Boat Ramp is always worth a glance because it is quite rare in this area. On Sunday there were several patches of Darling Pea (*Swainsona* species) flowering nearby, as this pea likes to live in communities with various types of *Acacia* (from "Plants of Western NSW").

Thanks, Nella. It was a lovely and very worthwhile morning.

Betty Bradney

Unfortunately Nella has had other commitments so has not been able to write about the individual orchid species so I have left the spiders without specific names. In the meantime Eric has come up with a short piece on why some orchids are so hard to see. Ed



Photos by Rowena Whiting from top: Masses of Spider orchids, A show of waxlips, Swainson Pea and Sundew with flower stalk.

Why are some orchids hard to see?

We generally think of flowers as brightly coloured objects attracting bees and birds, but there are other ways of luring pollinators. Orchids like the spider, gnat and mosquito types use mimicry as lures. They emit the specific odorous chemicals (pheromones) that particular female insects emit to attract a mate. The males are extremely sensitive to the right chemicals, only a few molecules is enough to trigger a reaction. Once close to the flower the poor male sees the shape of a female and tries to mate.

Orchids, like lilies, survive from year to year by producing bulbs safely tucked underground and out of sight of the many herbivores hoping for an easy meal. Relying on reproducing solely by seeds is extremely risky for orchids. Their seeds are small lacking much of the food store most other flowering plants have to help the new seedling establish. In addition orchids are totally reliant on mycorrhizal fungi for growth, and the fungus only associates with roots. It cannot travel with the seed. Consequently any germinating seed needs to be in close proximity to the right fungus to survive.

Having nutritious bulbs it makes sense not to advertise that they are there. Colourful flowers or even decent vegetative growth is easily spotted. Hence these particular orchids produce flowers sufficient to attract their pollinators which likewise have to be obscure to predators. Often leaves are only produced at non-flowering times or at least last only long enough to produce the flower and replenish the bulb for next years. It is safer to be cryptic.

Eric Whiting

Spring Camp at Rankins Springs 16-18 September 2016

With so many other events being cancelled because of the continuing wet weather over the past months, it was nevertheless decided to go ahead with the Spring Camp at Rankins Springs. Rain wasn't predicted until Sunday so Dionee and Graham Russell gave the go ahead on Thursday and 12 brave and dedicated members and friends braved the conditions and had a most enjoyable weekend.

Dionee had booked the hall for use of the well equipped kitchen and the management agreed that the hall was ours for the weekend so half the group decided to set up their beds in the hall itself. A wise move as it turned out as the predicted rain did come at 4am on Sunday morning which made packing up tents, camp trailers and swags a pain as everything would have to be dried out once we got a few fine days – fortunately that was possible on the Monday.

With road closures everywhere I decided to go via Yenda and call in to check The Winery site on the way. I wanted to see if the **Painted Honeyeaters** had arrived back for the Spring and to my delight, the familiar 'see-saw' call was heard and I saw 2 birds with others calling from across in Binya itself. So with that pleasant surprise, I drove on to Rankins Springs and set up my tent before the others arrived. Whilst doing so, I happened to notice a bird on the lawn and was excited to see a male **Spotted Bowerbird** feeding on some bread that had been thrown on the grass. I knew it was a male as his lilac-pink crest on the nape was in full view. Usually it is concealed and he only shows it in display so he must have had a bower somewhere nearby to have shown his crest for me to see. Another bird flew down and joined him and they soon flew off – never to be seen again for the rest of the time we were there. Even the locals, Rodney and Mark, were surprised when I told them about the birds as they didn't know there were any about in town.

Dionee and Graham arrived early afternoon and set-up their swag before off-loading all the food in the hall kitchen. Next to arrive was Jane who related how she had just had a harrowing drive through masses of water on the highway north of West Wyalong near Marsden.

Virginia and friends arrived next and they decided to sleep in the hall as did Jane. At 2pm we set out to meet Rodney Guest at his property and look at his large intact mallee areas. Few birds were seen but Virginia and Jane did come across several ground orchids – I'll leave it to her to report on what she saw.

Back at camp, Andrew and Ana had arrived and not much later Penny and Phil came.

The meal that night was a grand affair with Dionee and Graham cooking a huge baked dinner for us and we were joined by Rod and Mark for the occasion. At their suggestion, we decided to go along the Whitton Stock Route Road and then along Eight Mile Tank Road the next day in search of birds and orchids.



Enjoying dinner in the hall - Dionee Russell
Sacred Kingfisher - Graham Russell



We weren't disappointed as everyone had plenty to look at – orchids were fairly easy to see and birds were about in small numbers – **Hooded Robin, Sacred Kingfisher, Splendid Wren and Crested Bellbird** among the best (see list below). At this point Elene and a Spanish friend, Eloy, arrived to join us.

We had lunch after a walk in the property along the Eight Mile Rd junction with the Griffith Road (Kidman Way). It was quite a sight at the cars as Virginia's friends, Vilma and Vittorio, had brought their bocci balls with them so we all had a try at playing – Penny and Phil were the stars of the game!



After lunch we drove along the Mid-Western Highway towards Hay to a reserve where we spent the late afternoon before returning to camp exhausted by the day (or at least I was!). Great excitement when a Pink Cockatoo landed in a tree near the hall and displayed for all to enjoy – especially Elene and Eloy.



Dinner that night was a BBQ with everyone assisting Dionee and Graham in the preparation.

Thanks to everyone for an enjoyable weekend – despite the early departure on Sunday. Particular thanks to Dionee and Graham for the organisation, shopping and cooking for the weekend. Also a big thank you to Ana and Andrew for providing breakfast on both mornings.

**Major Mitchell's Cockatoo,
Phillip Williams
Rufous Songlark,
Graham Russell.
At the dam
Dionee Russell
Playing bocci
Dionee Russell**

Max O'Sullivan



Bird list in order of sighting on Friday and Saturday:

- Red-rumped Parrot
- Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater
- Galah
- Magpie
- White-necked Heron
- Willie Wagtail
- Blue Bonnet
- Australian Raven
- Grey Shrike-thrush
- Common Bronzewing
- Peregrine Falcon
- Pied Butcherbird
- Brown-headed Honeyeater
- Western Gerygone
- Yellow-rumped Thornbill
- Mistletoebird
- Nankeen Kestrel
- Crested Bellbird
- White-faced Heron

- Spotted Bowerbird
- Welcome Swallow
- Rufous Songlark
- Pee-Wee
- Peaceful Dove
- Mallee Ringneck
- Weebill
- White-winged Chough
- Major Mitchell's Cockatoo
- Turquoise Parrot
- Striped Honeyeater
- Grey-crowned Babbler
- Rufous Whistler
- Yellow Thornbill
- Grey Fantail
- Laughing Kookaburra
- Little Pied Cormorant
- Eastern Yellow Robin
- White-browed Babbler

- White-plumed Honeyeater
- Striated Pardalote
- Australasian Grebe
- Masked Lapwing
- Crested Pigeon
- Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
- Red-capped Robin
- Apostlebird
- Mulga Parrot
- Wood Duck
- Blue-faced Honeyeater
- Hooded Robin
- Brown Treecreeper
- Sacred Kingfisher
- Splendid Wren
- Jacky Winter
- Black-fronted Dotterel
- Bar-shouldered Dove
- Black Duck

Spring campout at Rankins Springs

Our weekend started by meeting at the Rankins Springs hall before 2pm on Friday. We pooled cars and drove many kilometres down Pintobakena Road to meet up with Rodney Guest, a local property owner who advised us where best to go on his property. We wandered through Mallee woodlands checking out the flora and fauna. Here we found many Pink Fingers *Caladenia fuscata*, Dwarf Greenhoods, Midget Greenhoods and occasional patches of Spider Orchids.



The next day was a beautiful sunny temperate day, great for long walks. We stopped along the old Whitton Stock route road walking through pine and acacia woodland. There was a great variety of ground cover with grasses, daisies, orchids, an abundance of Flannel Cudweed and flowering wattles. The greatest find were two Scented Leek Orchid *Prasophyllum odoratum*. After the recent rains there were streams of water along the roadsides spreading out over the fields.



Our next stop was at the Eight Mile Tank Road dam. We walked to the dam observing the



Eremophila glabra (Emu Bush), grevilleas, Twining Glycine *Glycine clandestine*, Desert Phebalium, Small-leaf Waxflower, Fern-leaf Hopbush and other hopbushes. We wandered through the Mallee reserve to find Butterbush *Pittosporum phylliraeoides*, Needlewood, hakeas, Showy Parrot-pea *Dilwynia sericea*.

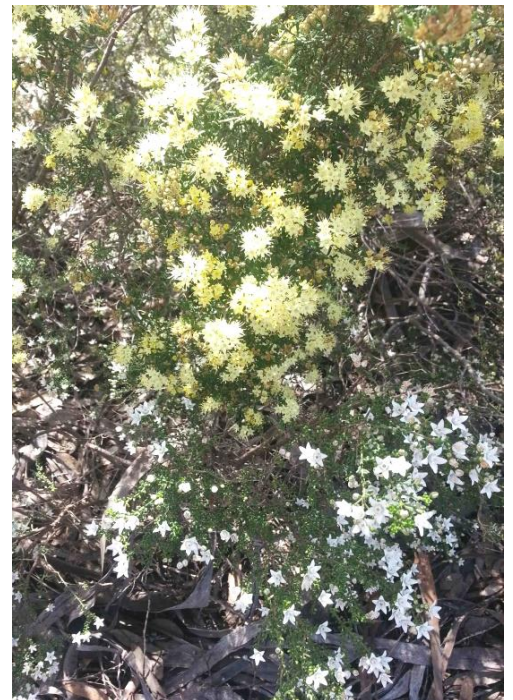
Those who returned back to the cars earlier, were found to be playing Bocci! We all had to have a go before lunch.

The next move was a walk to Gap Dam from Merungi Road through pine woodland. We were treated on the way with a showy carpet of



Broad-leaf Parakeelya *Calandrinia balonensis*, a succulent plant and also Capeweed.

A fulfilling weekend of comradery, which again included Jane. A special thank you to Dione and Graham, Ana and Andrew for well thought out meals and organization of the weekend.



I'm thankful to have chosen the hall to camp in as it was a washout on Sunday, especially having to pack up the wet gear.

Virginia Tarr

Scented Leek Orchid
Desert phebalium & Small-leaf waxflower
Broad-leaf Parakeelya,
Downy Waxflower,
Jane, Penny & Phillip discussing the water situation

Mungo National Park

At the September meeting Eric Whiting gave a short, informative presentation about the natural history and heritage of the Mungo National Park. We had visited there on the June long weekend this year with the Narrandera Camera Club; most of the participants are also members of MFN. First he explained the location of Lake Mungo as one of the terminal lakes of the Willandra Creek. This creek had been the course of the Lachlan River until arid conditions and copious sand blown in from the west defeated it. On return of wetter conditions the Lachlan created its present course.

The principle reason for the declaration of Lake Mungo was for its cultural heritage discovered appearing in the eroding dune systems, including the discovery of the fossil remains of a man who died 40,000 years ago. Other evidence of the long history of occupation is still being revealed as is the case of the recent discovery of a set of footprints on the lake bed. Replicas of these footprints can be seen behind the information centre.



The formations arising from the eroding dunes are also an attraction especially when seen at sunset as some of the photos showed. Parts of the dunes are still mobile and it is possible for visitors to experience the bare sand at one site.

Another side of the cultural heritage of the Park is the European settlement with the Woolshed being prominent. The group took advantage of the fine weather to take moonlight photos of this and also sunset photos at Zanci Homestead also in the Park.



But for nature photographers the various vegetation communities are of interest. Cypress Pine and Rosewood woodlands, saltbushes across the lake bed and mallee communities were all shown. Also being far from regular occupation the night sky can be seen in all its glory – though it can be rather chilly trying to photograph it in June. The open wood fire in the cosy common room of the shearers' quarters was much appreciated; this was our accommodation for the weekend.



Rowena Whiting

From top clockwise: Footprints at the visitors centre
The Mungo lunette at sunset, Woolshed at sunrise
Mungo, the dry lake bed – the lunette is on the horizon
Sand dunes at Vigers Well. Rowena's photos



BIGnet Report 3-4 September 2016

As everyone is aware, the MFN hosted the meeting of BIGnet (Bird Interest Group Network) in Leeton on the first weekend in September. Nella and I agreed for us holding the meeting and we set out planning for the two day conference. The MFN had hosted the group before in Griffith in the 90s so we had a good idea of what was required.

Thanks to Kathy Tenison's suggestion, we finally settled on the venue as the Conference Room at the Heritage Motor Inn on Yanco Ave. Daniel, the manager was extremely helpful and generous in quoting for the catering and the venue which perfectly suited the occasion.

Delegates began to arrive mid-morning on Saturday and the initial session was held to cover the minutes from the April meeting which was held in Sydney.



After lunch, the second session was a series of presentations from guest speakers, David Parker, Matt Herring and David Egan on endangered species in the Riverina. This session was open to everyone and many MFN members came along to hear the talks.

David Parker spoke about his studies of the **Plains Wanderer** and recent developments in trying to save this highly threatened species. Of particular interest was to hear of the recent rescue proposals to save the species by undertaking a captive breeding program. Taroom Zoo in Sydney has already successfully bred 3 chicks in an enclosure there and have the facilities available to take at least 3 more pairs to try to increase the numbers. Other zoos will also take part in

the program and it is hoped that in time sufficient numbers will be bred in captivity to attempt a release program at Oolambyan National Park in the coming years.

Matt Herring spoke about the now famous **Bitterns in Rice** project and entertained us with the tales of trying to capture some birds to attach satellite tracking devices on them. He also reported on the "missing" Robbie – still lost but hopeful still alive! It seems some of the devices on the birds have suffered battery failure and, at present, there is only one bird with a working transmitter.

David Egan completed the day with a talk on the **Red-lored Whistler** surveys he is undertaking at Nombinnie. It was interesting to have his survey methods explained and how successful he and his team have been in locating numbers of these birds in the mallee.

My thanks to these three speakers for making the time available to speak to the group.

We were also pleased to have Leeton Mayor Paul Maytom accept an invitation to speak to welcome the visitors and I thank him for making the time to come.



That evening most went to the Leeton Soldiers Club for dinner and a number of our members also attended.

Sunday we all met at the Petersham Road car park at Fivebough and Keith Hutton took the group to see what birds were about at the time. We didn't have a great deal of time as I had organised the Leeton Rotary Club to provide a BBQ breakfast at Mountford Park at 8.30am so things were a little rushed. Needless to say most of the visitors had already been to Fivebough or at least made a longer visit on the Sunday afternoon.

The final morning session was again about topics of interest to the group – twitchathon information, IBAs (Important Bird Areas) and finances of the organisation and individual clubs.

The meeting concluded with lunch before everyone departed.

In all, it was a very successful gathering and it was a relief that it went off so well. The next meeting is to be run by the Illawarra Bird Group early next year.

Photos by Penny Williams –
An attentive audience,
David Egan during his presentation

Max O'Sullivan

Tree Planting at Fivebough Wetlands

Despite the wet conditions the Community Tree Planting Day at Fivebough Wetlands on Tuesday, 20 September did go ahead. Had it been held a day later then the ground around the Information Centre would have been too wet to walk on let alone plant trees and shrubs.



The event was ably organised by Kelly Tyson, Leeton Shire Council with help from Local Land Services, Leeton and District Local Aboriginal Land Council, Murrumbidgee Irrigation and other organisations. About 250 school children from most of the schools in the district far dominated the adults attending. After a general welcome by Kelly and a welcome to

country by Elder William Ingram, the Parkview Cultural Dance Group performed two traditional dances for us. Then followed three more speeches illustrating the importance of Fivebough and its Ramsar significance.

The formal part was concluded by Elder Jimmy Ingram inviting us to partake in a spiritually cleansing smoking ceremony, something that most of us had never experienced before. Then it was down to business.

Nearly a thousand plants from Greening Australia were put into the ground in the area behind the Information Centre by eager young hands.

Finally we were rewarded with an invitation to try bush tucker of kangaroo

rissoles, emu spring rolls, fish, wattle seed cake and the great favourite, wattle seed and honey ice-cream. Witchetty Grub Pizza was also on the menu, but I did not see anyone try some!



Photos by Rowena Whiting from top left clockwise:
Welcome Dance - Parkview Cultural Dance Group
Jimmy Ingram - Smoking Ceremony
Another tree planted (Parkview School girls)
Emu Spring Rolls (delicious!)

Eric Whiting

Birdlife Australia National Twitchathon 2016

This year the competition is going national! On the weekend of the 29th and 30th of October, teams of keen birders from all experience levels will be racing across the countryside, birding in the name of conservation. The Twitchathon is a race in which teams aim to tick off as many species as they can in the allotted time. This year there are three different events so anyone (no matter how experienced or time-restricted), can compete!

- ❖ The **24hr Twitchathon** is a marathon of overnight driving and massive species totals – winning teams see over a quarter of all Australia's birds, driving hundreds of kilometres and stopping only to twitch!
- ❖ The **12hr 'Champagne' Twitchathon** caters to those with less time, wherein teams have half a day to tick up their species. It also removes the need for overnight driving, and teams have the option of a lunch break, with the end result being a more relaxed version of the 24 hour event.
- ❖ The **Birdathon** is a super-strategic event that could take teams all day, or as few as three hours.

Get involved by forming a team. Contact the NSW coordinators (Joshua Bergmark & Ashwin Rudder) for a registration pack, which includes rules for the different race categories, fundraising targets and information, details on how to donate, the official species list, and a digital copy of the flyer! Email twitchathon.nsw@gmail.com. See coming events for MFN contact.

MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

| | | | |
|--|---|-----------|---------------------|
| Grey-crowned Babbler | 'Mountain Dam', Colinroobie Rd via Leeton | 16/08/16 | Graham Russell |
| Black-winged Stilt [200] | Fivebough Wetlands | 01/09/16 | Keith hutton |
| Keith counted 28 stilts nesting on 1/9 but by 3/9 they were all flooded out & they departed with just 2 remaining. | | | |
| Whiskered Tern [27] | Fivebough Wetlands from Hoey Lookout | 03/09/16 | Keith Hutton |
| Glossy Ibis [9] | Fivebough Wetlands | 03/09/16 | A Morris, A Benson |
| Whiskered Tern [16] | Fivebough Wetlands | 03/09/16 | A Morris, A Benson |
| Plumed Whistling Duck [2] | Brobenah Hall Rd, via Leeton | 04/09/16 | A Morris, A Benson |
| Southern Whiteface [3] | Evans Smyles Rd, via Leeton | 04/09/16 | A Morris, A Benson |
| Diamond Firetail [16] | Barellan,-Weethalle Rd | 04/09/16 | A Morris, A Benson |
| Spotted Harrier [1] | Evans Smyles Rd via Leeton | 04/09/16 | BIGnet group |
| Brown Quail [2] | Fivebough Wetlands | 05/09/16 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Budgerigar | Whitton Stock Route Rd, near Binya SF | 05/09/16 | Lorna Mee |
| Variegated Wren [3] | Palla St, Griffith | 05/09/16 | Virginia Tarr |
| Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike | Palla St, Griffith | 07/09/16 | Virginia Tarr |
| Cockatiel [10] | Kidman Way near Coleambally | 07/09/16 | Betty Bradney |
| Wedge-tailed Eagle | Morundah Rd via Narrandera | 07/09/16 | Betty Bradney |
| Emu | Morundah Rd via Narrandera | 07/09/16 | Betty Bradney |
| Sacred Kingfisher [1] | 'The Winery' site Binya State Forest | 08/09/16 | Max O'Sullivan |
| First sighting for this season. | | | |
| Glossy Black Cockatoo [pr] | 'Mountain Dam', Colinroobie Rd | 08/09/16 | Graham Russell |
| Southern Whiteface | 'Mountain Dam', Colinroobie Rd | 08/09/16 | Graham Russell |
| Speckled Warbler | 'Mountain Dam', Colinroobie Rd | 08/09/16 | Graham Russell |
| Graham reports this is the first time he has seen the Whiteface and Speckled Warbler on his farm. | | | |
| Crimson Chat | Colinroobie Rd near the Walnut Orchard | 08/09/16 | Phil Tenison |
| Glossy Black Cockatoo [6] | 'Yarrabimbi', Colinroobie Rd | 08/09/16 | Andrew Thompson |
| Andrew reports there were 2 adult pairs both with a juvenile. | | | |
| Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [6+] | McNabb Cres, Griffith | 08/09/16 | Sue Chittick-Dalton |
| Grey-crowned Babbler [8+] | McNabb Cres, Griffith | 08/09/16 | Sue Chittick-Dalton |
| Sue reports the Babblers are daily visitors to her garden. | | | |
| Rainbow Lorikeet | McNabb Cres, Griffith | 08/09/16 | Sue Chittick-Dalton |
| Common Bronzewing [1] | Fivebough Wetlands | 09/09/16 | Keith Hutton |
| Cattle Egret [120] | Fivebough Wetlands from Hoey Lookout | 10/09/16 | Keith Hutton |
| Nankeen Night Heron [5] | McCaughy Lake, Yanco | 12/09/16 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Painted Honeyeater [2+] | The Winery site, Binya | 16/09/16 | Max O'Sullivan |
| This is the first sighting for the Spring. | | | |
| Spotted Bowerbird [2] | Rankins Springs Caravan Park | 16/09/16 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [2+] | Rankins Springs | 16/09/16 | MFN Group |
| Hooded Robin [pr] | Whitton Stock Route Rd | 17/09/16 | MFN Group |
| Crested Bellbird [2+] | Rankins Springs Campout | 17/09/16 | MFN Group |
| Blue-billed Duck [2m,1f] | Campbells Swamp, Griffith | 23/09/16 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Chestnut Teal [with ducklings] | Campbells Swamp, Griffith | 23/09/16 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Magpie Goose [3] | Campbells Swamp, Griffith | 23/09/16 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Caspian Tern [1] | Lake Wyangan [south lake] | 23/09/16 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Great Crested Grebe [5] | Lake Wyangan [south lake] | 23/09/16 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Great Crested Grebe [pr] | Fivebough Wetlands from Hoey Lookout | 25/09/16 | Keith Hutton |
| Keith watched the pair doing a mating dance on the water - likewise for several pairs of Hoary-headed. | | | |
| Hoary-headed Grebe [100+] | Fivebough Wetlands from Hoey Lookout | 25/09/16 | Keith Hutton |
| Great Crested Grebe [4] | Fivebough Wetlands from Hoey Lookout | 28/09/16 | Keith Hutton |
| Musk Duck [male displaying] | Fivebough Wetlands | 28/09/16 | Keith Hutton |
| Superb Parrot [flyover] | Fivebough Wetlands | September | Keith Hutton |
| Keith is seeing small flocks of from 5 to 11 birds flying over Fivebough during September. | | | |

At the end of September Keith has recorded 16 adult breeding pairs of **Great Crested Grebes** at Fivebough at the end of September. This is the largest count of this species in the 35 years of records.

Neil Palframan has been checking the Griffith area and has reported lots of breeding water birds – ducks and swans. Campbells Swamp is filling from all the rain with drainage from Scenic Hill and Barren Box is full to capacity.

Members' Observations

Recording the things we observe around us is an important part of being a field naturalist. Everyone can participate. Naturalists are always interested in hearing about what other people have seen, heard, or observed. Here are the contributions for this month.

Neil Palframan: I spotted something whilst out bike out riding today that looks like an “albino spider orchid”? A little patch of three in amongst other spider orchids on Nelson Road, Warburn. Went back out with the car, the camera, and with Johanna and Col. We found three variations of colour – dark, medium, light. How common is this? **Nella Smith** says she is seeing variations like this too. It seems to happen when a lot of them flower.



Penny Williams – Image of flood water over the Leeton to Barellean Road – 8 October



Barry Allen has photographed a pair of Rainbow Lorikeets feeding on grain at Karri Rd, Leeton on 5 October 2016.

Sue Chittick-Dalton has sent these pictures of a frog “that my friend, Wendy Bennett, found on her porch at Darlington Point on 10th September. In my book the picture is identical to Len Cronin’s Reptiles and Amphibians Giant Burrowing Frog *Heleiopus australiacus* but it is coastal”. [Looking in Harold Cogger’s Reptiles and Amphibians the orange markings match to the Giant Banjo Frog *Limnodynastes interioris* which is found in central NSW. It is usually found breeding after rain in inundated grassy areas. Ed]



**** COMING EVENTS ****

Note: The recent wet weather conditions may affect access to outing locations and these may have to be changed. Please contact the organiser to confirm.

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

Topic: "The Kimberley" Joanne Tarbitt

Contact: Penny Williams 6953 3524

Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

16 October Sunday Outing to be decided at the meeting – will depend on whether roads are open and people's availability.

Spring wildflowers are continuing to flower.

Bring: Morning tea and lunch.

Please contact: Penny - Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

19-25 October National Bird Week and Aussie Backyard Bird Count

29-30 October Birdlife Australia National Twitchathon 2016

The idea is to see how many species of birds you can find in the 24, 12 or just 3 hours. For more details see page 9. Note the Champagne Race is different this year and there is a new section – the Birdathon where you can choose how long you spend. There is a minimum of 3 hours.

If you have a team or would like to be part of another team and for further details contact Penny Williams 6953 3524.

Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

2 November Wednesday Copy for the November newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.

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

10 November Thursday Annual General Meeting and Monthly Meeting in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7.30pm.

Topic:

Contact: Penny Williams 6953 3524

Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

13-20 November Wild Pollinator Count

Other events

17-23 October Aussie Backyard Bird Count

In its third year and becoming one of Australia's largest citizen science projects. It's easy to get involved. Participants are asked to spend 20 minutes in their favourite green patch and record all birds seen on the Aussie Bird Count App or the form on our website www.aussiebirdcount.org.au to record the types of birds you see and roughly how many.

22 October

to 20 November Willandra: Three Rivers –artworks evocative of the area's unique landscape at the Griffith Regional Art Gallery.

For details contact Melanie Baulch melaniebaulch@bigpond.com or the gallery.