

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



June 2017 - Issue #249

Journal of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc.

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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

Red-tip Greenhood *Pterostylis rubescens*

A number were found in the Ingalba Nature Reserve during the recent vegetation surveys. It flowers from February to July.

photo by

Rowena Whiting



IN THIS ISSUE

Office Bearers and Subscriptions.....	2
Keeping you informed	2
Our Campout at Whroo - Graham Russell.....	3
Weekend at Whroo - Virginia Tarr	5
Fivebough Wetlands Happenings.....	5
Global Big Day e-Bird - report	6
MFN at the Riverina Field Days	7
Ingalba Nature Reserve – Vegetation Survey	8
Bird of the Month Red-browed Firetail.....	9
Correction to Turquoise Parrot – Nest Box Program .	9
Migration of Birds in the Riverina.....	10
Members' Sightings	11
Coming Events Calendar.....	12

CONTRIBUTIONS

For the July issue by

Wednesday 5 July

To Rowena Whiting

Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com.

Phone: 6953 2612

**Celebrate Oxley's 200th
anniversary at MacGregors
Creek, Cocoparra National
Park on 17 June**

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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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.

Keeping you informed:

Membership subscriptions are due on the 30th June

The membership renewal date of the 30th June has rolled around again ever so quickly.

Please send your money to the Treasurer, Phil Tenison, promptly to PO Box 541, Leeton, NSW 2705 or make a bank transfer to the MFN's bank account. It is the Commonwealth Bank, BSB 062 564, A/c 10039396. Don't forget to note your name so Phil can identify it on the Bank Statement.

Any queries Phil can be contacted on Work 02 69 512209 Home 02 69 534869

Annual subscription rates are currently:-

Family - \$45, Adult/Single - \$35, Journal only/Concession - \$25

A note from the Secretary

I am updating the membership data base during June and July. I will email out a Renewal of Membership Form in the next week. Please complete the form and return it to me. There is a section on the form that allows you to indicate the details you are happy to share with other members on a membership contact list.

Penny Williams

Upcoming submission dates:

Please bring your comments along to the meeting so submissions from the club can be discussed.

➤ Biodiversity and Land Clearing Regulations

The NSW Government is calling for public submissions on regulations and other documents that support the recently passed *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* and *Local Land Services Amendment Act 2016*.

The Acts are a result of the 2016 biodiversity reform package. You can read more about those reforms **at the EDO NSW website**.

➤ NSW Travelling Stock Reserves Review

There are more than 6,500 TSRs on Crown land in NSW, covering approximately two million hectares. The aim of the TSR review is to determine which TSRs are still used or required for the original purpose they were set aside for and to determine if they are important for other reasons. This information will feed future decisions about how this land can be best reserved, managed and owned. **Submissions close 5 pm Thursday 22 June 2017.**

<http://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/livestock/stock-routes/nsw-travelling-stock-reserves-review>

Our Campout at Whroo



On the 5th to the 7th May a group of 5 of us camped at Greens Camp Ground within the Whroo Historic Reserve, another 9 stayed in an airBNB a few kilometres away on Reedy Lake Rd., Whroo is located 7km south of Rushworth in Victoria. Whroo is a 500ha Historic Reserve within the 33,000ha Rushworth State Forest. It is also bordered by a Nature Conservation reserve on the west, south and east

Both the State Forest and Nature Conservation Reserve are Box/Iron Bark Forest.

The first European to go to this area was Major Mitchell who in 1836 passed diagonally through

Victoria, crossing the Goulburn River some 20km south of Whroo. By 1850 the area was extensively settled by pastoralists and, with the discovery of gold in 1853, the township of Whroo was established.

The Major Mine in the Whroo area is Balaclava Hill that was discovered in 1854 on the same day as the battle of Balaclava in the Crimean War.

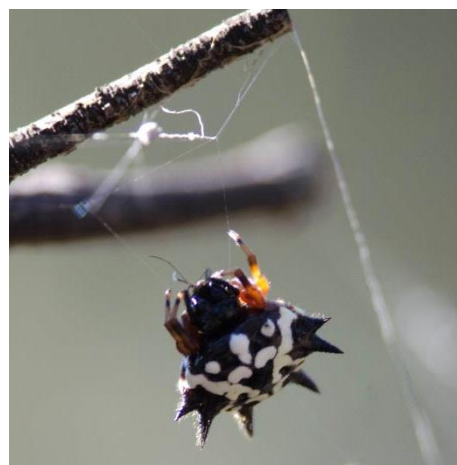
Between the gold rushes of 1853 and 1860 Whroo experienced a fluctuating population of around 10,000. The major growth in population occurred in the first few months after the discovery of Gold. This would decline due to the harsh conditions but increase again with the next new find. None of the towns 139 buildings remain all having been either destroyed or moved by 1960 but the evidence of the township is seen in the Sugar-gums, peppercorns and pine trees that mark where the town once stood

Whroo cemetery tells the story of the harsh conditions that existed. This is evidenced by the young age on many of the grave stones and the multiple children buried in the same grave, there is one that I noticed that contained three children all under one year old

While we were in Whroo we combined our nature observation with some of the Tourist things visiting Balaclava Mine, Fountainbleu Picnic area, Whroo Cemetery, and the Aboriginal Rock Well

After we had all arrived and set up camp or settled into the AirBNB, we headed up to the car park at the start of the walk to and around Balaclava Hill. A few of the group did the steps down into the bottom of the open cut mine, the rest of us stayed at the top and looked down. After a look at the mine we continued to walk around the hill, stopping at the outside of the tunnel that leads from the base of the mine through the hill. This tunnel was used to take the ore out of the mine to be processed. Being the first outing for the weekend the group was very talkative so the birding wasn't great but we did find a patch of mixed honeyeaters. After we had finished the walk we headed back to camp for the obligatory drinks and nibbles and to prepare the camp oven curried beef for tea. A pleasant evening was spent talking and eating around the open fire.

The next morning we met at 9:00am and headed down Tait Hamilton Rd toward Fountainbleu Dam Picnic Area. The plan was to stop on the way if we saw an area that we thought was interesting. The first stop was a bit of a flop with the only thing of interest a Spiny Spider that was well spotted by Granny CD, so off we went to look for a better spot. Our second stop was much more interesting with birds for the birders amongst us to chase and three different orchids for the plant people.





When we had chased down all of the birds and photographed the orchids we moved on. The third stop was for morning tea in the sun. This was a good area to stop and there were a few different birds, some old diggings to walk through (you needed to look where you were going as some of these are open shafts that you can't see the bottom of) and a very large Grass Tree, it was here that we were joined by the final two of our group, bringing the total number to 16. Our next stop was at Fountainbleu for lunch. The sun was beautiful and there we all saw some of the local gold, when the fossicker who was using the dam to pan came and showed us what he had collected, it was interesting to note how little it took to be worth around \$200.

When we had finished lunch we headed back to Whroo to go and have look at the cemetery. This was an interesting look back to try and imagine how the people of Whroo must have lived and died. After a walk through the cemetery some walked up to the Aboriginal Rock Well and others (including me) took a wrong turn and went for a nice walk in the bush. From here we all went our separate ways to meet up for tea at the Pub in Rushworth.

Sunday morning was pack up day but before that some of the campers headed down Reedy Lake Rd to check out the softies that stayed in the house. The trip down took us nearly an hour to travel what should only be a 15 minute drive. There were many birding stops on the way. When we eventually got to the house there were more different birds to look at. This trip yielded nearly 20 new birds to add to our bird list. After a chat back at camp everybody headed off with many stopping in Rushworth to have a look around and visit the Bakery that is well worth a visit.

Thanks to all for the company and sharing of knowledge over the weekend.

Graham Russell

Bird List for Whroo Weekend

New Holland Honeyeater
 Pied Currawong
 Scarlet Robin
 Yellow faced Honeyeater
 Grey Butcherbird
 Black Duck
 Grey-crowned Babbler
 White-plumed Honeyeater
 Yellow Thornbill
 Magpie
 Tree Martin
 Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
 White-faced Heron
 Grey Shrike-thrush
 Superb Fairy-wren

Noisy Friarbird
 Grey Currawong
 Golden Whistler
 White-throated Treecreeper
 Jacky winter
 Masked Lapwing
 Eastern Rosella
 White-eared Honeyeater
 Grey Fantail
 Kookaburra
 Spotted Pardalote
 Crimson Rosella
 Red-rumped Parrot
 Restless Flycatcher
 Fuscous Honeyeater

Red Wattlebird
 White-winged Chough
 Varied Sittella
 Weebill
 Wood Duck
 Noisy Minor
 Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
 Buff-rumped Thornbill
 Brown-headed Honeyeater
 Welcome Swallow
 Striated Pardalote
 Musk Lorikeet
 Crested Pigeon
 Willie Wagtail
 Galah



**Clockwise from top previous page:
 Group outside mine tunnel; Whroo Cemetery;
 Spiney Spider; Female Scarlet Robin; morning tea
 in Whroo Historic Reserve; Aboriginal Rock Well**

Weekend at Whroo

Our weekend camp to Whroo Historical Reserve was an eye-opener to behold. The weather was perfect. Accommodation at the B&B farm house for the 9 of us suited us well with a surrounding woodland of eucalyptus trees creating a haven for our feathered friends.



On our walks at each frequent stop we made, we were surprised by the diverse interests. We tried our hand at cracking the quartz mineral rocks looking for gold nuggets.... instead found not far away, Autumn Greenhoods, Midget Greenhoods and Parsons Band Orchid *Eriochilus cucullatus*. Lunch at Fontana dam was a pleasant affair, with a surprise visit of a stranger, (next picnickers who were washing gravel in sloshing pans) had been chatting to one of our group after their two big friendly dogs made friends with Andrew's dog, Blacky. This stranger bought over with him a small bottle filled with water and approximately 1/4 oz of gold chips that had resulted from their washing. It shows that fossicking is alive and well!

Interesting spiders and an elusive frog (heard but not found) caught our attention. Plus the birds of course. Healthy large Grass trees (Xanthorrhoea) brought together our attention.

We were treated to a heart-warming campfire curry, Friday evening attended by Dione and Graham. Wonderful meal and company.

Parson's Bands orchid
Relaxing around the camp fire
as the food cooks



Virginia Tarr

Fivebough Wetlands Happenings

In addition to the weekly improvements in the presentation of the Budyaan Baamirra Picnic Area through the Work for the Dole program, visitors may have noticed that Bertie & Beatrice are solidified in their perch and all the directional bollard plaques have been fixed to guide walkers around the tracks. Regular guests may have also noticed the appearance of some new bollards placed strategically around the reserve, designed to capture numbers of people walking the tracks to gain a better understanding of recreational use. The projects of Fivebough are slowly but surely coming together and the site will shortly be looking a million bucks.

The Fivebough Community Tree Planting event scheduled for National Tree Day on Sunday 30th July 2017 is just around the corner! So don't forget to keep an eye out for more information via the Fivebough Wetlands Facebook page and website (fiveboughwetlands.org.au) and through the MFN network.

The day is being coordinated in conjunction with several other ecological restoration projects across both Fivebough and Tuckerbil Reserves, as an outcome of a National Landcare Grant Ramsar initiative, facilitated by Riverina Local Land Services. Complimentary works being undertaken within the project scope include treatment of cumbungi invading water distribution channels within Fivebough, control of woody and noxious weeds across both sites and the establishment of a native grassland area, near the Budyaan Baamirra Picnic Area at Fivebough. The project officer, in collaboration with MFN members, is also currently designing species identification signage for birds, vegetation and other wildlife to be printed and installed within Fivebough Wetlands to provide information to site visitors. This project will run through to April 2018.

Bec Bryne, Department of Industry – Lands Project Officer



Budyaan Baamirra Picnic Area
Bertie & Beatrice on their perch

Global Big Day e-Bird, Saturday 13 May 2017

Max, Phillip and I had a late start to the e-Bird day. Not Max's fault. The aim of the day was to record the most bird species ever recorded worldwide on a single day. I had downloaded the free app on my phone to record the birds and their GPS location and the time we saw them as we moved around the different sites.

We set off to Fivebough Wetlands first. We went to the Gibbs Road entrance, the front entrance and along the track there. Then on we headed to Tuckerbil, Campbell's Swamp and finally Wattle Dam. By the time we reached Wattle Dam the darkness was creeping in. Oh why had I decided on such a late start? It slowly dawned on me that this was like a twitchathon only people from all over the world were part of it. The results are seen quickly, as many of the participants add their sightings as they move around, just as we had done. The e-bird is an online data base and accessed by bird observers around the world. Our total number of birds for the day was 69 different species. The data base records the first person to spot the bird worldwide for the day. We thought we may have a chance here as I entered the data, but it was not to be.



Fivebough Wetland produced a number of birds including Shelducks, Royal and Yellow Spoonbills and many Pelicans. We also saw Black-winged Stilts and Red-necked Avocet in good numbers. However the Brolgas that had been seen there were not to be seen. (We did hear they were back next day.) Tuckerbil was good for Pink-eared Ducks and a large number of Purple Swamphens as well as many of the water birds. Then onto Campbell's where we spotted Hardheads, Australasian Shovellers and many Great



Cormorants. Wattle Dam was for the bush birds. Here we scored 2 Glossy Black Cockatoos and about 15 Turquoise Parrots as our highlights for the day. The bird list is recorded below.

Meanwhile elsewhere in MFN territory 2 other members were busy observing birds. Alan Whitehead headed for the Narrandera Wetlands and spent the day there. His list of 34 different species is listed below and boasts a Red-browed Finch and Whistling Kite. Andrew Thompson was bird watching at "Yarrabimbi" and had a list of 41 species. Andrew saw a Glossy Black Cockatoo as well as Double-barred Finch and a Diamond Firetail.

This event on the 13th May was a one day event, but e-bird can record bird sightings any day of the year. It will compile and record your sightings. The Cornell University e-Bird sight boasts "My eBird is now in eBird Mobile! You

can now view your county, state, and country lists for your current location, view your life list, and see how your current list totals compare to your previous years." It is a whole new way of recording bird sightings around the world in one data base.

Penny Williams

Alan Whitehead's list from the Narrandera Wetlands:

Yellow Rosella	Australian Raven	Pied Currawong	Pied Butcherbird
Galah	White Cockatoo	Grey Shrike-thrush	White-necked Heron
Superb Wren	Black Duck	Magpie	Purple Swamphen
Kookaburra	Red Wattlebird	Noisy Friarbird	Common Blackbird
Eastern Rosella	Crested Pigeon	Peewee	Black-faced Cuckoo-Sh
Noisy Miner	Welcome Swallow	Wood Duck	White-faced Heron
Red-browed Finch	Hardhead	Jacky Winter	Silvereye
Willie Wagtail	White-plumed H/e	Grey Fantail	Yellow-rumped T'bill
Grey Teal	Whistling Kite		

Images by Phillip Williams
Pelicans; Turquoise Parrot;
Diamond Firetail.

Andrew Thompson's list from 'Yarrabimbi':

Peaceful Dove	Crested Pigeon	Magpie	Common Bronzewing
Peewee	Willie Wagtail	Mallee Ringneck	Glossy Black Cockatoo
Mulga Parrot	Eastern Rosella	Red-rumped Parrot	Double-barred Finch
Diamond Firetail	Grey-crowned Babbler	White-browed Babbler	Apostlebird
Galah	Inland Thornbill	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Weebill
Pied Butcherbird	Kookaburra	Grey Fantail	Pied Currawong
Red-capped Robin	Wedge-tailed Eagle	White-winged Chough	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike
Wood Duck	Australian Raven	Grey Shrike-Thrush	White-plumed Honeyeater
Striped H/e	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Noisy Miner	Eastern Yellow Robin
Jacky Winter	Variiegated Wren	Brown Treecreeper	Welcome Swallow
Rufous Whistler			

Penny and Phillip Williams and Max O’Sullivan’s list from Fivebough/Tuckerbil/Campbells/Wattle Dam:

Hoary-headed Grebe	Australasian Grebe	Little Pied Cormorant	Great Cormorant
Darter	Pelican	Cattle Egret	Great Egret
White-faced Heron	White-necked Heron	Royal Spoonbill	Yellow-billed Spoonbill
Straw-necked Ibis	White Ibis	Australian Shelduck	Black Swan
Wood Duck	Hardhead	Pacific Black Duck	Australasian Shoveller
Grey Teal	Chestnut Teal	Pink-eared Duck	Brown Goshawk
Swamp Harrier	Black Kite	Whistling Kite	White-bellied Sea-eagle
Black-shouldered Kite	Brown Falcon	Kestrel	Australian Raven
Eurasian Coot	Swamphen	Masked lapwing	Red-kneed Dotterel
Variiegated Fairy-wren	Red-capped Plover	Black-winged Stilt	Red-necked Avocet
Silver Gull	Crested Pigeon	Common Bronzewing	Peaceful Dove
Bar-shouldered Dove	White-eared Honeyeater	Glossy Black Cockatoo	Mallee Ringneck
Golden Headed Cisticola	Red-rumped Parrot	Turquoise Parrot	Kookaburra
Welcome Swallow	Pied Butcherbird	Rufous Whistler	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike
Grey Shrike-thrush	Red Wattlebird	Willie Wagtail	Magpie
House Sparrow	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Little Raven	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater
Singing H/e	White-plumed Honeyeater	Striated Pardalote	Starling
Peewee			

MFN at the Riverina Field Days



Virginia at our display
One of the figures and nesting box (right)

For the Riverina Field Days on Friday and Saturday, 12-13 May 2017, at Griffith, the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists had a table with the Murrumbidgee Landcare site.

The weather was warm and sunny, bringing a great number of families out to see us. We were kept busy answering enquiries and handing out pamphlets.

The Landcare added the bird nesting box for the Glossy Black Glossy Cockatoos.

The standing figures that were made with different grains and seeds proved to be a great attraction and so professionally done!



Virginia Tarr

Ingalba Vegetation Survey

25-28 May 2107

For the past 16 years Friends of Ingalba have carried out vegetation surveys in the three Nature Reserves near Temora – Ingalba, Big Bush and Pucawan. Surveys involved 30+ sites; the number having been increased in the last few years to include monitoring areas of controlled burns, and each site done twice a year. Such a sterling effort has become hard to sustain by a small group (Temora is only a small town) and MFN were asked to help this year.

The Reserve supports a variety of plant communities with Mugga Ironbark and Black Cypress being the main tree species together with Grey Box, Dwyers Gum and Tumbledown Gum.



So on Thursday 25 May Nella, Rowena and myself together with Margaret Strong, a new member from Canberra, met Ian Thompson the organiser of the surveys for the Friends at the entrance to Ingalba Nature Reserve on the Burley Griffin Way. We were led down to the centre of the Reserve to join 3 other friend's members for our first site (their second for the day).

For this site and the four others we did that day we were principally observing their methodology and getting to know some of the plants we do not see in the Riverina.

Their methodology is simple. Each site is a 20 x 20 metre quadrat (approximately as it is paced) based from a permanently marked stake. GPS co-ordinates aid the finding of each site. Then each species within the quadrat is recorded along with its cover abundance measured on a five point scale.



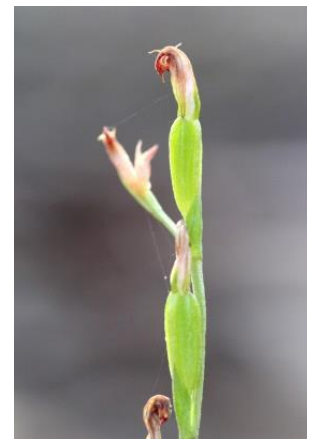
Recognition of species is aided by each site having a checklist. In addition a photo of the site is taken from a photo point peg a few metres from the main marker stake.

Clockwise from top:
General view with understorey Sticky Cassinia
***Cassinia uncata* and Bent-leaf Wattle *Acacia flexifolia* in flower;**
Survey site with marker;
Red-tip Greenhood *Pterostylis rubescens*;
Rick and Nella conferring at a site.

The next day David Egan joined us to do the sites in the Big Bush Nature Reserve. Once again Ian was our supervisor but only one other, David Schlunke could be present. David lives alongside this Reserve and knows it by heart (and with his heart). For this day and the next two days MFN members did most of the recording. We managed three sites before have lunch at David's place. David is an artist and invited us into his studio to see his works. It was very interested seeing them with each one having its motivation and evolution detailed. After lunch we managed another two sites before the light began to fade.

Saturday was back into Ingalba with only Ian to supervise us. We were also joined by Michelle and young Archie. This day we had sites that had been burnt a few years ago with some of them very densely covered by shrub regrowth. Even getting to these sites was challenging.

Sunday too was in Ingalba, in the southern part, this included a site on the prominent hill within the Reserve. This day we only worked up until lunch time so as not to have to drive home straight into the setting sun. Nevertheless we covered



four sites. Overall the four days was quite rewarding for us. The Temora area has quite a number of plants not seen around here – we do not travel eastwards very often unfortunately. It was a pleasure to help out a neighbouring group. Hopefully we can take part in their next survey in spring.

And the highlight of the trip – the orchids, especially the diminutive Red-lip Greenhood *Pterostylis rubescens*.

Eric Whiting

RED-BROWED FIRETAIL

EMBLEMA TEMPORALIS

This lovely little bird seems to contain itself mainly along the Eastern side of the continent and the Victorian coastline, so it is a rare and privileged sight to see them in our area and be photographed as Phillip has done at the Narrandera Wetlands recently.



Red-browed Firetail Image by Phillip Williams

These birds flock mainly during the non-breeding period and are often seen huddling together for warmth, but come the mating season and the male, quoting the Readers Digest, “Holds a grass stem at one end while adopting a stiff, upright posture and jumps up and down as he slowly approaches her from the side, drops the stem and switches to the second part of the routine when he sings and wipes his beak.”

These birds do not like open exposed spaces and find corridors of grasses and shrubs to move through searching for seeds, berries and insects. They are frequently seen in town gardens and always within proximity of water which is essential.

Their nest is flask-shaped made of grasses and bark with a tunnel entrance and is placed low in a shrub. They lay between 6-8 white eggs.

Other names; Lesser red-browed finch, red-bill, red-brow, red-browed finch, red-head, Sydney waxbill, temporal finch, waxbill.

Size: 120mm. **Male:** Olive green with scarlet brow, red bill through grey crown, rump scarlet, tail grey/black. **Female** is duller. **Voice:** high pitched ‘see seee seee.’

Sue Chittick-Dalton

Correction to the Turquoise Parrot Nest Box Program article in the last issue (#248, May 2017)

Max misunderstood David’s comments about this when I spoke to you at the Turquoise Parrot Field Day at Binya that day. I wrongly assumed you meant the bird was found at Oolambeyan.

From David Parker to Max:

I was just reading through the Field Nats newsletter and noticed the mention of the banded Plains-wanderer that had recently been recorded. I’m not sure where your information has come from, but it is not correct – I didn’t see the bird and it wasn’t at Oolambeyan.

Mark Antos co-ordinates grassland fauna monitoring program in the Terrick Terrick National Park, and is run with the assistance of a number of volunteer people. As part of the program, all Plains-wanderer (and other grassland birds) captured are banded.

Amazingly, one of these banded birds was observed by a group of people including John and Robert Nevinson, Cassandra Hooke and Megan Purvis (two Local Land Services that have been employed as part of the Plains-wanderer Stewardship Program) and Phil Maher. The bird was picked up on the Nevisons property north of Wanganella. This was bird number 052 66326 - a male which had been banded by Mark Antos and team at Terrick Terrick National Park on 13th May 2016 (it was one of 7 PWs banded that night). This is a distance of approximately 120km.

Importantly, it demonstrates that the NSW Riverina and Vic Northern Plains populations are not genetically isolated and that the Murray is not a dispersal barrier. This appears to be the longest recorded distance travelled by the species as well as the first Vic-NSW crossing.

[As so often from our mistakes we acquire further information about the topic. Ed.]

Migration of birds in the Riverina

People sometimes ask where to find particular birds in our area at different times of the year and often you have to say they are not about at the moment. Usually this occurs in the Autumn/early Winter when numbers of birds head north for warmer climates. Some head for North Queensland like **Rainbow Bee-eaters, Dollarbirds, Fairy Martins** and **Sacred Kingfishers** and some of these go even further to New Guinea



and islands beyond. Others just leave the area and often it is to go further north. Birds such as **Brown and Rufous Songlarks, Painted Honeyeaters, White-winged Trillers** and **White-breasted Woodswallows** are usually nowhere to be found locally in the winter. Other birds such as **Superb Parrots, Mistletoebirds, cuckoos** and even **Corellas** disappear for a time although a more thorough search, particularly in the red gum forests along the river, will often locate a few about in the colder months.

Other birds turn up for winter, escaping the cold in the mountains. Birds such as **Pied Currawongs**, in particular arrive in late April and spend the winter locally – particularly in Narrandera. Other birds like **Flame** and **Scarlet Robins** are also welcome visitors even though they are not in large numbers like the currawongs.

We all know of the sudden arrival in Spring of large flocks of **Glossy Ibis, Whiskered Tern** and, to a lesser extent, **Australasian Bittern** who come in anticipation of the rice growing season. These birds seemed to have been conditioned to come just in



time for the flooding of the rice fields – the bitterns spending time in local wetlands like Fivebough and Campbells until the rice has grown to the desired height for them to start breeding. In the height of the drought a few years back, the ibis and terns arrived but because there was so little rice being sown that year they didn't stay around and went elsewhere in search of greener (or wetter) pastures. Once the drought broke and more rice was sown, the birds returned.

This is only a sample of what birds migrate to and from our patch and it is interesting to note that some birds are so attuned to the environment that you could almost guarantee when they will turn up in the Spring. **Fairy Martins** in late July/early August, **Painted Honeyeaters** around 20th September, **Bee-eaters** in late September, **Dollarbirds** a little later around mid-October just in time for the Twitchathon!

Other birds remain in the area but are not always easy to locate at particular times of the year but are still about. Birds such as **Diamond Firetails, Turquoise Parrots, Diamond Doves etc** are about but are not easy to track down, although the Turks are easy to find at Wattle Dam at the moment.

Max O'Sullivan

Images by Phillip Williams
Mistletoebird; Fairy
Martin; Sacred Kingfisher

MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

Superb Parrot [3]	Lake Coolah	23/04/17	Nella Smith
White-winged Wren [f & juv]	Lake Coolah	23/04/17	Nella Smith
Glossy Black Cockatoo [pr]	'Mountain Dam' via Leeton	24/04/17	Graham Russell
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo	'Mountain Dam' via Leeton	Daily	Graham Russell
Glossy Black Cockatoo [f]	Narrandera	05/05/17	Betty Bradney
Emu [4]	Morundah	07/05/17	Alan Whitehead
Brolga [30]	Fivebough Wetlands	08/05/17	Max O'Sullivan
Pelican [up to 1000]	Fivebough Wetlands	08/05/17	Max O'Sullivan
Brolga [9]	Peter Draper's Koonadan farm	11/05/17	Peter Draper
The birds were feeding in the rice stubble.			
Freckled Duck [1]	Campbell's Swamp, Griffith	11/05/17	Max O'Sullivan
Pallid Cuckoo	Whitton Stock Route Rd	11/05/17	Max O'Sullivan
Great Crested Grebe [2]	Lake Talbot Boat Ramp, Narrandera	11/05/17	Alan Whitehead
Turquoise Parrot [15]	Wattle Dam, Binya State Forest	13/05/17	Penny Williams
Glossy Black Cockatoo [2]	Wattle Dam, Binya State Forest	13/05/17	Phillip Williams
Glossy Black Cockatoo [2]	'Yarrabimbi' via Leeton	13/05/17	Andrew Thompson
Brolga [14]	Fivebough Wetlands	14/05/17	Phillip Williams
Variegated Wren [5]	Palla St, Griffith	17/05/17	Virginia Tarr
Rainbow Lorikeet [25+]	Stafford Rd Griffith on power lines	17/05/17	Virginia Tarr
Australasian Bittern [1]	Campbell's Swamp, Griffith	18/05/17	Victorian visitors
Grey Shrike-Thrush	Neil's garden, Nericon	18/05/17	Neil Palframan
This is the first time in over 20 years that Neil has seen this bird in his garden.			
Grey Fantail	Neil's garden, Nericon	18/05/17	Neil Palframan
Again, this bird hasn't been seen at Neil's place for many years.			
Chestnut Teal [40+]	Ponds at the Griffith saleyards	18/05/17	Max O'Sullivan
Pink-eared Duck [80+]	Ponds at the Griffith saleyards	18/05/17	Max O'Sullivan
Mistletoebird [male]	The winery site Binya State Forest	21/05/17	Max O'Sullivan
Pied Currawong [small flock]	Peter Draper's place, Koonadan Rd	22/05/17	Peter Draper
Australian (Spotted) Crake [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	27/05/17	Keith Hutton
Australian Shelduck [30+]	Fivebough Wetlands	27/05/17	Keith Hutton
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [8]	McNabb Cres, Griffith	Regular	Sue Chittick-Dalton
Grey-crowned Babbler [6]	McNabb Cres, Griffith	Daily	Sue Chittick-Dalton
Singing Honeyeater [1]	McNabb Cres, Griffith	30/05/17	Sue Chittick-Dalton
Rainbow Lorikeet [5]	McNabb Cres, Griffith	30/05/17	Sue Chittick-Dalton

Here are Max's comments on Johanna's observation of Mallee Ringnecks nesting on a light pole.

This is completely possible as I have seen many species doing the same thing - just shows the urbanisation of some bird species who will use any hollow to nest in - saves going out into the bush! That's for the (other) birds!!!

Members will be sad to hear of the recent death of **John Tarr**, Virginia's father, in Griffith We extend our condolences to her and her family. His bird knowledge will be sorely missed.

"Consider this: all the ants on the planet, taken together, have a biomass greater than that of humans. Ants have been incredibly industrious for millions of years. Yet their productiveness nourishes plants, animals, and soil. Human industry has been in full swing for little over a century, yet it has brought about a decline in almost every ecosystem on the planet. Nature doesn't have a design problem. People do."

~ William McDonough, Michael Braungart

**** COMING EVENTS ****

8 June Thursday **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7.30pm.
Topic: Penny and Phillip Williams about their recent trip to Vietnam
Contact: Penny Williams 6953 3524.
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.

17 June Saturday **Celebrate the 200th 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.

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

13 July 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.

15 or 16 July **To be decided at the June meeting**

30 July Sunday **National Tree Day**
Tree Planting Day at Fivebough Wetlands

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.

9 October – Monday onwards - A biodiversity survey at Yathong of the reserve is planned.
Please contact Nella Smith 6059 1210 if you are interested in participating.

Other events

24 June Saturday **Grong Grong Star Picnic – Star gazing activities with the Wagga Wagga Observatory at the Grong Grong Golf Course.**

13-15 October **South-east Australian Naturalists' Association Spring Camp**
Little Desert area, Western Victoria.
Program is of half & full day excursions with speakers in the evenings
Further information from Penny Williams Email:
murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com. Or their Website – rfnc.org.au
Email – rfncseana@gmail.com

Advance notice - 2018

29 September to **Australian Naturalists Network get together will be held in Western Victoria**
8 October **Travelling from Halls Gap in the Grampians to Geelong along the Great Ocean Road. Expressions of Interest are being sought to assist with planning.**
Further information from Penny Williams Email:
murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com