

# *The Murrumbidgee Naturalist*



**April 2018 - Issue #258**

**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



***Spotlighting in the River Red Gum Forest***

**by Dione Russell**

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## **CONTRIBUTIONS**

**For the May issue by**

**Monday 30 April**

**To Rowena Whiting**

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

**Phone: 6953 2612**

***Annual Koala Count at  
Narrandera - 15 April  
Field Survey of a block at  
Griffith - 28 April***

## 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.

### Membership enquiries:

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

## Welcome to the April issue

Once again I need to point out a few booboos in the last issue. They seem to increase each move - you obviously want to make our newsletter the most perfect one out there!

First the sighting: Black-eared Honeyeater should have been White-eared Honeyeater.

Second the Purple Copperwing Butterfly is found at elevations over 900m not 300 as stated in the article. Jane Paul also wrote that she has been privileged to see this a few times. It is endangered due to its specialised requirements. As with botany the species name takes a small letter.

The photos I accredited to Phil were actually Kathy Tenison's.

There is a corrected version of the newsletter on the web site. At least they weren't all mine! Still keep me on my toes, your feedback is always welcome.

Another email I received was from a past member now living in Adelaide - Kath Matthews, her comments are about Graham's article on 'Are people a plague?'

"Loved Graham Russell's article. I have felt that for a long time that the human race will cause its own extinction but the interest in doing something about it is almost zilch. Unfortunately the human race in general is the biggest problem on the earth but I won't get onto that soap box of mine. Some time ago I bought a book by Anton Gill and Alex West called **Extinct** and it has some interesting facts. Not sure if you know it or not. However 99.9% of all species that have evolved on the earth are now extinct. On average species survive for 4 million years. The human family has evolved so far around 3 million years but if we keep going the way we are I can't see it getting to 4 million.

Another interesting little comparison I got from a book on fossils is **Making a Timeline of life on earth**. A toilet roll has on average 500 sheets. Remove 40 sheets and you are left with 460 sheets. Each of these sheets represents 10 million years in the earth 4600 million years history. The human species first appeared 1/20 of a sheet from the present end of the last sheet. On this scale our current calendar about 2000 years old would represent 1/5000 of a sheet from the present end. Thought someone might be interested in these little bits of info from someone who is definitely no expert just a collector of some interest bits and pieces. Neither of these books are scientific productions but easy to read for non-scientists like me. "

**Now I'll leave you to enjoy your read for this month, Rowena.**

## Show and Tell – at the March Meeting

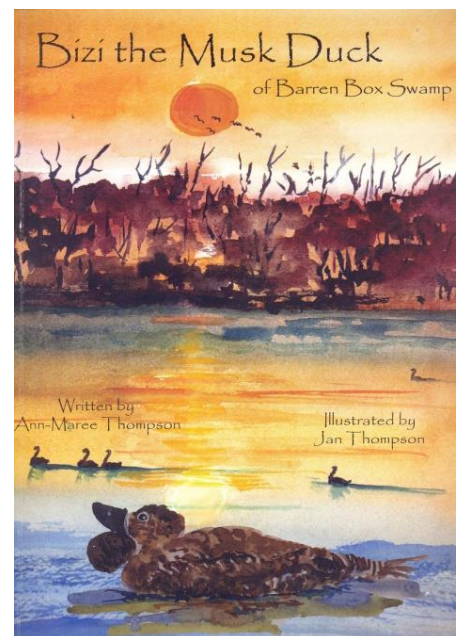
Old Man Saltbush – Nella Smith

**Andrew Thompson turned up with a bucket full of plant specimens from his property** on the Colinroobie Road. Despite some people thinking they were weeds, they were mostly saltbushes. Eric was able to identify most of them, pointing out particular features that distinguished them from something similar.

They included *Sida cunninghamii* – found on hills, *Sida corrugata*-Corrugated Sida, *Salsola kali*- Buckbush, *Atriplex nummularia* Old Man Saltbush, *Mariana microphylla*-Eastern Cottonbush, *Rhagodia spinescens* Thorny Saltbush – this was spikey which indicates harsh conditions, *Einadia nutans* Climbing Saltbush has red berries and a tart taste, *Sclerolaena muricata*- Roly Poly has spikes on fruit, *Rhagodia hastata* Saloop – spade shaped leaf, *Centipedia cunninghamii* Sneezeweed or Old Man Weed – concoction for colds (used externally), *Atriplex spinibractea*- 2 bracts triangular fruits, *Leptorhynchus panaetioides* Woolly Buttons, and *Boerhavia diffusa* Tar Vine – small / larger leaves has a tap root.



**Virginia brought along a book - *Bizi the Musk Duck of Barren Box Swamp* by Ann-Maree Thompson and Illustrated by Jan Thompson.** This is a children's book with illustrations that were originally handpainted and the story is about when a part of the swamp was deepened for water storage and the rest restored for environmental purposes with water savings that allowed the necessary infrastructure to be built while incurring no additional cost.



**A Bunya Pine *Araucaria bidwillii* cone was Rowena's contribution.** It had been blown off one of the 2 trees in Mountford Park in the centre of Leeton during a storm. A resident had taken it to the visitor information centre and she 'borrowed' it for the evening. The large evergreen coniferous tree, found naturally in south-east Queensland, one of the remnant sites is the Bunya National Park.

The cones are 20–35 cm in diameter, and can weigh as much as 18 kg and are opened by large birds, such as cockatoos, or disintegrate when mature to release the large 3–4 cm seeds or nuts.

It promoted discussion of how the indigenous people used them as well the danger of it

falling on someone's head. The aboriginal people of Australia once considered bunya pines to be sacred plants. The trees were so important to their culture that cutting one down was illegal according to their laws. Traditionally, the nuts were additionally ground and made into a paste, which was eaten directly or cooked in hot coals to make bread.

The fourth item(s) was from Ellené, a few small stones, these we were told were gastroliths. Eric has done some research on them - see separate article on page 7.

Rowena and Nella

Gastroliths – Dione Russell



## A Night in the Dark

On Saturday the 10th March a number of us met at the boat ramp car park by the Euroley Bridge on the Murrumbidgee River at 6:30 and then headed in to Middle Beach where we sat and had either a late afternoon tea or an early dinner on the beach.



Members enjoying a drink at Middle Beach– Dione Russell  
Tawny Frogmouth –  
Brush-tail Possum - Graham Russell

It was a nice evening and there was the normal river birds, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Yellow Rosella, and Galahs that kept us entertained with their antics while we waited for it to get dark

Once the sun had set we set off to walk along the track heading north down stream. We had hardly started out when a Tawny Frogmouth was spotted and stayed long enough for us all to get a good look. After all having a good look we walked further down the track and divided into two groups with one walking faster than the other, the faster group walked all the way down to the Gate in the next fence line. Here we turned around and headed back toward the beach, meeting the other group to hear that they had been slower because they had been looking at a Brush-tailed Possum that the first group had missed so it was back to try and find it.

It took us a few trips up and down the track to find one, no one is sure that it was the same one that the other group found first but we did eventually find one and by the end everybody got to have a look. With the Possum spotting finished we headed back to the beach and after some star gazing we headed home at about 10:30.

The list of sightings isn't that long but it was an evening that was enjoyed by all.

**Graham Russell**



Australian  
Bustard  
taken by  
Mal Carnegie  
near  
Lake Cowal

## GPS Tuition at Wattle Dam, Binya State Forest

The day started well with us all turning up early at the cross roads meeting place.

We then headed along the Whitton Stock Route Rd, come Barrys Scenic Drive to the Wattle Dam turn off. We were advised to go further until seeing the gate on the right and turn in to follow the track back to Wattle Dam, as the ramp is too high for normal vehicles to negotiate. Well.... if wanting a good 4WD track to manoeuvre then that is for you!

We arrived eventually without too many scratches or blown tires, to a dry Wattle Dam. Some of us had not seen it ever drying up.

Anyway we were issued the MFN's Garmin GPS tracking devices each to learn the navigational skills. It took a while to understand the technology of these devices, but once we were put in the right direction, there was no stopping us. It became fun....

The evening was warm while we sat by the miserable looking dam in the shade of the old River gum, eating our supper and observing only a small number of birds passing by before the sun went down. What amazed us greatly was the number of wallabies and grey kangars that came by to the edge of the dam looking for water and observing us. Sue felt that it was her duty to alleviate the situation by emptying her drinking water into the centre of the dam that was still slightly damp...

### Virginia Tarr



Vilma & Virginia at a waypoint

Sue emptying her water bottle and  
Peaceful Dove – Kathy Tenison



### Field survey on 28 April see Coming Events for meeting place/time

Griffith Local Aboriginal Land Council have asked us to supply a list of fauna and flora to be found on their recently acquired land off Mallinsons Road, Griffith, to assist in forming a management plan. This land is the north-western Toe of Scenic Hill and has Box – White Cypress Pine Woodland rising up to Dwyers Red Gum – White Cypress Pine Woodland. It is a U-shaped block with private land filling in the U.

All we need to do is walk through the block, noting the birds, plants, and as far as possible for us reptiles, insects and anything else we come across.

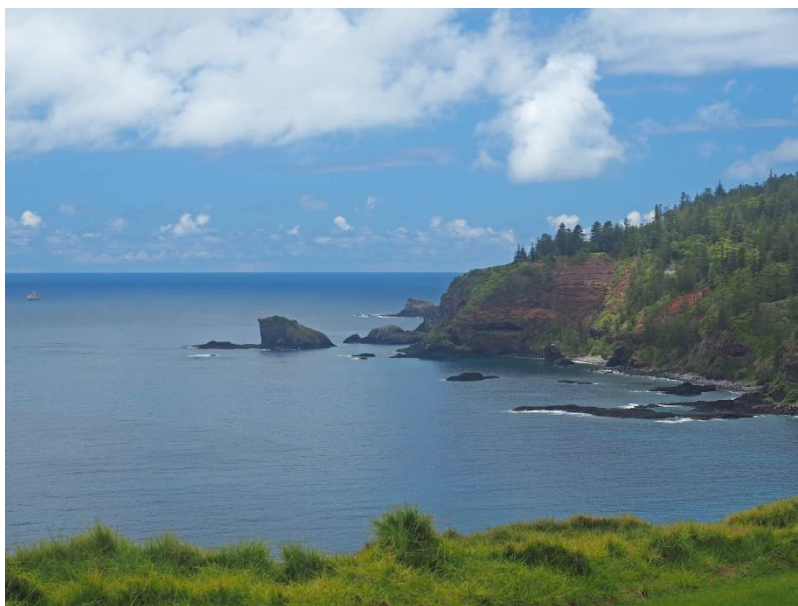
This will be a preliminary field survey with a follow up one in spring to get the differences in seasons. We will be accompanied by some of the GLALC members who I am sure will give us some of their aspects of the land.

### Eric Whiting

## Norfolk Island

[At the meeting Nella showed photos and talked about her trip to Norfolk Island last year; she joined a bird tour of the island. Ed]

Norfolk Island is a volcanic rock in the Western Pacific 1500km from Australia (that's 2 hours by plane). It is a small part of an undersea mountain extending between North New Zealand and New Caledonia. The vegetation is mainly Norfolk Island Pines. Storms, prevailing winds and seabirds probably carried seed banks to the island. Land birds followed and some have already become extinct or threatened due to the Brown Rat brought in by Polynesians for food and the Black Rat and rabbits brought in by early white settlers. The flora consists of subtropical and warm temperate species from lands to the west north and south - 51% Australian, 33% from New Zealand, 21% from New Caledonia and 6% from Fiji. Endemic species account for 24% of indigenous flora and there are 15 endemic land birds and 2 reptile species.



Captain Cook rediscovered the island in 1774 and 14 years later a convict settlement was established for hardened criminals. For some time Norfolk Island supplemented the food supplies for Sydney Cove. It was able to do this because of the wetter conditions and more moderate climate.

The end of convict transportation in 1850's meant that everyone left. Just then the Pitcairners had run out of land on their island and they were given Norfolk Is by Queen Victoria.

The Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly was formed in 1979 which meant self-government as an external territory of Australia. Tourism boomed in the 1980's, helped by the tax free shopping.

Just lately it has come under the control of NSW administration with the same educational, judiciary, health institutions as ours to make it more sustainable.

I visited Norfolk Island as part of their Birdweek event. This was an excellent week with a wonderful exposition of their natural assets by local National Parks staff and other locals and researchers.

The week was also excellent from the historical aspect. It is held in November every year.

**Nella Smith**

**Kingston Harbour  
Tropic Bird nesting  
White Oak flower**



## Gastroliths

For her show and tell at the last meeting Ellené had some gastroliths found by a dam near Wyalong. *“There is an island in the middle of the dam and I found them all together near the water edge.”* Gastroliths – well what are they? Well gastro = stomach and lith = stone, literally stomach stones. Many vertebrates swallow stones to help grind tough plant matter which is their diet. The stones can vary in size according to the size of the animal. Some herbivorous tadpoles swallow sand whereas fossils of the giant herbivorous dinosaurs have been found with cricket ball sized gastroliths. Many birds need grit in their diet to assist their gizzards (their muscular parts of their stomachs), to grind their food. All birds lack the ability to masticate food in their mouths because they do not have teeth especially grinding molar ones.

There is also a theory that aquatic vertebrates like fish, penguins, whales and crocodiles swallow stones to aid buoyancy. However studies have shown that the amount of stones in any one animal is not sufficient enough to have any significant effect.

Ellené’s gastroliths however are entirely different from swallowed stones. They come from crayfish not vertebrates and are formed from calcium carbonate. Calcium is a vital part of the strengthening of a crayfish’s exoskeleton, just as it is in our bones. The drawback of an exoskeleton is that for the animal to grow it has to be moulted, and a new bigger exoskeleton to be formed. Most freshwater environments do not have much calcium, so crayfish begin their moult by absorbing the calcium from the old exoskeleton, store it as gastroliths in the stomach, then re-secrete it into the new skeleton.

One report from Western Australia claimed that these gastroliths in crayfish were soft and easily crumbled. If however the crayfish was eaten say by a heron, then the digestive juices hardened the gastroliths into the polished buttons as seen with Ellené’s specimen.

### Eric Whiting



Ellené’s photo of her gastroliths

## Fivebough Wetlands Happenings

Over 100 Stage 1 students from Parkview Primary, Leeton visited Fivebough Wetlands in early April, to explore the diverse ecosystems of the reserve and learn about the creatures which inhabit them. There were some very clever questions asked by our young visitors; whether the site is naturally a wetland and the function of the nesting boxes, however there were also some very creative questions asked. The stand-outs of the morning were; are there crocodiles or sharks in the wetlands? Do I (Bec) live in the wetlands? Can you catch cod in the channels? How many kinds of ants live at the wetlands? Many of the kids said they would be back to visit so hopefully we have inspired a new generation of keen environmentalists to appreciate Fivebough.



Behind the scenes at Tuckerbil Wetlands Reserve we will shortly have 1,800 native trees planted to establish new vegetation corridors, linking Koonadan National Park to the reserve and facilitating succession planning for future habitat within the site.

A massive thanks goes to MFN for promoting Fivebough Wetlands at the Yanco Agricultural High School Gala Day, your support and contributions to the wetlands are always very much appreciated!

### Bec Byrne

NSW Department of Industry – Lands & Water

## Lake Brewster Pelican Banding

A joint NSW OEH, UNSW and WaterNSW project. Contributed by Nella Smith

### Have you seen a pelican with an orange leg band?

Then, we want to hear from you! See below for email address and what to include.

Pelicans from Lake Brewster, in the Murray-Darling Basin, have been banded as part of a research project to learn more about their movements.

**Pelicans by Phillip Williams  
And there are no orange tags!**

### Lake Brewster pelicans

Lake Brewster, in the Lachlan River catchment, is an important site for pelicans. It is one of the few sites in the Murray Darling Basin where pelicans breed in large numbers (more than 5,000 nests) on a semi-regular basis. Pelicans have nested at Lake Brewster since 1984 when records were first kept. In recent years the size of the pelican colonies has increased to about 8,000 birds in the summer of 2016-2017. WaterNSW who manage water storages and delivery in the Lachlan valley, and NSW OEH who manage the environmental watering program, have been working together to enable the waterbird breeding events which occur at the lake to complete successfully.



After prolonged flooding in the Lachlan River catchment in 2016, pelicans bred at several locations in the Lake.

### Pelican banding

One important factor of pelican ecology that is poorly understood is whether pelicans return to the site where they hatched. This is known as natal site fidelity. If pelicans exhibit natal site fidelity it has important implications for wetland and water management.

In May 2017, 66 juvenile pelicans were banded with uniquely numbered orange leg bands. These bands will stay on for approximately 10-15 years and help us keep track of movements – whether they revisit Lake Brewster or other wetlands.

### Lake Brewster

Lake Brewster was originally a natural ephemeral wetland which was developed in the 1950s into a secondary storage to re-regulate the delivery of water to the lower Lachlan. More recently, work has been undertaken to restore wetland habitats in the lake.

**If you see a pelican with an orange leg band (or an orange leg band but no bird) please email [pe.li.bands@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:pe.li.bands@environment.nsw.gov.au).**

Information to include in your email:

- the number on the band (if you can see it)
- the location of your sighting (a GPS point or nearby locality will help)
- the context - if the bird was alone or with a group
- the bird's behaviour – feeding, flying etc
- condition of the bird – healthy, unwell or deceased.



## Inspecting Nestboxes in the Landscape

Turquoise Parrots nest in low stumps often remaining in the landscape from forestry activities. However someone reckoned that there weren't enough of these so wooden nestboxes were placed in Binya State Forest and Cocoparra National Park about a year ago. These were placed in 10 clusters of five around the Spring Hill and Wattle Dam areas.

A couple or three of us had a great time finding these and inspecting them for usage.

Results were disappointing to say the least....except a feather and maybe some scats. However we did find the nestboxes and mapped them and at the same time had practice using GPS skills. We would hope to re-survey them in Spring and if anyone is interested we would love you along.

One interesting adaption by Turquoise Parrots is that they will feed on introduced weeds like Fleabane, Capeweed and Heliotrope.

The next project was to inspect nestboxes on the Borellan Road with the new Nestbox Inspection Camera. It is fairly easy to use but does require at least 2 operators. These nestboxes may target small parrots like Blue Bonnets, Eastern Rosellas and Red-rumped Parrots. There are also bat boxes in the trees with small slots rather than round entry holes in the boxes. Unfortunately the bat boxes are not able to be inspected with the camera.

The nestboxes are easily seen from the road which makes them easy to find but which could be dangerous for young birds when they fledge and aren't very road savvy.

Feathers, spider eggs and bee hives and what look like egg shells were found: some evidence of usage. At the Narrandera Wetlands broken eggshells and something that look like bird scats were photographed.

David Lindenmayer has done some research about the effectiveness of erected nestboxes and found that these can be very poor substitutes for cleared old trees as often happens when highways are realigned and roadsides are cleared of old growth.

**Nella Smith**

Spider egg cocoons in nestbox



## Our display at the Yanco Agricultural High School Gala Day on 10 March.

LLS supplied the gazebo and a couple of banners to enhance our display boards.

A rather hot day and we found it fairly quiet though overall the day was reported as successful with large numbers. We were able to converse with a few people who showed interest and had a story to tell.

Our thanks to members who volunteered to help – Margrit, Max, Graham, Dione, Eric and Rowena.



## Oriental Weatherloach

Peter Draper's sighting of an Oriental Weatherloach is significant as this species of fish is an introduced noxious pest with the capability of taking over our waterways in the same way as carp has done.



Oriental Weatherloach have cylindrical, mucous covered bodies reminiscent of eels. They can be identified from eels by the presence of five pairs of barbels around the mouth and a short dorsal fin.

Like eels they can move overland to new water bodies – they can swallow air to obtain oxygen. This also means they can tolerate waters with low dissolved oxygen. They are also tolerant of a wide range of water temperatures, thriving in

waters from 2-30°C and can even be found in hot springs with temperatures up to 38°C.

This species is a nocturnal bottom dweller that feed on algae, insect larvae, crustaceans and rotifers. They prefer water with sandy or muddy bottoms as they can burrow into them to escape predation. Like a lot of fish they can spawn a lot of eggs, 4-8,000 at a time. All in all they have all the capability for a rapid spread given the chance.

Oriental Weatherloach originate from China, Siberia, Korea and Japan, and was brought here as an aquarium fish. The first record from natural waters came from Gininderra Creek, ACT. From there it has already spread into the Murrumbidgee, Murray, Hawkesbury Rivers and the Port Hacking catchment in NSW. It is quite likely that there have been multiple introductions from either carelessly discarded aquarium stock, escapes from open ponds or from (illegal) use as live bait.

Any further sightings of this fish should be immediately reported so that NSW DPI can keep a control of this noxious pest (ring the Narrandera Fisheries).

### Eric Whiting

Information for this article came from a brochure produced and obtainable from DPI Fisheries.

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**News of a past member - Richard Faulder** was the secretary/ treasurer of MFN from its inception for many years. He was an entomologist and was invaluable at giving us a balanced view of the environment in this region. He is now a resident of Assumption Villa in Leeton and this photo was taken when Margrit Martin and Nella Smith visited him recently. While he is unable to converse now he loves having visitors. We are trying to find some insect posters (spiders are his favourite) to adorn the walls of his room.

I thought you'd like to be reminded of one of his arthropod reports.

### Arthropods of Tullys Hill - 1 September 1996

Near the starting point a small brown orbweaver spider (Family Araneae) hung in its web on a Gorse Bitter-pea bush, while a European Honeybee pollinated the flowers.

While progressing across the lower slopes long, fairly thick-shelled lerps were found on a leaf of *Eucalyptus dwyeri*.

Further up the hill, under a stone, small golden worker ants went about their business, ignoring a large alate (winged - not having made its mating flight) ant, even though the difference in size and coloration suggested that they were also certainly different species.

On top of the hill under rocks several types of mini-beasts (a better expression than "bergs") were found. Darkling beetles (Family Tenebrionidae) and their grubs, several weevils (Family Curculionidae) and even an amaurobiid spider could be expected in a fairly dry environment such as this. However, conditions under the stones must have been moist enough for a millipede and, surprisingly, a number of bristletails (order Thysanura), native relatives of the domestic silverfish.

Back down on the flat, passing an old shed, lifting (carefully) sheets of corrugated iron on the ground revealed large specimens of female Red-back spiders (*Latrodectus hasselti*, with *mactans* in the middle, depending on whether or not you think all comb-footed spiders with big black females with red markings on their abdomen belong to one world-wide species or not - I think the jury is still out).



# MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

<b>Sacred Kingfisher</b>	Karri Rd, Leeton	15/02/18	Barry Allen
<b>Wood Duck</b> [100+]	McKenzie Rd via Leeton	21/02/18	Graham Russell
<b>Water rat</b>	Narrandera Wetlands	21/02/18	Warrick Bradney
<b>Little Corella</b> [50]	Narrandera	01/03/18	Susan Whitehead
<b>Singing Honeyeater</b> [6]	Lake Talbot, Narrandera	01/03/18	Alan Whitehead
<b>Horsfield's Bushlark</b> [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	05/08/18	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Australian Shelduck</b> [40+]	Fivebough Wetlands	05/03/18	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Spotted Harrier</b>	Bald Hill Rd via Leeton	05/03/18	Allan Richards
<b>Painted Button-quail</b> [3]	Wattle Dam, Binya State Forest	06/03/18	Allan Richards
<b>Royal Spoonbill</b> [4]	Lake Talbot, Narrandera	08/03/18	Alan Whitehead
<b>Red Wattlebird</b> [2]	Jubilee Park, Griffith	08/03/18	Virginia Tarr
<b>Sulphur-crested Cockatoo</b> [3]	Jubilee Park, Griffith	08/03/18	Virginia Tarr
<b>Yellow Thornbill</b>	Cutler Ave, Griffith	08/03/18	Virginia Tarr
<b>Black-faced Woodswallow</b> [20+]	Conargo/Carathool Rd	12/03/18	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Blue-faced Honeyeater</b>	Jubilee Park, Griffith	14/03/18	Virginia Tarr
<b>Brolga</b> [4]	The Basin Dam, Koonadan	15/03/18	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Variegated Wren</b> [4]	Palla Ave, Griffith	16/03/18	Virginia Tarr
<b>Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater</b> [2]	Palla Ave, Griffith	16/03/18	Virginia Tarr
<b>Straw-necked Ibis</b> [10]	Jubilee Park, Griffith	16/03/18	Virginia Tarr
<b>Sacred Kingfisher</b> [1]	Gallipoli St, Griffith	16/03/18	Virginia Tarr
<b>Major Mitchell's Cockatoo</b> [20+]	'Mountain Dam' via Leeton	16/03/18	Graham Russell
<b>Musk Lorikeet</b>	Probert Ave, Griffith	22/03/18	David Parker
David reported this sighting on the Eremaea Birdline – just a single bird opposite the shops.			
<b>Red-capped Robin</b> [m]	Cassia St, Leeton	23/03/18	Margrit Martin
<b>Mulga Parrot</b> [6]	Wattle Dam, Binya State Forest	24/03/18	MFN group
<b>Diamond Dove</b> [6+]	Wattle Dam, Binya State Forest	24/03/18	Sue Chittick-Dalton
<b>Jacky Winter</b> [2]	Wattle Dam, Binya State Forest	24/03/18	MFN Group
<b>Splendid Wren</b> [4+]	Wattle Dam, Binya State Forest	24/03/18	MFN Group
<b>Red-necked Avocet</b> [20+]	Fivebough Wetlands	25/03/18	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Peaceful Dove</b>	The Basin Dam, Koonadan	28/03/18	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Major Mitchell's Cockatoo</b> [30+]	Lake Wyangan area – flyover	30/03/18	Johanna Botman
<b>Glossy Black Cockatoo</b> [male]	Galah Dam, Binya State Forest	31/03/18	Neil Palframan
<b>Oriental Weatherloach</b>	Koonadan	04/04/18	Peter Draper

This is a noxious pest – see Eric's article on page 10.

The GPS lesson at **Wattle Dam** on 24/03/18 was successful but the birding was restricted because the dam was dry. Despite this birds like **Peaceful** and **Diamond Doves**, **White-plumed Honeyeaters** and **4 Eastern Grey Kangaroos** still came in looking for water so the dam must have only just dried up. There were still numbers of insectivores about including thornbills, **Eastern Yellow Robin** and a **Grey Shrike-thrush**.

This is the first time I have seen this dove at that site.

**Note on Environmental Water into Tuckerbil.** Murrumbidgee Irrigation commenced putting water into The Basin Dam on Monday 26 March. By Friday, the water was going into Tuckerbil itself so it is hoped it will attract brolgas and possibly some migratory wading birds on their autumn migration north.

Keith visited Tuckerbil on 30/03/18 and got 9 raptor species:

<b>White-bellied Sea-eagle</b> [juv]	<b>Whistling Kite</b>	<b>Black-shouldered Kite</b>
<b>Black Kite</b>	<b>Swamp Harrier</b>	<b>Brown Goshawk</b>
<b>Australian Hobby</b>	<b>Brown Falcon</b>	<b>Kestrel</b>

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

Please note all outings are subject to weather conditions please email or phone if you intend to come.

- 12 April Thursday**      **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7.30pm.  
**Presentation: Web of Life in the Tanami Desert**  
**Bring along your 'Show and Tell'**  
**Contact:** Nella Smith 6959 1210.  
**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com).
- 15 April Sunday**      **Annual Koala Count at Narrandera Common**  
Meet there at 10:00 am where you will be assigned to a team  
Follow the signs from Lake Talbot canal bridge (just before the swimming complex). Bring binoculars.  
Barbeque lunch available at a small cost.  
**Contact Nella Smith 6959 1210.**  
**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com).
- 28 April Saturday**      **Field survey of Griffith Aborigine Land Council block –**  
Meet at corner of Lakes and Mallinson roads at 9am.  
Bring morning tea and lunch.  
For more information see page 5.  
**Contact Eric Whiting 6953 2612**  
**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com).
- 30 April Monday**      **Copy for the May newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**  
**Email:** [ericwhiting4@bigpond.com](mailto:ericwhiting4@bigpond.com). Phone: 6953 2612.
- 10 May Thursday**      **Monthly Meeting will be held in Griffith at the National Parks and Wildlife Office, 200 Yambil Street**  
**Guest Speaker: from Altina Wildlife Park**  
**Contact:** Nella Smith 6959 1210 or Virginia Tarr 69625614  
**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com).
- Note: this is being held in Griffith**
- 12 May Saturday**      **Outing to Altina Wildlife Park**  
Meet at the park, it is on the Sturt Hwy, east of Darlington Point by 9:15am.  
The tour will take 2-2½ hours. It is planned to have a BYO picnic lunch by the Murrumbidgee River.  
**Numbers with payment are required by Friday 13 April.** Cost is \$38 per adult, \$18 per child. Please let Dionee know at Thursday's meeting with payment or preferably make it to the MFN bank account with your name & Altina. Bank details are on page 2.  
**Contact: Dionee Russell 0428 536 290**  
**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com).

## Other events

- 8–15 April**      **Wild Pollinator Count week,**  
Please visit <https://wildpollinatorcount.com/> to find out how to do a count and how to submit your observations, and more...
- 13 April Friday**      **Water Forum at Griffith**  
Griffith Water Reform Action Plan Community consultation session  
Further information from Nella Smith Email:  
[murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com)