

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



April 2020 - Issue #280

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



One of the water pools along Jacks Creek swarming with tadpoles
Barry Allen.
(insert) Tadpoles
- Eric Whiting

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For the May 2020 issue by
Wednesday 6 May

To Rowena Whiting

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*Join the backyard brigade
and share your observations
with other members
via email*

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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 April

Well, what a difference a month makes. In view of the current circumstances I asked our President if he would like to say something which he has done. We need to keep busy and make good use of this 'extra' time by keeping connected.

Happy reading, Rowena.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Today we hark back to a time when most folk lived, not in bustling cities, but in small isolated communities, with little or no contact with the outside world. Due to the Corona phenomenon, 2020 society has unexpectedly been compelled to revert to this Medieval lifestyle.

But we have the internet.

The meetings and marvellous outings of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists may, for the time being, have ceased, but at least we can still all communicate.

Back in the 1950s my nature-loving father once told me:

"As long as you're interested in the natural world, you need never be bored. Even in an ordinary backyard, if you look hard enough, you can always find something of interest."

In that spirit, I would like to initiate a continuous online Show and Tell.

Here members, from the gardens or surrounds of their newly besieged citadels, can observe nature's wonders, whether beautiful or bizarre.

In just a couple of paragraphs they can email their sightings (or hearings) to Rowena to be emailed to the members. This collection can be sent out perhaps a couple of times a week, with return comments adding to the interest.

So I'll make a start:

BLUE FACED HONEYEATERS

There are currently three Blue Faced Honeyeaters roosting in a large Claret Ash next to our front gate. At daybreak each day they awake and chortle away to each other, at times quite loudly, for some time, before alighting on our bird bath for a breakfast drink. Then off they fly to enjoy their day. Totally charming.

Alan Whitehead

DOUBLE BUT DIFFERENT

We all, for the first time this year clad in jumpers and jackets, assembled at 8.30am at Yenda for our Cocoparra Ranges outing on Saturday, March 13.

As I alighted from the car at Jacks Creek Picnic area, I was fanned by the feather-soft, pale green fronds of a Weeping Wilga - the 'weeping' being my personal descriptor of this beautiful native bush - bountifully budding for a late Winter blossoming. As the bright, windless Autumn day warmed up we set off on our looped walk.

On ascending the track we were presented with a western vista of glorious green, where a month or so prior there had been only brown. The recent rains had also brought forth an array of wildflowers – ever the opportunists. Among these were the profuse white Native Tobacco, and the less abundant but even lovelier Blue Pincushions – and golden Cluster Everlasting Daisies.

Further up the hill some of us gathered to contemplate why Wonga Vines always spiraled to the right as they climbed their supporting trees. Eric soon dismantled the “Only in the Southern Hemisphere.” furphy. “Most climbers do the same thing all over the world” he tactfully explained “In fact the answer could be found right down at the DNA level, where the double helix also has a right ascending spiral.”

When we reached the top of the 300 metre hill we gazed down on a gully formed by dramatic erosion over eons along a line of weakness. The slanted morning sun illuminated the wonderful ochreine (if it's not a word, it should be) pallet of terracottas, pinks, oranges and reds.

We were suitably awed to be standing among geologic formations, the Upper Devonian, of some 350 million years old. It was evident that the dense, heavy sandstones had suffered torturous faulting and folding in the relentless march northward of the great Australian tectonic plate.

It was the glimpse of still pools of water that quickened our descent to the valley floor. In the short time since the rains, life, both floral and faunal, had already occupied their various niches. The most endearing were the large tadpoles which shimmied away from me as I stooped to drink the clear, clean water. Ahhhh.

At several sites along the cliffs there were sizable guano falls which, Max assured us, were Peregrine Falcon nesting sites. This led to a discussion on the survival mechanisms of many if not most birds rarely revisiting nests which had been violated, especially by predators. By the amount of white staining on the rocks, these sites seem to have been secure for many years.

“Ten years?” I suggested.

“Possibly.” Max replied.

“A hundred even!”

“Mmmm.”

The rain had indeed been heavy, as there was quite a build-up of debris around the tree trunks on the valley floor; as well as mats of dried-out white foam. Perhaps the water even flooded a massive wombat burrow (more like a cave!) which was freshly excavated; probably, due to the evidence of clear spore, the previous evening.

The walk back to the parking lot was accompanied by the ubiquitous bell-like tones of a Grey Shrike Thrush, and the repetitive cheep – cheep – cheep - cheep of an Eastern Yellow Robin.

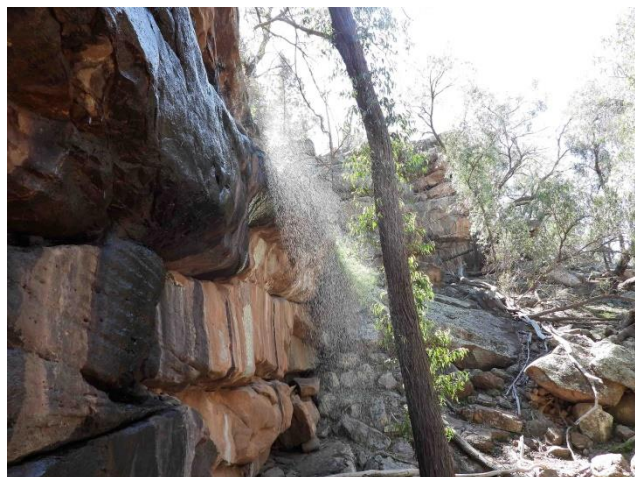
After morning tea we pressed on to Woolshed Flats. Here we were welcomed by a 'gathering' (my collective noun, rather than 'flock', for birds congregating in preparation for migration) of Rainbow Bee



Jacks Creek (top), Blue Pinchusion and a moth.

Eaters. This is probably the last time we'll hear these pretty little birds for six months or so as they depart for northern climes.

And speaking of climbs (sorry, not a great segue), ours was up the massive conglomerated boulders of the nearby – to put it charitably – 'waterfall'. The embedded river-worn pebbles were the largest I've seen in conglomerate rock, many over 5cm in diameter.

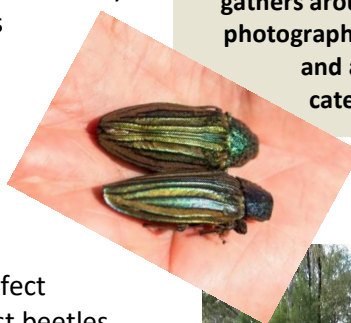


The whole area to me is a sedimentary sacred place.

On fossicking around these lithic marvels I spied a glint of gold among the rubble. Or was it emerald? Or topaz?

I had indeed hit pay dirt, in the form of a large beetle. It had been eviscerated by ants

Of huge interest the group gathers around to see and photograph jewel beetles and a loopa caterpillar



Woolshed Falls – Barry Allen

leaving the entire exoskeleton in perfect

condition. The animal was of more lineal form than most beetles, emphasized by the head-to-rear deep ridging along its elytra – not unlike a Leatherback Turtle.

But it was the metallic sparkle in the green-yellow spectrum of this splendid Coleopteran that so excited me as I scrambled down the track to show the others.

“Look what I ...”

But I was cut short by Margrit, who, holding out her hand, said.

“Look what I found.”

Yes, she had also discovered a beetle exactly the same as mine, but with the opposite but complementary spectrum; hers being mainly blue, violet and red! Double but different.

Placed together the radiant pair shone in the sun like the most precious of gems – in the full seven prismatic colours.



On returning to the car park, we descended from the gargantuan geologic - to a 2cm black caterpillar. Its beauty was only truly revealed when Margrit showed us (me at least) how to use binoculars as a magnifying glass. Merely look into the big end and go very close to the subject; as one would with a jeweller's lense. Only in this way could we appreciate the true splendour of the little creature, including fine dorsal hairs and a disproportionately large head. With its highly-defined yellow and black markings, it looked like a voodoo mask. I'm glad it was only the size of a tack head!

As I stepped back, I observed a cluster of half-a-dozen adult men and women enthusing over a tiny inchworm. Nature does that to you.

Alan Whitehead

A selection of flowering plants: from Left Austral Bugle, Mulga Grass, Smooth Goodenia, Bluebell and Stinging Pennywort



Cocoparras Bird List compiled by Max O'Sullivan

Jacks Creek:

Grey Shrike-Thrush	Grey Fantail	Eastern Yellow Robin	Galah
Yellow Thornbill	Rainbow Bee-eater	Mulga Parrot	Willie Wagtail
White-plumed Honeyeater	Grey Butcherbird (H)	Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo (H)	

Woolshed Flat Falls:

Rufous Whistler	Grey Shrike-Thrush	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
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Store Creek: Phil Tenison and I did a quick trip after Jacks Creek.

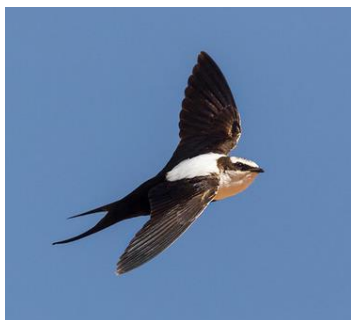
White-browed Babbler	Common Bronzewing	Peaceful Dove (H)
Grey Shrike-Thrush	Mallee Ringneck	Eastern Yellow Robin

On the road into Cocoparra:

Bluebonnet	Mulga Parrot	Red-rumped Parrot
Peewee	Magpie	White-winged Chough

Lake Cargelligo/Taleeban trip 28 March 2020

Just in case further restrictions might be announced by the Government at the end of the weekend I decided to do a solo trip to Lake Cargelligo to see what bird life was about. My first stop was at the parkland area near the Caravan Park in Rankins Springs in the hope that the **Spotted Bowerbird** might be about. No luck there unfortunately so I headed further north to Lake Cargelligo. First spot I wanted to visit was Chat Alley about 20km out of town on the road to Cobar. I was hoping for **Orange Chats** but after an



hour of searching, the only birds seen were **White-fronted Chat [4]**, **White-winged Wren [2males]** and a number of **Zebra Finch**. However, just as I was about to leave a pair of **White-backed Swallows** flew past so that was a good bonus. I decided not to go onto Round Hill this time but returned to the lakeside in town where I found a floating group of nine **Great Crested Grebe** very close to the boat ramp near the sailing club. They were just floating together as a small raft - a bit like the way **Hoary-headed Grebes** do but in much larger numbers usually.



Next stop was the Sewerage Ponds near the show ground but this proved pretty quiet with just the usual ducks we have here at Fivebough with the only new bird – a **Caspian Tern**. A pair of **Cockatiel** landed in a tree but that was all of interest.

I then drove back to Rankins Springs and headed for Taleeban Mining Reserve to check it out before returning home. I headed for the dam at the end of Anderson Lane where we saw **Crimson Chats** last club outing there last year sometime. The dam was almost half-full so I settled in the trees to see what came in to drink. After an hour, all that came in were **Peaceful Dove** and **Yellow-plumed Honeyeater**.

I went into the usual spot where we go in the reserve itself but it was very quiet. There was a little puddle of water in the dam there but nothing came in so I decide to head for home around 4pm.

Max O'Sullivan

White-backed Swallows – Mick Jury
Great Crested Grebe - Daniel McKeon
Yellow-plumed Honeyeater – Phillip Williams

From Meredith Billington **An upside to everything** – an article on line about the benefits of COVID 19 - <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/how-coronavirus-has-helped-the-planet.html>

An article from Australian geographic about birds returning to Menindee Lakes - <https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/news/2020/04/the-road-to-recovery-birds-are-returning-to-menindee-lakes/>

Travelling Stock Reserves

The guest speaker for our March meeting was **Peter Beal** Team Leader, Travelling Stock Reserves – TSRs, Local Land Services, talking on Travelling Stock Reserves .

In New South Wales there are about 750,000 ha in over 6,000 reserves now under the control of Local Land Services. The system of Stock Routes and associated over-nighting areas was formalised from the old droving routes for getting stock to markets in the populated coastal areas from the outback stations. With the rise in population during the Gold Rushes, droving became a big business,

For a long time management was invested in Pasture Protection Boards, the members of which were elected from local farmers. Boards were not tightly controlled and there were many cases of parcels of land being privatised by gentlemen’s agreements with no documentation – a legal nightmare now as boundaries often were not surveyed.

Boards were dissolved several years ago and LLS took over the management. Peter’s region covers nearly 90,000 ha in around 800 parcels of land. Quite enough if it only entailed managing stock movements (mostly emergency drought grazing now), but as land managers far more is involved.

Stock movements are regulated by a permit system to ensure separation of mobs, prevent overgrazing, and maintain biosecurity. Although neighbouring landholders are required to maintain their boundary fences, these need to be inspected along with the scores of kilometres of internal fencing. Stock also need watering points and these have to be maintained.

The original droving routes often followed aboriginal tracks so there are numerous cultural sites in TSR’s to be protected. As land managers LLS also has to maintain biodiversity (TSR’s are prime environmental corridors), and control pests and noxious weeds.

Stock Reserves are open to the public for passive recreation but camping is limited to drovers only and collecting firewood is strictly banned. As roads have been built within Stock Routes, misuse is easy and policing very difficult – LLS is reliant on the general public to report misuse (particularly with regard to rubbish dumping).

Of particular interest to us are the conservation projects being undertaken by LLS in Stock Reserves. Peter gave six examples of projects near to us: on Plains Wanderer in the Morundah area, Swift Parrots near Tarcutta, Squirrel Gliders near Wagga Wagga, Tumut Grevillea on the Goobagandra River, Serpentine Shrubby Woodland in Gobarralong TSR, and Sandhill Spider Orchid near Kamarah. With the latter a survey is proposed (with OEH) to be done next year. It is possible members could assist with this.

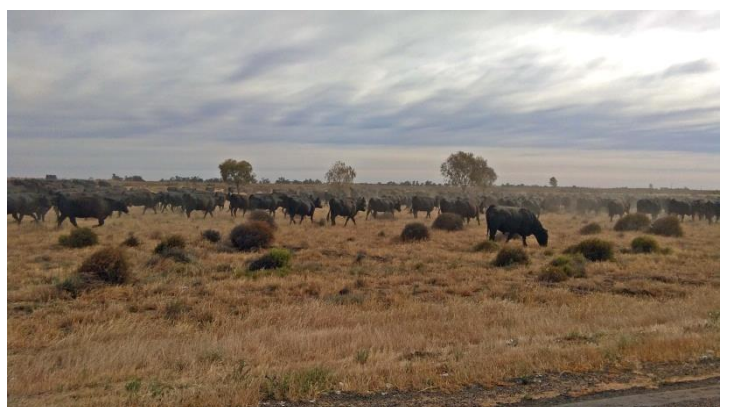
In spite of the magnitude of the work involved, Peter has only 5 Field Officers to assist him. (Does our urban-centric government realise the distances and amount of travel time involved?). We are therefore very grateful that Peter gave us the time to enlighten us on areas we have so taken for granted. Why have we not had TSR’s as venues for our outdoor program.

One final point – the talk was disrupted by members’ phones ringing, so discourteous to the speaker – our apologies Peter. When we resume our meetings would members please switch phones to silent.

Eric Whiting



**Travelling Stock Reserves –
Left: Coolah Lakeside, Narrandera-Barellan Road
Right: Cattle grazing near Booligool**



Orchids in Autumn

Since the Autumn rain we have seen emerging many species of plants that we haven't seen flowering for a few years. One group I am seeing are the Autumn terrestrial orchids which tend to flower in response to Autumn rains.

Pterostylis sp. aff. revoluta (Inland) Autumn greenhood (image right)

We haven't seen much of this Greenhood in the last two years but this year they have come up everywhere in the dry areas of box pine forests around here.

It is a handsome, large flowered greenhood, blooming in autumn. The large flower is green and white, with numerous parallel, longitudinal darker green lines. It has a long protruding tongue (labellum). They usually flower in Autumn and can be found in large groups.



Pterostylis parviflora Tiny greenhood (image left)

This is a slender plant in which the green flowers with reddish-brown tips face inwards, ie the entrance to the galea faces towards the stem. That must make it harder for the pollinator to find the entrance. It can be 5-60cm tall. This orchid tends to be found as singles in dry forests and can be fairly common.

Eriochilus cucullatus Parson's Bands (image right)

There is but one Eriochilus to be found around here. It is widespread and usually in colonies found on the wetter side of the hill. The ovate leaf usually doesn't develop until after the orchid has flowered. Flowers are white, pink or deeper pink, you can see that the petals resemble a clerical collar. One to five flowers can be found on stems 5-20cm tall. They usually flower from January to April depending on Autumn rain and are widespread and common.



Calochilus robertsonii (no image)

I only saw the long linear bluish green long channelled leaf with red near the base. These flower from Spring to Summer. I'll have to keep an eye on this one.

Genoplesium rufum Red Midge Orchid (image left)

This is a variable midge orchid with crowded red to green and chocolate flowers. It is tall and has a fine stem and can have up to 25 flowers which bloom from March to May. It is found in dry forests as singles and very widespread from the Tablelands to Griffith.



Nella Smith

Not so Leafless

I have two plants of *Acacia aphylla*, Leafless Wattle in my garden. Being close to a path they needed cutting back this year, fully expecting new growth to continue from the cut branches as normal. To my surprise some of the cut branches produced fully formed pinnate leaves.

I am aware that seedling wattles do have the first few leaves fully developed even if the normal pattern is to have phyllodes. To have them as regrowth on a supposedly totally leafless species was not expected at all. There must be genes to form leaves to be present, but what is the trigger to turn those genes off?



Eric Whiting

Backyard Findings and Member Profiles

From Glenn Currie. I took up Dione's suggestion and had a look around my backyard today. Lots of Crusader Bugs *Mictis profana* feeding on the *Senna sp.*. The ones with a cross are adults, the others are nymphs.



There was also a grasshopper - possibly *Macrotonas sp.*

Will keep looking in my backyard to see what I find. iNaturalist helped with Id'ing the Crusader Bugs. It hasn't been forthcoming with the grasshopper.

Member Profile - Glenn Currie

I joined MFN about two years ago.

I had been doing volunteer conservation work three years prior to that (simply because I had time to spare and it seemed like a worthy thing to do). Most of the work involved tree planting in nice places with great people. It was all very enjoyable but after a couple of years of ad-hoc volunteering, the work sparked an interest in what we were planting and why.



I joined my local Landcare group and my interest in "nature" grew. One day I met Eric at a wetlands event at Fivebough and he encouraged me to come to a MFN meeting.

I started going on outings, picking up bits of knowledge each time. The members are very helpful with sharing what they know.

My main interest is vegetation but I am slowly learning "birds". And when I come across some bug, frog, fungi, I go off on a tangent, do some research and wonder about how everything fits together.

From Betty Bradney. Hi, Rowena, what a good idea, to email things we found interesting.

Yesterday (29 March) I saw a big, heavily built light brown spider running madly across our car track and it appeared to be dragging something. I think it was a trapdoor spider, the sort with a mud lid to its home.

Suddenly it stopped and a wasp, (black with white speckles) darted out from under the spider and started attacking it. I chased the wasp away because I was on the spider's side. Sadly I was too late as the spider collapsed in a limp heap. The wasp must have already stung the spider when I first saw it and the wasp was hanging onto its victim waiting for the poison to take effect.

I went on with my gardening and when I passed the spot shortly after, the body was gone. The wasp must have waited for me to go so that she could lay her egg and then bury the egg with its food supply. The spider would have been two or three times the weight of the wasp.

Member Profile - Betty Bradney

Living in Narrandera after more than 20 years in Coleambally I joined a few things to try to fit in.

At a Narrandera Garden Club meeting, the guest speakers were Eric Whiting and Mike Schulz, topic 'glossy black cockatoos'. My daughter who was visiting said, "That sounds like something you would be interested in.", so I joined. The details are pretty fuzzy, but I clearly remember the last bit.

Nella Smith might have already been a member of Garden Club and I met Warwick Smith on our first outing. It might have been to see koalas on the common.



Backyard Jungle Sue Chittick-Dalton.

Just how lucky are we people who love birds. Despite the many reasons to curb my activities, I always have company. My yard contains Grevilleas, a huge Red bean Coffee Tree and a Lillypilly as well as an assortment of other flowering plants and shrubs plus 3 watering stations so the list of local birds is constant throughout the day. The Apostle birds are always squabbling over how many can fit in one water station. Only two rarely perch in my trees; the Major Mitchells and a resident Australian Hobby doing it's regular patrol, but daily they fly over my house. Does that count..?



Today, 30th March, Blackbirds, 3 separate families..always chasing each other, Yellow-throated Miners, Pied Butcherbirds, Australian Magpie, Magpie Lark, Red-wattle bird, Apostlebirds, Yellow Thornbills, Sparrows, Blue-faced honeyeaters who are fighting the Rainbow honeyeaters over the red berries of an Umbrella tree and my beloved Mallee Ringnecks and Twenty eight Parrots who are a constant in the Coffeebean tree. That is just today. Tomorrow could have changes. I just love where I live.

Member Profile - Sue Chittick-Dalton

In The Beginning

When my husband died in late 1991, bird watching and pounding through the hills was a great panacea. Soon found a golfing friend, June Sell also was a bird lover and this put an added joy to the game.

Later, we met Enid Atkinson at a Women's Club function and asked about a birdwatching group. Enid was very pleased to invite us to a Field Nat's meeting at Leeton. It wasn't too long afterwards that Bill Moller started a Griffith branch which was well attended and very convenient. It was a great joy to be among likeminded people.

Every memory of every outing has been positive and rewarding. Time has now caught up, and as the adage goes, "The mind is willing but the body is weak"!!!! So thank you all for your great friendship



Can't find a name for your specimen? iNaturalist (mentioned by Glenn) could be the answer.

"We're using the iNaturalist platform. It's very popular, used worldwide and was developed by The California Academy of Sciences and National Geographic.

"If you're interested in participating you first need to register on this website <https://www.inaturalist.org/>

"The next step is to download the iNaturalist app onto your phone. Its hopefully self -explanatory from there. To add your sighting to a project you'll have to search for "Narrandera Landcare's Fauna and Flora Observations" May be this is time to set up a MFN group. Rowena.

From Vince Brucello - Sunshower Lagoon on 1 March, only 200 metres of where we had a BBQ.



A Tale of Two Kestrels

Mid-afternoon on Christmas Day 2019, my husband Stephen and I spotted a very small bird in the middle of the road. At the same time as seeing it, another vehicle on the other side of the road sped past us, just missing the bird by millimetres, yet the bird remained where it was. Stephen stopped the car and I ran out towards the bird to pick it up. Stephen, to his admirable credit, went in search of any other little ones that may have suffered the same fate as this one. His instincts were spot on; he found another. Stephen's first thought was that they may be owl chicks; neither of us are terribly knowledgeable about birds, although we do enjoy observing the variety of bird life on our property in the Blue Mountains. These chicks' beaks gave us the clue that they may be of the raptor family, and when I sent a photograph to my father, Alan Whitehead, he confirmed that they were definitely kestrels.

When we arrived back home, I decided to use our guest caravan as the nursery/aviary for these rescued chicks. I knew that the birds would need hydration and food, and quickly, and I had the perfect food on hand - fresh, juicy, raw, minced meat that I feed our cats. The birds fed very well, and because the meat had a high moisture content, they were being hydrated at the same time.

Daily life was rescheduled around the needs of the infant kestrels. Taking Alan's advice of keeping the birds attuned to the rhythm of the Sun, I woke daily at 5:30am, just before sunrise, so I could be ready to uncover the nesting box at first light. I kept a comprehensive diary every single day, from the day we found them to the day they took flight and left the caravan 'nest'. By Day 6 in care, the kestrels had visibly grown and were thriving, with bright eyes, alertness and good plumage developing. Having assumed that the larger of the two kestrels was male, I named him Hermes, and the smaller one Athena. It was not until much later on, when I had some spare time to drill down on the internet, that it was finally revealed that both our kestrels were indeed female. Apparently, male kestrels have grey-coloured crowns, and the females have rufous crowns. Also, given that one was larger than the other, we thought that maybe Hermes had hatched a few days earlier than Athena.

As they grew in size, adjustments were made to their nesting/sleeping box. On Day 8, the flaps on the top of the cardboard box were removed entirely, and the sides of the box were reduced, to enable the kestrels to stretch their wings without pressing up against the inside of the box. On the same day, I brought a few short tree stumps into the caravan, and placed them in various locations, one being on the bench next to the nesting box. I could sense it was time for them to venture out and perch where they can truly stretch their wings. I was proved correct when I came back to the caravan at noon, where I found one of them proudly perched upon a stump!



Gabrielle Whitehead

Above: Hermes (front) Athena (rear) on the 6th day after being rescued 31 Dec

Below right: Athena on gloved hand, feeding – 21 Jan

Left: Athena the Kestrel learning to fly – 21 Jan



Plan B – Taiwan, a non-birding trip ?

February/March 2020

What better way to learn your way around a new city on day one, than to find a bookshop for a local bird guide. On a previous trip in Hong Kong it was a serious adventure - we travelled across the city by underground, asked directions, walked up the backstreets, found a street number, down thru the loading bay, up the back lift, along the corridor and there it was – the needle in the haystack. It was a little easier this time in Taipei. The Eslite bookshop at Taipei Main Station didn't have it, but yes the three storey Eslite uptown did, a simple trip and an introduction to the wonderful Taipei Metro.

The Birds of Taiwan is beautiful and glossy and covers 670 species, but a glance showed that it is a wild wish list. Given Taiwan's geographic location in Asia, off the coast of China, on the flyway from the Arctic – the book lists a host of V's in the book – vagrants – not much hope there. In addition, being on the migratory flyways, there are also a host of T's - birds that transit during the migration – not much hope there. Taiwan has a couple of little islands Kinmen and Matsu, well off their coast and within spitting distance of the Chinese mainland, clearly having mainland birds not found on Taiwan proper – so there are also a host of K's and M's in the guide – not much hope there either. In Australian terms, it's a bit like having our bird guide where most of the pages featured Christmas Island birds that most of us will never see.



Suburban Taipei is clean, well organised, multilayered with good public amenities

So after I ripped out all those pages¹ was there any birds left? Well yes, a lot of really nice birds.

Take a step back, this wasn't our original destination. Plan A was Xiamen China. Seems laughable now except for the lost money. So Plan B was Taiwan, we bought tickets there and back, had the first few nights hotel booked, and research was limited. So it's a matter of "here we are, now what?" And did I mention this was NOT a birding trip? NO! NO!

Taiwan is a country with rugged mountains still rising from a complex tectonic area, and monsoons, typhoons and earthquakes create havoc on this young geology. Landslides are commonly seen, and an immense amount of work goes into steps, boardwalks, gutters, paving and bridging to allow access and protect the environment. Rivers are stoned and concreted thru urban areas, but I regularly saw fish ladders to protect the wild stock.

Mountains surround Taipei so it is very scenic and there is no shortage of nature. My internet research said there was good birding in the city parks - catch the Metro to X, take exit Y, and you on the edge of park Z. How easy is that! So for a few days I wandered the 228 Peace Park (Google for it's tragic story), Daan Forest Park (a lively park which the residents flock to for socialising, dancing, tai chi ...), Elephant Mt (which is

Malayan Night-heron getting its colours

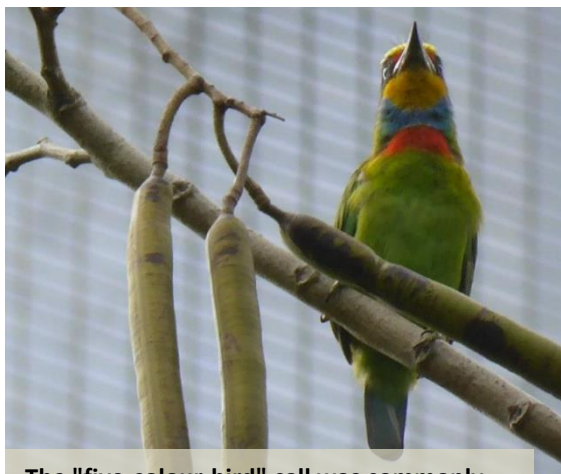


Black-crowned Night-heron in a city park



heaven if you like never-ending steps), and more. Despite the many people in the parks, there was wildlife, especially in the stands of fruiting figs, although I soon noted that while they usually ignored people even at close proximity that soon changed when I turned my eyes to them.

There were always Taiwan Barbets, well named by the locals as the five-colour-bird, calling continuously, very difficult to spot in the leafy trees but occasionally found on bare branches. The Black-crowned Night-heron were common and comfortable with the crowds, and even the less common Malayan Night-heron was easy to find.



The "five-colour-bird" call was commonly heard (Taiwan Barbet)

The Red-bellied Tree-squirrel was everywhere – running, jumping, climbing without hesitation. The long tailed and elegant Eurasian Magpie was common but would disappear the instant I stopped to look at it, let alone get a good photo, and the most common bird of all was the Black Bulbul but again, never co-operative camerawise.

Given the "vagrant" status of all the wagtails in Australia I was quite excited to see a Grey Wagtail

playing under the fountain in the gardens of the Chiang Kai-shek Hall, the highlight of the trip so far, but more was to come by trip-end - Eastern Yellow Wagtail, White Wagtail (on the platform of a railway station as we passed thru), and a flock of Citrine Wagtails on newly mown grass beside the bicycle track, completing the set apart from the vagrants.



Red-bellied Tree-squirrel was active everywhere

A short Metro ride, then a long, scenic but surprisingly cheap Maokong Gondola ride had us 300m up into a mix of tea plantations and jungle and hopefully different fauna. It turned out to be a bit too hopeful but there was Oriental Turtle-dove in rich bronze colours, and a Chinese ferret-badger, dead in a field! According to Wikipedia, "Ferret badgers create limited conflicts with surrounding human populations, as they rarely prey on chickens or livestock, and tend to not damage property." So I presume it hadn't been deliberately poisoned. Research indicates that Taiwan has a variety of non-feathered life, but I saw only Formosan rock-macaque, domestic cats which are well treated even if stray, and unidentified bat.

One evening I heart-attacked as I almost stepped on a trio of snakes in the local park, the owners had taken them out for a walk! The Taiwanese have interesting pet habits.

Sparrows were common but flipping with their hemisphere – I saw only Tree Sparrows, never a House Sparrow although they are there says the guide.

Black-collared Starling is an escapee and a bully bird



Lush nature and views across Taipei city are a short but steep walk away



MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

Black-winged Stilt [22]	Fivebough Wetlands	01/03/20	Keith Hutton
Marsh Sandpiper [6]	Fivebough Wetlands	01/03/20	Keith Hutton
Wood Sandpiper [7]	Fivebough Wetlands	01/03/20	Keith Hutton
Brolga [17]	Fivebough Wetlands	01/03/20	Keith Hutton
Red-capped Plover [10]	Fivebough Wetlands	01/03/20	Keith Hutton
Sacred Kingfisher	Naradhun St, Whitton	06/03/20	Margaret Strong
Black Swan [140]	Fivebough Wetlands	07/03/20	Keith Hutton
Straw-necked Ibis [180]	Fivebough Wetlands	07/03/20	Keith Hutton
Australian White Ibis [280]	Fivebough Wetlands	07/03/20	Keith Hutton
Glossy Ibis [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	07/03/20	Keith Hutton

This single bird seems to stay at Fivebough throughout the winter for the past 3 years from memory.

Silver Gull [180]	Fivebough Wetlands	07/03/20	Keith Hutton
Grey Teal [840]	Fivebough Wetlands	07/03/20	Keith Hutton
Chestnut Teal [10]	Fivebough Wetlands	07/03/20	Keith Hutton
Australasian Shoveler [36]	Fivebough Wetlands	07/03/20	Keith Hutton
Pink-eared Duck [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	07/03/20	Keith Hutton
Blue-faced Honeyeater [5]	Narrandera Wetlands	09/03/20	Alan Whitehead
Red Wattlebird [3]	Cutler Ave, Griffith	10/03/20	Virginis Tarr
Mallee Ringneck [many]	Cutler Ave, Griffith	10/03/20	Virginia Tarr
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Koonadan Rd, Leeton	10/03/20	Dione Russell
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo	Mountain Dam, Colinroobie Rd	10/03/20	Graham Russell
Glossy Black Cockatoo [22]	Yarrabimbi, Colinroobie Rd	10/03/20	Andrew Thompson

They were spooked by a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** and flew off.

Antechinus [sp]	Yarrabimbi, Colinroobie Rd	10/03/20	Andrew Thompson
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Andrew caught it on his motion camera.

Australian Raven [2]	Narrandera Wetlands	10/03/20	Aanya Whitehead
Diamond Firetail	Yarrabimbi via Leeton	12/03/20	Andrew Thompson
Little Raven [100+]	Cnr Brobenah & Colinroobie Rds	12/03/20	Andrew Thompson
Wood Duck [10]	Murrumbidgee River, Narrandera	12/03/20	Susan Whitehead
Rainbow Bee-eater	Bilbul via Griffith	17/03/20	Meredith Billington
Brown Honeyeater [2]	Pendula St, Leeton – return	16/03/20	Max O'Sullivan
Mulga Parrot [6]	Wattle Dam Binya State Forest	17/03/20	Allan Richards
Turquoise Parrot [male]	Wattle Dam Binya State Forest	17/03/20	Max O'Sullivan
Splendid Wren [2]	Wattle Dam area Binya State Forest	17/03/20	Allan Richards
White-fronted Chat [4]	Evans Smyles Rd, Leeton	17/03/20	Allan Richards
Australasian Bittern [1]	Irrigation Way Griffith – in rice field	18/03/20	Allan Richards

The bird had only its head sticking up out of the ripening rice crop but was only about 15m in from the road.

Painted Honeyeater [juv]	McC ann Rd Lake Wyangan – late stayer	18/03/20	Max O'Sullivan
Black Falcon [2 juv birds]	Evans Smyles Rd, Leeton	18/03/20	Allan Richards
Southern Whiteface [10]	Evans Smyles Rd, Leeton	18/03/20	Allan Richards
Silver Gull [220]	Fivebough Wetlands	19/03/20	Keith Hutton
Wood Sandpiper [6]	Fivebough Wetlands	19/03/20	Keith Hutton
Masked Lapwing [93]	Fivebough Wetlands	19/03/20	Keith Hutton
Double-banded Plover [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	22/03/20	Max O'Sullivan
Greenshank [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	22/03/20	Keith Hutton
Black-fronted Dotterel [1 juv]	Fivebough Wetlands	22/03/20	Keith Hutton
Glossy Black Cockatoo [pr]	Widgelli property	26/03/20	Tori Horder
Brown Treecreeper	Yanco Reserve	28/03/20	Kathy Tenison
Southern Boobook	Yanco Reserve	28/03/20	Kathy Tenison

Since the good rain earlier in the month, many birds seem to have disappeared from Fivebough Wetlands – birds like **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper**, **Marsh Sandpiper**, **Black-tailed Native-hen**, **Red-kneed Dotterel**, **Black-winged Stilt** and **Red-necked Avocet**. There was just one Stilt present on 30/03/20 and the 6 Wood Sandpipers

were still about as well as 7 Brolgas but there has been a big increase in **Black Swans, Australian Shelducks, Silver Gulls** and **Masked Lapwings**. The large numbers of Ibis – both **Straw-necked** and **Australian White** are still present in large numbers daily.

The **Wood Sandpipers** seem to have departed and have not been seen since 1st of April.

Red Wattlebirds [5]	Cutler Ave Griffith	31/03/20	Virginia Tarr
Double-barred Finch [4]	Cutler Ave Griffith	31/03/20	Virginia Tarr
Glossy Black Cockatoo [pr]	Koonadan Rd Leeton – Peter's house	01/04/20	Peter Draper

This is the first time Peter has seen these cockatoos so far from the hills.

Correction: In my report at the March MFN meeting I am not sure what figure I actually quoted for the number of Flying Foxes counted at Centennial Park in Sydney recently but the figure was an astounding 93,600 according to one of the counters. It seems that a huge number have come into Sydney because of the recent bushfires along the NSW coast and joined the already large group of resident flying foxes there.

Max O'Sullivan

Keeping Kids and Adults Entertained

Many of us are now confined to home and looking for activities. Those of you who have children and grandchildren might be interested in the following links.

<http://mli.org.au/useful-resources-for-educating-and-entertaining-kids-at-home/>

Last weekend I took this photo of a Southern Boobook Owl near home. BirdLife Australia provides templates for Owl Masks. Check them out. Just print them out and colour them in.

<http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/Nocturnal-bird-masks>

If you're an adult you might enjoy this link to courses and resources.

<http://mli.org.au/online-courses-and-resources/>

Kathy Tenison

Dates to note

12 April – 19 April week **Spring Wild Pollinator Count**

This gives you an opportunity to contribute to wild pollinator insect conservation in Australia.

If you're new to the project, you can find out details on [how to contribute here](#). It just takes 10 minutes: find a flower to watch and record what you see. You can do as many counts as you want, any time during that week, on fine weather days (most insect pollinators don't like poor weather, especially high winds, heavy rain, or frosts). Observations must be submitted via [our online form](#).

Read more about the project [here](#), and also check out some [Frequently Asked Questions](#) and [other resources](#) to help you identify what sort of insects you see.

You can **join in** by watching any flowering plant for just ten minutes sometime during the week.

<https://wildpollinatorcount.com/>

4 May Wednesday

Copy for the May newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.

Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com Phone: 6953 2612.

Please email your backyard stories with photos or drawings, your feedback on the newsletter, hints on identification, photography and anything else you would like to share, to me. Stay involved and connected by contributing to the online Show & Tell. Rowena