

# The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



July 2020 - Issue #283

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



Sunrise over a farm dam at Koonadan, Leeton Photo: Phillip Williams

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## CONTRIBUTIONS

For the August 2020 issue by  
Wednesday 5 August

To Rowena Whiting

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Nature sustains us. It's where we originated. The lesson from this pandemic is not to be afraid of nature, but rather to restore it, embrace it, and understand how to live with it.

Thomas E. Lovejoy

## Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

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**Treasurer:** Ellené Schnell 0488 080 866      **Website Co-ordinator:** Kathy Tenison 6953 4869

**MEETINGS** ARE HELD ON THE SECOND THURSDAY EACH MONTH, EXCEPT JANUARY, AT THE Yellow Room, Leeton Library, Sycamore Street at 7 PM

**FIELD TRIPS** NORMALLY TAKE PLACE ON THE FOLLOWING WEEKEND.

INTENDING NEW MEMBERS, GUESTS AND VISITORS WELCOME.

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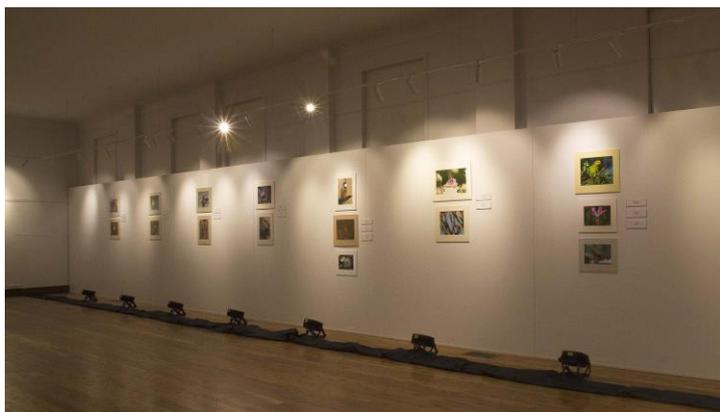
## Welcome to July

With COVID-19 restrictions easing, our usual outings went ahead last month, it was lovely to meet up again. Thanks to all the contributors particularly the prompt replies to my late request for more copy. It took 14 pages to fit it all in!

Rowena.

### MFN on display in Leeton

At the new Museum and Art Gallery in Chelmsford place (WC&IC building) our anniversary exhibition photos are on display in the art gallery. This has been organised by Penny and Phillip Williams.



There is a History of Water display in the Museum area with a focus on Leeton. Opening hours are 10am to 3pm Monday to Saturday.

In the **Community Op Shop** in Pine Avenue, Fivebough Wetlands is the theme of activities and display being organised by Jason Richardson. Kathy Tenison has been coordinating the MFN display materials and presentation with Jason. .

### A Correction to the June issue:

In the article about Lord Howe Island the photograph of the island looking towards Mt. Gower was taken by Paul Johnstone and not Corinne Tomkinson as stated in the article. Apologies to Paul.

## Visits to Reserves along the Stock Route east of Narrandera, Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June.

### MILTHORPE'S TSR – opposite Narrandera Fisheries

We bypassed the grassland and headed for the wetland, created from an overflow of water out of a dam used by Fisheries. There was a scattering of large *Eucalyptus microcarpa* (Grey Box) between us and the grassland, also numerous eucalypt seedlings further into the wetland which together provided habitat for the birds we heard calling.



In the shallow ponds along the edge of the body of water were large numbers of a water fern called Red Azolla (*Azolla filliculoides*), appearing as a mottled pink carpet. Common Nardoo (*Marsilea drummondii*) shared these ponds, with Water Primrose (*Ludwigia peploides*) and Common Spike Rush (*Eleocharis acuta*) hugging the edges. Growing in the mud a metre away we saw a few Celery Buttercups (*Ranunculus sceleratus*), lots of Waterpepper (*Persicaria hydropiper*) and Poisonous Pratia (*Pratia concolor*). Outstanding in bright green foliage with pale yellow 'button' flowers were Common Cotula (*Cotula australis*) sprinkled all along this area a little further away from the water. In amongst these we noticed Black Nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*), Ruby Saltbush (*Enchylaena tomentosa*), *Erichlamys behrii* (Woolly Mantle) and Lignum [common name is short for Polygonum – Family name] being *Muehlenbeckia cunninghamii*. Along the edge of the adjoining grassland were numerous *Vittadinia cuneata* (New Holland Daisy) with their prominent 'fuzzy' seedheads.



At constant intervals, while some of us chatted about the plants and others searched for birds, was heard the creaky call of a Plains Froglet (*Crinia parinsignifera*). We also heard this common insect like winter sound, that it is actually made by a very small and vocal grassland frog, in each of the TSRs we visited.

**YORKIES PLAIN TSR** – approximately 10kms east of Narrandera along the Sturt Highway.

We noticed many grassland plants that have come up since the autumn rain as we hurried across this wonderland to the riverine woodland along the northern side of the reserve. A good track made it possible for vehicles to cross, so some of the group drove and others walked quickly to catch up.

*Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (River Red Gum) was the main species of tree bordering the river, but our attention was drawn to the shrubby / grassy understory. Lignum was obvious, being higher than most of the other plants such as *Maireanna brevifolia* (Yanga Bush). At a lower height we noticed a stunning *Ptilotus macrocephalus* (Square Headed Foxtail) in full flower. Rather than wander to look for more of these beauties, we looked around and saw others such as *Goodenia glauca* (Pale Goodenia) in flower, a *Brachycome* species (a Daisy of the Asteraceae Family) in flower, *Maireana excavat* (Bottle Fissure Bush) and *Rhodanthe corymbiflora* (Grey Sunray) also in flower.



From top:  
Milthorpe Stock Reserve wetland area  
Remnant of a fungus  
Pale Goodenia

During the fast walk back across the plain, we noticed *Ptilotis atriplicifolius* (Crimson Foxtail) in full flower, various species of *Maireana* (Blue Bush) and the low rounded shapes of *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* on either side of the entrance gate.

**SANDIGO TSR** – approximately 20kms east of Narrandera along side the Sturt Highway.

The setting was picturesque alongside the riverine woodland, but the native vegetation inside the reserve was very degraded and thinly spread. Bare patches of soil from overgrazing by sheep was the prominent feature, along with invasive weeds that the ruminants obviously rejected as food.



**Square Headed Foxtail**

This was where our visits to TSRs ended. Return visits to the first two grasslands would be very rewarding between now and summer due to the good rain we've had so far this year. The common names I've used in this report are from the Plants of Western NSW, the standard botanical reference for our region. Updated genus names are from Wildflowers of the Narrandera and Cocoparra Ranges by Eric Whiting and internet sites such as

ANBG, which also often give the meaning of the botanical Latin names. The Office of Environment and Heritage NSW has "Frogs of Western NSW" (an online resource) available for anyone to freely listen to (and download) the calls of *Crinia parinsignifera* and our other frog species.

**Margaret Strong Photos by Rowena Whiting**

### Travelling Stock Reserve outing 13 June 2020

**Bird list compiled by Max O'Sullivan**

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Stop: Milthorpes TSR (opposite The Fisheries Narrandera)

Australasian Grebe	Little Pied Cormorant	Little Black Cormorant
White-faced Heron	Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Wood Duck
Black Duck	Grey Teal	Black Kite
Dusky Moorhen	Purple Swamphen	Crested Pigeon
White Cockatoo	Galah	Superb Parrot
Eastern Rosella	Yellow Rosella	Kookaburra
Welcome Swallow	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Grey Shrike-thrush (H)
Willie Wagtail	Grey Fantail	Western Gerygone (H)
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Little Friarbird	Noisy Friarbird



**Broken Cypress Pine**

Noisy Miner  
Striated Pardalote (H)  
Magpie

Blue-faced Honeyeater  
White-winged Chough  
Pied Butcherbird

White-plumed Honeyeater  
Pee Wee  
Australian Raven

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Stop: Yorkies Plain TSR (on the Sturt H'way)

Kestrel  
Galah  
Noisy Friarbird

Wood Duck  
Cockatiel  
Pied Butcherbird (H)

White Cockatoo  
Western Gerygone (H)

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Stop: Sandigo TSR (behind the Sandigo rest stop on the Sturt H'way)

Crested Pigeon  
Kookaburra  
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike  
Western Gerygone (H)  
White-plumed Honeyeater

White Cockatoo  
Tree Martin  
Jacky Winter  
Yellow-rumped Thornbill  
Pee Wee

Galah  
Ground Cuckoo-shrike  
Grey Fantail  
Brown Treecreeper  
Magpie

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## The Power of Plants

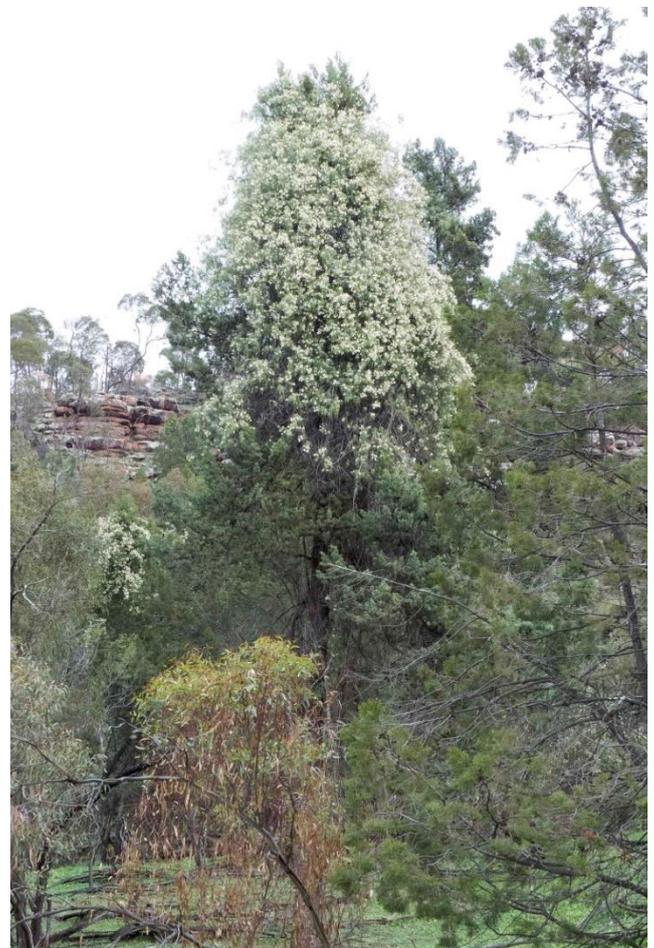
Whilst looking at a Wonga Vine that had climbed up to the top of a Cypress Pine tree, one comment was 'What power the vine has to pull down a tall tree'. Actually it is not the power of the vine but either gravity or wind that causes the demise of the tree (and vine).

The real power of both plants is how they grew to such a height. For both water and nutrients come from their roots and must be pumped up to their canopies for photosynthesis. An engineer would put in a sizable pump, connect it to piping that would withstand the pressures needed to lift such a column of water. Even the best pump would lose energy to heat and noise. Plants do it without the noise and at pressures sustainable to their tissues. The tree we were looking at was barely 20 metres high. Forest giants like the Victorian and Tasmanian Mountain Ash or the North American Giant Redwoods can be over five times that height and require many litres of water to feed their canopies. It is not just getting the sap up there, gravity wants it down. The roots expend a lot of energy supplying the canopy.

Wind gives a sideways pressure on the canopy that has to be resisted to prevent the tops being broken off. A basic law of physics is that to maintain the status quo, any force requires an equal and opposite force. That is the plants have to push back. Eons of evolution have led to trees having remarkable resistance by being flexible enough to bend with the wind to reduce the drag. However much of the sideways pressure is translocated down to the roots so much of the force is counteracted by pushing against the soil. Also wind drag can be minimised by growing close together and sharing the force. There is a snag though. Growing close together means each tree must obtain its moisture from a lesser area. This is easy for rainforest trees but not for trees in dry country. Hence rainforests can grow taller than in the outback.

Now back to the Wonga Vine. The tree has grown its root system to support the trees canopy. The Wonga Vine has cheated and used the tree for support adding its canopy to the trees thereby adding to the wind resistance with minimal compensation from its roots. It is not the best thing to rely on others.

**Eric Whiting**



**Flowering Wonga Vine covering a Cypress Pine**

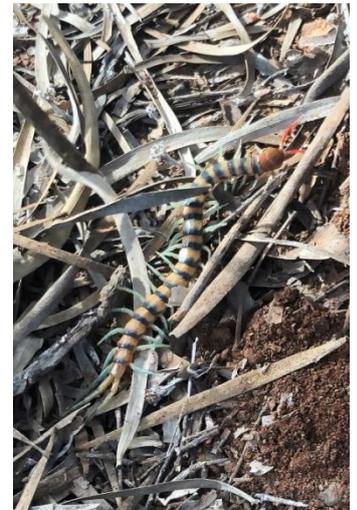
## Our Walk up Mt Caley

13 June

When John Oxley passed this way in June 1817 he wrote in his diary “We saw no game with the exception of three or four kangaroo rats, many beautiful small parrots were observed, and as barren as the scrub appeared to us, yet our botanists reaped an excellent harvest here. We passed over a rugged, barren, and rocky country for about four miles and a half when we ascended a hill upon our right which promised a view in all directions. To the southward, south-west and even west the country was a perfect plain, interspersed with more of those dreadful scrubs”. This may not have been Mt Caley or some hill nearby but it does indicate the toughness of the country with the impenetrable Cypress Pine and Acacia that he encountered but also the great diversity of plants found on the hills. He was however looking for grass and water for his horses to keep him going which appeared to be scarce. He called Mt Cayley Cave Hill and we should have looked under the ledge at the cairn for that cave.

On our walk in this relatively wet year we saw mounds of iridescently green mosses and *Pomaderris cocoparrana* seedlings emerging amongst the rocks with occasional last year’s plants which were larger and had escaped chewing by goats with a few daring to flower.

The common Dwarf Greenhood (*Pterostylis nana*) was flowering everywhere. The hoods of the individuals in a clump face all different directions, this may be to increase their chances of pollinations by tiny fungi gnats. Remains of Autumn greenhood (*Pterostylis*



*revoluta* ) were seen and the robust rosettes of Midget Greenhood (*Pterostylis mutica*) yet to flower in Spring.

Steve turned over a rock to look at termites only to uncover a large green legged centipede (genus *Cormocephalus*)! It must have been having a feast. Other invertebrates seen were a lovely Australian Golden Orbweaver (*Trichonephila edulis*) and an iridescent beetle (*Pseudotaenia waterhousi*). (Thanks to identification from iNaturalist).

The view from the top was how Oxley saw it: to the southward, south-west and even west, the



**Pomaderris in bud (above top), Dwarf Greenhoods, Autumn Greenhood, Centipede (above from left), Jewel Beetle, Golden Orbweaver Spider (below). Centipede photo by Francesca Dentis, others Nella Smith**

country was perfectly plain, interspersed with more of those dreadful scrubs except we could see Yenda and he didn't.

In the open flatter parts was a field of Purple Burrdaisy (*Calotis cuneifolia*) and the yellow of Sticky Everlasting (*Xerochrysum viscosa*) mixed up with a lot of Raspwort. We wouldn't want to come here in October for the dread of days removing tiny burrs from all clothing parts.

We adjourned over the road through the Spring Hill picnic area to the short walk to Falcon Falls to check that the necklace fern was still tucked under the rock crevasses of the waterfall and that the Batswing fern was present. The waterfall was just dripping, you need to come here in the rain or very soon after to see it flowing.

No Turquoise Parrots were present today but we saw a few family groups of Speckled Warblers and occasional Eastern Yellow Robins with their flash of yellow and their perchance to perch on the sides of trees. The Brown Treecreepers were also busy checking under bark for beetles and grubs.

A quick visit to Wattle Dam gave Jess an opportunity to do the bird jig when she saw a couple of new birds to her: Splendid Fairywren and Mulga Parrot all in one eyeful.

We achieved something this morning going up that hill, someone said. This is surely proving to be a good year botanically thanks to rain and sunny days.

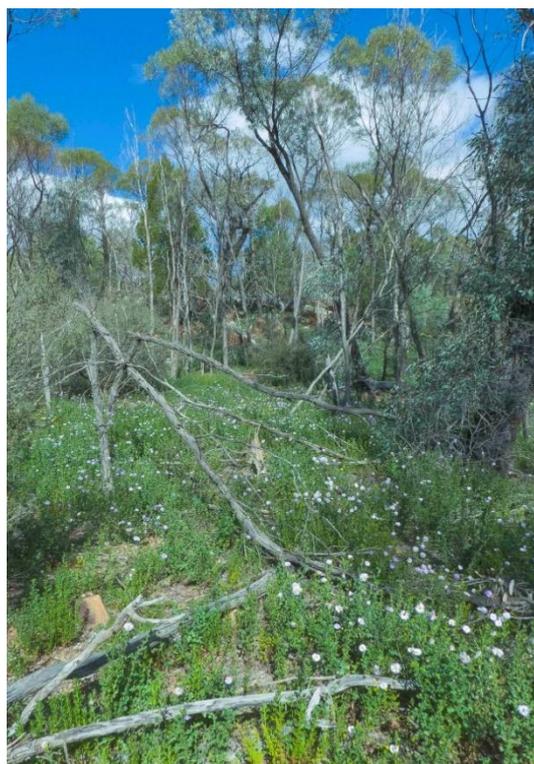
**Nella Smith**

#### Bird List 27 June 2020

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater  
Striped Honeyeater  
Rufous Whistler  
Grey Shrike-Thrush  
Mulga Parrot  
Yellow-rumped Thornbill  
Jacky Winter

White-plumed Honeyeater  
Grey Fantail  
Peaceful Dove  
White-browed Babbler  
Brown Treecreeper  
Speckled Warbler  
Grey Butcherbird

Willie Wagtail  
Australian Raven  
Bar-shouldered Dove  
Galah  
Striated Pardalote  
Red-capped Robin  
Splendid Wren



**A mass of Purple Burrdaisy on lower slopes of Mt Caley - Photo Rowena Whiting**

## Centipedes

Centipedes are a form of arthropods in a Class called Myriopoda. The Class has two divisions, the centipedes and the millipedes. The former has only one pair of legs per segment and are carnivorous, and the latter two pairs of legs per segment and are herbivorous.

Centipedes have a head of six fused segments that carry a pair of antennae and three pairs of jaw parts. The rest of the body has a pair of walking legs except for the first segment where the appendages are modified into poison injecting claws. The bite of a centipede is very painful and generally requires hospital treatment. Be very wary if you find one. The last segment has non walking appendages that are used for catching prey. Although centipede means hundred legs usually there are not that many. The one we saw on the Mt. Caley trip (genus *Cormocephalus*) (photo on previous page) had 19 pairs of legs. The centipede with the most legs has 76 pairs.

The usual places to find centipedes are amongst litter, under fallen logs and under rocks. Although carnivorous they seem to co-habit with ants and termites quite happily, and often with a skink or two. Usually if uncovered they will run to other cover but they can run fast and you may be mistaken for cover only to be bitten when they find it is not shelter.

**Eric Whiting**

## Recording a Rakali Sighting at Narrandera Wetlands

Narrandera Landcare started doing quarterly bird surveys at the Narrandera Wetlands 18 months ago and we are very appreciative of the help Alan and Nella give us to compile the surveys. We use the handy Birdata app and usually record around 30 species. Our last survey was 2 July 2020 and we observed 31 species.

A lot of the usual waterbirds (Egrets, Spoonbills and Herons) were noticeably absent but the woodland birds were abundant. The results can be seen here

<http://birdata.birdlife.org.au/survey?id=3159913&h=3dde711d>

Whilst walking around the Wetlands looking for birds both Alan and Nella observed an Australian Water Rat swimming around and Nella said it rated as a “significant sighting”. I didn’t see it and couldn’t get a photo.

Later that day I pondered the best way to somehow report this sighting – iNaturalist didn’t seem the best platform due to the way it’s structured (you basically need a photo). “Bio-collect” didn’t seem right either, so I looked up the Australian Platypus Conservancy website <https://platypus.asn.au/>, who are also interested in Water Rats. Their sighting form was easy to fill in and submit, and I got a very appreciative email thanking me for the observation. It included an attachment with information on *Hydromys chrysogaster* or Rakalis.

After my first sighting of a Water Rat 2 years ago I looked them up and remembered thinking at the time they are done a dis-service by being lumped in with “rats”. While a rodent they can be referred to as Australia’s Otter. “Their muzzle is blunt and furnished with a dense set of whiskers, hind feet are broad, partly webbed and paddle-like. Their tail is well-furred and thick to help serve as a rudder when swimming and their body is elongated and streamlined. Fur is soft and lustrous, drying quickly and helping to keep the animal warm in the water.”

More information on them can be found here <https://platypus.asn.au/rakali/>. The Australian Platypus Conservancy would appreciate any sighting of these or any Platypus you may observe.

\*if the highlighted links don’t work, Cut and Paste them into your browser.

Glenn Currie



Drawing by Melanie Baulch

### Lord Howe Island Museum display:

When on Lord Howe Island in late February this year I spent a few hours in the excellent museum there. One piece in the place caught my eye so I copied it down. It was written by an American Indian, Hollow Horn Bear Lakota (not sure if that's his full name or if Lakota is a place) who lived between 1850 and 1913.

*“Someday the earth will weep, she will beg for her life, she will cry with tears of blood.*

*You will make a choice, if you help her die, and when she dies, you too will die”*

It's happening now! We really are helping her die!

### Also on Lord Howe a Swift Parrot

A wayward [Swift Parrot](#) has lobbed unexpectedly onto Lord Howe Island, well beyond its usual range — a reminder of how hazardous their migration can be....

## Member Profiles

### Kathy Tenison

We joined MFN as a family but it has only been in recent years I have attended more activities. I have always loved the bush and spent a lot of time walking or riding through it.

As our children got older we had more spare weekends and I started to feel a real desire to understand the bush more deeply. Seeing an Eastern Yellow Robin for the first time magnified down a telescope brings a real delight to the soul.

Finding birds in the bush with binoculars and sometimes capturing a half decent photo is a real thrill.

Add to that the joy of going on outings with wonderful people who have loads of experience and knowledge identifying plants and animals.

These like-minded people who care about the bush have great conversation and bring loads to the table which helps build understanding and protection of the environment. Thanks MFN!



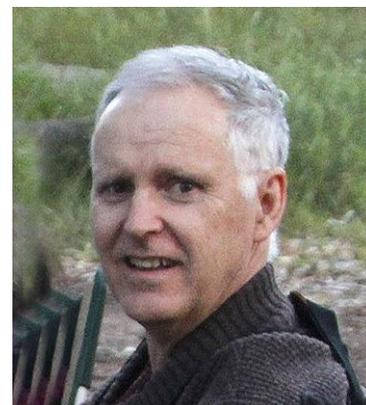
### Phil Tenison

I joined MFN about 2002 to further my interest in the bush, bird watching and photography.

Field Nats has such a wealth of knowledge rolling around in the heads of its members, that the trips are more than just viewing of birds, they are a trip through a vast array of disciplines such as local history, botany, navigation, animal tracking, geology, flora and bush survival. This makes the trips special as there is always something happening or something to see.

The concern I have for the future is that this local knowledge, the beauty and enjoyment of the Australian bush will be lost, as there will be no bush left and no one interested enough to go and enjoy it.

Thus the Field Nats are a very rare group, lovely people, lots of knowledge, great ideas, great locations, and they are willing to share all this.



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### Clean-up at Campbell Swamp hide:

On Monday 29 June Allan Richards and I found two young teenagers armed with brooms, dust trays and garbage bags cleaning the hide – they were young uni students from Griffith who were home with the covid-19 lockdown. They said they didn't know the swamp existed until a friend of theirs told them about this "cool" place he had discovered when riding about the area so they came and investigated and loved it and decided to give it a good clean. They were very enthusiastic girls and even wanted to repair the broken plank in the boardwalk. I told them that was being taken care of and thanked them for doing the excellent cleaning job of the hide. It was such a commendable thing for them to do.

### Funding application for replacing the boardwalk at Campbell Swamp:

Applications for applying to Crown Lands for funding to replace the boardwalk at Campbell Swamp have been shelved until next year. Applications close on 10 July and in discussion with Griffith City Council it was decided to wait another 12 months. It seems that one of the main reasons that the application through GCC last year failed was because there was no Development Plan written for the site and until that is done there is little chance of another application this year from the MFN to succeed for the same reason (ie; no plan). Council assured me they are preparing one now for the whole of the Lake Wyangan wetland areas and when it is completed this year, they, as in the Council, will reapply in 2021.

So we are let off the hook this year but will be heavily involved next year when the Development Plan is completed – the intention is to do Campbell's Swamp plan first including renaming it Campbell's Wetlands!

That means a few repair jobs are needed to tide us over and Neil, with Nella's help to provide more planks, will fix any broken or weakened ones to help keep it reasonably safe for the time being.

## Visit to Livingstone National Park

Livingstone National Park is located about 30 km south of Wagga. We travel past the Uranquinty Bakery which makes spectacular pies and sweet treats and great bread.

It's like a different world there, rolling green hills, a late lifting fog and a cool breeze. It was soft and wet underfoot.

I don't think Livingstone was ever logged so it still has some very large trees. There is found a canopy of red box *Eucalyptus polyanthemos*, Scribbly gum *E. rossii* and Red stringybark *E. macrorhyncha* mixed up with some Ironbark *E. sideroxylon*. The black and white and grey trunks make for an interesting visual contrast.

The shrub layer is diverse with the Prostanthera flowering on this day, *Grevillea floribunda* recovering from a dry spell but a few woolly flowers were present. The herb layer was notable with a range of different species of *Pterostylis* rosettes with a couple flowering, mainly *Pterostylis revoluta* and the remnants of *P. rubescens*. The Grass trees were looking as elegant as dancing girls.



A gathering of about 20 Grong Gongs (as Margrit called them) AKA Gang Gangs. Margrit spied a long legged hare skittering off into the gully which we later realised was probably a fallow deer.

Red Wattlebirds, Spiny cheeked Honeyeaters and Fuscous Honeyeaters delighted in the nectar offered by the *E. sideroxylon*. A few Flame Robins and a Hooded Robin ducked about for insects.

**Nella Smith**

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### The Winery site on Whitton Stock Route Rd, Binya:

On Saturday after the Spring Hill outing, I called in to the Winery site. I was shocked to see major earthworks were underway within the site with numbers of trees bulldozed down and tracks made the whole length of the area from the Old Winery fence to the opposite end. The site is now leased to CMP Oilseeds according to my contact Greg Boyle at Casella Winery.

On Friday (3 July), I met with Greg to get some information about what was happening and when he went in he was totally unaware of what was happening there. He told me he would investigate and would get back to me. Not only is water being connected in new pipes, large fence poles has been cemented in all through the site indicating it will be fenced in a number of enclosures all the way through.

**Max O'Sullivan**



## Our trip to Maralinga, South Australia in May 2019 by Penny and Phillip Williams

In May last year we went to Maralinga for 3 nights and a 2-day tour. Maralinga was a British Nuclear Testing Site between 1956 and 1963. There were 7 atomic explosions at the site in 1956 – 7, and then minor trials which contaminated the environment with plutonium and other radioactive debris.

The former nuclear test site includes the Maralinga township area, large airstrip and the test area. The test area is criss-crossed by roads and contains the testing sites, and pits where radioactive material was buried during the several clean-ups and attempted clean-ups of the Maralinga site after completion of the tests. Maralinga is now part of the Maralinga Tjarutja lands and managed by the Anangu people who are the traditional owners of Maralinga.



Maralinga is north of the Indian – Pacific Railway in Western South Australia and its location is shown in the map of South Australia. The rainfall at Maralinga township is around 125mm per annum and temperature can go down to -3°C in winter and up to about 45°C in summer.

Historically the area was traversed by the Anangu people as they travelled from their lands in the north to the coastal areas. There was little water in the area. We were shown a well which had been dug in 1879 by Tietkens looking for water. This well had yielded salty water which was not suitable as drinking water for stock. The land was not colonised by pastoralists. It is known that the Anangu people knew where

water could be found in this country as they moved through it.

The 1950's saw major construction in the area. A township was built to house the defence personnel which included concrete slabs on which to place huts and a swimming pool. A very large airfield was put in where aircraft could land bringing men and supplies from as far away as Britain. The apron of the airfield also collected rainwater which was run into a dam to supply the town and testing site with a water supply of a quality that was suitable for drinking. A complex system of roads many of them bitumen roads was also constructed.

We saw the impact on the environment that this activity by the British had many years on, and the results of the clean-ups. Most of the buildings over the site had been removed though the concrete pads in the town remained. The Testing Site is now littered with the remains of the equipment used to carry out the testing. There had been a huge clean-up of the radioactive material that had been laying over the surface of the area. This has been buried in large pits which are marked with concrete signage. The half-life of some of the radioactive material which has been buried is about 24,000 years. We were reassured that the areas we went to is now safe for us to visit. However, it is not safe to camp on parts of this land and it continues to be checked for radioactivity by scientists annually.

There is wildlife at Maralinga. We saw a couple of different types of lizards, a camel and some birds. We were not here to concentrate on the living environment, but it would be worth returning to have a look at this as well. The environment is arid so that the vegetation and the animals reflect this.

The British Nuclear Tests didn't last for very long in comparison to the age of the landscape, but their effects on the environment is certainly long term.

For further information there are several books written about Maralinga and a lot of articles on the internet.



Thorny Devil

# MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

**White-bellied Sea-Eagle** [pr] Brobenah Hills circling 10/06/20 Keith Hutton

The birds were displaying and were immature birds. See Keith's comments below.

**Dusky Woodswallow** [6] Woolshed Flat Rd, Cocoparra Nat Park 12/06/20 Max O'Sullivan

**Fan-tailed Cuckoo** [2] Rocky Waterholes, Narrandera 12/06/20 Alan Whitehead

**Noisy Friarbird** [many] The Fisheries via Narrandera 13/06/20 MFN outing

**Ground Cuckoo-Shrike** [2] Sandigo TSR via Narrandera 13/06/20 MFN outing

A very unexpected surprise at the Sandigo TSR for the 8 members on this our first outing since February. These birds are quite unusual for the area but seem to appear once in a while locally – just passing through.

**Glossy Ibis** [1] Fivebough Wetlands 14/06/20 Keith Hutton

**Water Rat** [1] Fivebough Wetlands 14/06/20 Max O'Sullivan

**Long-necked Turtle** Fivebough Wetlands – on the track 14/06/20 Max O'Sullivan

**Restless Flycatcher** Whitton mid-June Margaret Strong

**Banded Lapwing** [10] Evans Smyles Rd, via Leeton 16/06/20 Keith Hutton

The birds were in a young lupin crop in a paddock along the road on the right hand side well past the hill and closer to the feedlot.

**Gull-billed Tern** Mick Bevan's farm, Fivebough 18/06/20 per Keith Hutton

The tern was following Mick's tractor and was feeding on the freshly ploughed ground! Mick took a photo.

The bird stayed around for just 2 days and hasn't been seen since.

**Brolga** [6] Fivebough Wetlands 21/06/20 Keith Hutton

**Red-kneed Dotterel** [2] Fivebough Wetlands 21/06/20 Keith Hutton

**Purple Swamphen** [100+] Fivebough Wetlands 21/06/20 Keith Hutton

**Australian Shelduck** [25] Fivebough Wetlands 21/06/20 Keith Hutton

**Brown Quail** [5] Fivebough Wetlands 21/06/20 Keith Hutton

**Pelican** [only 2] Fivebough Wetlands 21/06/20 Keith Hutton

**Glossy Ibis** [2] Fivebough Wetlands 21/06/20 Phil Tenison

**Black-fronted Dotterel** [1] Fivebough Wetlands 21/06/20 Kathy Tenison

**Pied Currawong** Scenic Hill, Griffith 25/06/20 Neil Palframan

Very unusual for Currawongs to appear in Griffith. The closest I've seen them is at Binya (MO'S).

**Emu** [16] Newell H'way north of Jerilderie 26/06/20 Neil Palframan

**Red-necked Avocet** [1] Fivebough Wetlands 26/06/20 Max O'Sullivan

**Superb Parrot** [10] Fivebough Wetlands – flyover 26/06/20 Max O'Sullivan

**Kestrel** [14] Leeton/Murrumbidgee area 27/06/20 Keith Hutton

Keith counted the Kestrels on the way from Leeton via Stony Point Rd to Murrumbidgee and back to Leeton on Griffith Road. Only 4 or 5 birds have been seen locally over the past few months.

**Spotless Crake** [2] Fivebough Wetlands 27/06/20 Keith Hutton

These crakes have been heard over the past month but not seen until now.

**White-bellied Sea-Eagle** [Imm fem] Fivebough Wetlands 27/06/20 Keith Hutton

**Black Falcon** [1] Fivebough Wetlands 27/06/20 Keith Hutton

**Stubble Quail** [6 or 7 heard] East of Tully's Hill 27/06/20 Keith Hutton

Birds heard calling in a fallow cereal paddock in the late afternoon.

**Spotless Crake** [1] Fivebough Wetlands 28/06/20 Allan Richards

**Brown Quail** [1] Fivebough Wetlands 28/06/20 Max O'Sullivan

**Glossy Black Cockatoo** [10] Brobenah Rd property 28/06/20 per Kathy Tenison

**Musk Duck** [Pr] Campbell Swamp 29/06/20 Allan Richards

**Banded Lapwing** [5] Evans Smyles Rd via Leeton 30/06/20 Allan Richards

**Grey-crowned Babbler** [12] Middle Rd via Leeton – in 2 groups of 6 30/06/20 Allan Richards

**Black-winged Stilt** [200+] Fivebough Wetlands 01/07/20 Max O'Sullivan

**Water Rat** [1] Narrandera Wetlands 02/07/20 Nella S & Alan W

**Black Swan** [Pair with 5 cygnets] Main pond Fivebough Wetlands 01/07/20 Allan Richards

A count of at least 10 swans nests were also seen from Hooey's Lookout at the northern end of Fivebough.

**White-winged Triller** [3 males] Campbell Swamp - early arrivals? 03/07/20 Max O'Sullivan

**An observation note from Alan Whitehead:** On 10 June at Lake Talbot, I saw 8 Pelicans and 10 Great Cormorants. The cormorants were engaged in collaborative fishing when, for no reason I could tell, one Pelican grabbed another by the bill and for a good minute or so did its best to drown its victim, pushing it underwater with strength and determination. Just as quickly as it began, it ended, with both birds fluffing their feathers and carrying on as if nothing were amiss.

Also on the same morning, 2 Whistling Kites were being hassled by 2 ravens and a Mudlark – a day of conflict at the lake that morning!

**An observation note from Keith Hutton:** On 10 June, 2 immature White-bellied Sea-Eagles, were watched for more than 30 minutes displaying high up in the sky between Tully's Hill and Yarrabimbi/Brobenah. Mainly just soaring round in big circles with the smaller bird above the other. On 4 occasions between 3.15 and 3.45pm spectacular dives by the higher towards the lower bird resulted in the lower bird turning over and thrusting upward its talons when the birds appeared almost to collide in mid-air. Both birds had white tails so I assume they were over two years old.

### Max O'Sullivan

A **Magpie Rumble** sighted on the streets of North Griffith. **Neil Palframann**

A pair of Magpies were having a wrestle in the street gutter. That's fairly common. Very soon a second pair decided to have their own wrestle in the same gutter, and then it was difficult to tell if it was two two-bird wrestles or one four bird wrestle. It was high entertainment as confirmed by the four other Magpies who flew in to watch and give encouragement with spirited chorkleing and singing. On and on it went and the



spectators eventually got bored and left, while the original two continued for a full fifteen minutes.

The photos are of Friendly Magpies waiting for crumbs at the Finley Bakery and of a Magpie that spent half an hour playing with its new toy.



### From Jason Richardson

I had an unusual experience seeing a new bird in the backyard but knowing exactly what it was.

My partner Jo has sometimes talked about Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes and the name was distinctive enough, as well as apt, that I knew the bird on sight.

I tried to get a photo but it took off just as I clicked the shutter.

# \*\*\*\* COMING EVENTS \*\*\*\*

**11 July Saturday**

**Visit the wetlands around Narrandera**

Locations and meeting place still to be determined.

To comply with COVID-19 restrictions you must register to participate.

**Contact: Alan Whitehead on 6959 3779**

**18 – 26 July**

**National Moth Week**

Interested in exploring moth diversity in your backyard! Leave a light on outside, check outside lights near you, or set up a blacklight and sheet.

Register your National Moth Week event for free here:

<http://nationalmothweek.org/register-a-nmw-event-2020/>

**25 July Saturday**

**So far nothing has been planned for this outing day.**

Suggestions would be appreciated.

**Contact: Alan Whitehead on 6959 3779**

**5 August Wednesday**

**Copy for the August newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**

Email: [ericwhiting4@bigpond.com](mailto:ericwhiting4@bigpond.com). Phone: 6953 2612.

## **Biodiversity Survey from Friday 21<sup>st</sup> August**

We propose to conduct a biodiversity survey in the **Weddin Mountains** on the week starting 21<sup>st</sup> August. . This is a baseline survey to ascertain presence/ absence of flora and fauna.

You are invited to come along and assist. We will be mammal trapping using Elliott traps for 4 nights and conducting vegetation surveys. We will also be doing opportunistic listings.

You may camp in the Ben Hall campground and must be totally self- sufficient. The campground has picnic tables and a toilet. In order to camp there you need to book your site and pay \$6 per person per night. (This is new since Coronavirus) You need to book online or call the National Parks contact centre 1300 072757. You could work out how to get there using Google Maps or whatever navigator you own.

Any enquiries to Nella Smith [nella.smith0@gmail.com](mailto:nella.smith0@gmail.com)

## **A trip to Gluepot Reserve in South Australia in Spring 2020 ?**

CALLING for EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (subject to what happens with COVID)

Gluepot is a remote reserve run by Birdlife Australia and by all accounts is a birdwatcher's paradise. It is run by volunteers, and there is an excellent visitor centre full of information about their various research projects

However it is remote, the last 50 kilometres north of Waikerie are dirt, and the only facilities are pit toilets.

Visitors have to bring their own everything - camping and cooking gear, water, and food.

Please contact Meredith Billington (0498711165) or [Meredith.billington@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Meredith.billington@environment.nsw.gov.au)

More information at <https://birdlife.org.au/visit-us/reserves/gluepot>

**The Australian Naturalist Network Annual Get-together at Stanthorpe in September has been cancelled.**

### **Membership subscriptions were due on the 30<sup>th</sup> June**

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

See above for annual subscription rates and bank details.