

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



May 2017 - Issue #248

Journal of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc.

PO Box 541, LEETON 2705 ISSN-1327-1172

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Objectives

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



One of the
Koalas spotted
at the
Narrandera
Flora and
Fauna Reserve
by Phillip
Williams

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CONTRIBUTIONS

For the June issue by

Wednesday 31 May

To Rowena Whiting

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*"For if one link in nature's chain
might be lost, another might be
lost, until the whole of things will
vanish by piecemeal."*

Thomas Jefferson

Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

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

FIELD TRIPS NORMALLY TAKE PLACE ON THE FOLLOWING WEEKEND.

INTENDING NEW MEMBERS, GUESTS AND VISITORS WELCOME.

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

Bank details for direct deposit: 062 564 account no. 10039396, a/c name: Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Include your own name and description of payment in the reference box.

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

From the Inbox

Autumn Greenhoods sited by Virginia Tarr

My day out (23 April) to the Cocoparra National Park was spent BBQ ing with family and friends. I then drove up to Mt Bingar to look for the Rusty Orchids. Instead came across the Autumn Greenhoods where the Rusty Orchids have been found, there had been a recent controlled fire burn-off. Very little green vegetation on that side of the road, yet the Greenhoods were found on the opposite side of the road where there wasn't any burn-off.

[Ed note – Rusty Greenhoods generally flower September to November.]



Amazing Fungi on TV

Fungi photographer turns retirement hobby into obsession

<http://ab.co/2muHYHb> - via @abcnews

Here is the link to the small segment that showed some amazing fungi, soon to feature in an episode of Planet Earth 2.

Steve Axford started photographing rainforests around Lismore, on the NSW North Coast, about 10 years ago and found a way to create time lapses of his fungi beauties showing the life cycles of the mushrooms. One of them was a fungus which is now called a blue truffle. The photography is superb.

Mallee Ringnecks

Just a few lines and a very poor image because I only had my phone with me.

This light pole is on Banna Avenue in Griffith, on the north side of the street, just outside of the Woolies petrol station. My attention was drawn while filling up, by a fly-in by a Mallee Ringneck that settled on the arm of the light pole. I then noticed a second bird a little further down the pole that was half inside the hole in the concrete. At first it looked as if the bird was just keenly interested, but eventually completely disappeared into the hole. The first bird was still on the outside calling beautifully. They would have to have a nest there, don't you think?

Johanna

[I'm afraid the photo wasn't clear enough to include –Ed]

Into the Red Gums



On Saturday the 29 April nine of us met at the Rotary Park in Darlington Point, the weather didn't look as good as the forecast, it was cool and overcast (later in the day it got better). When all had arrived we headed back towards Whitton to head in to the Murrumbidgee Valley Regional Park. We entered the park at what used to be Cuba State Forest.

As soon as we entered the park we stopped to have a look along the Billabong that is on the right as you enter. When we stopped a few of us walked back toward the main road to check out the Fairy-wrens that we had seen on the way in, as there were no coloured males there was some discussion as to

which ones they were. There weren't many birds on the water but here were raptors overhead so maybe that is why there weren't any birds on the water. There was some discussion about the control of noxious weeds based around the Noogoora Burr (*Xanthium occidentale*) that we saw in a few patches along the edge of the billabong



After a short walk along the edge of the Billabong we headed further into the forest and stopped on the side of the river at "Crayfish Bend". The first order of the day was morning tea as it was now nearing 10 o'clock morning tea was accompanied by discussion of the merits of our current economic model and the effect that this has on the natural environment. We eventually went for a walk into the adjacent bush. It was noted that now that there is no grazing that even at the end of summer there was a good cover of dried grass on the ground and signs that the under story of the forest is starting to re-establish, notably wattles. Tree was the theme of the day for the birds in this area with large numbers of Brown Treecreepers and Tree Martins, all of the normal river forest birds were there also.



From top anti-clockwise Group watching and waiting in the forest, Variegated Fairy-wren, Cooba *Acacia salicina*, Tree Martins, Red-capped Robin.

The river forest was its normal peaceful self and the size and age of some of the River Red Gums is something to remember, it is interesting that the

largest of the Gums are along the edge of the river where they couldn't be cut down (harvested) without falling into the River.



After our walk it was time for lunch then off to our final stop for the day. Heading south-east back along the river to a sand hill area that is covered in White Cypress Pine. This area was a rehabilitation area behind a locked gate to stop vehicle entry so we pulled up and clambered through the fence and walked to the top of the hill. The birders amongst us weren't overly confident of finding much but we hadn't walk far and we were of chasing birds and this area turned out to be as rich in birds as the River forest. Other than the Pines there were Bull Oaks and at the top of the hill there was a group of very large Cooba Wattles *Acacia salicina* one had a trunk that was around 450mm diameter and 7 to 8 metres high, so much for wattles being short lived.

After walking back down the hill to the cars we said our good byes (this takes longer than you would think) and headed home at around 2 o'clock. An interesting and informative day was had by all.

Graham Russell

'Narrandera's koala population is something of an unlikely success story, where animals from two different states were brought here and introduced to unfamiliar territory. Not only have they survived, they've thrived. The population is healthy, growing and disease free. Since being re-introduced, they've come back like mad," said National Parks and Wildlife Service ranger Angela Lewis. Koalas were re-introduced in the seventies after an absence of more than fifty years.

The weather, always the unknown factor in this event, was kind – fine, mild, calm - the sort of weather likely to tempt people to come "to a great family day out". Families with school aged children contribute greatly to the success of the day because children have the sharpest eyesight. Most of the children this year were too young to be useful koala spotters. I met a friend who was attending her first koala count with her grandson. I remarked that he was the very age we needed. After the count I asked their results: He had spotted the first koala for his group and was just ahead of the media crew, who then interviewed him. "Made his day," said his grandmother.

Statistics: 153 people came to the Flora and Fauna Reserve, locals, people from neighbouring towns, four Europeans and an African and they counted 33 koalas. The Field Naturalists were well represented with a number acting as team leaders. One of the Rotarians, who was part of the group serving a delicious lunch, sighted a koala in a tree without a ribbon so it was added – 34.

A former resident of Darlington Point said that when he was a boy he saw an occasional koala in the red gum forest along the river, so it is a nice thought that the koalas were not entirely killed out, but that a few survivors may have joined up with the Narrandera population which is spreading up and down the river.

Hopefully I will meet up with you all at next year's Koala Count.

Betty Bradney

Managing your property for conservation

Our presentation at the April meeting was given by Andrew Thompson. Most of us have visited his property "Yarrabimbi" on the Colinroobie Road not far out of Leeton; some many times over the years. It is always a delight to go walking there in the Colinroobie hills amongst the Dwyer's Gums and array of native plants; a patch of Green Mallee is pretty special as is a sighting of Glossy Black Cockatoos along with a glimpse of a wombat. There are wonderful views of the surrounding countryside from the top, both to the north, Mt Ariah, and to the south-west over Fivebough and Leeton.

Every property is assessed according to a range of criteria; it must contain high conservation value native vegetation. A vegetation plan is drawn up.

It is really great that Andrew has taken out a perpetual agreement with the Conservation Trust to manage his 255 hectares. Initially he received financial help however the maintenance is ongoing. Weeds and feral animals need to be controlled, and fences maintained. There are constraints on not felling trees apart from that necessary to maintain tracks or for reducing fire risk. All dead timber has to remain. Grazing is only allowed during an 8 week period over winter and no more than 30% can be removed. Exotic plants are only allowed at the house site and here Ana has created a lovely area with a variety of flowering plants.

Around the property Andrew has set up photo points to monitor the vegetation; the cypress pine, Kurrajongs and Hill Oaks are coming back well from the drought. Bird numbers are remaining constant.

Our thanks go to Andrew for a very informative talk about what is required from the landowner when he enters into a conservation agreement.

Rowena Whiting



Easter with the Mid-Murrays

This Easter the Mid-Murray Field Naturalists celebrated their 50th anniversary with a campout in Wandown Flora and Fauna Reserve. This reserve is in the Victorian Mallee north-west of Tooleybuc and south of Boundary Bend.

The Mid-Murrays have a tradition of regular campouts and have even bought a community tent to enhance their events. Unlike our past campouts theirs are always “bring everything” tenting affairs – with the exception this time of the provision of Port-loos. The numbers attending certainly warranted it. I never heard exactly how many but there was at least 70-80 including lots of children.

Rowena and I arrived during the afternoon of Good Friday allowing good time to put the tent up and meet the local members. It has been some time since we last met up with them when they had a campout in the Cocoparras. Then it was off to the Tooleybuc Sports Club for the Anniversary Dinner. The Sports Club put on a full roast (four types of meat) meal served buffet style and truly fit for country appetites.

Although a formal dinner speeches were kept to a minimum. The highlights were in having the first President and the first Secretary present, both in their 90s, the latter was at the camp. I particularly noted the annual presentation of an Outstanding Naturalist Award, perhaps we could institute something similar.

Saturday’s agenda was very much laid-back. Wandown Reserve originally was part of the Soldier Settlement Scheme after the First World War. A lot of the 400 to 500 acre blocks offered were failures after a few years. Drought then the Great Depression often led hopeful farmers to just walk off their blocks. Wandown was just one of these blocks, and in the morning we had a guided tour around the site of the original home. One member, who had been brought up on one of the blocks, gave an interesting commentary on the history of the area.



In the afternoon we travelled a short distance to another Reserve to the north to see the Malleefowl mounds, one of which was in use. Unfortunately we didn’t see the bird.

Saturday evening’s meal was provided by Mid-Murrays – a glorious spit roast, enjoyed around a central campfire.

There were 2 excursions on the Sunday: in the morning we had another short walk out from the camp site to a recently worked Malleefowl nest. Mid-Murrays are also participants in the Malleefowl Recovery Project and help monitor some 45 mounds on a regular basis. We learnt a lot about the lifestyle of the Malleefowl. The second excursion was to the Murray River at Boundary Bend for lunch and for some a swim or at least a paddle. Most of the time though was taken up with reminiscing which continued round



**Malleefowl mound, Lerps on a eucalypt leaf – food for the Malleefowl
Daisy Bush, Woolly Mat-rush,**

the campfire that night.

Monday came round far too quickly even though it was a real relaxing weekend. It was time to pack up, say our farewells and head back across the Hay Plains for home.



Eric Whiting

200th Anniversary of Exploring our country – part 2

By the time **John Oxley** and his party had got to the Binya area, they were in a desperate situation. Their new location just north of the present Burley Griffin Highway had a reasonable amount of fresh grass to feed the horses something that they severely lacked all the way since they left the Lachlan 17 days ago. However there was no water for them. Oxley had to send them back each day to their previous campsite near Flower Vale on the Erigolia Road some eight miles away. This was not sustainable for the horses in their weakened state. He had already lost one, it having collapsed under its load near Mt Caley.

The men in the party were not faring much better either. Their clothes were badly torn from the constant pushing through thick bush and their shoes were so bad they made new pairs from the skin of the horse without waiting for it to dry.

Whilst the horses were being taken back to Flower Vale on the 4 June, Oxley sent two men to reconnoitre further south-west along his intended route. They travelled six or seven miles to somewhere near the Stanbridge Trig just west of the Whitton Stock Route. Their return appears to have followed the line of the Mirrool Creek on the rare occasions of a big flood. The two men failed to find any trace of water and said they turned back when the bush was just too dense to continue.



On the following day Cunningham explored the southern end of the Cocoparra Ranges passing over the saddle between Binya Lookout and Mt Brogdon into Pleasant Valley. Turning north he kept along the foot of the spur east of Wattle Dam and the next spur coming down from Mt Caley into the lower end of Goat Creek Valley. He did not go up Goat Creek but returned along the foot of the ridgeline south from McGregors Top and back through the Binya forest.

Meanwhile Oxley had reassessed his situation and decided to proceed the next day on a north-westerly course hoping to meet the Lachlan River again or the postulated inland sea. Firstly though he travelled due west to round the southern end of the Ranges. The camp for June 6 was in the area of the Mt Elliot Tank where they found 'more tolerably good grass', and just as importantly pools of water. Interestingly this day's journey was largely through Cypress Pine regrowth.

Continuing on north-westwards the next day then reaching the foot of the MacPherson Range approximately by Billings Road. It was another waterless camp but fortunately this time they carried a keg of water. The next day was spent in search of water and in climbing the range to ascertain the prospects ahead. All Oxley could see was endless scrub. He was not impressed and called the range Disappointment Hills.

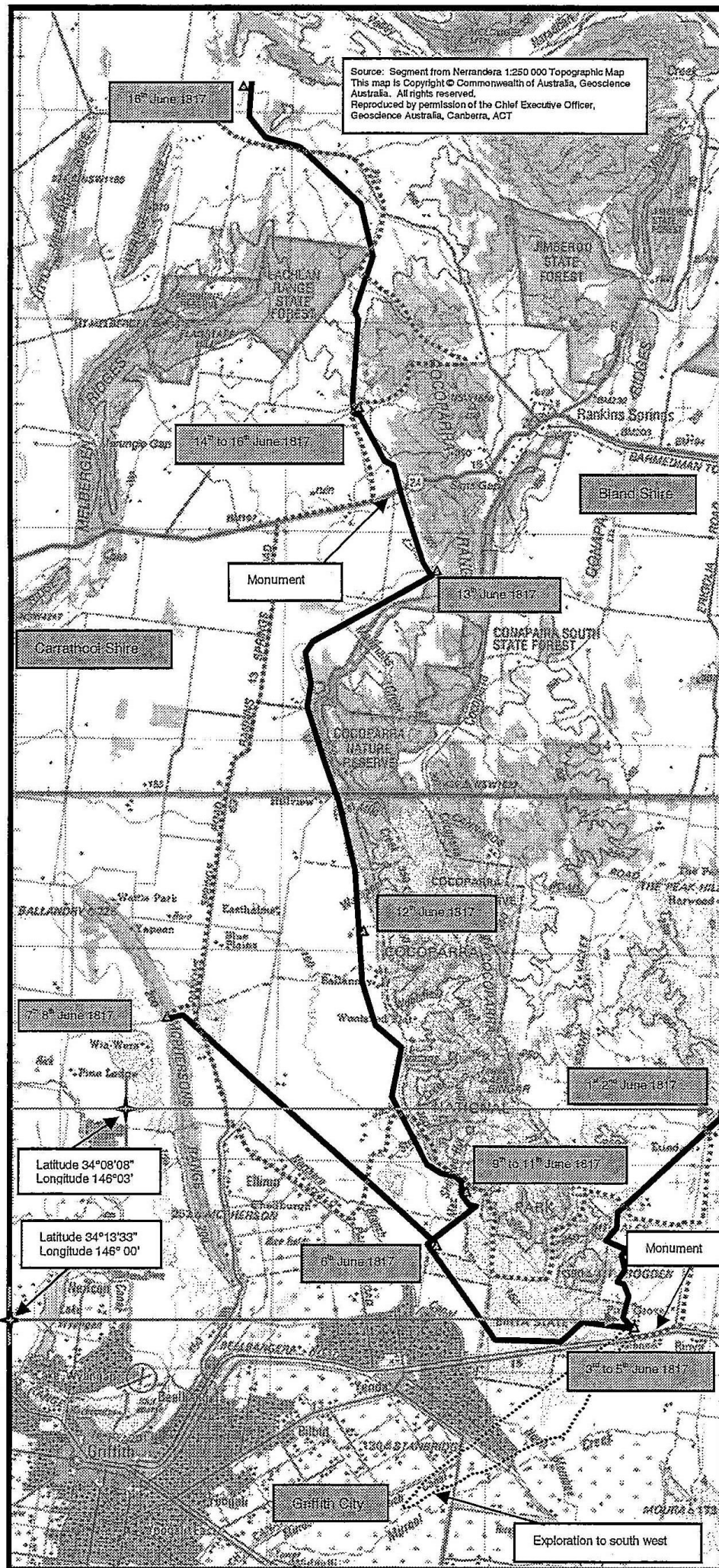
On the 9th the party returned to the Mt Elliot area. To add to their misery it rained overnight and most of the day making the ground soft and boggy. The campsite for the night was probably on MacGregors Creek. There was more rain overnight, so the decision was made to stay there until the 13th.

Cunningham took the opportunity to explore the surrounds of MacGregors Creek right up to MacGregors Top. At the time Oxley had sent the Colonial Botanist Charles Fraser with another man to scout further north up the western side of the Cocoparra Ranges. They found water in holes in almost every gully. So the party continued on northward on the 12th, reaching One Mile Creek by 2 o'clock. The creek was running (there had been more rain overnight) and the sides were grassy. The route the next day continued up the side of the Cocoparras to where they swing north-easterly. In general this is the route of the Whitton Stock Route. Rather than climb up to the saddle the Stock Route now takes, they camped in a rocky gully for three nights before continuing up the west side, crossing the present Mid-Western Highway 900 metres east of the Monument. Heavy rain fell on the second night accompanied by strong winds and they woke to find another horse had died.

The party followed the line of the ranges north (the extension of the Cocoparra Ranges, then along the Naradhan Range. They eventually reached the Lachlan – now a well-defined river – again on the 23 June.

Eric Whiting

Main Reference: Whitehead J. (2003) *Tracking and Mapping the Explorers. Vol 1 The Lachlan River: Oxley, Evans and Cunningham 1817.*



Extracts from Allan Cunningham's Diary

**June 2 1819 –
To Mt Caley and back**

Having attended to my plants, I accompanied one of our party, Fraser, on a botanical excursion over these rocky hills which upon examination afforded me very few novelties, being chiefly a repetition of the plants I have previously collected of which *Dodonaea pinnata*, *Grevillea sphacelata*, and a *Phyllanthus* are most predominant.

~~~~~  
This mount has been named in honour of Mr. George Caley, a most accurate, intelligent and diligent botanist, who laboured on the Eastern coast of this continent a number of years and considerable success, and who well merits such a mark of distinction.

**Fig 9.18 Evans' Survey Traverse Route in the Yenda, Griffith and Rankins Springs Area showing Camp Site locations.**

## SPLENDID FAIRY-WREN *Malurus splendens*

Mother Nature excelled herself when she painted this beautiful little male Splendid Fairy-Wren. To quote Gould, "It may be considered more gorgeous than any other race." Predominately violet, cobalt, sky blue and black, but colours vary between the three races extending from the West towards the Eastern states" The races are called Splendens, Musgravi and our area is Melanotus. Here the females don't have the blue wash on the wings but do have the blue tail feathers and beige/grey body.

Splendid wrens are shy than others and prefer good cover; they avoid towns and very arid areas.

It is not unusual to have two breeding males in the flock but only occasionally are there two breeding females. It is the female who incubates the 3-4 eggs in an oval nest with a side entrance towards the top and built low to the ground.

There are several names given to this bird depending on the race:

Splendid Blue wren, Banded Blue wren, Banded Superb-warbler, Black-backed Fairy-wren, Turquoise wren.

Voice is a loud trilling or rattling depends on your interpretation of sound. Size 140 mm

**Sue Chittick-Dalton**



Splendid Fairy-wren by Graham Russell

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## Turquoise Parrot Nest Box Program Field Day

Four MFN members attended this meeting at the Binya Community Hall on Wednesday 19 April. The public interest meeting was well attended and the local Ladies Committee organised the catering which was greatly appreciated by everyone – especially the BBQ lunch at the Spring Hill Picnic area in the Cocoparras.

The gathering was organised by Tammy Galvin from Local Land Services and the presenter for the day was Chris Tzaros, a wildlife ecologist who has worked on the Turquoise Parrot recovery plan in the Warby Range State Park near Wangaratta in Victoria. Twenty or thirty years ago there were few sightings of the parrot in Victoria where they were once quite common so Chris started a program to provide nesting boxes for the remaining birds. This was 10 years ago. The area had been heavily logged and all that remained of suitable nesting sites were the metre high stumps left by the wood choppers of the pre-mechanisation days. The parrots seemed to prefer these stumps, opened at the top, to breed in.

So Chris provided both old hollows cut to the preferred depth (800mm) along with man-made ones and attached them to trees in suitable habitat within the park. To his delight, the parrots took to the boxes and bred happily in the intervening years so now, with this successful trial behind him, he has plans to extend the nest box program in other suitable Victorian parks and here at Cocoparra and Binya.

Chris had already placed many nesting boxes at various sites where Turquoise Parrots have been recorded locally – Woolshed Flat, Wattle Dam and Spring Hill. He proposes to put out more boxes both in the parks and on private properties adjoining them where suitable habitat still exists.

The nest box dimensions are too small for Mulga Parrots to use and Chris has recorded breeding activity by **Owlet Nightjars, Brown and White-throated Treecreepers** in the artificial boxes at the Warby Range site.

The boxes here will be monitored, particularly during the next breeding season in September, to record their use by our own Turquoise Parrot population.

**Max O'Sullivan**



Photo by Chris Tzaros



## Bitterns in Rice report

The Bitterns in Rice Steering Committee Meeting was held in Coleambally on 20 April at which Matt Herring reported on the successes and a few failures of this season's study.

This rice season Matt and his team were concentrating on catching more birds for satellite tracking. He had great success with trapping booming males at the start of the season when they were establishing their territories in the rice. He used the cage with a mirror at the back and lured them in by playing the booming call. This is the way the MFN bird 'Bidgee' was caught, fitted with the tracker and released.

Unfortunately, it's possible there has been a major disaster with our bird as recent satellite reports have the signal coming from the same spot and Matt fears the bird is either dead or has lost its transmitter. He is going to search the spot and will report back on what he finds. A similar fate may have befallen another tagged bird, Cumberland.

**New update from Matt on 25 April is that recent satellite fixes have indicated some movement and he is hoping that the next time they check the transmitter the bird might have moved. So there's still hope that Bidgee is alive and being tracked.**

There was a discussion at the meeting about the possibility of failure of the transmitter packs rather than the birds could have died or been killed. This same system is used to track many species like the American Bittern without a large number of failures but it seems the harness on our birds could possibly get snared and maybe pulled off, or else, the birds themselves might pick them off.

At the present time, three transmitters (Arnold, MILo and Demo) are still working out of the 10 that have been attached since April 2015. Despite the valuable information gleaned from the tracking to date, the method is both costly and very time consuming, with a larger than expected number of tracking failures. The challenge is identifying the source of the issues. Perhaps the birds damage the antennas when preening or the harness is worn off by the coarse stems of the rice. Once the issues are identified they can be addressed. So what next?

Next season Matt and his team would like to concentrate on monitoring nests in the rice itself to see what the chicks do and how many actually manage to survive to fledging – something that has not been studied in detail so far. A method being trialled by Local Land Services to track feral pigs uses thermal imaging cameras mounted on a helicopter to locate and count wild pigs which has proved very successful. So discussion on the use of this to monitor the chicks could be a possibility with a similar system mounted on a large drone. Once nests in the rice have been located and their exact position recorded, the drone could be used to check on these nests on a regular basis.

Of course, all of this requires massive funding so before anything can be decided, some serious canvassing for funds will have to be done. Another 'crowdfunding' campaign could be undertaken and that will be investigated over the coming weeks before a final decision is made whether to proceed this way and whether this trial would be beneficial to the Bitterns in Rice study.

So far, Matt feels that satellite tracking of those few birds that have retained their packs for sufficient time after the rice harvest has begun indicates that most birds leave the Riverina and head for wetlands in Victoria.

Robbie was the first and best bird to show what might be the pattern for others and last year two birds were tracked to Victoria. The lack of sightings of bitterns in our area over winter certainly suggests the birds leave after the rice harvest and overwinter elsewhere. Based on the past 4 years of monitoring of randomly selected rice crops in the Riverina, Matt's modelling shows that in most years between 500 and 1000 bitterns return to Riverina rice crops in Summer. With the estimated total population of the Australasian Bittern at 1500 to 4000 birds, that number coming here is a stronghold of the species – possibly 25 to 50% of the world population. This is very significant in terms of Threatened Species numbers, so more funding to continue the study must be forthcoming in order to confirm the findings of the past 4 years of work by Matt and his team.

**Max O'Sullivan**



# MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                      |            |                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------------|
| <b>Black Swan</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                | Lake Talbot, Narrandera                              | 28/03/17   | Warrick Bradney    |
| <b>Ring-tailed Possum</b> [6+]                                                                                                                                                                                   | Livingstone National Park via Wagga                  | 05/04/17   | Nella, Phil & Max  |
| <b>Brush-tailed Possum</b> [4+]                                                                                                                                                                                  | Livingstone National Park via Wagga                  | 05/04/17   | Nella, Phil & Max  |
| This was on a LLS organised search for the <b>Squirrel Glider</b> in Livingstone NP. No gliders were seen.                                                                                                       |                                                      |            |                    |
| <b>Barn Owl</b> [4]                                                                                                                                                                                              | Collingullie area. On the way home.                  | 05/04/17   | Phil Tenison       |
| <b>Turquoise Parrot</b> [9]                                                                                                                                                                                      | Wattle Dam, Binya State Forest (5.30pm)              | 07/04/17   | Sue C-D & visitors |
| <b>Plains Wanderer</b> [banded]                                                                                                                                                                                  | Oolambeyan National Park                             | April 2017 | David Parker       |
| Phil Maher and David caught a Plains Wanderer that had a ring on its leg that had been banded at Terrick Terrick in Northern Victoria – a distance of nearly 200km away - even as the crow flies!!               |                                                      |            |                    |
| <b>Wedge-tailed Eagle</b>                                                                                                                                                                                        | Karri Rd, Leeton                                     | 08/04/17   | Barry Allen        |
| <b>Dusky Woodswallow</b> [30+]                                                                                                                                                                                   | 'Yarrabimbi', Colinroobie Rd –<br>Roosting in groups | 12/04/17   | Andrew Thompson    |
| <b>Straw-necked Ibis</b> [50+]                                                                                                                                                                                   | Irrigation Way, Narrandera                           | 13/04/17   | Alan Whitehead     |
| <b>Boobook Owl</b> [H]                                                                                                                                                                                           | Narrandera Flora and Fauna Reserve                   | 13/04/17   | Susan Whitehead    |
| <b>Little Lorikeet</b> [2]                                                                                                                                                                                       | Murrumbidgee River                                   | 15/04/17   | Virginia Tarr      |
| <b>Whiskered Tern</b>                                                                                                                                                                                            | Lake Wyangan                                         | 16/04/17   | Virginia Tarr      |
| <b>Rufous Whistler</b>                                                                                                                                                                                           | Nericon – serenading Neil and Johanna                | April      | Neil Palframan     |
| <b>Orange Chat</b>                                                                                                                                                                                               | Cobb Highway, Mossgiel                               | 17/04/17   | Neil Palframan     |
| <b>Emu</b> [2-300]                                                                                                                                                                                               | Cobb Highway                                         | 17/04/17   | Neil Palframan     |
| <b>Pied Currawong</b>                                                                                                                                                                                            | Narrandera Wetlands                                  | 22/04/17   | Warrick Bradney    |
| Currawongs have been reported in Narrandera, Leeton and Yanco since Warrick has reported their arrival in the area for the winter.                                                                               |                                                      |            |                    |
| <b>Superb Parrot</b> [8+]                                                                                                                                                                                        | Lake Coolah area via Narrandera                      | 22/04/17   | Allan Richards     |
| <b>Black Falcon</b> [pr]                                                                                                                                                                                         | Lake Coolah area via Narrandera                      | 22/04/17   | Allan Richards     |
| <b>Little Eagle</b> [1]                                                                                                                                                                                          | Lake Coolah area via Narrandera                      | 22/04/17   | Allan Richards     |
| Birds were circling low over an open paddock – excellent extended views of the 3 raptors.                                                                                                                        |                                                      |            |                    |
| <b>Wood Sandpiper</b> [1]                                                                                                                                                                                        | Fivebough Wetlands                                   | 22/04/17   | Max O'Sullivan     |
| <b>Diamond Firetail</b> [5]                                                                                                                                                                                      | Woolshed Flat Cocoparra National Park                | 23/04/17   | Virginia Tarr      |
| <b>Spotted Harrier</b> [1]                                                                                                                                                                                       | Erigolia Rd north of Binya township.                 | 23/04/17   | Max O'Sullivan     |
| <b>Banded Lapwing</b> [2]                                                                                                                                                                                        | Erigolia Rd north of Binya township                  | 23/04/17   | Max O'Sullivan     |
| <b>Ground Cuckoo-Shrike</b> [2]                                                                                                                                                                                  | Erigolia Rd north of Binya township                  | 23/04/17   | Allan Richards     |
| Three of us were travelling north when we saw the harrier and when we stopped I saw the lapwings flying nearby. While locating them for a close look Allan spotted the cuckoo-shrikes in the same spot.          |                                                      |            |                    |
| <b>Shy Heathwren</b> [2]                                                                                                                                                                                         | Taleeban Reserve                                     | 23/04/17   | Max O'Sullivan     |
| <b>Crested Bellbird</b> [2]                                                                                                                                                                                      | Taleeban Reserve                                     | 23/04/17   | Allan Richards     |
| <b>Yellow-plumed Honeyeater</b> [20]                                                                                                                                                                             | Taleeban Reserve                                     | 23/04/17   | Allan Richards     |
| <b>Blue-billed Duck</b> [6+]                                                                                                                                                                                     | Flooded area on Anderson Rd                          | 23/04/17   | Max O'Sullivan     |
| This is the flooded area just off the Rankins Springs Rd. There is still plenty of water and lots of ducks – <b>Plumed-whistling</b> [2], <b>Shovellers</b> , <b>Pink-eared</b> plus the other expected species. |                                                      |            |                    |
| <b>Brolga</b> [8]                                                                                                                                                                                                | Tuckerbil – distant views from Koonadan              | 24/04/17   | Allan Richards     |
| The big change locally is the disappearance of the huge numbers of <b>Maggie Geese</b> – they seem to have departed the area in mid-April as they are now nowhere to be found.                                   |                                                      |            |                    |
| <b>Black Falcon</b> [1]                                                                                                                                                                                          | Fivebough Wetlands                                   | 27/04/17   | Max O'Sullivan     |
| <b>Little Eagle</b> [3]                                                                                                                                                                                          | Fivebough Wetlands                                   | 27/04/17   | Max O'Sullivan     |
| <b>Pelican</b> [918]                                                                                                                                                                                             | Fivebough Wetlands                                   | 27/04/17   | Keith Hutton       |
| <b>White-bellied Sea-Eagle</b> [pr]                                                                                                                                                                              | Fivebough Wetlands                                   | 27/04/17   | Keith Hutton       |
| <b>Brolga</b> [6]                                                                                                                                                                                                | Fivebough Wetlands                                   | 27/04/17   | Keith Hutton       |
| <b>Silver Gull</b> [373]                                                                                                                                                                                         | Fivebough Wetlands                                   | 27/04/17   | Keith Hutton       |
| <b>Red-necked Avocet</b> [51]                                                                                                                                                                                    | Fivebough Wetlands                                   | 27/04/17   | Keith Hutton       |
| <b>Red-capped Plover</b> [32]                                                                                                                                                                                    | Fivebough Wetlands                                   | 27/04/17   | Keith Hutton       |
| <b>Great Cormorant</b> [355]                                                                                                                                                                                     | Fivebough Wetlands                                   | 27/04/17   | Keith Hutton       |

**Decisions regarding what goes in the monthly Sightings Report:** Just a reminder of what gets reported and what doesn't from members' submissions. Because of space, I make the choice, difficult at times, of what to report and more particularly of what not to report each month. Decisions aren't always clear cut as I put in some common sightings if I consider them slightly unusual – like being seen in someone's garden for the first time or it is the first record of a particular species returning – like when **Pied Currawongs** come back to Narrandera for the first time in late autumn.

Or if those birds are seen in Leeton town which is not a common sight – they are on the outskirts at Yanco, Colinroobie and along the river but only occasionally are currawongs seen in town.

Common local species such as miners, thornbills, honeyeaters and the many duck and waterbird species don't get a mention unless they are seen in unexpected places or in larger than expected numbers – like **Pelicans** at Fivebough at the moment.

The lists are read by many outside of our membership so I have to be sure of some reports before I put them on the list. Having just gone through the rigmarole of justifying the sighting of the **Pied Heron** at Lake Coolah recently makes me more aware of being accurate in what gets reported – otherwise I get questioned about the accuracy of a particular report. Rare or unusual sightings on our list do get recorded elsewhere so we need to be accurate and sure of our sightings.

My apologies to the regular contributors if they feel I have ignored most of the birds they report. It is for the above reasons that I have to be selective in what is reported. But keep your sightings coming in each month and I will continue to select what I feel are unusual and make it on the list.

**Max O'Sullivan**

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## Fivebough Wetlands Happenings

Fivebough Wetlands Reserve is currently buzzing with project works and various contractors chipping, spraying, painting, digging and planting to achieve both ecological and recreational objectives. The most recent contractor to take on the wetlands is a Work for the Dole crew, coordinated by Get Set in Leeton and funded by Department of Employment. The team has been scheduled to spend two days a week at Fivebough, from April through to September, working to regenerate and refresh the site.

Visitors will see a change in the face of the Budyaa Baamirra Picnic Area, with a new coat of paint, re-oiled picnic tables, establishment of a lawn and garden area and some new signage and displays to welcome the public. The project will also renovate the car park and the Wiradjuri Walking Track as well as introduce some native grassland and nesting boxes for local furred and feathered friends of the reserve. Keep an eye out for the new 'Windows to the Wetlands' structures also, to be installed around the Wetlands Walking Track, providing a view to the inhabitants of the basin through the cumbungi. So if you happen across the crew of busy bees at Fivebough, chipping weeds or cleaning up rubbish, give them a wave and have a chat about their fantastic project to revitalise the public recreation facilities of Fivebough Wetlands.



**Some Eastern Long-Necked Turtle hatchlings discovered and rescued by one of the Work for the Dole.**

Also on the horizon is the Community Tree Planting event scheduled for National Tree Day on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2017, supported by NSW Department of Industry – Lands, Greening Australia and Riverina Local Land Services. We have over 800 native trees to be planted at Fivebough Wetlands, to enhance and expand the woodland component of the ecosystem, which provides habitat and forage for so many significant species of the reserve. All members of the public are invited to participate in the morning event and celebrate National Tree Day at our spectacular Leeton wetlands. Further details for the event will be made available via the Fivebough Wetlands Facebook page and website ([fiveboughwetlands.org.au](http://fiveboughwetlands.org.au)) and through the MFN network.

**Bec Bryne**, Department of Industry – Lands Project Officer

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

- 11 May Thursday**      **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7.30pm.  
**Topic: Images and tales of the Whroo Campout** Graham Russell  
**Contact:** Penny Williams 6953 3524.  
**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com).
- 12 & 13 May Friday/Saturday**      **Murrumbidgee Field Days**  
MFN will be having a display with Murrumbidgee Landcare, please contact Virginia Tarr on 5962 5614 if you are able to assist.
- 13 May Saturday**      **Global Big Day – a bird spotting day**  
It is held annually to try to record as many species worldwide on the one day. If you are interested in finding out more or taking part go to <http://ebird.org/ebird/globalbigday> or give Max O’Sullivan a ring 6953 4726
- 20 & 21 May Sat/Sun**      A vegetation survey is being undertaken of the **Ingleba Nature Reserve** (near Temora) by the Friends of Ingleba group. There are 30 sites to survey. Come for the weekend or just the day. You will need to be fairly self-sufficient for catering or bring and share. Kitchen and bathroom facilities are available  
**AND**  
**27 & 28 May Sat/Sun**      Contact Nella Smith 6959 1210 if you are interested in participating.
- 31 May Wednesday**      **Copy for the June newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**  
Email: [ericwhiting4@bigpond.com](mailto:ericwhiting4@bigpond.com). Phone: 6953 2612.
- 4 June Sunday**      **Celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the explorers Oxley- & Cunningham at Mt Caley near the Spring Hill picnic area in the Cocoparra National Park. He camped here on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June**  
This will entail a walk and climb through bush (no track) to the summit of Mt Caley. An alternative is to wander around the picnic area or lower slopes. Meet at the crossroads Whitton Stock Route – Burley Griffin Way at 9 am. Bring morning tea and lunch.  
Contact Eric or Rowena Whiting 6953 2612  
Email: [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com).
- 8 June 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).
- 17 June Saturday**      **Celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the explorers Oxley- & Cunningham at Binya and MacGregors Creek (Cocoparra National Park). He camped at MacGregors Creek on 9-11 June.**  
Meet at Yenda Post Office at 9am.  
Bring morning tea and lunch.  
Contact Eric or Rowena Whiting 6953 2612  
Email: [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com).
- Make a note in your diary for the **MFN Spring campout –**  
**22- 24 September**      **Yathong Nature Reserve**  
**Friday to Sunday**      **Staying in the shearers quarters.**  
                                 **Organisers: Graham & Dione Russell. Details later.**