

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



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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



Juvenile Peregrine Falcon and its perch

**Photographed by Phil Tenison
just out of Griffith near some
rice paddocks**

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CONTRIBUTIONS

**For the March 2020 issue by
Wednesday 4 March
To Rowena Whiting
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***Twilight Outing to
"Sunshower" near Darlington
Point followed with a barbecue***

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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 2020

and another year of field natting, sharing our observations, participating in and contributing to the club activities. I hope everyone has enjoyed their break and not too dismayed by the disastrous damage done by the bushfires on our natural habitats. The long haul to recovery has begun. Hopefully we can organise some trips to see it progressing and some of the flora that only appears following a fire. Ideas for field trips and for speakers at our meetings are always welcome.

You may like to know that the centipede image in the December issue was the Scutigera centipede, *Theuropoda* sp albeit very common though rather pretty. We have our Friends of Grasslands folk in Canberra to thank for that identification.

With my thanks to those members who responded to my plea for copy so promptly.

Enjoy this month's read, Rowena.



Fivebough Wetlands, MFN meeting on 12 December 2019

Our December meeting took the form of an evening visit to the Fivebough Wetlands where we were able to observe a fair number of birds including 11 Brolgas and a Pectoral Sandpiper. Back at the picnic area we indulged in a variety of cheeses, nuts and slices and watched the new moon rise.

Max has provided this bird list.

Pelican	Brolga	Great Egret	White-faced Heron
Royal Spoonbill	Glossy Ibis	Black Swan	Yellow-billed Spoonbill
Grey Teal	Eurasian Coot	Dusky Moorhen	Straw-necked Ibis
Purple Swamphen	Masked Lapwing	Red-kneed Dotterel	Australian White Ibis
Red-capped Plover	Marsh Sandpiper	Pectoral Sandpiper	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
Wood Sandpiper	Black-winged Stilt	Silver Gull	Australian Shelduck
Whiskered Tern	Crested Pigeon	Galah	Australian Spotted Crake
Red-rumped Parrot	Welcome Swallow	Pee-wee	Black-tailed Native-hen
Purple-backed Wren	Superb Wren	Magpie	Australian Reed Warbler
Little Raven	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike		

Fish have Feelings, Too! A Lament

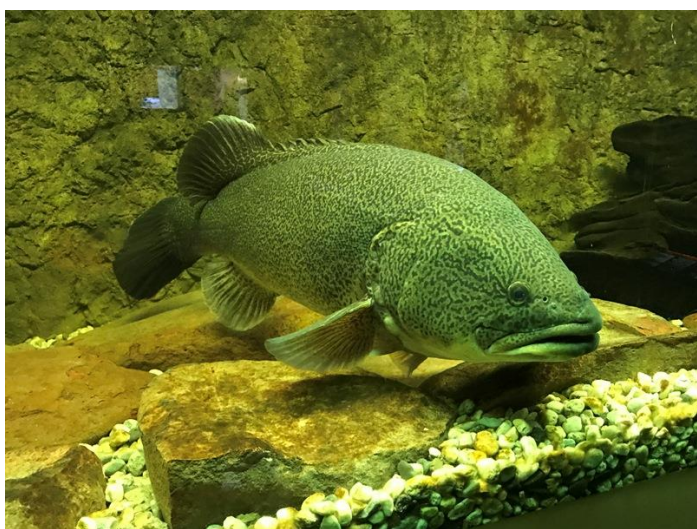
Where to go on a field trip in high-Summer when the temperature hits the mid-40s? Nella knew. The Narrandera Fisheries Centre, that's where.

We emerged from the white-hot glare of the carpark into the cool of the John Lake Visitors Centre, where we were welcomed by the affable Trish Evans. Both affable *and* informative, as it turned out.

After a talk, she inappropriately gave us a choice of going outside to observe the fish feeding; or of watching a video in the air-conditioned theatre. To our collective shame, we chose the latter. Though in our defence, the video was very good, created, a few years back, with the help of the pupils of Narrandera Public School.

The Visitors Centre is worth the trip for itself alone, with interesting freshwater marine displays, informative posters, and photos – and a turtle/tortoise (?) touch tank.

One impressive specimen was the exoskeleton of a lobster-sized Murray Crayfish attached forlornly to a mounting board. To my mind, the legal or otherwise harvesting of these wondrous crustaceans – and many other rare and imperiled river-dwellers – should be banned.



Agro – image from Narrandera tourism website

But best of all was the well-maintained Aquarium, with many rarely-encountered creatures, both finned and otherwise, swimming about or just resting. The ultimate denizen of this cool, dim world was in the largest tank of all. And his name was Agro.

This colossus was a 25-year-old Murray Cod; one which had been actually born at the Centre. My joy turned to sadness when I recalled the last time (on TV) that I had seen such a fish – as, just a year ago, they were hauled by the tonne, dead and corrupted, out of the Menindee Lakes. Thankfully, one vital function of the Fishery is fish rescue.

As I left, I caught the eye of that villain of our inland waterways, a large carp, suspended in a state of near-inertia, regarding me suspiciously.

Then we embarked on the 100 metres walk through the heat to The Hatchery. Here we were met again by coolness, this time in the form of lots of drip-drip-dripping water and wet concrete. In the lines of aerated tanks we could peer into, the millions of fry born each year spend their first safe and happy days on this earth.

We were led around by a man of encyclopaedic knowledge of our treasured (or should be) freshwater river and wetland ecologies. A reassuringly rigorous science, overlaid by deep empathy for his tiny charges, was at the core of everything he explained or demonstrated.

Then the best of all; in the Laboratory we lined up like eager schoolchildren to peer through the microscope. The first viewing was of a single one-day-old hatchling, complete with ventrally-attached yolk (really oil) sac. What a privilege!

Next was a pipette squirt of dirty dam water. What's to see in that? Well, a great deal, indeed. This droplet contained thousands of microscopic protozoa busily swimming around, prior to becoming fish food. Many of these could be identified by photos on the pinboard in front of us.

Much of the piscine biomass produced by the Hatchery is released into some of the big dams in New South Wales, such as Blowering and Wyangala. Apparently, income from fishing licences is earmarked to the Centre for this purpose. So we have a closed loop of licences paying the Hatchery to restock the dams so that the anglers can come and take them out again.

"Any questions?" asked Mine Host, rather unwisely, as it turned out.

In my infant-like naiveté, which I usually consider a charming aspect of my nature, I asked.

“Why don’t the fish just breed in the lakes/dams so that they don’t have to be restocked at all?”

Alas, before the sentence was out of my mouth, I knew the answer.

“These are all river-evolved fish; their breeding needs are for sunlight and running water. Dams are mostly uniformly deep, dark and cold.” he patiently explained.

No more questions from me, then.

On our return to the Visitors Centre, I ducked into the Aquarium, alone, to say goodbye to Agro. As we touched - fingers to nose - through the glass, there was a wordless but no less eloquent communication between us – the innominate but profound kind.

Apart from all the rest - and there was a plenitude of rich experience - for me that momentary but momentous meeting made the whole trip worthwhile.

Alan Whitehead

The Search for Hawkweed Continues

[See Margrit’s article in the March 2019 issue for her detailed description of the program and her participation last summer. A copy is on our website. Ed]

The invasive Orange Hawkweed *Hieracium aurantiacum* was first discovered in Kosciuszko National Park in 2003. It wasn’t until 2009 that a control program was initiated and in 2012 a dedicated position was created to help run it. Today a well developed support team exists, made up of full time staff, volunteers and contractors. Together with the introduction of innovative detection tools (drones, detection dogs) they have monitored, recorded and mapped many findings as well as discovering the best methods for detection and eradication. Timing is essential to stop the plant from spreading. New sites for surveying are often added by either accidental findings or through computer modelling which tries to work out where seeds might be dispersing using prevailing winds.

In the 2012/13 season, the area surveyed totalled 232 ha, and has steadily increased in successive years. In the 2018/19 season, the area surveyed had increased to 1289 ha, following the

introduction of Drones (882 ha) and detection dogs (9.5 ha).

Every site has to be monitored until no Hawkweed is found, and they will be continually checked for a further 5-7 years to account for seed longevity. A few of the first reported Hawkweed sites are now over 7 years Hawkweed free.

Since the beginning of the program, 97 volunteers have contributed to around 2,182 hours of surveillance - maybe this this includes **you!**

Margrit Martin

PS: The control program had to be cancelled in January 2020 because of fires and associated dangers.

For more information go to <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/volunteer-activities/hunting-hawkweed> or talk to Margrit. Ed



**Flower of the Hawkweed
Scouring the tussock fields on Kosciusko**



Here are a couple of links you may like have a look at...

Narrandera Landcare did a survey in mid-January at the wetlands when it was dry. The results can be found here [here](#). The Wetlands are full now and we can expect over 30 species.

Malleefowl footage from December 2019 <https://10daily.com.au/news/australia/a191218zfvdl/quite-amazing-rare-sighting-offers-hope-for-critically-endangered-bird-that-cant-flee-fire-20191218>

Seasonal dispersal of birds from our area

It is always of interest to notice how birds move within Eastern Australia at various times of the year. In this article I am not referring to the Migratory Wading Birds that we know about but local Australian species.

At certain times some species are relatively easy to locate yet at other times they can't be found locally. A perfect example of this is the **Superb Parrot**. They arrive in Leeton in early Spring and are seen in town and around the district, especially along the river, in large numbers. To me it is a joy to see their return and to know that they, until recent years, were on the "Vulnerable" list with numbers in decline in the late nineties. Fortunately after a number of good breeding years their numbers have increased and they are now considered less so. At this time of year mid to late February they leave the area and are more difficult to locate – especially in the winter months. After a successful breeding season they will seek a food source where ever they can, often appearing in areas where they are not usually seen – like Nericon for example where Neil Palframan reported them for the first time this season.

They are still about but from now on they are difficult to locate although in the past year or so small numbers are able to be found all year if you look hard enough in the right places – like at Yanco Reserve or the Leeton Golf Course.

Other species that seem to leave the area at various times during the year but usually turn up in the Spring are such birds as **Corellas**, both Little and Long-billed, **Cuckoos**, Horsfield's, Black-eared and Fan-tailed in particular, **Honeyeaters**, Painted, Black, Pied and White-fronted, **Woodswallows**, White-browed and Black-faced, and **Olive-backed Orioles**.

It is not clear exactly where some of these birds go but, in general, there are two types of migration patterns within Australia – those that tend in a North-South direction and those that tend more to an East-West movement. Although with the present drought any changes are unpredictable with some birds heading for the coast and also because of the bushfires some coastal species turning up inland.

Perhaps the best examples of East-West movement has been seen this year in the numbers of **Crimson Chats** and **White-winged Trillers** seen locally – something that has been unexpected when in the past only a few members of these species are seen. The same can be said for **Songlarks**, both Rufous and Brown which are being reported more frequently this summer.



Brown Songlark (top) showing breeding patch on chest – Phil Tenison
White-winged Trillers female on left – Phil Tenison
Male on right – Kathy Tenison

Winter movement also occurs to our area in numbers of **Pied Currawongs** turning up in autumn. In previous years, Narrandera was their main haunt but in the last two years large numbers are being reported in the Leeton area with numbers of birds also at Binya State Forest and even Griffith this past winter.

Other winter migrations occur with the **Robins**, mainly Flame and Scarlet which turn up locally in small numbers but can be located with a bit of effort. Both Fivebough and Evans Smyles Road are often the best places to see **Flame Robins** whilst **Scarlets** tend more to the hills around the area.

Finally, the North-South migration is about to start with species such as **Rainbow Bee-eaters, Dollarbirds, Fairy Martins** and **Sacred Kingfishers** getting ready to head north for the winter. None of these birds can be found in mid-year locally. **Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes**, whilst still about in small numbers in summer return in larger groups in the autumn.

A bird of interest is the **Silvereye** which is common but in the winter, the most common sub-species is the Tasmanian form with its rufous flanks. They seem to replace the mainland form which head further north.

The above only covers a proportion of birds that come and go at various times of the year from our area and is not meant to be a definitive list nor an accurate assessment of just where the birds go nor when they leave the area for whatever reason best known to them. These are personal observations based on my own experience of bird movements throughout the year.

Max O'Sullivan



Rainbow Bee-eater (top) and Sacred Kingfisher by Kathy Tenison

Visits to Binya State Forest on 12th (Neil) and 13th (Max) December 209

Neil was headed to Galah Dam to check it out and stopped just before Galah Road near the intersection with the road to Binya Lookout and saw the following birds in a matter of minutes of arriving – an example of a feeding flock as we've heard about since our trip to Sri Lanka in July. After recording the list below, he went on to Galah Dam itself and although full of water very few birds were about. On the return to the very active spot all the birds he'd seen earlier had dispersed with only the Woodswallows still about.

Neil's list:

Budgerigar	Masked Woodswallow	White-browed Woodswallow	Mulga Parrot
Yellow Thornbill	Western Gerygone	Grey Shrike-thrush	White-browed Babbler
Speckled Warbler	Red-capped Robin	Rufous Whistler	Peaceful Dove
Tree Martin	Grey Fantail	Willie Wagtail	White-winged Triller
Pied Honeyeater	Spiny-cheeked H/e	Mistletoebird	
Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike			

When Neil told me about the birds he'd seen, I made a trip there the next morning and added the following to the list. Needless to say I didn't see all of the birds Neil recorded – I didn't get the budgies!

My extras list:

Splendid Wren	Black-eared Cuckoo	Inland Thornbill	Buff-rumped Thornbill
Chestnut-rumped Thornbill	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Black Honeyeater (f)	Black Kite
Striped Honeyeater (H)	Common Bronzewing	Silvereye	Striated Pardalote (H)

Max O'Sullivan

Narrandera “Town of Trees”

‘Till recently, the entrance signs to Narrandera, with their promising “Town of Trees” sub-line, did not disappoint the glare-weary visitor. Alas, some new-team Philistines arbitrarily decided that the town was no longer a “Town of Trees”, and the words were removed.

However, Narrandera is indeed a small inland sea of green in an ocean of aridity (250-500mm rainfall p.a.). But how many trees? Many more, and of more varieties, than one would expect, as it turns out.

To have plentiful trees, a town has to have lots of spare space. In Narrandera this is in the form of inspired town planning from its 19th century designers, who created wonderfully generous street widths and verges. Some of the leafy boulevards are even blessed with wide centre park-like lane divisions. Talk about generous.

History tells us that these spacious avenues were purely practical. Built as they were to accommodate the great wool wagons which were required to pass easily - due to being unable to reverse! Also, the canny townscapers sensibly created larger than normal house-building sites – allowing for more and bigger trees!

Whatever, the sprawling spaces permitted the early townsfolk and their council to plant legion large street trees, like the avenues of shady spreading English Planes, with insouciant abandon. This de facto town planning in a world which was largely unfamiliar with the concept even preceded nearby Leeton and Griffith, both designed, half a century later, by world-famous landscape architect, Walter Burley Griffin. (I propose the heretical conjecture that the great American visited Narrandera and purloined many of its wonderful streetscape ideas prior to designing the other two towns!)

In any case, Narrandera has some of the most beautiful avenues of street trees of any inland New South Wales town.

Added to this great, green biomass is the resplendent variety of street trees in Narrandera; not just exotics, like the Planes, but many Australian natives as well. At almost any time of the year one can admire the beauty of honeyeaters and parrots feeding and squabbling in flowering eucalypts. These might be various bloodwoods, with their dense, creamy blossom, or the equally flower-endowed melaleucas over-arching many of our wide, open spaces. Some of these trees are even included on the Australian Big Tree register; in particular a massive Lemon-scented Gum in the St Thomas school playground, the biggest in Australia!

Best of all, perhaps, are the warm-spectrum bounty of the dozens of different coloured-flowering gums. These are found all year round in shades of cerise, tangerine, hot pink, burgundy, crimson, orange, scarlet and yellow. They provide a rich and continuing source of pollen and nectar for a wide community of birds and animals. Among the best are many tall, pink-flowering Ironbarks.

Then there are the remarkable dry country mallee plantings. Most of these come from southern and western Australia, so are a pleasant surprise to see flourishing right here in Narrandera. These trees (large shrubs, really) have massive flowers quite disproportionate to their size. They come in shades from strawberry red to lemon yellow, each bloom as large as a rose, which subsequently sets a massive amphora-like gumnut.

Generous too with their nectar and pollen are the native Tea Trees, Grevillias, Bottlebrush, Callistemon and Banksias; yet again co-operatively spreading their abundant flowering throughout the seasons.

Then there are those unique spectral floral displays which one awaits with great expectations; some glorious examples being Oleanders, Crepe Myrtles and Jacarandas. These last flower in November, and Narrandera has an impressive collection, whether group-planted or as single breathtaking specimens.

Though these are not alone in the late Spring beauty street parade; flowering also at this time are Australia’s own Silky Oaks and Illawarra Flames (relative of our endemic Kurrajongs). To observe this trinity together, as one often can, with their primary colours of blue-purple, gold and scarlet, is an arboreal revelation. All three, oddly, are rainforest trees (the Jacaranda from the Amazon), which share the curious property of reverse deciduation; they lose their leaves in the Spring! Another rainforest tree that can be found in our streets is the sweetly-perfumed Native Frangipani. Once supplied by the Forestry, they do surprisingly well here.

Not only is Narrandera blessed with ultra-wide esplanades, but with generous parks and other public spaces. Here again many interesting trees abound, like the two voluptuous Bottle Trees (again related to

the Kurrajong) in Marie Bashir Park. These are unique Australian natives; as are many of the pines, like the Hoop and Bunyah, which reach for the sky in many parts of town.

What they may lack in height, they make up for in spread are the deep-green, heavily-fruited Moreton Bay Figs – also natives. One of the best of these can again be found in the playground of St Joseph’s. Rivalling this beauty is the tree over-arching the aptly-named Fig Tree Motel, which sadly seems to be in dire straights (the tree, not the motel!), with many of its gigantic branches dying. Let’s hope it can be saved.

“Gratitude is not only one of the 10 Precious Virtues, but the mother of all virtues.” so saith the Roman philosopher, Cicero. How grateful we should all be to the original town planners of Narrandera, whose foresight and effort provides us today with room to move and breathe. How grateful, too, we should be to every soul who planted even a single tree in the previous fifteen decades.

Over the century or so of a tree’s life it can barely be imagined how much benefit it has provided to animal and man, both in practical terms and the aesthetic. In fact, the tree you plant today may one day provide shade and pleasure to someone saying ‘thank you’ to you the planter. A nice thought.

While on pleasure, think of that provided by the town’s many deciduous trees, such as the Liquid Ambars, Claret Ashes and Golden

Elms. Yet, following their provision of Summer shade, and later a spectacular Autumn colour display, they considerably deciduate to permit the warmth and light of the sun to stream in over Winter.

We even have some of the more rare deciduous trees spot-planted around town, one spectacular species being the fast-growing Paulownia. One can hardly believe the dinner plate-size (up to 60cm wide in young trees) and butter-yellow radiance of its giant Autumn leaves. This is indeed a ‘sacred’ tree, being known in its original home in the Orient as the Phoenix or Empress Tree, with legends abounding of its life-affirming properties. Who knew?

Perhaps I’ve left the best till last, but only because it is the iconic tree of not only Narrandera, but the entire Big River Country. This is the majestic River Red Gum. These ligneous giants can be found mainly along the canal, river and other protected areas. The River Red Gum is in fact the anchor tree for the entire ecological community of the region, supporting a myriad of bird and animal life, from Boobook Owls to Redhead Flying Foxes to Koalas. Fortunately, our 19th century forebears wisely preserved the large River Red Gum forest at The Common south of town, which acts not only as an arboreal buffer to an otherwise largely treeless, desiccated landscape, but by putting the stamp of veracity on the town’s – sadly now erstwhile! – signage: Narrandera, “Town of Trees”.

Alan Whitehead



From top: Eucalyptus blossom,
Giant Crimson,
Whipped cream blossoms of Bloodwood

Environmental Water at Yanga

Below is an explanation of what is happening in Yanga Lake from an update by EWAG contributed last October by Nella Smith. Yanga Lake is now dry except a pre existing dam. 750 turtles were taken out of this dam where they had gathered and were relocated. Most of the dead fish were carp. Charlie Carp took out a lot of the carp for fertiliser.

Summary statement - Yanga Lake

Yanga Lake provides important habitat and food for native fish, waterbirds and other wildlife.

In 2017-18, water for the environment provided the trigger for native fish to breed in the lake. There, they provided a valuable source of food for a range of waterbirds including pelicans, cormorants and darters. The lake is now drying down and is likely to be dry before Christmas. The sequence of events has demonstrated the importance of floodplain wetlands to the lifecycle of native fish and as important feeding sites for waterbirds.

With drought conditions impacting the majority of NSW, DPIE must target remaining water for the environment at key refuge sites to support the long-term survival of native fish populations, waterbirds and other wildlife. This year, Tala Lake and several other deep creeks will receive water for the environment to support native fish populations and manage the risks of a second dry year.

Why is Yanga Lake drying out ?

Natural floods or managed deliveries of water for the environment are needed to maintain water levels in Yanga Lake. The ongoing drought means that scarce water for the environment cannot be made available to all the lakes and wetlands in the valley which need water. Given its large size, significant capacity, combined with difficult logistics for water delivery, Yanga Lake hasn't been identified to receive water for the environment at this time.

Are there mostly carp left in the Lake?

Yes. Ongoing monitoring of numerous Lowbidgee lakes and lagoons indicates that the vast majority of residual fish in Yanga Lake are large carp. There are also a small number of adult Golden perch and several species of turtles (which will hopefully walk to the river).

What happened to all the young Golden Perch that bred in the lake in 2017/18?

Ongoing waterbird and fish monitoring indicates that fish eating waterbirds such as pelicans, cormorants and darters fed on the vast majority of juvenile Golden perch that grew out in Yanga Lake after the 2017 environmental flow.

What is the long term plan to manage refuge sites for native fish in the Lower Murrumbidgee

This year Tala Lake and several nearby deep creeks will receive water for the environment to support native fish populations. To manage the risks of a second dry year, water will also be set aside or "carried over" to next water year to again manage levels in these same group of refuge sites.

If water was to be made available for Yanga Lake now, there would be none available for carryover, so a continuation of dry conditions would potentially result in all refuge sites drying up next year.

Where else is water for the environment being used for native fish?

Up to 10 lagoons between Narrandera and Carrathool are receiving water for the environment during spring and summer this year primarily to provide habitat for native fish and turtles.

When will Yanga lake fill again ?

Yanga Lake remains as a high priority site for Water for the environment. It just happens to be the largest single watering site in the valley. When water resources improve the newly reconfigured Gayini Nimmie-Caira wetlands will provide more efficient delivery paths to Yanga Lake.



Yanga Lake with water and now currently dry.
A feature of the wet/dry regime of our river systems

A Change of Scenery

Each January, Rowena and I have a week away with the Victorian Nature Photography Group. Most years the venue has been in alpine country, but this year it was Portland on Victoria's far west coast. To break the journey we overnighted at Ararat and this gave us the opportunity to spend time visiting Peshurst Volcanoes Discovery Centre – well worth a visit with displays that could compete with any capital city museum. Peshurst is at the foot of Mt Rouse, a volcanic cone that rises 120 metres above the volcanic plain that covers most of south-west Victoria.



A bushfire at Mt Eccles prevented us visiting there so we cut across country to see the Lava Tumuli that are between Wallacedale and Byaduk. Tumuli or lava blisters occur (very rarely, only a few are known around the world) when a lava flow spreads over small wet spots. The steam generated pushes up domes in the solidifying crust.

Incidentally, while we took 2 days to get to Portland, Robbie, the first bittern fitted with a satellite tracker, did virtually the same journey non-stop!!



The prize attraction for naturalists in Portland is the Gannet colony, the only one on mainland Australia. Here local volunteers conduct guided visits close to the colony, taking you through the protecting fence. It was wonderful to be only a few metres away from the nesting birds – once you got used to the stale fish smell!

Most of the week was spent exploring the rugged coastline or the various forests that surround Portland. Like most of southern Australia, this year has been exceptionally dry so flowers were not their best. Consequently bird and insect life



was diminished. We had our younger granddaughter with us and her young eyes and enthusiasm uncovered a good number of insects to photograph – or try to!

We were fortunate to join the Portland Field Naturalists on their regular Wednesday morning walks. This time it was along part of the Great South-west Walking route just outside the town. We were delighted to be shown two types of Hyacinth Orchids and a tall Leek Orchid as well as the various other observations that the locals were pleased to show us.

Oh too soon it was time to return home, a week of camaraderie and fresh sights to remember.

Eric Whiting

**From top: Cape Bridgewater coast line
Tumuli at Byaduk
A section of the Gannet colony with a couple
of immature birds
Colourful Bugs**



MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

Orange Chat [2m 4f]	Chat Alley via Lake Cargelligo	07/12/19	Max O'Sullivan
Spotted Bowerbird	Rankins Springs near the caravan park	07/12/19	Max O'Sullivan
Black Falcon [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	08/12/19	Keith Hutton
Black-tailed Native-hen [69]	Fivebough Wetlands	08/12/19	Keith Hutton
Whiskered Tern [26]	Fivebough Wetlands	08/12/19	Keith Hutton
Collared Sparrowhawk [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	08/12/19	Keith Hutton
Red-capped Plover [25]	Fivebough Wetlands	10/12/19	Keith Hutton
Red-necked Stint [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	10/12/19	Keith Hutton
Curlew Sandpiper [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	11/12/19	Keith Hutton
Budgerigar [3]	Binya State Forest on way to Galah Dam	12/12/19	Neil Palframan
Pied Honeyeater	Binya State Forest on way to Galah Dam	12/12/19	Neil Palframan
Pectoral Sandpiper [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	12/12/19	MFN Group
Brolga [11]	Fivebough Wetlands	12/12/19	MFN Group

In the past weeks, the number of Brolgas has been slowly increasing from 5 for weeks and then 7 and then 9 and now 11!

Black-eared Cuckoo [1]	Binya State Forest on way to Galah Dam	13/12/19	Max O'Sullivan
Black Honeyeater [fem]	Binya State Forest on way to Galah Dam	13/12/19	Max O'Sullivan

See Neil and my full list elsewhere in the newsletter – such a productive spot with basically nothing coming in to Galah Dam itself.

Freckled Duck [2]	Campbell Swamp – first for a while	14/12/19	Max O'Sullivan
Square-tailed Kite [1]	Barren Box boundary – circling overhead	16/12/19	Neil Palframan
Black Falcon [2]	Barren Box boundary – circling overhead	16/12/19	Neil Palframan
Emu [22]	Barren Box outside in wheat field	16/12/19	Neil Palframan
Whiskered Tern [small flock]	Koonadan Rd, Leeton	16/12/19	Penny Williams
Black Kite [27]	Irrigation Way near the Golden Apple	30/12/19	Keith Hutton

The kites were circling over a eucalypt plantation feeding on cicadas.

Common (Indian) Myna [2]	Cnr Brobenah and Lonnie Rds, Leeton	01/01/20	Penny Williams
Brolga [13]	Fivebough Wetlands	01/01/20	Keith Hutton
White-fronted Chat [20+]	Fivebough Wetlands	01/01/20	Keith Hutton
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper [100+]	Fivebough Wetlands	01/01/20	Keith Hutton
Wood Sandpiper [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	01/01/20	Keith Hutton
Plumed Whistling Duck [2]	Narrandera Wetlands	05/01/20	Glenn Currie
Hooded Robin [pr]	Galah Dam, Binya State Forest	05/01/20	Max O'Sullivan
White-winged Triller [8]	Galah Dam, Binya State Forest	05/01/20	Max O'Sullivan
Crimson Chat [5]	Spring Hill, Cocoparra National Park	05/01/20	Max O'Sullivan
Plumed Whistling Duck [11]	Dam at the Leeton Waste Depot	06/01/20	Max O'Sullivan
Banded Lapwing [4 Ad + 4 juv]	Dam on McKenzie Rd off Colinroobie Rd	09/01/20	Max O'Sullivan
Blue-faced Honeyeater [2]	Cutler Ave, Griffith	13/01/20	Virginia Tarr
Mistletoebird [male]	City Park, Griffith	15/01/20	Virginia Tarr
Glossy Black Cockatoo [17]	Yarrabimbi Colonroobie Rd, Leeton	16/01/20	Andrew Thompson
Little Eagle [light phase]	Fivebough Carpark circling overhead	16/01/20	Keith Hutton
Banded Lapwing [20]	Property at Yoogali in front garden	18/01/20	Phil Tenison
Peregrine Falcon	On power pole Irrigation Way, Yoogali	18/01/20	Phil Tenison
Magpie Goose [30-40]	In a paddock north of Campbell Swamp	22/01/20	Neil Palframan

Neil reported there were a couple of hundred Black Duck also in the paddock with the geese.

Glossy Black Cockatoo [5]	Tully's Hill, Leeton	28/01/20	Peter Draper
Rainbow Bee-eater	Tully's Hill, Leeton	28/01/20	Peter Draper

Bee-eaters are being reported in bigger groups of late indicating they are preparing to head north.

White-fronted Chat [27m & 1f]	Fivebough Wetlands	31/01/20	Keith Hutton
Freckled Duck [2]	Fivebough Wetlands – settling ponds	31/01/20	Keith Hutton
Brolga [20]	Fivebough Wetlands	03/02/20	Max O'Sullivan

Brolgas have been at Fivebough in varying numbers since early year which is quite unusual for them to remain locally for such a long period.

Marsh Sandpiper [10+]	Fivebough Wetlands	03/02/20	Max O'Sullivan
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Max O'Sullivan

****** COMING EVENTS ******

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

- 13 February Thursday** **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7pm.
Topic: Vince Brucello will show some of his nature videos including his new production of the Fivebough Wetlands made for tourism promotion
Contact: Graham or Dione Russell 0428 536290 (Dione) or
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- 15 February Saturday** **Vince Brucello has invited us to his property "Sunshower"**
The lagoon there received environmental water this summer.
The aim is to do a mini survey of the birds etc on the property.
Meet at the Waddi Service Station, Darlington Point at 5pm.
Bring nibbles and BYO meat and salads for a barbecue by the lagoon.
Contact: Eric or Rowena Whiting 02 6953 2612 or 0429 726 120 or
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com
- 14 – 17 February** **eBird International Bird Count**
This follows the same rules as the Australian one. Details can be found at birdcount.org. They also have a photo contest.
- 4 March Wednesday** **Copy for the March newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**
Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com. Phone: 6953 2612.
- 12 March Thursday** **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7pm.
Topic: Travelling Stock Routes
Guest Speaker: **Peter Beal** Peter is team leader for TSRs at Local Land Services
Contact: Graham or Dione Russell 0428 536290 (Dione) or
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- Other events**
- 17-20 April**
Friday to Monday **South East Australian Naturalists' Association Inc (SEANA)**
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**
Friday to Sunday **Australian Naturalist Network Annual Get-together**
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