

# *The Murrumbidgee Naturalist*



**September 2018 - Issue #263**

**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



**Riverine plains at Oolambeyan - Kathy Tenison  
with a Black Kite, Brown Falcon (Graham Russell) soaring  
above and a female Red-capped Robin (Phillip Williams)**

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Wednesday 3 October**

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*September  
is  
Biodiversity month*

## 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

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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.

## Birds of the Sub-Antarctic Islands

The club welcomed our August guest speaker, **Fred van Gessel** but instead of the advertised topic of Birds of Borneo, we had an excellent presentation from Fred of the birds and animal life of the Sub-Antarctic Islands to the south New Zealand – Stewart Is., Auckland Is., Macquarie Is., Campbell Is., Antipodes Is., Bounty Is. and Chatham Is.

Most of the New Zealand Islands have very restricted access due to the effort to protect the many endangered native species that have been introduced onto the isolated islands in order to ensure they are free from predators that had been introduced to the mainland North and South Islands after settlement.

The majority of Fred's photos were from the stay on Australia's Macquarie Island where you can get close to the birds and animals that live there – seals, penguins and various sea birds. All of which are very tolerant of humans and allow close contact – often too close in the case of the Elephant Seals! Fred had photos of the huge breeding colonies of both Royal and King Penguins – colonies of more than 20,000 nesting birds! The cruise boat that he went on only carried 50 passengers and they were fortunate enough to have only one rough day in the whole trip. The rest of the time the southern ocean was comparatively calm which made for good photography for those on board.

### Antipodean Albatross

#### Three King Penguins walk on beach.



The majority of sea birds seen were of the many species of albatross with not a great deal of the smaller petrels and prions they had hoped to see. The calm seas were the possible cause for this as these birds prefer more rugged sea conditions to feed. On the many rocky islands there were thousands of breeding birds particularly of the various species of shags (NZ cormorants).

One point that Fred made was how the New Zealand Government is more active in trying to protect their native species compared with Australia where only iconic species get funding and protection.



Fred is an avid sound recordist of bird calls and has many CDs and books about bird calls – particularly of Australian bird calls. He had a number of these with him and several members took the opportunity to buy some from him.

Thanks to Fred for the interesting presentation and to John Collins who organised Fred's visit and talk. Photos are by Fred van Gessel; his website is [www.professionalwildlifesounds.com.au](http://www.professionalwildlifesounds.com.au).

Max O'Sullivan

## DEATH OF AN EAGLE

### Spring Camp 2018 Oolambeyan National Park

One of the best things about being a member of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists is the perks. This was amply demonstrated on the weekend of the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> August on our (so called!) Spring Camp. This was at Oolambeyan National Park. Here some 25 of us enjoyed three days comfy accommodation in the grand old early 20<sup>th</sup> century Homestead, with all meals included (Graham's famous Friday barbeque and everyone else's Saturday casseroles!) for a very minimal cost.

As a special bonus (exclusive to our club, I like to think) we also had the undivided services of our host, the omniscient and ever-helpful Michelle Ballestrin, the NPWS ranger in charge of Oolambeyan.

The stated mission of the trip was to sight the elusive Plains-Wanderer, a rare and diminutive bird 'about the size of a Coke bottle', in Michelle's words. (The pedant in me wondered 'Which sized Coke'). The preservation of the Wanderer was the primary motivation for the establishment of the national park in the first place.

The easiest way to sight the bird is by joining a nocturnal emu line of torch bearers attempting to flush one out. And what an eccentric assembly we were, with the pale light of a waxing moon revealing a long line of firefly-like torchlights moving steadily forward through the tussocks.

Sorry, no happy ending here; but we did see a beautiful little **Horsfield's Bushlark**, which cooperatively permitted itself to be photographed before fluttering off into the gloom.

The Saturday pre-breakfast birdwalk was a zinger. Although very cold and windy, (as it was the entire weekend) the bird watching was wonderful. Minutes from departing the Homestead five Wedge-tailed Eagles soared above us in circling formation-flying; the wind their friend in this spectacular show.



However, an even finer treat awaited us some time later in the tussocks near the road in the form of a family of **White-winged Fairy-wrens** darting in and out of view. This climaxed when two of these male blue-and-white beauties displayed together for their females ...? Each other? Us? An unforgettable sight.

The rest of the day was devoted to a car convoy tour, interspersed with short walks. Here we ranged widely over the vast estate, of particular interest being the unique (to me at least) botanical community. The dominant eucalypt, the **Black Box** was, in spite of the drought, budding heavily, in some cases even beginning to flower. I took this as an optimistic sign that the precipitation future might be better than the present.



These cream-white gems were the most tiny gum blossoms (and buds and nuts) I'd ever seen: obviously an evolutionary strategy to attract insect pollinators rather than birds and mammals.

Another treat for me – and a first – was finding the lovely **Butter Bush**, a **desert persoonia**. How aptly named; the inner lining of the spent heart-shaped seed capsules a rich gold, as if enameled. Eric once again demonstrated the triumph of life in this sea of grey aridity by showing us, on a tiny twig, a vivid viridian lichen.

Horsfield's Bushlark – Graham Russell  
White-winged Fairy-wrens – Kathy Tenison  
Black Box flower – Rowena Whiting





The group enjoying lunch, Aboriginal heat ball, Group in an enclosure area with tree plantings, the dead wedgie - Rowena Whiting  
Southern Boobook – Graham Russell



We were reminded of the Indigenous

heritage of the area when Michelle found an unremarkable ball of dried clay. “Not just clay” she told us “but an aboriginal heat ball. They would roll these up and place them in the fire for personal warmth, like a hot water bottle.” How old was this simple but ingenious heat ball in my hand, vestiges of charcoal still to be seen?” I mused “A hundred years ...? Two hundred ...?”

If all this was a testament to life, the next stop was to one of death.

How privileged we were to be able to walk right up to a colossal but abandoned Wedge-tailed Eagle’s nest built securely in the forks of a sturdy Cypress Pine. Underneath was a bone-collector’s Utopia, with the detritus of many eagle meals scattered every which way. This was compelling evidence, as Michelle confirmed, of this greatest of Australian raptors being an effective and perennial pest controller, as many if not most of the bones were rabbit. A farmer’ ally of the first order.



Our sadness at the demise of the little bunnies (just joking!) turned genuine when we found the body of a dead adult eagle soon after.

It lay on its back, mighty pinions outstretched in a gesture of life abandonment, its soft breast down - that which had warmed and comforted how many eaglets? - fluttering in the breeze. I asked Michelle how she thought it had died. “Probably of old age.” she replied to my surprise. I know it’s my preferred method of passing, but an eagle?

“Well, it hasn’t been predated, or shot, or even injured.” she patiently explained “Many wild animals, like kangaroos, die of old age.”

Next morning, Sunday, an intrepid few ventured out for the morning birdwalk, and we weren’t, disappointed, with Max’s list now passing the 50 mark. Pretty impressive considering the drought, the severe cold and wind, and the fact that there were no water birds resident.



These always boost species numbers.

I must admit there were moments when I regretted being out there as my frozen fingers had difficulty focusing my binoculars. But all was made worthwhile with the final bird sighting of the weekend. At the very end we decided to snoop around in the massive but dilapidated shearing shed, where we saw a sleeping Brush-tailed Possum. But best of all, we



spooked a Southern Boobook Owl from its slumbers. It flew out to alight on a nearby Peppercorn tree to fix us with a disapproving gaze while the shutterbugs clicked away.

After The Big Cleanup, we were on our way, to be farewelled by a Wedge-tail as it glided low over our car. So the cycle of life, death, and life continues.

## Alan Whitehead

### Bird list for Oolambeyan National Park camp 17-19/08/18 compiled by Max O'Sullivan

Wedge-tailed Eagle	Black Kite	Whistling Kite
Hobby	Singing Honeyeater	White-plumed Honeyeater
Southern Whiteface	Blue Bonnet	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Red-rumped Parrot	Diamond Dove	White-winged Fairy-wren
White-fronted Chat	Noisy Miner	Little Raven
Willie Wagtail	Welcome Swallow	Tree Martin
Galah	Crested Pigeon	Red-capped Robin
Horsfield's Bushlark	Australian Pipit	Pied Butcherbird
Magpie	Pee Wee	Restless Flycatcher
Emu	Mallee Ringneck	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike
White-winged Chough	Variegated Wren	Stubble Quail (H)
Mistletoebird	Barn Owl	Ground Cuckoo-Shrike
Black Falcon	Weebill	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater
Yellow-throated Miner	Common Starling	Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo
Laughing Kookaburra	Nankeen Kestrel	Banded Lapwing
Brown Falcon	Superb Wren	Mulga Parrot
Australian Raven	Apostlebird	Striated Pardalote
Southern Boobook	Striped Honeyeater (H)	

### Stark vegetation difference between the outside and inside of the enclosure by Kathy Tenison Kangaroos by Phillip Williams



**From the inbox and editor** has been considerably reduced this month due to the large amount of contributions and photos. It has not been easy to choose which images to include. Many thanks to all, particularly the photographers – I know it takes time to convert to a suitable size. Rowena.

**Meredith Billington sent this link to a good news story:**

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-18/feral-cat-management-in-the-apy-lands/9269240>

A new feral cat management device that uses lasers to detect the shape and movement of cats, then sprays them with toxic gel, is deployed in the APY Lands in South Australia.

Following the success of the prototypes in South Australia, NSW NPWS is now trialling Felixer at Featherdale Wildlife Park with Spotted-tailed Quolls to make sure they do not trigger the laser sensors.



**Stackpoole National Park, 25 August 2018.**



A group eleven members set off on a triangular route through the middle of the park. The vegetation in that section is dominated by White Cypress Pine *Calitris glaucophylla*, which obscured our views of the few birds we could see. We still managed to identify Yellow Thornbill, White-eared Honeyeater, Striated Pardalote, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Grey Shrike-thrush, Dusky Woodswallow, Inland Thornbill, Speckled Warbler, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, an immature male Rufous Whistler, Yellow-rumped Thornbills and a male Red-capped Robin as we



completed the walk towards the cars. Earlier, we had heard Fairy Wrens but couldn't get a clear enough view to identify the species, as with Babblers.

Although the dry conditions resulted in an absence of annual plant species, we still found fascinating features to admire and discuss. Mistletoe was a feature on a variety of acacia trees, including Mulga sp. Of special note was Wire leaf Mistletoe (*Amyama preissii*) on Hakea Wattle (*Acacia hakeoides*). *Eremophila longifolia* (Emu Bush) bark and general form attracted many comments, as with a Bull Oak (*Casuarina luehmannii*).

We were well entertained by a Singing Honeyeater feeding on Grey Mistletoe (*Amyema quandang*) as we ate our lunch. It took a great deal of patience for Kathy to get a good photo and for any of us to get a good view through the foliage, but due to the number of flowers the individual did not leave the acacia a tree for the duration of our meal.



**White-fronted Honeyeater**  
**Kathy Tenison**  
**Lunch time – Virginia Tarr**  
**Hakea Wattle in flower**  
**Sour Bush, Spur-winged**  
**Wattle leaf – Rowena**  
**Whiting**



We drove around to the eastern boundary of the park, where the vegetation alongside a shady track thoroughly engaged us for the remainder of our excursion. The sickle shaped foliage of Spur-winged Wattles (*Acacia triptera*) evoked lengthy admiration and awe, due to its beauty, thorniness and density of the shrubs. The group diverged as some of us discussed the Sour Bushes (*Choretrum glomeratum*), covered in buds, while others went up the track to a cluster of flowering Mugga Ironbark (*Eucalyptus sideroxylon*). There



(left) Grey Mistletoe  
Kathy Tenison  
(right) Needle Wattle–  
Rowena Whiting

we enjoyed the constant whining of Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters trying to defend the prized flowers from a Yellow-plumed and a White-fronted Honeyeater. Mistletoe flowers on Mallee were also popular with the honeyeaters and the proud cultivator, a male Mistletoebird, appeared as a jewel flitting on the boughs. Another 'flitter' out and back to the foliage, but only glimpsed occasionally, was a Grey Fantail. White-winged Choughs were heard but not seen through the thick Mallee understorey in from the track.

On our entry the park from the sealed road, the most experienced birder amongst us, Sue, noticed Blue bonnet and Red-rumped parrots, Crested Pigeons, a Whistling Kite, Australian Magpie, Peewee, Little Ravens, Australian Raven and Galahs. Observed during a brief stop alongside the Hillston road en route, were large clumps of Flax Lilies (*Dianella revoluta*) and Needle Wattle (*Acacia rigens*) in flower, which is named for its rigid foliage.

**Margaret Strong**

## Fivebough Wetlands on Show

Fivebough Wetlands has again had the opportunity to showcase its highly valued ecosystems and wildlife to the community, with recent dignitaries paying a visit in August. The Executive Director of Crown Lands attended a field walk, hosted by the Griffith District Office, to experience the reserve first hand and admire the amazing works undertaken over the past four years. It was a great opportunity to share the wetlands with more senior levels of management of the Department and impress with the splendour of the site.

Fivebough has also been on show for its educational significance with over 100 year 7 students from St Francis visiting the site in early September, to learn about the interwoven network of ecosystem processes and the importance of managing the site for ecological values.

Visitors will notice the new footbridge access from Petersham Road carpark, finished recently and hopefully an aesthetic improvement from the former footbridge. The bridge and bollard are designed to restrict motorbike access to the reserve while providing improved access for wheelchair and mobility scooter visitors. There are of course some limiting factors identified with the new bollard in place, requiring a key hire system, which is being discussed further between the Department and the Tourist Information Centre to implement the best use arrangement for wheelchair and mobility scooter users.



**Bec Bryne**

NSW Department of Industry – Lands & Water

## NESTBOX INSPECTION AT FIVEBOUGH

MFN were asked if we would be interested in doing some monitoring of the recently installed nestboxes at Fivebough Wetlands. They were made and installed last year by the Work for the Dole crew who have done such fantastic work down there.

We were definitely interested in putting our newly acquired nest box inspection camera to use and agreed to have a look and see what we could find. We assembled on a Tuesday morning, 4 September equipped with GPS's, a ladder and camera.

The task involved wandering through the young woodlands, finding the nestboxes, numbering them with tags then logging their GPS co-ordinates. We found 34 boxes and that there were two styles of boxes used.

One was of a common vertical design which was ideal for our camera. We could put it in the entrance hole and have a good look at what was in there. The second style was a more horizontal design with a piece of PVC pipe for an entrance. These types would be suitable for Pardalotes and probably other species, but not so choice for our kind of camera. The camera is designed to look down rather than out.



Fortunately, all the boxes have hinged lids, aren't installed too high and we had a ladder with us, so we could still have a look inside these boxes.

Three boxes had feathers in them indicating some birds have obviously been in them. One of these had grass arranged in a circular pattern resembling a nest of some sort. No egg fragments were visible, but these remains are often consumed by the birds. This box was possibly used for nesting. The other two boxes with feathers had some grass in them but not enough to form a nest. Maybe the bird had second thoughts about nesting there?



Arachnids were inhabiting most of the boxes, usually Sparassid species (Huntsman spiders). Spider cocoons and egg sacs were common. A lot of the boxes had unidentified scats. Two boxes had abandoned bee hives. The remains of insects, after being consumed by something were evident in some. We wondered about the plant debris (leaves and gum nuts) in the boxes – was it blown or carried in by something?

This was a very rewarding exercise for the Field Nats. One thing we determined was the value of getting an image of every box and examining it on the computer at home. What isn't evident on the small LCD screen in the field becomes more obvious on the larger monitor. A seemingly empty box can have very interesting contents.

We will also change our methodology next time to make it easier to match the images with the nest box #. Many thanks to all the Field Nats who helped on the day.



Photos by – Kathy Tenison

Glenn Currie



## Identifying Mistletoes

Identification of plants principally uses the divide and conquer method. Sequentially answer questions of features that separate groups until only one is left.

The first question to ask in identifying mistletoes is:

‘Has the mistletoe runners with multiple points of attachment along the host’s branch or has the mistletoe only a single attachment?’

If the mistletoe has multiple attachments and is in our area then it is Creeping Mistletoe *Muellerina eucalyptoides*. This occurs along the slopes to the eastern edge of our area, usually on eucalypts but can be on exotic trees. Further east is another species. Callitris Mistletoe *M. bidwellii* which only infects Cypress Pines.

The questions can be set out as a decision table as below. Scientists however set them out as couplets (occasionally as triplets) with the leads to the next question numbered. A mistletoe key would look like:

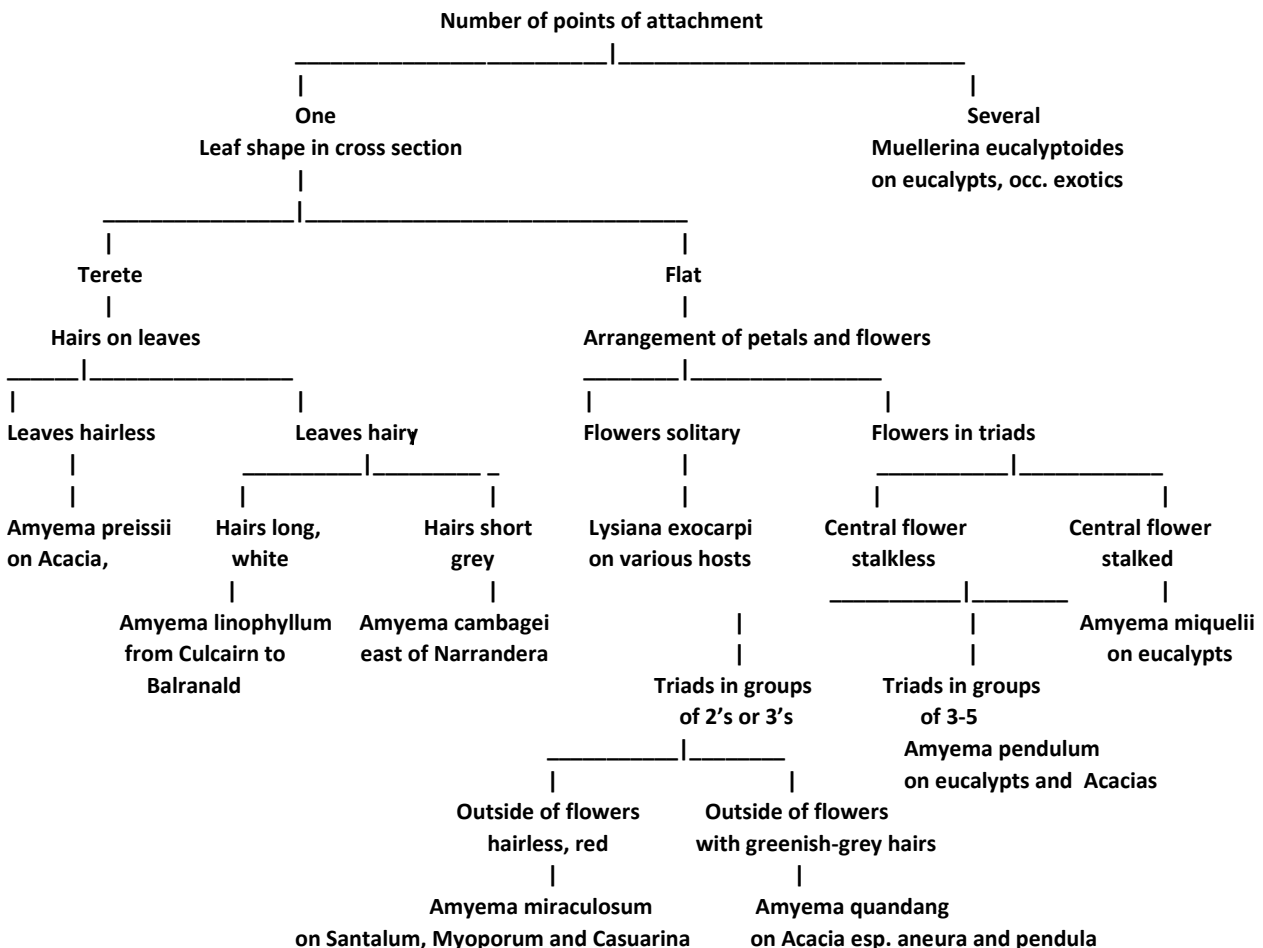
- |   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. Plant with runners with more than one point of attachment to the host. | M. eucalyptoides. |
| Plant with a single attachment to the host.                               | 2.                |
| 2. Leaves terete.   | 3.                |
| Leaves flat.  | 6.                |

and so on till all species are identified.



Grey Mistletoe (Stackpoole)  
– Virginia Tarr

### Decision table for the identification of Mistletoes



## Notes on species:

***Muellerina eucalyptoides*:** Creeping Mistletoe. Occurs on the Slopes along the eastern edge of our area. Hosts are eucalypts and sometimes exotic trees.

***Amyema preissii*:** Wire-leaf Mistletoe. Occurs north and west of Rankins Springs. Hosts are Acacias, sometimes Senna.

***Amyema linophyllum*:** Slender-leaf Mistletoe. Occurs Balranald – Griffith – Culcairn triangle. Hosts Casuarinas mainly Buloke and Belah.

***Amyema cambagei*:** Needle-leaf Mistletoe. Occurs Narrandera to Canberra northwards. Hosts Casuarinas mainly River Oak also Belah.

***Lysiana exocarpi*:** Harlequin Mistletoe. Fairly widespread in southern NSW on various hosts.

***Amyema miquelii*:** Box Mistletoe. Common on eucalypts. Leaves often coppery coloured.

***Amyema pendulum*:** Drooping Mistletoe. Infrequent. Hosts are eucalypts particularly River Red Gum, and Acacias.

***Amyema miraculosum*:** Fleshy Mistletoe. Scattered occurrences. Hosts are Santalum, Myoporum or Casuarina species.

***Amyema quandang*:** Grey Mistletoe. Widespread. Hosts are Acacia species particularly Mulga, Boree and Yarran.

Eric Whiting



Grey Mistletoe *Amyema quandang* (Top)  
Wire-leaf Mistletoe *Amyema preissii* (above)–  
by Rowena Whiting

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## Shorebird Global Alert

“A worldwide catastrophe is underway among an extraordinary group of birds – the marathon migrants we know as shorebirds. Numbers of some species are falling so quickly that many biologists fear an imminent planet-wide wave of extinctions.” (New York Times article).

With respect to the situation in Cairns where shorebird arrivals have been recorded over many years, the situation is awful. 2018 has been the lowest shorebird arrival of all time (Paul Frisk). Numbers arriving at the start of the season ( August) have plummeted from 1000s a few years ago to barely 100 this season.

“These declines represent the No.1 conservation crisis facing birds in the world today. Climate change, coastal development, the destruction of wetlands and hunting are all culprits. And because these birds depend for their survival, as we do, on the shorelines of oceans, estuaries, rivers, lakes, lagoons and marshes, their decline point to a systemic crisis that demands our attention, for our own good.” (NY Times)

A prediction by Leonardo da Vinci set the scene in the 15 century when he wrote:

“There will be no end to man's malignity. By their limbs we shall see a great portion of trees of the vast forests laid low throughout the universe – endless animals will lose their lives.”

Max O'Sullivan

Article taken from the Cairns Birders Newsletter – 7 September 2018.



## A MUSSEL WITH MUSCLE

Curiously, the etymology of both nouns in the title, mussel and muscle, are the same, from the Latin, *musculus*. This is the story of a very muscular mussel for sure. While walking along the edge of the irrigation canal adjacent to Narrandera town, I found an old bivalve shell, that of a freshwater mussel. Nothing strange there, apart from the size, a whopping 15 centimetres long and some six centimetres fat! A search of the internet revealed that this is the largest of this genus of mollusk. Mollusk? - from the Latin - like mussel and muscle - meaning 'mouse'. This name is due to the mouse-like softness (as in mollify) of muscle, which is evolution's first vascular tissue. Vascular? Referring to its fluid holding - blood - capacity (as in 'vase') ....

Enough with the word play!

An internet search revealed that my shell was close to the largest (20 centimetres) freshwater mussel found in NSW, probably Australia - possibly the world! In a previous Show and Tell at a Field Naturalist's meeting I reported on a 'tell' (if not 'show') of another large invertebrate, the Murray Crayfish, a lobster-sized crustacean again found in our area. A land of giants, indeed!

Following my mussel find (I couldn't determine the exact species from just the shell) I searched for more. And I did find some dozen or so scattered along the bottom of a very steep bank of the canal for a distance of about a hundred metres – and no-where else. I risked life and limb on the precipitous slope to acquire the four or five twin shells that I did manage to collect.



I surmised that it was a kind of midden created by a predator, as it appeared that the tough muscle tissue had been gnawed. The eponymous hinge muscle is the Chubb safe of most bivalves, which, when it is intact, can clamp shut with tremendous strength; especially an animal this size. When compromised, however, it is their Achilles heel. With some residual hinge tissue still evident, I guessed that the shells were not that old, perhaps half a year or thereabouts. The actual animals were of course much older – but how old? Surely the number of laminates would inform a marine biologist.

This predation led me to consider a recent sighting I had in the area, that of an Australian Water Rat, a native rodent, another local giant at up to 60 centimetres snout to tail. This was in the nearby Narrandera Wetlands. That's a big rat! It would seem that the mollusks, after being found by the rat or whatever, were hauled out onto the bank to be consumed *in situ*.

I subsequently asked a local about my find, and he said he knew these large shellfish from his childhood ramblings, adding in disappointment that they were poor eating, tasting of mud. Not surprising, as they are bottom filter feeders moving, hinge-up lips-down, tongue-out, across the bottom of streams, rivers, and latterly canals, in search of food. This poor culinary reputation, plus the extension of ideal flowing freshwater habitat via irrigation systems, seems to have assured not only their survival, but their proliferation. No doubt Indigenous food gatherers would not have been too precious about the taste, just a couple of these heavy bivalves being a decent meal. Perhaps they employed that old stand-by with mud-tasting freshwater prey of placing it in clean water for a time to expel the taste?

When I found the mussel shells, they were mostly black, but with a good hard scrub, they were revealed as a glowing matt white, sometimes with a hint of opalescent nacre shining through the clearly defined calcium carbonate laminates. Some even had tiny seed pearls attached to their satin-smooth interiors. In fact these beautiful creatures reminded me of a poor man's pearl oyster, another giant bivalve, but this time of tropical marine origin.

That's what I love about field naturalism, you never know what wonders you're going to find, or where you're going to find them, even in a muddy man-made canal right next to a town.

**Alan Whitehead**

# MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

Compiled by Max O'Sullivan

<b>Olive-backed Oriole</b>	'Willimbong' Leeton	Daily	Margrit Martin
<b>Black Swan</b> [3]	Lake Talbot Narrandera	02/08/18	Warrick Bradney
<b>Red-capped Robin</b>	Belah St Leeton – southern end	03/08/18	Joy Young
<b>Great Crested Grebe</b>	Lake Talbot Boat Ramp Narrandera	03/08/18	Alan Whitehead
<b>Blue-faced Honeyeater</b>	Narrandera	03/08/18	Susan Whitehead
<b>White-fronted Chat</b>	Fivebough Wetlands – Gibbs Rd	04/08/18	Kathy Tenison
<b>Superb Parrot</b> [18]	Leeton Cemetery	05/08/18	Max O'Sullivan

It seems the Superbs are returning for the forthcoming breeding season. They are earlier than last year.

<b>Brown Songlark</b> [1]	Fivebough Wetlands - Gibbs Rd	05/08/18	Max O'Sullivan
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Also early for the Spring return.

<b>White-fronted Honeyeater</b>	Nericon Swamp bushland area.	05/08/18	Neil Palframan
<b>White-eared Honeyeater</b>	Nericon Swamp bushland area.	05/08/18	Neil Palframan
<b>Sulphur-crested Cockatoo</b> [400+]	Narrandera Football Oval	07/08/18	Alan Whitehead
<b>Long-billed Corella</b>	Darlington Point	07/08/18	Kathy Tenison
<b>Major Mitchell's Cockatoo</b>	'Mountain Dam' Colinroobie Rd	08/08/18	Graham Russell
<b>Grey-crowned Babbler</b>	'Mountain Dam' Colinroobie Rd	08/08/18	Graham Russell
<b>Nankeen Night Heron</b> [8]	Mc Caughy Lake Yanco township	09/08/18	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Hoary-headed Grebe</b> [>180]	Lake Wyangan north lake	10/08/18	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Glossy Ibis</b> [3]	Fivebough Wetlands	10/08/18	Keith Hutton
<b>Freckled Duck</b> [3]	Fivebough Wetlands	10/08/18	Keith Hutton
<b>Mistletoebird</b> [male]	Nericon Swamp bushland area.	11/08/18	Neil Palframan
<b>Olive-backed Oriole</b> [2+]	'The Winery' site Binya State Forest	11/08/18	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Flame Robin</b> [pr]	Fivebough Wetlands - Gibbs Rd end	12/08/18	Phil Tenison
<b>Freckled Duck</b> [5+]	Fivebough Wetlands – settling ponds	12/08/18	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Pied Currawong</b>	Wood Rd Griffith	12/08/18	Neil Palframan

I asked Neil if he had seen or heard any currawongs around Griffith this winter and he reported the above.

There are some at 'The Winery' site at Binya and plenty from Yanco to Narrandera with the odd ones around Leeton town itself.

<b>Variegated Wren</b> [3]	Palla St Griffith	Daily	Virginia Tarr
<b>Blue-faced Honeyeater</b> [3]	Palla St Griffith	13/08/18	Virginia Tarr
<b>Glossy Ibis</b> [7]	Fivebough Wetlands	14/08/18	Keith Hutton
<b>Rainbow Lorikeet</b> [1]	Narrandera Wetlands	14/08/18	Keith Hutton
<b>Brolga</b> [10]	Koonadan property of Peter Draper	15/08/18	Peter Draper
<b>Black Falcon</b> [1]	Oolambeyan National Park	18/08/18	MFN campout
<b>Horsfield's Bushlark</b>	Oolambeyan Nat Park – spotlighted.	17/08/18	MFN campout
<b>Barn Owl</b>	Oolambeyan NP – at night from the car	17/08/18	Nella Smith
<b>Wedge-tailed Eagle</b> [7]	Oolambeyan NP – circling together.	18/08/18	MFN campout
<b>Ground Cuckoo-Shrike</b> [2]	Oolambeyan NP – flying over and calling	18/08/18	MFN campout
<b>Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo</b> [1]	Oolambeyan NP	18/08/18	MFN campout
<b>Banded Lapwing</b> [8]	Oolambeyan NP	18/08/18	MFN campout
<b>Southern Boobook</b> [1]	Oolambeyan NP – woolshed	18/08/18	MFN campout
<b>Baillon's Crake</b> [1]	Fivebough Wetlands – season arrival.	20/08/18	Keith Hutton
<b>Sharp-tailed Sandpiper</b> [5]	Fivebough Wetlands – season arrival	20/08/18	Keith Hutton
<b>Red-necked Stint</b> [1 juv]	Fivebough Wetlands – season arrival	20/08/18	Keith Hutton
<b>Fairy Martin</b> [6]	Fivebough Wetlands – season arrival	20/08/18	Keith Hutton
<b>Black-tailed Native-hen</b> [3]	Fivebough Wetlands	20/08/18	Keith Hutton
<b>Collared Sparrowhawk</b> [fem]	Fivebough Wetlands	20/08/18	Keith Hutton



<b>Whiskered Tern</b> [6]	Fivebough Wetlands – season arrival	20/08/18	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Double-banded Plover</b> [1]	Fivebough Wetlands – breeding plumage	21/08/18	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Brown Honeyeater</b> [1]	Fivebough Wetlands in car park	21/08/18	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Yellow Thornbill</b> [6]	Cutler Ave Griffith	25/08/18	Virginia Tarr
<b>Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater</b> [3]	Goonga St Griffith	25/08/18	Virginia Tarr
<b>Southern Boobook</b> [calling]	Gallipoli St Griffith – for the past week	25/08/18	Virginia Tarr
<b>Whiskered Tern</b> [4]	Fivebough Wetlands	25/08/18	Keith Hutton
<b>Swamp Harrier</b> [pr]	Fivebough Wetlands	25/08/18	Keith Hutton
<b>Brolga</b> [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	25/08/18	Keith Hutton
<b>Little Corella</b> [800-1000]	Petersham Rd Feedlot Leeton	25/08/18	Keith Hutton

**Keith also reports that at Petersham Rd Car Park between 07.30 and 08.30 on 26 August significant movement of small passerines were observed:**

Silvereye 60+; White-plumed Honeyeater 4/5; Yellow-plumed Honeyeater 5/6; Striped Honeyeater 1; Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater 6/7.

Groups of 5-20 birds passed through over the one hour; Singing Honeyeater 5/6; Red Wattlebird 5; Yellow-throated Miner 3; Rufous Whistler pair; Double-barred Finch 2 and Striated Pardalotes were calling constantly in the tallest gum trees.

There were also groups of Superb and Variegated Fairy Wrens present, a Hobby flew over and 2 Black-tailed Native-hens were hanging about close-by and were photographed by Kathy and Phil Tenison.

The iron bark and eucalypts in the car park are flowering and will attract many birds for the next few weeks.

<b>White-fronted Honeyeater</b>	Stackpoole National Park	25/08/18	MFN outing
<b>Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo</b>	Stackpoole National Park	25/08/18	MFN outing
<b>Dusky Woodswallow</b>	Stackpoole National Park	25/08/18	MFN outing
<b>Inland Thornbill</b>	Stackpoole National Park	25/08/18	MFN outing
<b>Speckled Warbler</b>	Stackpoole National Park	25/08/18	MFN outing
<b>Yellow Rosella</b> [2]	Whitton Museum	27/08/18	Margaret Strong
<b>Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike</b> [20]	Whitton Museum	27/08/18	Margaret Strong
<b>Grey-crowned Babbler</b> [8]	Griffith Golf Course	27/08/18	Margaret Strong
<b>Mallee Ringneck</b>	Palla St Griffith	19-30 Aug	Margaret Strong

Margaret also reported the Southern Boobook calling nightly from 19 – 30 August around Palla St ,Griffith that Virginia also reported above. I assume it is the same bird.

<b>Superb Parrot</b> [21]	Fivebough Wetlands – flyover	29/08/18	Keith Hutton
<b>Sharp-tailed Sandpiper</b> [10]	Fivebough Wetlands	29/08/18	Keith Hutton
<b>Australian Reed Warbler</b> [10+]	Fivebough Wetlands – season arrival	02/09/18	Keith Hutton
<b>White-winged Triller</b> [male]	Koonadan site – season arrival	02/09/18	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Glossy Ibis</b> [12]	The Basin Dam Koonadan	02/09/18	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Buff-banded Rail</b> [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	02/09/18	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Blue-billed Duck</b> [3m 1f]	Fivebough Wetlands – settling ponds	02/09/18	Max O'Sullivan
<b>Australian Shelduck</b> [95+]	Fivebough Wetlands	02/09/18	Keith Hutton
<b>Little Eagle</b> [light phase]	Fivebough Wetlands – killed a Pee Wee	02/09/18	Keith Hutton
<b>Glossy Ibis</b> [16]	Fivebough Wetlands	02/09/18	Keith Hutton
<b>Marsh Sandpiper</b> [1]	Fivebough Wetlands – season arrival	02/09/18	Keith Hutton
<b>Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo</b>	Campbell Swamp	03/09/18	Margaret Strong
<b>Yellow Thornbill</b> [3]	Campbell Swamp	03/09/18	Margaret Strong
<b>Red-capped Robin</b>	Campbell Swamp	03/09/18	Margaret Strong
<b>Australasian Darter</b> [4]	Lake Wyangan - south lake	03/09/18	Margaret Strong
<b>Australian Reed Warbler</b> [2]	Lake Wyangan – south lake	03/09/18	Margaret Strong
<b>Brown Honeyeater</b>	Kairi Rd Leeton	05/09/18	Keith Hutton

It seems the Brown Honeyeater is extending its range further south and west over recent years. Penny and Phil had a pair with juveniles in their Petersham Rd home last year and I have a pair that have been in my garden for over a year. The only earlier records were rare Spring/Summer reports from Binya (south) State Forest over the years which was considered a rare sighting then. However, there have been other reports on the Eremaea birding site to indicate they are being seen in other areas in western NSW out of their usual range.

<b>Major Mitchell's Cockatoo</b> [9]	Fivebough Wetlands - flyover	07/09/18	Max O'Sullivan
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# \*\*\*\* COMING EVENTS \*\*\*\*

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

## September is Biodiversity Month

- 13 September Thursday**    **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7.30pm.  
**Topic:** North Queensland presentation by the Tenisons & Williams about their recent trip.  
**Bring along any 'Show and Tell'**  
**Contact:** Nella Smith 6959 1210.  
**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com).
- 15 September Saturday**    **Outing: Brobenah Hills Crown Land**  
**Bring:** morning tea and lunch packed to walk. Walk will be reasonably hard no track, free walking through the bush.  
**Meet:** at 9:00am opposite Milbrae Quarry entrance on the Colinroobie Road.  
**Contact:** Graham or Dione Russell 0428 536 290  
**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com).
- 29 September Saturday**    **Outing to the Mallee around Rankins Springs**  
**Bring:** morning tea and lunch – will be by the cars. Walk should be easy.  
**Meet:** at 9:00am the Caravan Park in Rankins Springs  
**Contact:** Graham or Dione Russell 0428 536 290  
**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com).
- 3 October Wednesday**    **Copy for the October newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**  
**Email:** [ericwhiting4@bigpond.com](mailto:ericwhiting4@bigpond.com). Phone: 6953 2612.
- 11 October Thursday**    **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7.30pm.  
**Topic:** To be decided – Bring along ideas for topics or possible guest speakers.  
**Contact:** Nella Smith 6959 1210.  
**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com).
- 13 October Saturday**    **Field survey of Griffith Aborigine Land Council block –**  
**Meet:** at 8:30am at corner of Lakes and Mallinson roads .  
**Bring:** morning tea and lunch.  
This **Spring survey** is a follow up to the survey we did in April (report is in the May issue). As before we will be walking through the block, noting the birds, plants, reptiles, insects etc.  
**Contact Eric Whiting 6953 2612**  
**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com).
- 27-28 October Sat - Sun**    **Birdlife Australia National Twitchathon 2018**  
**No details have been received as yet.**
- Other Events**
- 14 September**    **Protecting Parrots Field Day**  
Lachlan Fold Wildlife Action Group and Riverina Local Land Services  
**Learn about the Turquoise Parrot and visit bird watching sites**  
Speakers Chris Tzaros and Graham Fifield  
Time 10:30am to 2pm, meeting at the Rankins Springs Golf Course  
Morning tea and picnic lunch will be provided - please RSVP for catering purposes to [jess.hill@lls.nsw.gov.au](mailto:jess.hill@lls.nsw.gov.au) or 0419 867 649