

# The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



December 2016 - Issue #244

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



## Eastern Blue Tongue Lizard *Tiliqua scincoides* by Phillip Williams

The anterior temporal scales are much larger than others, being longer than broad.

I photographed it this afternoon about 5:30 (21 Nov 2016) on the footpath at home. I have seen this one or a very similar one around a few times but have not photographed it so far this summer. I suspect we may have more than 1 in our yard as I have seen them a number of times over the years. This one did not even try to move when I came back with the camera. Did not seem at all worried about me. It was pretty hot where it was on the northern side of the house in the shade under the eave. I expect the footpath would still be pretty hot as this path gets the full midday - early afternoon sun. I hope eats mozzies, but if it has been, it is not making any noticeable impact on the mozzie population in our yard!

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## CONTRIBUTIONS

For the February issue by  
Wednesday 1 February

To Rowena Whiting

Email: [ericwhiting4@bigpond.com](mailto:ericwhiting4@bigpond.com).

Phone: 6953 2612

**Christmas Break up is at  
"Yarrabimbi" on Saturday  
10 December**

## Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

<b>President:</b>	Graham Russell	0419 350 673	<b>Editor:</b>	Rowena Whiting	6953 2612
<b>Vice President:</b>	Nella Smith	6959 1210	<b>Committee:</b>	Johanna Botman	6963 4855
<b>Vice President:</b>	Eric Whiting	6953 2612		Phillip Williams	6953 3524
<b>Vice President:</b>	Virginia Tarr	6962 5614		Betty Bradney	6959 2901
<b>Secretary:</b>	Penny Williams	6953 3524			
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Phil Tenison	6953 4869	<b>Website Co-ordinator:</b>	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:

<b>Leeton</b>	Eric Whiting	6953 2612	<b>Griffith</b>	Virginia Tarr	6962 5614	
<b>Narrandera</b>	Nella Smith	6959 1210	<b>Coleambally</b>	John Wilkinson	6954 4129	
<b>Annual Subscriptions:</b>	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.

## As the calendar year closes the new MFN year commences

First and foremost we have a new president, **Graham Russell** was elected unanimously, welcome Graham. Our sincere thanks to **Max** for guiding us so well over the past three years, the maximum time to hold the position. Other office bearers remain the same – see above. There were a few changes other positions and to representatives to various organisations; these are listed:

Auditor:	Andrew Thompson
BigNet:	Max O'Sullivan
Environmental Water:	Nella Smith, alternate representative Max O'Sullivan
Conservation Officer:	Penny Williams
Sightings Coordinator:	Max O'Sullivan
Website coordinator:	Phillip Williams and Kathy Tenison
Facebook coordinator:	Virginia Tarr
Fivebough and Tuckerbil delegate:	Eric Whiting, alternate representative Max O'Sullivan
Camp organiser:	Dionee Russell
Equipment officer	Nella Smith
Environmental committee:	Phil Tension, Nella Smith, Graham Russell

*Once again the contributions have been great this year and I would like to thank everyone for making our newsletter so popular. I will be looking for plenty more in the new year!*

*In the meantime enjoy the festive season with family, friends, on the beach, by the river, in the mountains, with the birds, the choice is yours.*

**Rowena**

## 2016 AUSSIE BACKYARD BIRD COUNT RESULTS

More than 61,000 people participated this year, submitting over 45,000 checklists and counting 1.4 million birds!

The Top 10 most counted bird species in Australia remained unchanged for the third year running, with the Rainbow Lorikeet once again claiming the number one spot. Even though scientists recently separated the NT Rainbow Lorikeet into a different species - the Red-collared Lorikeet - the Rainbow Lorikeet was still number one by a wide margin.

While the Top 10 species remained the same there was a bit of movement in the order, with House Sparrows dropping two places, reflecting the current worldwide trend of sparrows disappearing from urban areas. Is this the beginning of the decline of Australia's House Sparrows? This will be one to watch in next year's count.

To see the full results or to download the species list for Australia or your state click [here](#). A HUGE thank you to everyone who took part in the #AussieBirdCount.

## Our Visit to Buckingbong State Forest

Buckingbong State Forest was the venue of the November excursion. On the suggestion from Nella who had been there a month earlier, we headed for the Greenvale Road section of the forest. From this road we turned into Red Hut Road and soon stopped to have a look around. This part of the forest is a Forest Reserve. It is largely White Cypress Pine Woodland like the majority of the State Forest.

Nella had seen Spider-orchids there but we were far too late for them. All we saw was a dense ground cover that turned out to be mostly weeds. If not a weed it was a Purple Burr-daisy fully armed with ripe burrs (OK although a native, they are a weed - an unwanted plant). There were some natives, generally the commonly seen varieties not always in flower. They prompted some discussion at the time but nothing to write home about. In parts Clustered Everlastings were out en masse sometimes interspersed with Bluebells. The one exception was the number and



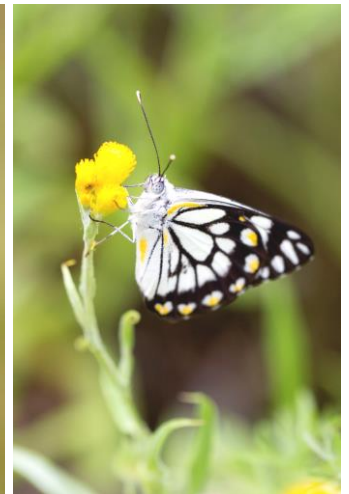
robustness of Onion Orchids *Microtis unifolia*.

In an attempt to find better sightings we drove further along Red Hut Road, stopping to walk along a cross track, easier walking, but not much different to the first stop. The only really talking point was finding that all the bushes of Western Golden Wattle *Acacia decora* did not have a single pod on them nor any sign they had any this season.



Hoping for a change of scenery we continued on up the road aiming to get to a dam marked on the map. We never found that one. Undaunted we tried for another further on, which we did find. There was water in it but the birding was not great. The mosquitoes were prolific though and we soon beat a retreat. Plantwise the only species of note was the entirely parasitic, leafless, introduced Broomrape *Orobanche minor*.

It had now become time to think of lunch. Max had vaguely recalled stopping at another dam further along Greenvale Road. Unfortunately too vague a recollection because we never found it. It also came on to rain. It did not take too much discussion to accept Alan and Susan's invitation to have lunch back at their cottage they are renovating in Narrandera.



The cottage is near the extended walking track to the Narrandera Wetlands, a fact we took advantage of after lunch that happened to be also a break in the rain. We made it back to the cottage just in time.

### Eric Whiting

#### Buckingbong State Forest Bird List 13/11/16 compiled by Melanie Baulch

Pied Butcherbird	Red-capped Robin	Galah
Australian Raven	Apostlebird	White-winged Chough
Rufous Whistler	Rufous Songlark	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Grey Fantail	Southern Whiteface	Western Gerygone
White-browed Babbler	Willie Wagtail	Jacky Winter
Common Bronzewing	Grey Shrike-Thrush	

**Photos by Rowena Whiting**  
**From top: a mass of Clustered Everlastings, White-winged Chough nest, Caper White butterfly on Clustered Everlasting bud, Ajuga, Onion Orchid.**



## Campbell's and Nericon Swamps – Surveys for Environmental Water Advisory Group (EWAG)

Neil and Max reported for duty on the 26 November at Campbell's Swamp (or is that Campbells or is it Campbell). We intended to cover both Campbell's and Nericon Swamps and in the end produced five counts at Campbell's and three counts at Nericon which we estimate covered at least 95% of the wetlands.

As most would be aware the two swamps differ markedly with Campbell's having higher and thicker growth of reeds and hence it needed more survey points, but no matter how many points there is still a good chance of birds remaining unseen. Nericon Swamp, after the initial inlet area of reeds, is wide and relatively growth free, and only the distance across makes the counting difficult.

Perhaps it was the lack of the usually very skittish Pacific Black Duck which made the rest of the birdlife quite relaxed and easy to count ... along with the fact there were not many present to count! Also the day was sunny, warm with a light breeze ... I guess ideal conditions for waterbirds and observers.

Numbers counted were quite low and not often into the double figures, most of the twenty minutes at each spot being taken up with finger twiddling. I guess the main conclusion comes from the orders of magnitude. These same surveys would see numbers ten or a hundred times greater, when the wildlife eventually returns from their current utopia to our little refuges.

However, during the course of a fairly dull day there were a few "veryhighlights" ... a first for me outright, a first for me at Campbell's/Nericon, and three separate sightings of the Bittern, see Max's sighting notes.

### Neil Palfaman

**The statistics were:** for Campbell's we saw 47 species and counted 465 birds and for Nericon we saw 23 species with a count of 288.

[Disappointing that only 2 members were able to partake in this survey; we trust that the data from this will play a part in future analyses, showing how variable the seasons can be. Ed]

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## Breeding Bonanza at Fivebough Wetlands and Lake Coolah

This time last year we had the **Bittern Bonanza** at Fivebough wetlands with 34 birds recorded on the evening of 20 November. This year with all the winter rain both Fivebough and Lake Coolah, in particular, are again full as they were in March 2012 and the water birds have taken great advantage of the abundance of food in order to breed. This breeding breeding bonanza is also happening at Campbell's and Nericon Swamps and possibly at Tuckerbil as well if access into the swamp was easier.

As Fivebough started to fill in mid-year, the **Black Swans** were the first to take advantage of the increased water level and, by late July, Keith Hutton had recorded an amazing 71 nests scattered about the wetlands particularly in the northern end where they could be easily seen from Hooey Lookout. The first cygnets started appearing around early August.



Since then and with more persistent rain in August/September, all other birds have been induced to breed in great numbers. This has been particularly noticeable at Fivebough and Lake Coolah where it is relatively easy to see the birds, despite Fivebough being inaccessible still beyond the Information Centre.

**Black Swan with young (above)  
by Phillip Williams  
Coot and chicks (left)**

**Purple Swamphens, Moorhens** and **Coots** have all got young in many family groups whereas, the grebes; **Great Crested, Hoary-headed** and **Australasian** have bred but only a small number of



chicks have been seen. But that doesn't mean they have been less successful, it's just that they are more secretive and keep their chicks well hidden in the reeds.

Duck species with young that have been seen are **Black, Musk, Blue-billed, Wood, Grey and Chestnut Teal, Plumed-Whistling, Hardhead** and **Australasian Shoveller**. So far there has been no sightings of **Pink-eared** ducklings and Keith reported 2 pairs of **Wandering Whistling Duck** and **Plumed Whistling Duck** at Fivebough on 23 November so, hopefully, they might stay around and breed successfully as well. There has been no sightings of any **Freckled Duck** and not many are being reported on Birdline from any eastern State. They are possibly further inland as there is no shortage of suitable habit everywhere this season.

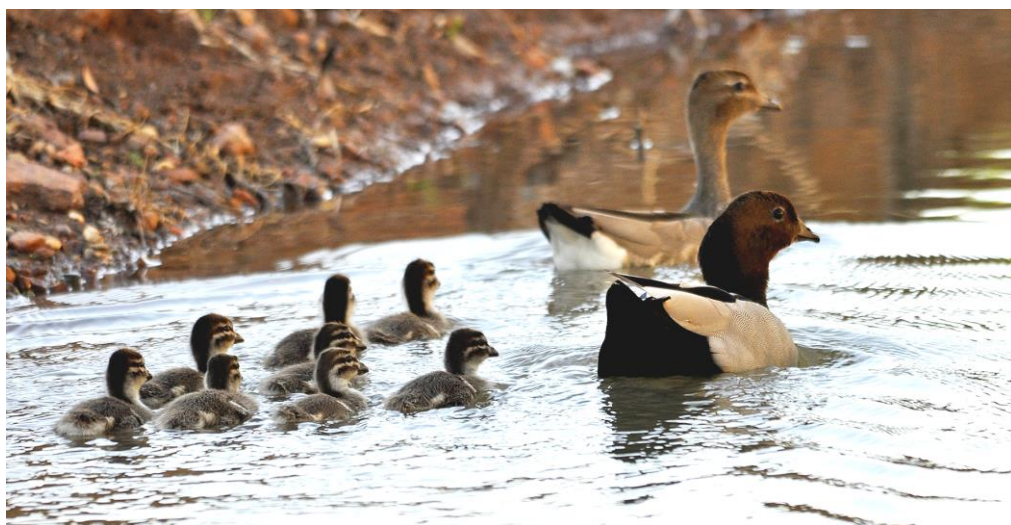
Up to 14 **Magpie Geese** have been seen at Fivebough and up to 8 at Lake Coolah. It wasn't until 25 November that proof of their breeding was confirmed when I saw a family of newly hatched goslings at Fivebough. When Neil and I did the bird count at Campbell's and Nericon Swamps on 26 November, we were surprised to find more than 50 geese at the two swamps with many young birds from very tiny goslings to half-grown juveniles, indicating successful breeding at both wetlands.

**Black Swans** too have continued to breed with a few new nests at Fivebough and many more at Lake Coolah. So they have had a very successful year locally as I don't recall as many in the past 10 years. Swan breeding has also occurred at Campbell's Swamp, Nericon and Barren Box.

To top this successful breeding event off, I spotted a pair of **Brolgas** with a juvenile on 16 November at the northern end of Lake Coolah so they have also taken advantage of the good season.

**Black-winged Stilts** have also been breeding and despite several nests being drowned early in August when the water level rose, some were successful in raising young and at present there are many nests at both Fivebough and Lake Coolah.

It is also interesting to note that, despite the breeding successes mentioned above, the numbers of ducks at the various swamps are very low compared with past years when water wasn't so readily available as it is this year. This time last year, there were hundreds if not thousands of **Grey Teal** about but not this year. Such is the dispersal because of the large numbers of wetlands that can support them. Also, **Whiskered**



Wood Ducks and family - Phillip Williams

**Terns** are about but not anywhere near the numbers that come and fly over the rice fields at this time of year. I have seen none over the rice but numbers over the swamps. Most noticeable of all, is the lack of **Glossy Ibis** in the area. Instead of the usual thousands that come when the rice is planted, there are none.

Obviously, places like the Macquarie Marshes are a greater attraction this season.

**Some interesting numbers from Keith's quarterly counts comparing 19/10/2015 with 27/10/2016**

**Australian Shelduck:** 136 last year and none this year (31 have since appeared on 19/11/16).

**Grey Teal:** 1095 on last year's count and only 75 this year.

**Great Crested Grebe:** None last year and 87 this year.

**Glossy Ibis:** 2060 last year and none this year (7 turned up on 23/11/16).

**Black-winged Stilt:** 2500 in 2015 and now just 34.

**Sharp-tailed Sandpiper:** 2300 in 2015 and none this year.

**Whiskered Tern:** 2040 in 2015 and only 10 this year.

Such is the change to a very wet winter in our region.

**Max O'Sullivan**



## Travelling with Virginia and Trevor to the Channel Country

Our long awaited trip to the Queensland Channel Country mine site eventuated at the end of July into August, after the winter rains abated. We loaded up our old trusty 4WD Toyota Cruiser and bogie trailer with repair equipment, tyres, 8 weeks food supply, bags of clothing for all weathers, textbooks and binoculars, plus camera, tent, welding gear and 2 generators.

The road-sides were the greenest we had ever known, pools of water laying in the furrows, saturated by the frequent storms that passed by in July and August. Before Cunnamulla we spotted in the cleared fenced-in paddock, a Big bird. "What was that Trev?" as we zoomed past. Sure enough my first sighting of a Bustard when we checked the Morcombe Field Guide.



From Cunnamulla after a good feed, fuel-up and checking road conditions to Quilpie via Eulo, and Toompine, we had a smooth ride on very good newly tarred roads that provided us with great views of undulating rolling hills of green and yonder blues. A pair of Brolgas were spotted on a creek flat. After collecting the last few perishables, meat and ice in Quilpie, we made it to Eromanga before dark passing road-kill, with a number of Wedge-tailed Eagles, many Ravens, a Whistling Kite and Black Kites taking advantage.

Along the road to our Monte Carlo mining camp we were stopped by a group of 6 Spinifex Pigeons courting each other. My mobile phone

camera wasn't good enough to catch them before they moved on. We were pleasantly surprised by the splashes of brightly coloured flowering acacias, cassias, mulgas, eremophilas, and ground covering plants such as the different fox tails of the *ptilotus species*, goodenias, copperburrs of the *sclerolaena species*, pea flowers of the *indigofera species*, and succulents (*portulacaceae family*) as we drove into the harsh gibber, come rocky, gravelly then clay



Streaked goodenia *Goodenia calcarata*  
Regal bird flower *Crotalaria cunninghamii*  
Montecarlo peak  
Brolgas on Quilpi Toompine rd

country with dry creek-beds gorging crossing our track to the campsite.

We stayed there for three weeks, moving camp and equipment to the new site, fossicking, visiting other miners and our favourite billabong with River Red Gums and Coolibahs, along its banks. An eremophila was attracting the Singing Honeyeaters. Not far from there is the range with caves that contains aboriginal artworks. My time in the afternoons was spent identifying all the flowering plants that we had gathered and recording the birdlist of 42+. The species of the Cinnamon Quail-thrush x 5 we were delighted to observe near our camp once.

On the way south, we visited the Eromanga Natural History Museum. <http://www.enhm.com.au/index.htm>. This has been established recently after finding one of the biggest, world renowned Titanosaurus in the local region in 2006. There are over 70 palaeontology sites that are registered to be worked on in this South West Queensland region. It was a very worthwhile informative tour of the facility and seeing the local staff at work cleaning these huge bones and gratifying to know that they are to stay in that facility on show.

There is much more to see and do in that region.

### Virginia Tarr

[Virginia gave a very informative talk at the November meeting. Ed]



## MFN President's Annual Report 2016



November began with great excitement at Fivebough with a massive influx of **Australasian Bitterns** waiting for the rice sowing season to begin. The climax was an unprecedented count of 34 birds on the 20 November and their numbers started to drop off soon after that, presumably to disperse into the rice fields of the area.

In my absence, the annual Twitchathon was held on the last weekend in October and with two teams participating in the Champagne Race— no prizes this

time but everyone enjoyed the experience.

The annual **Xmas Party** was again held at 'Yarrabimbi' on 12 December and many thanks to Ana and Andrew for allowing the members to enjoy their hospitality and surroundings.

The usual '**Summer in the Mountains**' weekend was held at Falls Creek with the members staying at the Australian Alpine Lodge. Thanks to Ana and Andrew, Neil and Johanna and Dione and Graham for taking care of the catering. And thanks also to Neil for organising the outings during the weekend.



March saw club members joining with the **Rankins Springs Group** to do a Glossy Black Cockatoo count in the Rankins Springs area. All participants enjoyed the experience and made many friends with the local organisers. Our own count was organised by Nella and despite fewer members participating some good numbers of birds were counted especially at Peter Gleeson's property on Colinroobie Road.

**Robbie at Mt Burr Swamp, Southern Victoria by Damien Cook in September**  
**Jane, Nan and Sue taking a break in the mountains**  
**Glossy Black Cockatoo – Graham Russell**

**Gregory Andrews, the Commonwealth Threatened Species Commissioner,** made a brief visit to the MIA and was shown various sites

both at Coleambally and Leeton during his time with us and now has a greater appreciation of our concerns.

Betty was the club organiser of the **Annual Narrandera Koala Count** and numbers were down slightly on previous years with just 20 sighted.

In May, Nella organised a **Biodiversity survey at North Nombinnie Nature Reserve** and we were pleased to have David Egan take some of the attendees on his Red-lored Whistler surveys. It was good for us to see how such surveys are carried out and how the records are kept for reporting to the various Government Departments.

The **Threatened Species Day** was highlighted by the showing of the movie about Little Penguins in Victoria – the movie was "**Oddball**" and was shown at the Griffith Cinema. Thanks to Nella for setting-up the display in the foyer and other members for assisting her.

**Campbell's Swamp boardwalk** proved another distraction with more repairs required to the rotting planks and damaged handrails. Thanks to Terry Smith for supplying the freshly milled replacements and to Neil for doing all the hard labour in replacing them. I was the plank runner. Fortunately, an inspection by **Griffith Council** not long after approved the boardwalk as safe and structurally sound and a certificate indicating that was granted.



July saw the beginning of what turned out to be possibly **the wettest winter in the Riverina** in many many years and at the time of writing this report, there is still water everywhere but with signs of it slowly drying out. Apart from road closures in the area, **Fivebough Wetlands** was made inaccessible in early October and remains so until the water evaporates with the warmer weather over the next few months.



Several planned activities had to be either postponed or cancelled because of access difficulties on the unsealed roads to Binya and Cocoparra and flooding of areas normally visited by MFN. **The Tree Planting** organised by Kelly Tyson from Leeton Shire Council did go ahead on 20 September with many local schools sending students to assist. A **“Welcome to Country”** and smoke ceremony was held by members of the local aboriginal community and a Bush Tucker lunch was provided for those attending.

In July/August clubs and interest groups from all over NSW were encouraged to study the NSW Government proposal for changes to the **Biodiversity legislation**. Meetings were held and there was much discussion on-line about the negative effects such changes would have on the flora and fauna on the state. The MFN submitted a letter of objection and we are still awaiting the result of the 7,000+ submissions received.

As a result of a visit in May by Elisabeth and Tom Karplus from Birds NSW Nella and I agreed to host the September meeting of **BIGNet (Bird Interest Group Network)** in Leeton. **The meeting** went ahead as planned on the 3rd and 4th of September at the Heritage Motor Inn in Leeton and we were happy with the weekend. Our thanks go to the Heritage Motor Inn and Leeton Shire Council for their support of the event. Fortunately it was held on the weekend prior to more heavy rain so the visitors were able to get about without being flooded in - even Fivebough was accessible still.

Flood waters near Leeton (above)  
by Penny Williams  
Red-lored Whistler (below)  
(Photo courtesy Graeme Chapman)

MFN members attended the Saturday afternoon session of the meeting heard a series of presentations given by **David Parker** on his studies of the Plains Wanderer, **Matt Herring** on the Bitterns in Rice project and **David Egan** on his continuing surveys of the Red-lored Whistler.

The MFN **Spring Camp at Rankins Springs** went ahead on the weekend of 16-18 September with a good turn-out of participants and wonderful catering from Ana and Andrew and Dione and Graham. Despite millions of mozzies whenever we ventured into the bush, we managed to see plenty of ground orchids and birds. Thanks go to the Rankin Springs Community for their guidance in organising where to go around Rankin Springs. Rain limited our plans on Sunday to participate in a flower identification day at Cocoparra National Park.



Finally this year's **Twitathon** is happening again on the last weekend in October with two teams participating, one team in the changed Champagne event and one team participating in the new Birdathon event. The change in the rules of the Twitathon and the unusual year challenged participants.

This is my last year as Club President and I would like to thank **Penny Williams** and **Phil Tenison** for their tireless commitment to the club as Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

Many thanks also to all members who continually support the group and participate whenever events are held.

Special thanks to **Rowena** who does an amazing job in getting the club newsletter out every month and to **Andrew Thompson** who audits our club accounts.

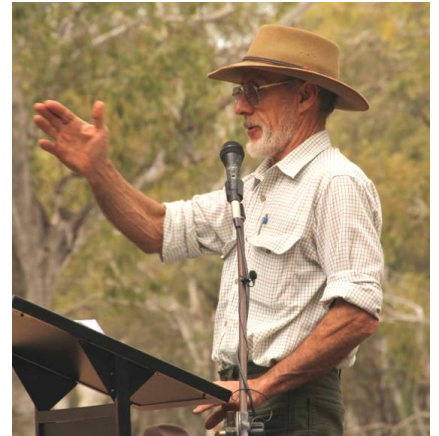
**Max O’Sullivan**



## FAREWELL TERRY SMITH (13/10/1948 - 26/11/16)

Where does one begin to summarise the too short life of our friend Terrence Ernest Smith? He touched most of our lives in many different ways and we all have happy memories that we would like to share. It was a privilege to hear his children read his eulogy with such obvious respect, admiration and most of all love. I will try to summarise their notes, not an easy task, for Terry was a man who had such a rich and full life.

At 15 he left school where he was good at maths which he obviously liked and was not interested in English. It was then that I first met Terry. As an unfortunate English teacher assigned to a class of mainly boys just one period a week for poetry and without poetry books, I can still remember the panic with which I appealed to the English Master, "What will I do?" "You'll think of something!" I did, but it wasn't poetry and the Master was not pleased when he found out that I had read them a story of which I had an emergency collection. Terry reminded me of that time when I next met him at Field Naturalists more than 30 years later.



In 1968 Terry was conscripted from farm work into the Army and after basic training was offered a position as a sapper in the Royal Australian Engineers. After three years' service in Vietnam, building, driving and maintenance work. "Dad's sense of duty and adventure which he has displayed throughout his life took him happily to Vietnam and looking back he always told us it was one of the best things that ever happened to him" (Adrian). I think it gave him the confidence to cope with whatever life threw at him.

With his restored A-Model Ford for weddings, Terry met his future wife Nella when driving the bride, Lorna, Nella's twin sister to her wedding. They were married 18 months later and moved to Albury.

The Army offered Vietnam vets training and Terry undertook a number of courses. In the words of one of his children, he was jack of all trades and master of all of them. He took over the trucking business in Narrandera. "By constantly building and fixing things he provided for the family and at the same time taught us that nothing is impossible"-Mark. The Smiths regularly took camping trips for holidays going further and further afield and into interesting wild places. They went on three Desert Discovery trips. With a variety of outdoor interests, they would, of course be drawn to the Field Naturalists' club. Rowena said that when she thinks of Terry she remembers the speed with which he could make a fire, boil the billy and make a cup of tea.

Planting and growing trees was a passion. Terry was an inaugural member of Narrandera Landcare Group, president for the last ten years and a very hard act to follow. We planted a few Kurrajongs at the racecourse in mid-August for national tree day, just before he became ill. Narrandera Landcare thrived with Terry's leadership: He played a major part in organising and planting the Narrandera Wetlands and went from there to bridge building. He researched the Australian Panel bridge and knew where enough pieces were around the countryside. He collected rollers and frames, wire brushed them all and painted them in the shed. He then led a community effort to install the bridge across the creek into the wetlands. After this success he turned his attention to the broken bridge at Rocky Waterholes and repeated the process on a much larger scale. About 80 volunteers under Terry's leadership launched the Panel bridge across the canal and joined two recreation areas with a pedestrian/cycle way. "The speed of Dad's illness has left us shocked. Three months ago dad built a deck at home. Two months ago he was building Red Gum bench tops for Adrian's new kitchen. But Dad died at home with his family around him. He had two gears Go and Stop."- Warwick Smith.

### Betty Bradney

Our sincere condolences to Nella, Josephine, Adrian, Mark and Warwick. Ed.



Terry speaking about the bridge construction at the opening.  
Cooking sausages (Enid is looking on)  
At the construction of the wetlands



# MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

<b>Major Mitchell's Cockatoo</b> [2]	Colinroobie Rd, Leeton	31/10/16	Phil Tenison
<b>Grey-crowned Babbler</b>	McNabb Cres, Griffith	09/11/16	Sue Chittick-Dalton
<b>Rainbow Lorikeet</b>	McNabb Cres, Griffith	09/11/16	Sue Chittick-Dalton
<b>Blue-faced Honeyeater + juv</b>	Draper Rd, Murrumbidgee	Oct/Nov '16	Bill Draper
<b>Yellow Rosella</b>	Casaurina St, Narrandera	28/10/16	Susan Whitehead
<b>Little Friarbird</b>	Lake Talbot, Narrandera	28/10/16	Alan Whitehead
<b>Major Mitchell's Cockatoo</b>	'Mountain Dam', via Leeton	Oct/Nov '16	Graham Russell
<b>Common (Indian) Myna</b> [2]	Red Hill Estate, Narrandera	30/10/16	Warwick Bradney
<b>Latham's Snipe</b> [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	09/11/16	Keith Hutton
<b>Buff-banded Rail</b> [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	09/11/16	Keith Hutton
<b>Australian Shelduck</b> [6]	Fivebough Wetlands	09/11/16	Keith Hutton
<b>Spotted Harrier</b> [1]	McKenzies Rd, Leeton	14/11/16	Keith Hutton
<b>Koala</b>	Narrandera Wetlands	14/11/16	Susan Whitehead
<b>Eastern Koel</b> [H]	Narrandera	Nov. '16	Alan Whitehead
<b>Superb Parrot</b> [1]	11 Pendula St, Leeton	14/11/16	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Magpie Goose</b> [14]	Fivebough Wetlands	15/11/16	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Latham's Snipe</b>	Fivebough Wetlands	15/11/16	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Musk Duck and 1 duckling</b>	Fivebough Wetlands	15/11/16	Max O'Sullivan
The duckling was riding on the back of the female.			
<b>Australasian Shoveller</b> [pr]	Koonadan in a pond beside the rail line	15/11/16	Max O'Sullivan
<b>White-winged Triller</b> [6+]	Koonadan near the Basin Dam	15/11/16	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Sacred Kingfisher</b> [1]	Koonadan near the Basin Dam	15/11/16	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Common (Indian) Myna</b> [1]	Corbie Hill area via Leeton	16/11/16	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Brolga</b> [6]	Lake Coolah via Narrandera	16/11/16	Max O'Sullivan
There was a large juvenile Brolga with a pair of adult birds.			
<b>Plumed Whistling Duck</b>	Lake Coolah via Narrandera	16/11/16	Max O'Sullivan
There was a female with 10 very small ducklings.			
<b>Australasian Bittern</b> [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	17/11/16	Keith Hutton
<b>Australian Little Bittern</b> [3]	Fivebough Wetlands	17/11/16	Keith Hutton
<b>Banded Lapwing</b> [3]	Fivebough Wetlands	17/11/16	Keith Hutton
<b>Australian Shelduck</b> [31]	Fivebough Wetlands	19/11/16	Keith Hutton
<b>Australasian Bittern</b> [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	19/11/16	Keith Hutton
<b>Caspian Tern</b> [pr]	Main Canal, Brobenah Rd, Leeton	19/11/16	Keith Hutton
<b>Australasian Bittern</b> [1]	Campbell's Swamp	23/11/16	Max O'Sullivan
The bittern was feeding in the open close to the boardwalk at 10.30am.			
<b>Latham's Snipe</b> [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	23/11/16	Keith Hutton
<b>Whiskered Tern</b> [5]	Fivebough Wetlands	23/11/16	Keith Hutton
<b>Wandering Whistling Duck</b> [4]	Fivebough Wetlands	23/11/16	Keith Hutton
<b>Plumed Whistling Duck</b> [4]	Fivebough Wetlands	23/11/16	Keith Hutton
<b>Glossy Ibis</b> [7]	Fivebough Wetlands	23/11/16	Keith Hutton
<b>Magpie Goose with young</b>	Fivebough from Quodling Rd	25/11/16	Max O'Sullivan
There were 3 adults escorting 8 – 10 very young goslings – maybe a creche?			
<b>Wandering Whistling Duck</b> [6]	Campbell's Swamp	26/11/16	Survey
<b>Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo</b> [1]	Campbell's Swamp	26/11/16	Survey
<b>White-winged Wren</b> [pr]	Nericon Swamp	26/11/16	Neil Palframan
<b>Australasian Bittern</b> [2]	Nericon Swamp	26/11/16	Survey
<b>Wedge-tailed Eagle</b> [2]	Nericon Swamp overhead	26/11/16	Survey
<b>Whiskered Tern</b> [3]	Nericon Swamp	26/11/16	Survey



<b>Magpie Goose [50+]</b>	Campbell's and Nericon Swamps	26/11/16	Survey
Neil and I did the bird survey at both swamps and were surprised by the number of Magpie Geese present at both swamps. There were several family groups with many goslings of various sizes indicating the good conditions for all water birds this year (see my article elsewhere in the newsletter).			
<b>Wandering Whistling Duck [1]</b>	The Basin Dam, Koonadan	27/11/16	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Latham's Snipe [6]</b>	Grass Innis via Narrandera	Early Nov.	Nella Smith
<b>Latham's Snipe [12]</b>	Five Mile/Grass Innis, Narrandera	30/11/16	Max O'Sullivan
Nine snipe were seen together along the channel opposite the ski area. Others were seen walking around the water line. They flushed but only flew a short distance before landing in the grass.			
<b>Black-eared Cuckoo</b>	McNabb Cres, Griffith	28/11/16	Sue Chittick-Dalton
<b>Major Mitchell's Cockatoo</b>	McNabb Cres, Griffith (Flyover)	Daily	Sue Chittick-Dalton
<b>Grey-crowned Babbler</b>	McNabb Cres, Griffith	Regularly	Sue Chittick-Dalton
<b>Max O'Sullivan</b>			

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## Flies, Flies and more Flies



We suffered the thousands of mosquitoes this spring and now follows the next stage resulting from the wet winter – summer flies. Not that we are done with mosquitoes. There is still plenty of free water around in the bush for them to breed in, but as it steadily dries out the mosquito problem should abate. Not so for flies. The majority of types only need a moist substrate for their larvae to grow and even less moisture for the adults to survive.

Both mosquitoes and flies are in the same Order of insects, the Diptera. The distinguishing feature of the Order is the possession of only one pair of wings, The second pair have been altered into halteres, little knob ended stalks that are rapidly moved in a figure of eight motion to provide a gyroscopic effect that greatly enhances stability. There are a few other insects that have totally lost the second pair of wings (eg some moths) but no others have halteres.

Diptera are the second greatest in the diversity of species of insects, or for that matter all animals. There are something like 150,000 known species of dipterans (beetles have over 300,000 known and could be as many as a million). Australia has about 8,000 species classified into 98 families. However when we talk of flies per se we generally refer to three of the families, Muscidae (House Flies, Bush Flies), Tabanidae (March Flies, Horse Flies), and Calliphoridae (Blow Flies, Blue Bottles). Even so we are talking of a lot of species – c180, c245 and c140 respectively.

Male March and Horse Flies can be distinguished from members of the other two families in that their large eyes meet in the middle of the head. Most members have piercing mouth parts as adults and are often blood-suckers. Just spend a little time in the Alps in summer to find out how efficient! However it is only the females that bite (no comment!), males only feed on nectar. Like mosquitoes the higher nutrition of blood is required to develop the eggs.



A fly lapping up moisture.  
A fly on a Needle Wattle  
flower *Acacia rigens*

The other two families generally have adults that feed on rotting vegetation or animal remains though some like the Botfly that causes Blow-fly Strike in sheep feed on living animal tissue. Generally adult mouth parts are modified into sponge-like pads on the retractable proboscis. Food is lapped up if liquid or if solid, first liquefied by regurgitated saliva and then lapped up. It is the regurgitation that is responsible for the transmission of diseases.

With so many species, small size, and even smaller anatomical features to determine species, it is hard to know which one you are about to swat. There again, do you need to know when the pesky thing is so annoying.

**Eric Whiting**

# \*\*\*\* COMING EVENTS \*\*\*\*

8 December Thursday

**Note: this is  
being held in  
Griffith**

**Monthly Meeting will be held in Griffith** at the **National Parks and Wildlife Office, 200 Yambil Street**; a "Meet and Greet" information meeting about the Club between 7 and 8pm. Organised by Kerri Keely, Murrumbidgee Landcare. David Woodside will speak on birds in our area, an ordinary meeting will follow, and a light supper will be provided. Please RSVP to Kerri Keely, [kkeely@mli.org.au](mailto:kkeely@mli.org.au) or 0428-396 826.

**The monthly meeting will follow.**

**MFN contact:** Penny Williams 6953 3524

**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com)

10 December Saturday

**Christmas / end of year break up**

**Meet at Yarrabimbi ( Andrew and Ana's) on Colinroobie Rd to leave for a walk from 6:00 to 7:00pm with tea being at 7:30pm.**

The catering arrangements will be that there will be a \$7 cost to provide the meat. Then if every body could bring either a sweet or a Salad.

We won't be doing pre dinner nibbles. Bring your own drinks

So that we know numbers for the meat could those that intend to come **please let us know either by email by Thursday.** When you respond could you please let us know what you intend to bring so that we make sure that we don't end up with 10 potato salads and no sweets.

**Phone Dione on 0428 536 290**

**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com)



2017

13/14/15 January

**Summer camp – staying at the “Riverglade Caravan Park” in Tumut.**

Walks will be short (<3km). Cost will be a maximum of \$120 per person, including food for both nights (\$60 per night), bring your own linen.

A \$50 deposit paid by the 18th December for accommodation.

After this there may still be accommodation available, but that isn't guaranteed.

**Contact: Phone Dione on 0428 536 290**

**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com)

1 February Wednesday

**Copy for the February newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**

Email: [ericwhiting4@bigpond.com](mailto:ericwhiting4@bigpond.com). Phone: 6953 2612.

2 February Thursday

**World Wetlands Day**

**This year's theme - Wetlands for Disaster Risk Reduction**

5 February Sunday

For World Wetlands Day Landcare will be holding an event in **Leeton**. There will be a "**Birds and Brekky**" at **Fivebough Wetlands** meeting at 9am, followed by the Movie Stormboy at the Roxy Theatre.

Contact is Kerri Keely, email [kkeely@mli.org.au](mailto:kkeely@mli.org.au)

9 February Thursday

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

**Topic:** to be decided,

**Contact:** Penny Williams 6953 3524

**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com)

12 February Sunday

**Rocky Waterholes, Narrandera**

A twilight meeting for a walk along the channel bank followed by nibbles at the area by the bridge.

Contact: Max O'Sullivan 6953 4726

Email: [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com)