

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



December 2019 - Issue #277

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



**Purple-backed
Fairy-wren by
Bill Draper**

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**For the February 2020 issue by
Wednesday 5 February**

To Rowena Whiting

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***December meeting will
be at the Fivebough
Wetlands - 6pm***

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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 PM

FIELD TRIPS NORMALLY TAKE PLACE ON THE FOLLOWING WEEKEND.

INTENDING NEW MEMBERS, GUESTS AND VISITORS WELCOME.

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Welcome to December - the end of another year

As you all know the AGM was held last month and there have been a number of changes to the executive and committee. Alan Whitehead has taken on the role of President and Dionea and Graham Russell becoming joint secretaries. A special thanks must go to Graham and Nella for their notable contributions as president and secretary respectively.

*Wishing you all a very
happy and safe time at
Christmas and for the
New Year*

You may have noticed there is no summer camp planned for this summer; in view of the weather predictions it was felt this should occur in Autumn (as happened last year).

As 2019 draws to a close, I would like to thank the contributors especially the regulars for their supply of articles over the last 12 months. I receive a lot of natural history and conservation stories and news items from the wider world but rarely have had to use them to fill the pages. It is your reports and articles that make it your newsletter. I hope you keep your pencils or typing fingers active in the coming year and keep the contributions coming. Special thanks also to all of the photographers in the group that have so willingly provided their images.

Happy reading and enjoy your summer break, Rowena.

Member News

This month we have to convey some sad news for two of our members. **Keith Hutton**, a founding member lost his younger son, Daniel at the end of October. We extend our sincere sympathy to Keith and his family, on their loss.

Sadly long term and life member **Enid Atkinson** passed away last month in Atherton. Details of her funeral will be conveyed when they are available. See Sue Chittick-Dalton's farewell to Enid on the following page.

Our thoughts are with **Glenn Currie** who is away fighting the fires in northern NSW with the National Parks Service.

VALE ENID ATKINSON

We say goodbye to a cherished friend and mentor, Enid Atkinson, who passed away on 26 November at Atherton, Queensland hospital.

We all owe Enid so much gratitude for sharing her expertise of local flora, fauna and history, and all this knowledge was imparted as part of a friendly conversation...."Just love the shiny leaves of the Bimble Box"....."Just look at the different colours of those pines"... At no time was it a lesson, just a great story of our surroundings.

Patricia Weare, author and illustrator of the beautiful book "A COLLECTION OF AUSTRALIAN WILD FLOWER ILLUSTRATIONS" wrote in thanks...."Enid Atkinson for willingly sharing her knowledge of the hill flowers and providing a second pair of eyes on so many excursions. Our many hours of botanising and philosophising have been a most enjoyable experience".

Enid and I first met as Lady Cub Masters at a Scouts Jamboree, and renewed our friendship 30 years later when June Sell and I asked her about a Bird Club. Enid introduced us to the Murrumbidgee Field Nats. And the rest is history.

Enid had many talents.....her art work was renowned and immortalised on the cover of the 2nd book of "The history of Griffith".

This wonderful nonagenarian had filled her life with love for her family, friends and the natural world around her.

We will miss you. Sue Chittick-Dalton

The Huntsman Spider (snippets of info)

Appeared in the newsletter #75 July 2001

Large, flat and flabby looking.

Often wrongly called Tarantula

Slow moving, timid, hard to provoke

Harmless to humans

Deadly to flies and cockroaches etc.

Pursues its prey; does not use a web.

Lives under the bark of trees

Often enter houses in hot or wet weather.

Shed their skins like other arthropods

Class Arachnida

Order Araneida

Species Isopeda and Neosparassus.

Has eight simple eyes. (Set in two lines

four smaller eyes over four larger eyes)

The female huntsman spider

Places her eggsac under bark or rock

Then stands guard

(A wolf spider drags her eggsac around)

She tears open the eggsac to help the

spiderlings emerge.

Runs like a crab

The legs fan out - joints bend forwards

Can run sideways as well as forwards,

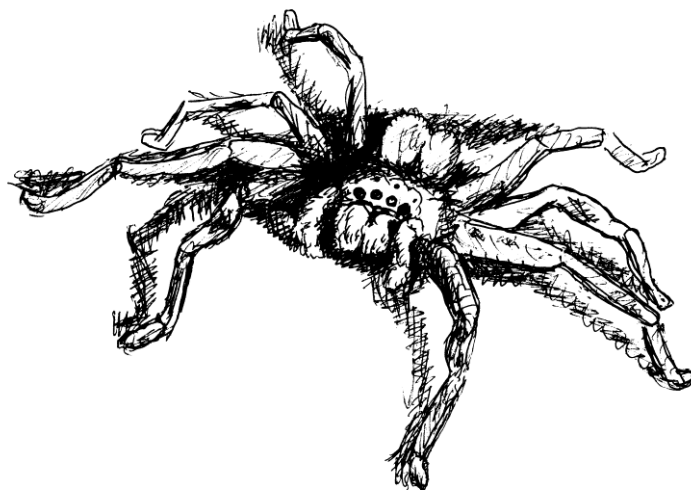
This is useful under bark

This spider is common around here

Under bark and in old houses or sheds.



Enid at McCaughy's Lagoon in 2014 – Rowena Whiting
Enid finding her own path thru life ... er, no ... Campbell
Swamp (2007) Neil Palfaman



Enid Atkinson

Twitchathon Report for the Silly Galahs 2019

Max arrived at our place at 6:00am on Sunday the 27th ready for our big day on the birding calendar. We left minutes later and headed to Griffith, a bit different to last year's track. Max had done a lot of research on the various sites and decided to change tact from the previous year.

We headed straight to McCann Road, Griffith and were on the job by 7:00am. This is where we hoped to find all the special Honeyeaters. Things were a bit slow to start only finding the **Red-rumped Parrot**, **Bluebonnet**, **Starling** and **White-winged Trillers** which all have equal billing in this game so we were glad to see them. A bit further down the back of the block were the jewels in the crown, with a good lot of **Honeyeaters; Pied, Black, Painted, and Striped**. We were also pleased to see the **Double-barred Finches** and the **Purple-backed Fairy-wren**.

We then headed to Lake Wyangan where we found the **Whiskered Tern**, **Black-winged Stilt**, **Red-kneed Dotterel** and loads of other more common birds such as the **Blue-faced Honeyeater**, **Masked Lapwing** and **Apostlebirds**. They all wanted to be on the list. Just around the corner at the causeway we managed to tick off the **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper**, **Australasian Darter** and **Pied Cormorant**.

Campbell Swamp saw a major coup in the **Australasian Bittern**. It flew up out of the reeds a distance from us but there was no mistaking the bird. Here we also ticked off more Cormorants in the **Little Pied**, **Little Black** and the **Great. Swamp Harriers** and **Whistling Kites** entertained us in the air overhead. Sadly we didn't have time to muse.

We headed to the sewerage ponds near Griffith. Scaling the fence and heading out without the scope were a couple of issues, however we did find a **Musk Duck**, **Hardhead** and the **Hoary-headed Grebe**.

It was 11:00am by the time we made it to the park in Griffith where we found the **Rainbow Lorikeets**.

Off to Spring Hill to find the **Turquoise Parrots** or so we hoped. No such luck, however the **Crimson Chats** were in abundance and we spotted the **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Rufous Whistler** and the **Eastern Yellow Robin**. A walk to Falcon Falls failed to find the **Peregrine Falcon** but after lunch we scored the **White-browed Babbler** and the **Brown Treecreeper** who seem to call Spring Hill home. Lunch at Spring Hill was nice and relaxed if you could call it that with our heads on a swivel for fear we saw something and could not count it because it was lunch time.

Then off to Wattle Dam. We sat quietly in the car while Max told us of a time 5-6 years ago when he and Neil Palframan saw sixty **Turquoise Parrots** at this Dam. We could only dream!

Yenda Sewage ponds found us a few; **Black-fronted Dotterels**, **Mulga Parrots** and the **Australasian Grebe**. Then back to Leeton ticking off **Emu** on the way near Foleys Corner. They were sitting under a tree well camouflaged. Down Vance Road we found a **Cattle Egret**. Still no **White-necked Heron** which we didn't find all day which was surprising.

Fivebough Wetlands always comes up trumps with the **Red-necked Stints**, **Marsh and Wood Sandpipers**, **Spotted Crake**, **Brolgas** and **Australasian Shovelers** among many we saw. A **Brown Songlark** on the path as we walked in was a bit of a surprise, thanks Phil!

We hoped to find the **Zebra Finches** on Quodling Road but they were nowhere to be seen. Max had seen them each time he had visited in the last week. Birds are never guaranteed.

We were however lucky the **Dollarbird** at Euroley Bridge had returned for the summer and the **Eastern Rosellas** and the **Striated Pardalote** were keeping him company. On the way to Yanco Reserve about seven **Superb Parrots** flew overhead and at the reserve itself there were **Friarbirds**; both **Noisy** and **Little**.

Our last bird for the day was the **Major Mitchell's Cockatoo** which flew across the front of the car at the Walnut Farm. Sometimes twitching is so easy.

We finished the day at Andrew and Ana's catching up briefly with the Bidgee Boobooks (Glenn Currie, Margrit Martin, Meredith Billington and Alan Whitehead) unable to speak about our wins and losses at the



Sharp-tailed Sandpiper Kathy Tenison

time, so the rules say. We did however compare notes via email a few days later. It is interesting to discover the hits and misses of both teams.

Phil, Max and I managed 118 birds over 266 km. Everyone was very happy with the day. Thank you Andrew and Ana for your hospitality and restoring the energy levels of some worn-out Twitchers.

Kath and Phil Tenison

Bidgee Boobooks Twitchathon 2019

It was another big birding day for our Bidgee Boobooks team as we again took part in the 12 hour Twitchathon event. The team this year was comprised of Alan, Margrit, Meredith and myself. We started at 7am at the Narrandera Wetlands and ticked off a respectable 28 birds before we proceeded to the Rocky Waterholes area adding a few more birds there.



We drove to Leeton stopping at Yanco Common where Alan had his best viewing ever of Superb Parrots. 5 were low down in a tree and were totally unflustered by our presence.

**Four of the Superb Parrots
Nankeen Night Heron**



They were our memorable 50th sighting at about 11am. We then stopped at McCaughey's Park in Yanco to see if any elusive Nankeen Night Herons were visible. We couldn't tick them the last two Twitchathons but were fortunate to see two this year. These last two stops were new to Alan and I think he's well pleased to know about them now.

Fivebough Wetlands gave us a good number of birds but none of our group had the expertise to id all that were out there. The drive along the backroads near Murrumbidgee, on the way to Griffith didn't provide the raptors we are used to seeing.

We stopped at a few places in Griffith – the Golf Course, Campbell Swamp and McCann Road but the pickings were slim. The Causeway did provide the majestic sight of two White-bellied Sea-eagles flying and turning in unison.

On our way back to Narrandera we stopped at Andrew and Ana's and managed to add a couple more birds to the list. It was getting late in the afternoon and we enjoyed some much appreciated coffee there (thanks Andrew and Anna!)

Our day was done at 7pm back in Narrandera. A good day was had by all. We "twitched" 92 birds, had a great day and managed to raise some money and awareness for Birdlife Australia's conservation efforts with the Bush-stone Curlew.

Glenn Currie

2019 Twitchathon Hits and Misses

Birds seen by the Bidgee Boobooks Team of Glenn Currie, Margrit Martin, Meredith Billington and Alan Whitehead and not by the Silly Galahs Team of Kathy and Phil Tenison and myself.

Freckled Duck
White-bellied Sea-Eagle
Superb Wren
Jacky Winter
Rufous Songlark

Nankeen Night Heron
Yellow (Crimson) Rosella
Western Gerygone
Grey Butcherbird
Silvereye

Royal Spoonbill
Sacred Kingfisher
Noisy Miner
Pied Currawong

Birds seen by the Silly Galahs and not by the Bidgee Boobooks :

Emu	Magpie Goose	Musk Duck
Black Swan	Australian Shelduck	Hoary-headed Grebe
Pied Cormorant	Great Cormorant	White-faced Heron
Little Egret	Great Egret	Cattle Egret
Australasian Bittern	Straw-necked Ibis	Black-shouldered Kite
Australian Spotted Crake	Marsh Sandpiper	Wood Sandpiper
Red-necked Stint	Red-capped Plover	Major Mitchell's Cockatoo
Mulga Parrot	Dollarbird	Striped H/e
Yellow-throated Miner	Singing H/e	Painted H/e
Black H/e	Pied H/e	Crimson Chat
Red-capped Robin	Eastern Yellow Robin	Dusky Woodswallow
Little Raven	Mistletoebird	Fairy Martin
Little Grassbird	Brown Songlark	

Best Bird: **Superb Parrot** for the Bidgee Boobooks and **Brown Songlark** for the Silly Galahs

Biggest Dip: **White-faced Heron** for the BBs and **Superb Wren** for the Silly team!

Max O'Sullivan

President's Report 2019

It's time for the Annual General meeting again and for me that brings to the close my three-year stint as president.

In the past 12 months we have conducted our twice monthly outings, a summer camp that was postponed and ended up being a autumn camp and in place of our usual spring camp this year we stayed at home and spent three days celebrating 25 years of Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists. In addition to these normal activities we have had members being involved in Biodiversity surveys and becoming involved in the Malleefowl recovery program.

I was unable to attend as many of the outings and camps as I would have liked but on those that I did it was the camaraderie and willingness to share that made them a pleasure to attend. The sharing of knowledge is for me one of the highlights of being a member of the MFN, when Dione and I first started to attend MFN we were both daunted by the amount of information that is held by the members. There are two things that got us to turn up to the second outing and then to become members and that is the friendship and the knowledge resource that being a member gives you access to.

The big happening for the club this year was the 25-year anniversary, this consisted of a three day weekend of celebration that included, outings to four different locations including the two that were visited on the very first outings 25 years ago, Fivebough Wetlands and Yarrambimbi, a property in the Collinroobie Hills; we also had a photo exhibition and dinner.

Looking to the future of the Club I would like to encourage all to become involved in the running of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalist, we have a healthy membership but we need to ensure that the running of the club isn't left to just a few.

As we endure another drought or is this just the way that it is now, either way I feel that the importance of organisations like the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalist is going to increase. We need to take every opportunity that we are presented with to go in to bat for the environment that has brought us together as a group.

I look forward to spending another great year learning, enjoying the great Australian bush and being advocates for it.

Graham Russell

Murrumbidgee Valley National Park (Cuba Forest)

On November the 16th a group of us gathered at the Lions park in Darlington Point in preparation for an excursion into the Murrumbidgee Valley National Park at the Cuba entrance. It was a very cool morning for the middle of November so there was some exchange of jackets before we headed the couple of kilometres back toward Leeton to the Cuba Forest.

We turned off the road and as soon as we were over the grid and into the National Park proper we pulled up to walk along the billabong that was in the process of being filled up with what I presume is Environmental Water.

The big birding highlights from this 1st stop were the 100 plus ducks that flew off when we first arrived, the lack of water birds present (maybe because they hadn't yet found it as it was still filling up), and the nesting pair of Brown Treecreepers. The other notable from this stop was the series of blue ear tags nailed to some of the trees. These were associated with silver insulation tied around the tree. An email to Charles Sturt University, Institute for Land, Water and Society after I got home confirmed the suspicion that the ear tags

were markers for a research project. To quote from the email that I received back from Dr Damian Michael Senior Research Fellow,

“The ear tag should have been accompanied by a silver cover which I am temporarily using as an artificial bark cover to examine arboreal lizard populations across the Murrumbidgee catchment. The tag is identifying the tree.” I am going to follow up further to see if there is more information available in relation to how long and if there are any preliminary findings yet

Our second stop was down on the River for some morning tea and a walk along the track. The birding highlights for this stop were the Square-tailed Kite that continually circled overhead (see photo & piece by Max on page 13) as we walked along the track, the others for this stop was the Superb Parrots and for me the Superb Fairy-wren.

Our final stop for the day was at the sand hill further east for lunch first and then a walk in the Cypress pine up to find the very large Cooba Wattle *Acacia salicina* that we found the last time that we visited, it took a while to find because it wasn't quite as high as it was last time. It had fallen over but was still alive and thriving.

Graham Russell

Birdlist compiled by Max O'Sullivan

Little Pied Cormorant
Wood Duck
Brown Goshawk
Wedge-tailed Eagle
Peaceful Dove (H)
White Cockatoo
Eastern Rosella
Kookaburra
Dollarbird
Red-capped Robin
Grey Shrike-Thrush
Western Warbler
Brown Treecreeper
Striated Pardalote
White-winged Chough
Little Raven

Little Black Cormorant
Black Duck
Square-tailed Kite
Kestrel
Galah
Cockatiel
Yellow Rosella
Sacred Kingfisher
Welcome Swallow
Rufous Whistler
Willie Wagtail
Inland Thornbill
Little Friarbird
Starling
Pied Butcherbird

Glossy Ibis
Grey Teal
Whistling Kite
Crested Pigeon
Little Corella
Superb Parrot
Red-rumped Parrot
Bee-eater
Tree Martin
Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike
Superb Wren
Yellow-rumped Thornbill
White-plumed Honeyeater
Pee-wee
Magpie



Sacred Kingfisher – Graham Russell
Blue tag – Graham Russell
The fallen Cooba Wattle – Dione Russell

CAROLS BY EVEN'LIGHT

We all arrived, eyes bright with expectation, for the "Christmas Party" at Middle Beach, Euroley, late Saturday afternoon November 30.

But where the tinsel? Where the carols? Well, this was a very Australian Christmas Party. The tinsel was the argent-gold light of the setting sun twinkling through the tracery of River Red Gums on the far side of the mighty Murrumbidgee River. And mighty it is, in this location at least, flowing languorously by; deep, clean and green.

And the carols? These were provided by a variety of birds, in this particular avian community, all loud and joyful. This was especially so with the flock of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos which seem to have commandeered this glorious river reach as their own. As well, the strident strains of Noisy and Little Friar Birds added their own harmonies to the choral cacophony.



What is a Christmas Party without a feast? And feast it was, splendidly laid out on a long table surrounded by comfy camp chairs. Due to fire restrictions, we couldn't barbeque, but the cold meats contributed by Graham and Dione more than compensated for this minor dearth of "Australianess"; especially the home-cooked silverside – the best ever!

And here I am privileged to thank this stalwart couple, not just for today's outing, but for all their many toils for the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists; with special reference to Graham's stewardship as President for the last three years.

Then there were the savouries, snacks and salads; fruits and fromages; and a dizzying display of dessert delights. A taste treat for me (Enough with the alliteration!) were loquats. I haven't enjoyed these sweet, golden orbs since they were Susan's curious craving when

she was pregnant with our daughter in 1965.

At last, the first cherries of the season! These completed the colour and cuisine perfection of this bounteous board. All under the benevolent gaze of a silver sickle moon.

But back to field naturalism; as the twilight encroached, a Little Black Cormorant skimmed across the surface of the river on its way home to roost, and a Dollarbird was seen but not heard (like a well-behaved child) as it performed its final aerobatics in search of a before-bed snack.

It was now dark enough for a spotlight ramble. We spied a few roosting birds, including two which defied identification. That's because these narcoleptic canopy-dwellers had their heads tucked tightly away, oblivious of our searchlight intrusions. They were mid-sized, with pale grey breasts and long, thin tails, with a square end. I surmise that they were either one of the aforementioned Noisy or Little Friar Birds. But with no obvious gorget ruffle in the former, I've narrowed them down to Little Friar Birds.

Then a vision of loveliness: two Tawny Frogmouths snuggled together - an adult and a juvenile. The parent was facing us; the young one rather presented its back. Even so, both stared at us indignantly with their glorious golden eyeshine.

**Sulphur Crested Cockatoos – Graham Russell (left)
Group enjoying their meal – Rowena Whiting
Tawny Frogmouths – Kathy Tenison**



From above to below: a bizarre ground-bound denizen scurried across our path; then considerably stopped for a photo. It was a kind of centipede, but only about 4cm long, with very wide legs and long antennae. Surely this is the time the Club finally discovers a new species – and have it named after us!

A haunting goodbye to both Spring and the wonderful day was bequeathed by a pair of Southern Boobook Owls, again heard but not seen, calling from either side of the river.

As far as Christmas parties go, I would replace tinsel and carols with scintillating sunsets, a sickle moon, and Aussie birdsong every time.

Alan Whitehead

Centipede – Rowena Whiting



Yanco Creek – a Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism Project

Remember when the government decided not to pursue any more buy-backs from consumption of water for the environment partly due to socio-economic reasons. In order to achieve the required amount of water needed to keep the rivers, our waterways, our water, the environment healthy we still require the 2750gl.

In order to achieve these targets the Commonwealth Government is implementing Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism Projects. This is a long way of saying that they are finding other ways to save water so that there is enough to keep the environment healthy without having to take any more from irrigation.

This is an outline of proposed projects on the Yanco Creek.

The Improved Flow Management Works at the Murrumbidgee River-Yanco Creek Offtake project entails:

1. Building a new Yanco Creek Regulator, designed to **exclude** comparatively high level environmental flows from entering Yanco Creek from the Murrumbidgee River.
2. Building a new Murrumbidgee Regulator, designed to raise the current weir pool by up to 2.5m so that environmental flows can be delivered efficiently into Yanco Creek.
3. Refurbishing the existing Yanco regulator (on the Murrumbidgee river) to accommodate the raised weir pool by strengthening its foundations and increasing its crest height.
4. Decommissioning the existing Yanco Weir.

I just hope that if these changes are made that the environmental values of the Yanco Creek System are retained and improved. This includes supporting Blackbox depressions and riparian vegetation like reeds and rushes and that the creek is still able to sustain populations of small bodied fish that are extinct in the Murrumbidgee and elsewhere as well as the threatened Catfish, Trout Cod not to mention frogs and birds and us. I wonder if the cost of this project is necessary as I believe that the Mid-Murrumbidgee wetlands can be watered adequately without the Regulator work.

What a huge responsibility the creek has!!

Nella Smith



Malleefowl Mound Monitoring- The World's Largest Wildlife Monitoring Program—

Not many people will know this; however the National Malleefowl Recovery Team (NMRT) believe that the annual Malleefowl mound monitoring program that occurs across southern areas of Australia is the largest wildlife monitoring program in the world. And you can be a part of it too!!

And here in the Riverina it has only just begun, with another successful Malleefowl Mound Monitoring Training day completed despite Mother Nature trying her best to disrupt learning by throwing in a windy/dusty day and late afternoon we finally saw some much needed rain. Unfortunately with heavy rain; monitoring had to be postponed till a later date, however we cannot complain as the most of the state is in drought.

Graeme Tonkin (NMRT) was the trainer with his offsider being Joe Dafoe who assisted new volunteers during the field component of the training. The training was organised by Riverina Local Land Services and funded through the *Australian National Landcare Program*.

I would just like to thank the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists who have attended both Coordinator and mound monitoring training/mound monitoring and also becoming members of the New South Wales Malleefowl Recovery Group (NSWMRG). The support from your members has been amazing!!

Volunteers from the MFN's and NSW P&W as well as Tony Buckmaster (CISS)



The following weekend we travelled to Mt Hope to assist Tony Buckmaster (Centre for Invasive Species Solutions) with the annual mound monitoring, the weather was much more pleasant for bush walking and it was great to be able to explore new areas we had not been. The Mallee in this area was quite open with little to no ground cover or mid story and does make one



wonder what Malleefowl chicks would eat and where they would hide in those first few days/weeks.

This was the first official monitoring carried out by the NSWMRG and our new Coordinator (Elle Schnell) did an outstanding job of sorting out equipment and directing the group to monitoring locations and also for getting most of the volunteers to attend. Great Job Elle!!!

Graeme and Joe (NMRT) measuring mound

Mt Hope Volunteers

Then it was back to West Wyalong to sort out the rest of the monitoring in the Riverina and once again it was looking like Mother Nature was not on our side. With the fire warning reaching catastrophic on the Thursday and fires burning all around the state I was starting to doubt that we were going to get this monitoring complete before Christmas. However, the weather turned quite pleasant on the Friday and temperatures stayed quite mild due to cloud and smoke cover for most of the day. By the end of Sunday 146 mounds had been monitored and was a great effort from all volunteers who attended over the three days. One Malleefowl was sighted by Rod Guest and all volunteers got to visit an active





Volunteers at the active mound

increasing/decreasing, or if they are remaining the same.

As always, please feel free to contact me at any time if you would like more information on becoming a member of the NSWMRG, how to get involved with annual monitoring and general information on the amazing Malleefowl.

David Kellett Riverina LLS/NMRT/NSWMRG, 0428 693 990 david.kellett@lls.nsw.gov.au

From Virginia Tarr on the first Malleefowl monitoring weekend

I have attached a couple of pictures taken on my Saturday Malleefowl training with David Kellett, Ellene, Penny & Phillip Williams, Mellani Bauch, Richard Green, 4 Griffith Rangers and a couple others including Dr Tony Buckmaster, Graham (speaker) and assistant Joe.

It was very informative and we were able to do monitoring of 3 mounds early in the am before the dust storm came over then return for further tuition, videos and lunch.

The rain started as we departed around 3pm.

We in NSW have much to do to catch up with Victoria and South Australia well organized groups and data collection.

Virginia.



PS. The picture with x sticks gives indication of that the mound has been monitored and if there has been activity since last monitoring!



mound on the Saturday morning.

So what's next? I hear you say! Well there are over 700 Malleefowl mounds scattered across NSW that need to be monitored every year so we can get a better understanding of how the Malleefowl are travelling in our state and there is approximately 4000 mounds across Australia that fall under the National Malleefowl Recovery Team's annual monitoring program that is carried out by volunteers just like yourselves. The data is then uploaded to the National Malleefowl Database by our

wonderful Coordinators such as Elle Schnell so that Ecologists can study the data to see if Malleefowl numbers are

MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [2-12]	Mountain Dam, Colinroobie Rd	Most days	Dionee Russell
Superb Parrot	Melbourne St, Narrandera	01/11/19	Warrick Bradney
Birds were feeding on Betty's Flinders Range Wattle seeds.			
Superb Parrot [4]	Robert St, Narrandera – fly over	07/11/19	Warrick Bradney
Dollarbird [Pair at nest hollow]	Rocky Waterholes, Narrandera	07/11/19	Alan Whitehead
Barn Owl [road kill]	Cnr Whitton Rd and Pendula St, Leeton	08/11/19	Max O'Sullivan
Marsh Sandpiper [5]	Fivebough Wetlands	09/11/19	Keith Hutton
Wood Sandpiper [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	09/11/19	Keith Hutton
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper [15]	Fivebough Wetlands	09/11/19	Keith Hutton
Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo [juv]	Campbell Swamp, Griffith	10/11/19	Neil Palframan
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo	Mt Hope – malleefowl monitoring	10/11/19	Ellené Schnell
Brolga [3]	Fivebough Wetlands	10/11/19	Keith Hutton
Black-winged Stilt [35]	Fivebough Wetlands	10/11/19	Keith Hutton
Whiskered Tern [10]	Fivebough Wetlands	10/11/19	Keith Hutton
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper [31]	Fivebough Wetlands	10/11/19	Keith Hutton
Rainbow Lorikeet [3]	Narrandera Wetlands	11/11/19	Susan Whitehead
Sacred Kingfisher [1]	Colinroobie Rd, Leeton	11/11/19	Phil Tenison
Turquoise Parrot	Rankins Springs area	11-12/11/19	Virginia Tarr
White-winged Triller [2]	Rankins Springs area	11-12/11/19	Virginia Tarr
Masked Woodswallow	Rankins Springs area	11-12/11/19	Virginia Tarr
White-breasted Woodswallow	Rankins Springs area	11-12/11/19	Virginia Tarr

Virginia submitted a list of other more common birds seen which I have not included here.

Crimson Chat [male]	"Willow Park", Koonadan Rd	13/11/19	P&P Williams
Singing Honeyeater [1]	"Willow Park", Koonadan Rd	13/11/19	P&P Williams
Purple-backed Wren	Koonadan Rd, Leeton	14/11/19	P&P Williams
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [1]	Koonadan Rd, Leeton	14/11/19	P&P Williams
Superb Parrot	Koonadan Rd, Leeton	14/11/19	P&P Williams
Yellow Rosella	Koonadan Rd, Leeton	14/11/19	P&P Williams
Magpie Goose [35+]	Lake Wyangan from the Picnic Area	14/11/19	Max O'Sullivan
Red-capped Plover [25+]	Lake Wyangan north lake from Causeway	14/11/19	Max O'Sullivan
Australasian Bittern [3]	Campbell's Swamp	14/11/19	Max O'Sullivan
Blue-billed Duck [2 males]	Campbell's Swamp	14/11/19	Max O'Sullivan
Musk Duck [1 female]	Campbell's Swamp	14/11/19	Max O'Sullivan
Square-tailed Kite	Cuba Forest outing	16/11/19	MFN Group
Little Eagle	Cuba Forest – Superb Parrot count	17/11/19	Max O'Sullivan
Wood Sandpiper [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	17/11/19	Keith Hutton
Marsh Sandpiper [11]	Fivebough Wetlands	17/11/19	Keith Hutton
Red-kneed Dotterel [25]	Fivebough Wetlands	17/11/19	Keith Hutton
Australian Spotted Crake [3]	Fivebough Wetlands	17/11/19	Keith Hutton
White-fronted Chat [29]	Fivebough Wetlands	17/11/19	Keith Hutton
Baillon's Crake [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	18/11/19	Max O'Sullivan
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [20+]	West Wyalong town	22/11/19	Max O'Sullivan

The birds were flying over the motel near the aeroplane park when attending the Malleefowl monitoring.

Red-necked Avocet [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	24/11/19	Keith Hutton
Australian Spotted Crake [7]	Fivebough Wetlands	24/11/19	Keith Hutton
Little Bittern [2 heard]	Campbell Swamp	27/11/19	Max O'Sullivan
Black-tailed Native-hen [75]	Fivebough Wetlands	30/11/19	Keith Hutton
Glossy Ibis [16]	Fivebough Wetlands	30/11/19	Keith Hutton
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper [101]	Fivebough Wetlands	30/11/19	Keith Hutton
Red-capped Plover [23]	Fivebough Wetlands	30/11/19	Keith Hutton
Cattle Egret [5]	Fivebough Wetlands	30/11/19	Keith Hutton
Pectoral Sandpiper [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	30/11/19	Keith Hutton

Australian Shelduck [8]	Fivebough Wetlands	30/11/19	Keith Hutton
Brolga [5]	Fivebough Wetlands	30/11/19	Keith Hutton
Crimson Chat [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	30/11/19	Keith Hutton
Superb Parrot	Nericon – flyover	01/12/19	Neil Palframan

A small flock flew over Nericon which is the first time Neil has recorded them in the township.

Superb Parrot [3 groups of 8+] Between Koonadan and Boundary Rds 05/12/19 Graham Russell

Sue Chittick-Dalton has submitted the following list of birds from her place in McNabb Cres, Griffith – list made over the 3 days from 3rd to 5th of December 2019.

Sacred Kingfisher	Little Friarbird	Grey-crowned Babbler
Yellow Thornbill	Silvereye	Blue-faced Honeyeater
Purple-backed Wren	Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [flyover]	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater
Yellow-throated Miner	Apostlebird	Grey Fantail
Crested Pigeon	Red Wattlebird	

Max O'Sullivan

Square-tailed Kite – Cuba Forest outing 16 November 2019



At the club outing to the above red gum forest we were having morning tea beside the river when a raptor circled low overhead. It circled several times checking us out and we could get a reasonably clear but brief view of it and Phillip Williams managed a good photo. My impression was that it must be a **Square-tailed Kite** which is not often seen in our area. I noticed the characteristic whitish face and reddish body but the most noticeable thing was its long fingers at the end of the wings. The lack of a square tail was not obvious as the bird looked very ragged there with feathers missing and there was no black bar at the end

which is also the characteristic feature of this bird. However, once Phillip sent his photo to me, it was clearly the bird in question and the tail indicates that the bird was in moult or else, hopefully, it was nesting. The photo shows clearly the fingers on the end of the wings has the barring which is another identifying feature of this species.

Max O'Sullivan

Common Bronzewing nest 22 November 2019 West Wyalong

At the malleefowl mound monitoring in the West Wyalong area recently, our group Ellene, Margrit and myself were walking in low re-growth bush when a bird exploded from the ground beside us. It flew about 200m away and landed on the ground in low scrub. My impression was of a pigeon and I assumed it to be a **Common Bronzewing**. I saw where it flew from and could see a white egg under a small tuft of grass. On close inspection, we found the very neat nest on the ground contained a chick and an egg. I was puzzled as I had never read of or known that these pigeons nest on the ground.

When I got home, none of my field guides mentioned this and I asked Keith Hutton what he thought about it. He consulted his HANZAB books and reported that there was a reference in there of these birds nesting on the ground but that they normally nest in trees or thick bushes. There was thick bush nearby so I was intrigued that the bird built its nest on the ground. The only other pigeon I know to do this is the **Brush Bronzewing** but this spot is well out of their range of coastal heathland and adjoining forest areas.

This 'discovery' was a revelation to me which just goes to show you can never assume anything where birds are concerned.

Max O'Sullivan



**** COMING EVENTS ****

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

12 December Thursday **Monthly Meeting** will be held at Fivebough Wetlands
 A short walk followed by a quick meeting and supper. Bring a cuppa and plate to share.
 Meet at the Petersham Rd car park at 6pm.
Contact: Graham or Dione Russell 0428 536290 (Dione) or
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.

2020

2 February Friday **World Wetlands Day**
 This year's theme - **WETLAND BIODIVERSITY: WHY IT MATTERS.**
 Share and raise awareness

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

13 February Thursday **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St.,
 Leeton commencing at 7pm.
Topic: to be decided.
Contact: Graham or Dione Russell 0428 536290 (Dione) or
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.

15 February Saturday A twilight meeting for a walk followed by nibbles and chinwag
Contact: Graham or Dione Russell 0428 536290 (Dione) or
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

Other events

17-20 April **South East Australian Naturalists' Association Inc (SEANA)**
Friday to Monday **Autumn Camp 2020 in South West Victoria**
 Hosted by Hamilton Field Naturalists Club Inc
 Autumn is a good time to visit for birds, fungi and geological interests.
 Further details available from Rowena Whiting 02 6953 2612

11-20 September **Australian Naturalist Network Annual Get-together**
Friday to Sunday is being hosted by Stanthorpe Field Naturalists Club
Explore Queensland's Granite Belt with local field naturalists
 Further details available from Rowena Whiting 02 6953 2612

Glossy Black Cockatoo feathers (male above, female below)
 found at "Yarrabimbi", Colinarooie Road - Margrit Martin



Malleefowl feather
 Ellene Schnell

