

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



July 2019 - Issue #272
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



A Taste of Mt Brogden, Cocoparra National Park
Images by Rowena Whiting

IN THIS ISSUE

| | |
|---|----|
| Office Bearers and Subscriptions | 2 |
| Welcome to July | 2 |
| Mt Brogden – time for climbing | 3 |
| Meet Sauli Wilkinson, John’s camel | 4 |
| Birds at Leeton Golf Course | 5 |
| Community Biodiversity Survey in the mallee | 6 |
| Geology around Narrandera – background notes..... | 7 |
| Fivebough Wetlands – track works | 8 |
| Members’ Sightings..... | 9 |
| Coming Events Calendar..... | 10 |

CONTRIBUTIONS

For the August issue by
Wednesday 31 July
To Rowena Whiting

Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com.

Phone: 6953 2612

*Explore the geology around
Narrandera and
Go birding at Lake Wyangan*

Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

| | | | | | |
|------------------------|----------------|--------------|------------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| President: | Graham Russell | 0419 350 673 | Editor: | Rowena Whiting | 6953 2612 |
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| Secretary: | Nella Smith | 6959 1210 | | | |
| Treasurer: | Ellené Schnell | 0488 080 866 | Website Co-ordinator: | Kathy Tenison | 6953 4869 |

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:

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------------|----------------|-------------------------|---------|
| Leeton | Eric Whiting | 6953 2612 | Griffith | Virginia Tarr | 6962 5614 | |
| Narrandera | Nella Smith | 6959 1210 | Coleambally | John Wilkinson | 6954 4129 | |
| 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.

Welcome to another month.

We are now well into winter and with a little rain the bush has a greenish tinge to it. However it did mean we weren't able to drive along some of the 'dry weather' roads for the Roadside Survey. Eight members participated so with teams of 2 per car we cover 4 sections. The rest are waiting for the roads to dry out.

The appearance of new shoots was very apparent as the group made their way up to the summit of Mt Brogden and whilst a rather windy day we were sheltered in the forest. See Eric's report on the next page.

Enjoy the read, Rowena



David Kellett -
Chairperson, National
Malleefowl Recovery
Team

"I thought I would share an amazing photos of a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** that was caught on one of my monitoring cameras 20 km's south of West Wyalong."

Membership subscriptions were due on the 30th June

Please send your money to the Treasurer, Ellené Schnell, promptly to PO Box 541, Leeton, NSW 2705 or make a bank transfer to the MFN's bank account. Any queries, Ellené can be contacted on 0488 080 866.

See above for annual subscription rates and bank details.

Time for climbing Mt Brogden – 29 June 2019

Depending on which forecast was read, a strong cool change with rain was due between midday and 3 o'clock. Time enough to climb Mt Brogden and get back down. The planned excursion was on! There was a plan B in case the track into Binya Picnic Ground, although much improved of late, was too dicey being over rather clayey ground easily churned up if wet. In the end there was no problem at all – just the occasional mud splash.

It is only a short distance through Cypress Pine to the start of the walking track, then a steady constant ascent up a spur for half of the distance. . By paying attention to the rain forecast we overlooked the rest of it; strong north-westerly winds backing to the south-west with the change and strengthening. The birds were quite aware of that part – they had already taken shelter. Hence no bird list. Only one was seen, and Eastern Yellow Robin.



Plants on the other hand had responded to the recent rains with the perennial shrubs putting on fresh new growth and copious seedlings covering the ground. As it is more common to identify plants by their flowers, there was plenty of discussion on which ones we were seeing. The nearest we got to



seeing a shrub in flower was some Dainty Phebalium *Phebalium obcordatum* still in bud but showing up clearly white – another week and they would probably be fully open.

Now to say the weather patterns have been rather strange this year was amply emphasised when we saw both Autumn Greenhoods *Pterostylis robusta* (peak flowering period in May) and Dwarf Greenhoods *Pterostylis nana* both in flower. The latter would not be expected until well into July.



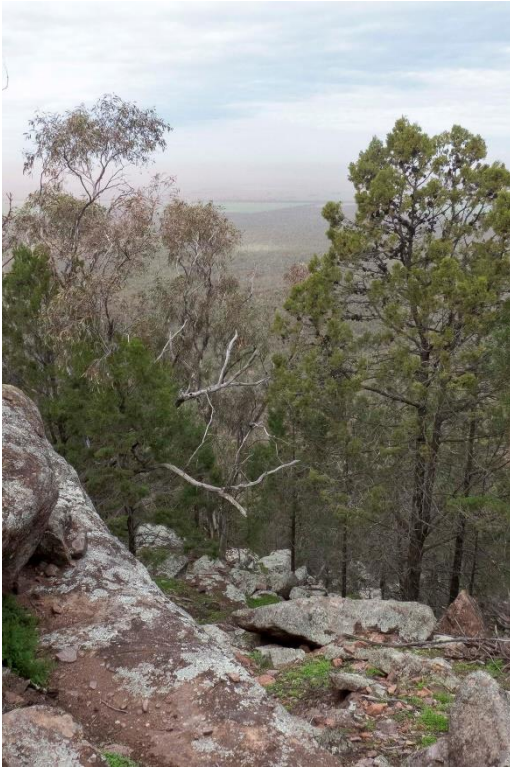
(top) Eastern Yellow Robin – Graham Russell
(above left) Dwarf Greenhoods – Rowena Whiting
(above right) Autumn Greenhood – Eric Whiting
(below) Flannel Cudweed – Rowena Whiting

At the top of crest I diverted into the top of the gully to look for *Pomaderris cocoparrana* a threatened endemic. I first encountered this shrub there in 1995. The millenium drought had had a devastating effect on this species (along with the other shrubs) and since then I had seen only a few small plants at this site since.

Tragically I did not see any this time. On catching up with the rest of the party, Nella said she had seen a plant near the path close to where I turned off. A better search was agreed on for the descent.

On turning the corner at the top of the spur we came out of the shelter of the spur and realised the strength of the wind – the change was on its way. There were fewer stops to look at plants and we soon reached the lookout close to the peak.





Usually from the lookout the Brobenah Hills round to way past Hanwood are clearly visible, not this time. Anything past Yenda was blotted out by a big dust storm. It was not long before we began our way down.

(left) View from the Lookout - Rowena Whiting
(below) Pomaderris – Rowena Whiting



Returning the top of the spur we did find the Pomaderris. Twelve plants (the highest barely 30cm – it can grow to at least 2 metres) just by or close to the track, with another one further down the track. The dry summer cannot be entirely blamed for the lack of recovery of this species as at Easter last year I observed that it had fared much better than the Tea-Tree on Mt Caley.

The descent was soon accomplished and we had time to have late morning tea cum early lunch at the picnic ground before driving out. We met the first of the rain as we past the Winery site on the Whitton Stock Route. Graham, you could not get the timing better than that!

Eric Whiting



A clarification: Margrit included this icon of a camel in her article in last month’s newsletter and I added the word ‘my’ favourites; however she had used it to represent the camels’ vegetation favourites were *Portulaca (oleracea, pilosa and intraterranea)*, *Whitewood (Atalaya hemiglauca)*, *Acacia ligulata* and *Camelbush (Trichodesma zeylanicum)*.

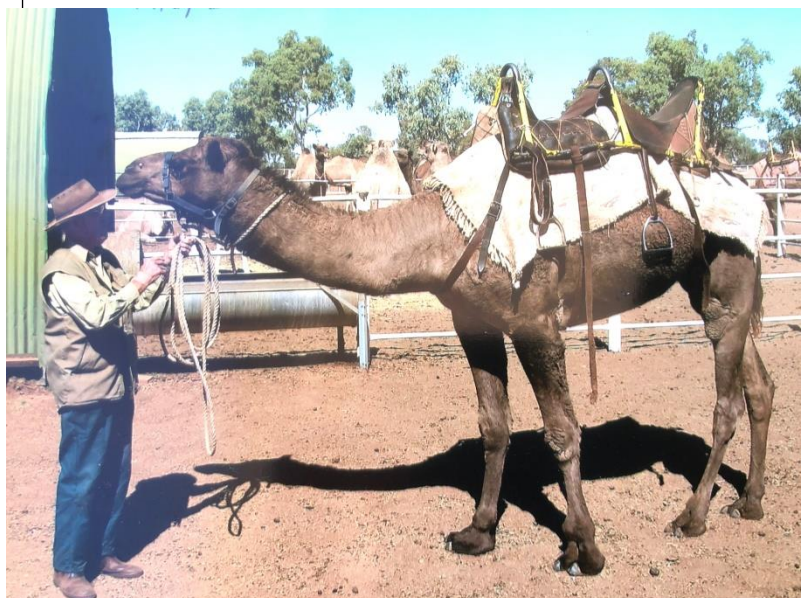
Members at the June meeting would have seen Margrit Martin’s photo of **Sauli Wilkinson** during her presentation of her recent trip to the Simpson Desert. This prompted me to ask Margrit for her photos and also ask her owner and MFN member John Wilkinson for a little story.

John brought Sauli from Phil Gee (from Maree) as a calf of about 2 years old because of his quiet temperament. When Sauli was 4 years old John broke him in. Sauli is named after one of the boys from New Guinea who John teamed with during World War II in New Guinea.

John has spent many years as a cameleer trekking through the Australia deserts .

My thanks to Susie Rowe for her help in writing this. Rowena whiting

John submitted his preferred picture of him with Sauli.

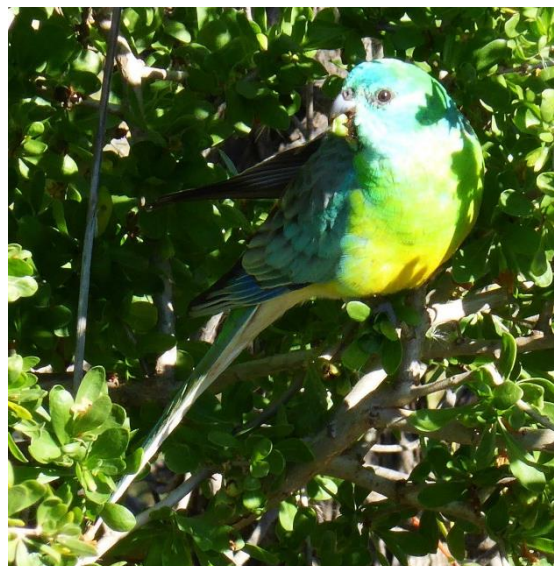


Leeton Golf Course 16 June 2019



Following on from the flyover sightings of both Superb Parrots and Rainbow Lorikeets as seen from the Leeton Post Office on Saturday 15 June whilst waiting for the roadside veg survey to begin, I went that afternoon to the Leeton Golf Course as I suspected that was where they were heading. Sure enough, I found several flowering gums along Maiden Avenue as well as a couple along the fairway and yes I saw both species there. However, the course was very active with golfers everywhere so I went back on the Sunday at lunchtime and only 2 golfers were using the course so I did a long walk through the course and was very surprised to see and hear Superb Parrots all over the place.

Golf Courses, in general, are excellent places for birds and we all know of the reputation of the one at Griffith for parrots and especially Major Mitchell's Cockatoos. In the time I've been living in Leeton, I never gave the local golf course much more than a cursory glance from the car when driving past. On a couple of



(top) Major Mitchell Cockatoos – photo by Neil Palframann
 (above) Superb Parrot - photo by a Hunter birdo
 (right) Red-rumped Parrot - photo by Neil Palframann

occasions Paul Maytom, Leeton's Mayor, said he always sees or hears the Superbs whenever he plays golf there. And still I didn't check it out for myself.

I never gave it much thought until now when I discovered them on Saturday. In all I suspect there would have been as many as 15 present feeding on the blossom and roosting in the trees calling continuously. As well, there were at least 4 Rainbow Lorikeets and an assortment of other birds. Quite a pleasant shock for me who was so dismissive of the place over the years. Not any more as I will check it out regularly from now on.

Birds seen with approximate numbers:

| | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Superb Parrot [10-15] | Rainbow Lorikeet [4] | Pied Currawong [over 50] |
| Galah [over 100] | White Cockatoo [2] | Noisy Miner [4] |
| Yellow-throated Miner [2] | Apostlebird [10] | Crested Pigeon [over 40] |
| Masked Lapwing [2] | Starling [10] | Eastern Rosella [4] |
| Red-rumped Parrot [16] | Blue-faced Honeyeater [8] | Magpie [16] |
| Pee-wee [8] | Feral Pigeon [2] | Black Duck [3] |
| Wood Duck [2] | Australian Raven [4] | |

On a second visit on 27/06/19 as well as the above I added the following:

| | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Long-billed Corella [2] | Yellow Rosella [4] | Grey-crowned Babbler [4] |
| Rufous Whistler [1m] | Chestnut Teal [2] | Little Friarbird [3] |
| Noisy Friarbird [1] | Kookaburra [1] | Little Pied Cormorant [1] |

Max O'Sullivan

Community Biodiversity Survey

Introduction

“Acres” is a cropping and grazing property owned by the Heath family. It is located off the Rankin Springs Road, approximately 38km north of Griffith.

As part of Saving our Species program an area of remnant mallee was fenced by a 1.8m high floppy fence in order to exclude feral animals and macropods in order to protect threatened species and possibly to release Malleefowl into it.

In order to obtain baseline data about the flora and fauna of the Feral Animal Free site, a biodiversity survey



Exclusion fence to protect an area of remnant mallee.
Photo Rowena Whiting

Malleefowl at mound in Pulletop Nature Reserve,
January 1979.

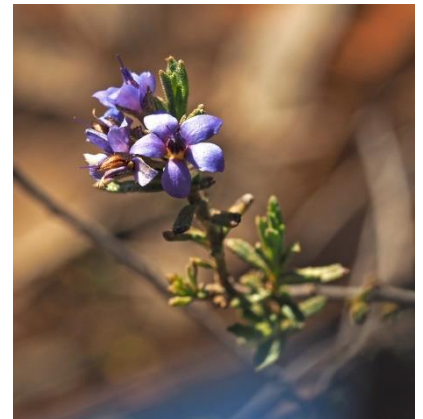
Photo S.Wakefield



of the enclosed area was carried out between 6 June 2019 and 12 June 2019 by members of Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists and associates.

This will allow changes in vegetation and fauna species to be monitored over time.

The survey site is a 55ha remnant of mallee woodland, which is almost entirely surrounded by land which has been cleared for agricultural purposes. A road corridor links the area to Pulletop Nature reserve and to another



Mallee Blue Flower / Common Dunnart
Photos Nella Smith

mallee remnant nearby.

The landform is flat, with one ephemeral drainage line which is characterised by the presence of Mugga Ironbark *Eucalyptus sideroxylon*.

The vegetation is comprised of a number of mallee eucalypt species, with a shrub understorey which varies in density throughout the enclosure.

Within the enclosure the dominant shrub species is a wallaby bush, *Beyeria* sp. Acacia species are distributed sporadically, and there are some dense stands of *Senna* in previously disturbed areas. There were also *Davesia* species which may also provide seeds. At least 4 species of acacia were also present as well as some eremophila, cassinia, grevillea and prostanthera.

Thirty-one bird species were observed during the survey. Amongst those observed were 3 pigeons, Common Bronzewing; Peaceful Dove and Crested Pigeon; 4 parrots, Galah, Mallee Ringneck, Mulga parrot and Blue Bonnet; 4 thornbills, Inland Thornbill, Yellow Thornbill, Chestnut rumped Thornbill and Yellow-rumped Thornbill. 4 Honeyeaters, Striped, Spiny-cheeked, White-eared and Noisy Miner.

Nine mammal species were observed. Species caught in Elliott traps and pitfall traps were Common Dunnart, Yellow-footed Antechinus and House Mouse. Images of Common Brushtail Possum and Swamp Wallaby were captured on wildlife cameras. Eastern Grey Kangaroo and Echidna were seen nearby or in the enclosure. Hare, fox and rabbit were also seen nearby, outside the enclosure.



A few MFN members and some Naturalists from Bathurst participated in this survey. We also had visits from National Parks staff and David Kellett from Local Land Services. We were visited regularly by adjoining landholders and the owner of the place.

It was beautifully frosty some mornings and we also encountered some rain. Such is life when doing these biodiversity surveys. Campfires were enjoyed every night for ambience and for cooking of meals.

Nella Smith

Background notes for the geology tour of the Narrandera District –

This tour will be a circular trip to see the geological features evident largely from roadsides. Two very different landforms can be seen – the granite batholith north from Grong Grong and the sedimentary sandstones of the Narrandera Range.

The Grong Grong batholith has been dated as Middle Silurian, c420 million years ago (mya) and is derived from molten siliceous rock welling up into Ordovician sediments (c460mya) that had been deposited in a trench that formed off the coast of ancient continental Australia. At the time what we now know as eastern Australia did not exist and the rest was part of the supercontinent Gondwana.

The molten rock did not reach the surface and so cooled slowly allowing the rock to crystallise. The centre of the mass cools the slowest and so the crystals had plenty of time to grow giving a coarse textured granite. Two stops (both along the Newell Highway so please take extra care), will show the difference in texture. Had the molten mass had breached the surface then violent volcanic eruptions would have occurred. Rocks formed from molten lava whether eruptive volcanic or deep batholiths are called igneous.

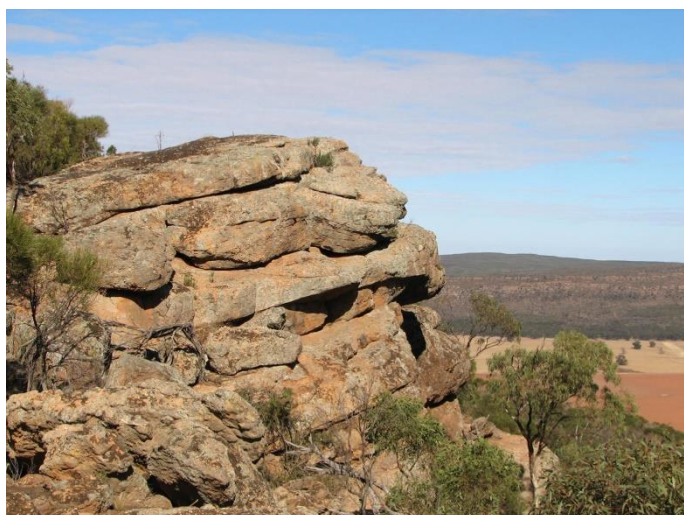


The Narrandera Range is composed of sedimentary rocks, mostly from the Upper Devonian period c370 mya and some Early Devonian c400 mya. The latter sit on Ordovician deposits, some of which outcrop as the low hills north of Colinroobie (and at Andrew Thompson's place). The gap over the Middle Devonian arises from the land then being above sea level and erosion was taking place.

Initially sedimentary rocks are laid down in horizontal beds, but earth movements can dramatically fold them or cause tremendous breaks or faults where one side is lifted (or dropped) in relation to the other side of the fault. Each movement results in an earthquake.

The arching top of a fold is called an anticline and the bottom 'U' is a syncline. Think of sinners going down to hell to remember which is which.

The size of the particles making up sedimentary rock is a function of the energy of the flow from which they are deposited, and the energy is a product of speed and/or volume. A fast falling mountain stream has high energy, a meandering river across a flood plain or spilling out into a lake or sea has low energy. The former



brings down rocks and boulders which when deeply buried get compressed into conglomerate. The latter stream grades down to sandstones and siltstones. Just what is deposited at any one place and time depends on what is happening at the time – the course of the river, the season, the overall climate. Typically beds are built up in sequences and tracing these sequences is the way we detect folds and faults. The differences in susceptibility to erosion markedly affects the shape of the landscape.

In all what is under our feet gives a lot of explanation of what we see in our countryside. It is worth getting to know a bit more about geology.

Eric Whiting

Track works at Fivebough Wetlands

Visitors will notice there are continuing track works happening at Fivebough Wetlands, unfortunately for the project, most recently halted due to some rainfall (welcomed everywhere else!). The tracks remain closed to the public while there are machines operating on the Reserve and signage has been erected with a fence at the footbridge.

We will advise when the Reserve is again open to public access and Fivebough management apologise for this ongoing inconvenience, however once finalised, the tracks will be back to their finest, pre-flood condition for everyone to enjoy.

In other project news, shortly, visitors will see some new signage appearing in the Wiradjuri Walk, sharing information of each component of traditional culture within the area, from art and totems to food and medicine. These signs will correlate with the traditional displays, already in place throughout the walk and hopefully enhance understanding and appreciation of Wiradjuri culture.

Bec Byrne, NSW Department of Industry – Lands & Water



Wetland Vegetation

Over the past decade, Commonwealth environmental water has been used to improve water quality and wetland condition across the Murray-Darling Basin. The Lower Murrumbidgee floodplain is one area where wetlands are receiving targeted environmental water. This region covers approximately 200,000 hectares and supports some of the most extensive River Red Gum, Black Box and lignum (or gweeargal in Wiradjuri) is an important under story shrub of wetland systems and is typically found at the end of inland rivers where wetlands and low-lying depressions are periodically flooded. Forming a tangled mass of branches and dense thickets, lignum provides extensive breeding sites for colonial waterbirds, native fish and frogs. Several other key wetland plants are showing signs of recovery in response to the delivery of environmental water, including Swamp Lily, Common Spike Rush and Spiny Mud Grass, species which help to oxygenate the water and reduce evaporation rates.



Wetland with Swamp Lily by Skye Wassen

Contributed by Nella Smith from a calendar featuring the Murrumbidgee Long Term Intervention Monitoring Project of CSU School of Environmental Sciences. Photo from ABC website.

MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

| | | | |
|---|---|----------|-----------------|
| Southern Boobook | Reservoir Lane Leeton in a Kurrajong tree | 01/06/19 | Joy Young |
| Joy also reported seeing Kookaburras, Willy Wagtails, Common Blackbirds, Pee Wees and Magpies. | | | |
| Wedge-tailed Eagle | Rankins Springs | 08/06/19 | Elle Schnell |
| Grey Butcherbird | Fivebough Wetlands | 09/06/19 | Keith Hutton |
| Crested Bellbird | Taleeban Reserve | 10/06/19 | Nella Smith |
| Shy Heathwren | Taleeban Reserve | 10/06/19 | Nella Smith |
| Common Dunnart | Rankins Springs | 10/06/19 | Nella Smith |
| Yellow-footed Antechinus | Rankins Springs | 10/06/19 | Nella Smith |
| Koalas [Mating] | Narrandera Wetlands | 11/06/19 | Susan Whitehead |
| Black Kite [2] | Narrandera Wetlands | 11/06/19 | Susan Whitehead |
| Black Swan [4] | Lake Talbot, Narrandera | 12/06/19 | Alan Whitehead |
| Straw-necked Ibis [500] | Leeton - twilight westerly flyover | 13/06/19 | Alan Whitehead |
| Yellow Rosella [8] | Narrandera Wetlands | 13/06/19 | Susan Whitehead |
| Restless Flycatcher | Naradhim St, Whitton | 14/06/19 | Margaret Strong |
| White-fronted Honeyeater [2] | McCann Road Lake Wyangan | 14/06/19 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Spotless Crake [2] | Campbell Swamp, Griffith | 14/06/19 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Spotted Crake [1] | Campbell Swamp, Griffith | 14/06/19 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Rainbow Lorikeet [4] | Leeton Post Office – flyover | 15/06/19 | Graham Russell |
| Superb Parrot [6] | Leeton Post Office – flyover | 15/06/19 | Max O'Sullivan |
| The above two species were later located in the Leeton Golf Course – see article elsewhere in the newsletter. | | | |
| Diamond Firetail [1] | Koonadan Historic Site | 18/06/19 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Grey Butcherbird | Whitton Museum | 18/06/19 | Margaret Strong |
| Brolga [20] | Fivebough Wetlands | 22/06/19 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Red-necked Avocet [6] | Fivebough Wetlands | 22/06/19 | Max O'Sullivan |
| This is the first sighting for some months. | | | |
| Northern Mallard [Pure male] | Fivebough Wetlands | 23/06/19 | Keith Hutton |
| This is the first pure Mallard to be recorded at Fivebough for the 39 years of Keith's records and it was a perfectly marked male not a cross with Black Duck as you see in most park ponds – like McCaughey Lake at Yanco. | | | |
| Superb Parrot [25] | Karri Ave, Leeton - flyover | 25/06/19 | Keith Hutton |
| Flyovers of 7 to 20 birds have been a regular event in the past 2 weeks or so. | | | |
| Pied Currawong [55] | Petersham Rd, Leeton | 26/06/19 | Keith Hutton |
| Currawongs have been around Leeton township in larger than usual numbers this winter. | | | |
| Flame Robin [m&f] | Evans Smyles Rd via Leeton | 26/06/19 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Brown Treecreeper [5] | Evans Smyles Rd via Leeton | 26/06/19 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Nankeen Night Heron [2] | McCaughey Lake, Yanco | 02/07/19 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Mistletoebird [m&f] | Mc Caughey Lak,e Yanco | 02/07/19 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Grey Fantail | Bringan Rd, Whitton | 02/07/19 | Margaret Strong |
| Black-shouldered Kite | Bringan Rd, Whitton | 02/07/19 | Margaret Strong |

Sue Chittick-Dalton's reports that missed the last newsletter – my apologies Sue!

25/05/19 Spring Hill Picnic Area and Falcon Falls walk, Cocoparra National Park:

| | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Peregrine Falcon | Peaceful Dove | Bar-shouldered Dove |
| Eastern Yellow Robin | Mallee Ringneck | Mulga Parrot |
| Little Raven | Yellow Thornbill | Pied Currawong (large flock) |
| Yellow-throated Miner | Apostlebird | White-winged Chough |
| May 2019 at McNabb Cres. Griffith. | | |
| Hobby | Mallee Ringneck | '28' Parrot |
| Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater | Red Wattlebird | Blue-faced Honeyeater |
| Rainbow Lorikeet (many) | Major Mitchell's Cockatoo - daily flyover | |
| Max O'Sullivan | | |

**** COMING EVENTS ****

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

SAVE THE DATE for the

Celebration of our 25th anniversary on the weekend of 18/19/20 October 2019 -

**We are planning for an Anniversary Dinner, Outings and a
Photographic Exhibition over this weekend.**

- 11 July Thursday** **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7.30pm.
Topic: Identifying ducks – DVD by the Victorian Game Council for shooters
Bring along your 'show and tell'.
Contact: Nella Smith 6959 1210 or murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- 13 July Saturday** **Geology Tour around Narrandera**
Meet at 9am at the Narrandera Information Centre
Bring morning tea and lunch.
See Page 7 for information about this outing.
Contact: Eric Whiting, phone 02 6953 2612 or ericwhiting4@bigpond.com
- 27 July Saturday** **Outing to McCann Road, Lake Wyangan**
Meet at 9am at the Griffith Information Centre
Bring morning tea and lunch.
Contact: Phil Tenison, phone 02 6953 4869
- 28 July Sunday** **National Tree Planting Day with Narrandera LandCare**
At the Narrandera Wetland, starting at 9am
Contact: Glenn Currie for details, 0488 563 321
- 31 July Wednesday** **Copy for the August newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**
Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com **Phone:** 6953 2612.
- 8 August Thursday** **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7.30pm.
Topic: to be decided – bring along your 'show and tell'.
Contact: Nella Smith 6959 1210 or murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- 10 August Saturday** **Outing to Cocoparra National Park**
Contact: Eric Whiting 6953 2612 or ericwhiting4@bigpond.com
- 24 August Saturday** **Outing to Taleeban Mining Reserve**
Contact: Nella Smith 6959 1210 or murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- 8 September Sunday** **Annual Koala Count at Narrandera Flora and Fauna Reserve.**
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 or murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- 4-7 October**
Friday to Monday **Spring Camp of South East Australian Naturalists' Association**
Hosted by Castlemaine Field Naturalist Club Inc.
A great opportunity to explore natural history of the area with local naturalists.
For details contact Nella Smith 69591210 or email
murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.