

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



November 2020 - Issue #287

Journal of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc.

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Website: www.mfn.org.au

Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

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



Malleefowl
tending
mound
by
Phillip
Williams

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CONTRIBUTIONS

For the December 2020 issue by
Wednesday 2 December

To Rowena Whiting

Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com.

Phone: 6953 2612

Nature is ever at work building and
pulling down. creating and destroying.
keeping everything whirling and flowing.
allowing no rest but in rhythmical
motion. chasing everything in endless
song out of one beautiful form into
another John Muir

Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

President:	Alan Whitehead 6959 3779	Editor:	Rowena Whiting 6953 2612
Vice President:	Warrick Bradney	Committee:	Phil Tenison 6953 4869
Vice President:	Max O'Sullivan 0434 923 766		Glenn Currie 0488 563 321
Vice President:	Virginia Tarr 6962 5614		
Secretary:	Graham and Dione Russell 0419 350 673 (Graham) 0428 536290 (Dione)		
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 Presbyterian Church, 23 Sycamore Street at 7 PM

FIELD TRIPS NORMALLY TAKE PLACE ON THE FOLLOWING WEEKEND.

INTENDING NEW MEMBERS, GUESTS AND VISITORS WELCOME.

Membership enquiries:

Leeton	Eric Whiting 6953 2612	Griffith	Virginia Tarr 6962 5614
Narrandera	Nella Smith 0428 890 537	Coleambally	John Wilkinson 6954 4129
Wagga Wagga	Melanie Baulch 0428914702	melaniebaulch@bigpond.com	

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Opinions expressed by authors are their own and do not necessarily represent the policies or views of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc.

Welcome to November

October has seen another month with a number of activities.

Red Earth Ecology Jo and Jason gave us an enlightening presentation about their involvement with the Burning Seed Festival which is held in the Matong Forest. Jo's contribution is showing the participants the local flora and fauna. They showed a video they have made where Jo details the ancient history of the landscape along with the current flooding.

A number of field natters participated in a **Mistletoe workshop** held in Yanco and Griffith lead by Dave Watson, a world expert from CSU; at **Taleeban** we found a number of greenhoods and were delighted to see the rare Velvet bush is coming back and the **Malleefowl Monitoring Program** was well supported by members. It is amazing what some rain can do, it is certainly an astounding season

We had 4 teams competing in the Twitchathon and they all had a good day albeit a lack of bush birds. This is a fund raising event so if you haven't got involved as yet and would like to support one of the teams then go to the web site www.twitch24nsw.org where you will find details of how to make a donation for the team you would like to support. Remember if you donate through the BirdLife portal your donation is tax deductible.

This month is our AGM. Please give some thought to how you can contribute to the clubs' activities so it is not left to the same people, we are always looking for suggestions for outings and presentations.

Again, plenty to read, and to contributors I would like to convey my appreciation for your articles and sending them a little earlier so I can have the weekend away.

Thanks Rowena



Major Mitchell with young in a willow hollow. Bidgee Boobooks Twitch team nominated this as their "Rarest/Best Bird" – photo Glenn Currie

Once more to Taleeban 10 October 2020

My title for my report on the July 2017 visit was 'A slow walk after a long drive'. This time the drive was the same but the walk was even slower! This was entirely due to the profusion of flowers. What a difference rain makes!

Recalling seeing White-winged Trillers at the dam further down Anderson's Lane last time, we went there first. No luck – only a distant view of a single bird. The lack of bird life continued throughout the day.

In contrast all the flowers expected to be seen in mallee were flourishing. I think we spent more time on our knees with our cameras than walking. No more so than Sadie, the Russell's granddaughter. Having borrowed Gran's SLR she had a ball even though the art of focusing on single flowers was a big challenge.

The highlights of the day were the number of Biseta-type greenhoods. Full ID was beyond those present but there surely was two or more species. Another rarely seen orchid was a *Prasophyllum* (Leek Orchid). However

we did not see any Sun Orchids even though the season was right and the sun had warmed the day.

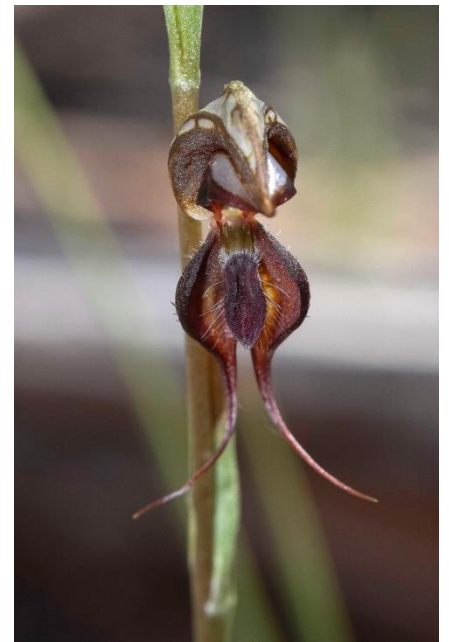
Another unusual sight was the flowering of the omnipresent Porcupine Grass. The profusion of the tall spikes hazily dominating the prickly tussocks only occurs after decent rains.

After a lunch stop some of us checked out the mining site for reptiles with no luck. We did however find the rare

Slender Velvet Bush *Lasiopetalum baue*, had responded well with several knee-high bushes seen. A happy ending to a glorious day.

Eric Whiting

From top: a Guinea Flower Leek Orchid, Slender Velvet Bush, *Pterostylis biseta* orchids – 3 species?



Two Kids and cameras at Taleeban

When we went to Taleeban at the beginning of October Dionee and I took the two oldest of our grandchildren with us and gave them a camera each. Jarvis is 6 and Sadie is 8 so it is interesting to see what they thought was worth photographing. They are not always the best technical photos but in amongst them there are some that I would be happy to have taken.

Not sure how many Rowena will have room for in the newsletter but I will post the ones that I have picked out to our face book page so if you haven't already seen them go and have a look.

Again, from mine and Dionee's point of view thanks to those that were at Taleeban and treated the kids just like any other nature lover that was in the bush to learn. Our thanks.

Graham Russell

Bird List for Taleeban on 10th October

Yellow-plumed Honeyeater
Whistling Kite
Shy Heathwren (h)

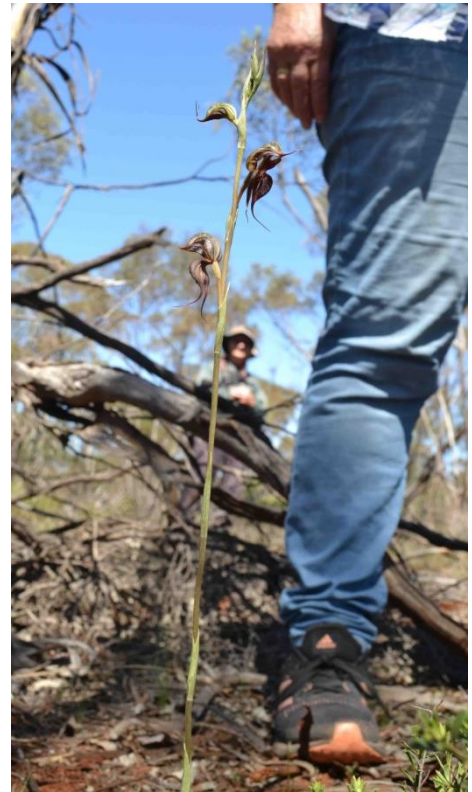
Spiney Cheeked Honeyeater
Masked Woodswallow

White-browed Woodswallow
Yellow Robin

A selection of Jarvis's photos



A selection of Sadie's photos



Show & Tell from the October meeting

Have you found something in your garden you'd like identified? Joy E Young – has suggested this service from the ABC Gardening Australia magazine.

“WHAT ON EARTH?”, send us a photo and Martyn will ID it. Email yourday@gardeningaustralia.com.au with ‘Creature’ in the subject line.

Why Mistletoes are important

Murrumbidgee Landcare recently organised a workshop with David Watson a Professor of Ecology at the Yanco Reserve. For 20 years he has had a passion for Mistletoe (a self-confessed fool for mistletoe). He gave a very informative talk about the much maligned mistletoe.

He was able to dispel a few long held myths about the mistletoe and about its ecological function and importance in the landscape. Here is a brief report about his enthusiastic exposition.

Mistletoes are native plants on native trees. They are parasitic plants- instead of obtaining nutrients and water directly from the soil through roots they take them from other plants. Relying on their hosts for their water and nutritional needs, most parasitic plants manufacture their own carbohydrates using photosynthesis.

Mistletoes attach to their hosts above ground thereby freeing them from soil completely. Thus they can be described as shrubby, aerial hemiparasite. It is an ancient marriage between trees and mistletoe that has been going on for 55 million years!!! There are specific mistletoes for Acacias (as we saw in the Boree) Banksia, Callitris, Hakeas and even Mangroves host their own species of mistletoe.

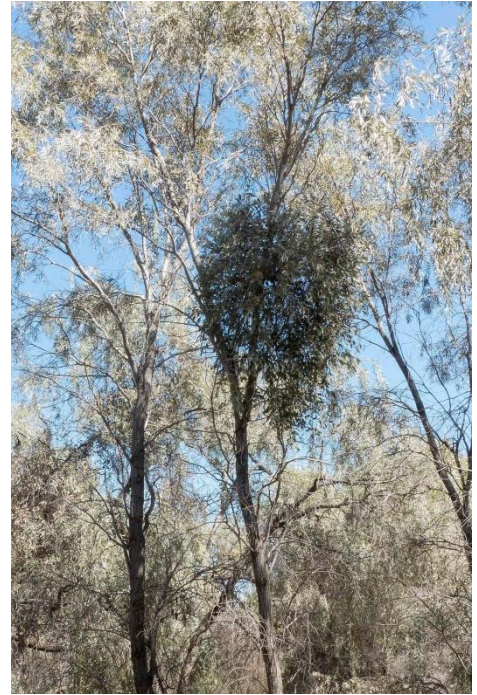
Despite popular opinion mistletoe is actually a very useful plant.

Many animals use it for food and for nesting. Studies have shown that areas with more mistletoe have a greater diversity and number of animals

The threatened Painted Honeyeater and the Superb Parrots eat it.

The little fruits known as “snotty gobbles” were an important snack for indigenous children. Many little birds like thornbills and honeyeaters rely on the thick clumps for nesting sites. Some butterflies lay eggs on mistletoe and the caterpillars help to control it.

Interestingly the Brush-tailed Possum relies on it for food and at the same time controls it. As Brush-tailed Possums have declined in number due to habitat destruction and removal of nesting hollows the mistletoe can grow uncontrollably. Fire destroys mistletoe and as we very quickly try to control fires we also allow the mistletoe to grow uncontrollably by these practices. (There are always winners and losers)



Interestingly David said... Mistletoe is not a thief, it is a borrower. It drops leaves on the ground faster than other trees. The litter is filled with nutrients which supports and improves microbial, fungal and insect activity on the ground. Mistletoe creates microclimates. If you feel the leaves they feel cool – the mistletoe lets water weep out of its leaves slowly to cause this. Other partial parasites like quandong and sandalwood also do this.

Mistletoe uses Mistletoebirds to pollinate its flowers and disperse the seeds. Movement and nesting of this little black and red bird is timed with peak fruit availability. The seeds are very sticky and when it deposits the seed it sticks firmly on the branch of a tree from where it sprouts. It will not sprout on your clothes line though.

Photos: Grey Mistletoe in a Boree tree - Rowena Whiting
Grey Mistletoe flower – Rowena Whiting
Mistletoebird – Phillip Williams



David Watson and Kathy Tenison from Murrumbidgee Landcare for organising it all.

Nella Smith

Book Review – Mistletoes of Southern Australia

A comprehensive book on a distinct group written by a world expert in the field often is rather heavy reading. Not so with this book by David Watson and beautifully illustrated by Robyn Hulley. As those that attended the workshop on mistletoes at Yanco Reserve can attest, David is an enthusiast in the extreme with unsurpassed knowledge of mistletoes in all their aspects. With this book he gives us the benefits of his learning in an easy to read way – technical terms and jargon are absolutely the minimum.

Mistletoes have a very distinctive growth form – woody plants that live on other plants not rooting in the ground but tap into their host's conductive tissues for water and minerals. There are 97 species in Australia in three different families. Unlike the sole European species that features prominently in folk lore, ancient Druid rites, and modern Christmas rituals, most Australian species are often overlooked even though they have attractive flowers and are important in web of life. The first chapter is devoted to mistletoe biology – their origins and relationships, their life cycles and habits. The second short chapter is on identification.

The greater part of the book describes the 47 species found in the southern half of Australia. Strangely Tasmania does not have any. The format is simple, one page for each species with headings for distribution, description, habitat, main hosts, associates (mainly giving the butterfly/moth or bird species that have it as their host plant) and other notes. On the opposing pages are clear drawings of that species by Robyn Hulley.

Next comes a chapter on ecology with a discussion on the relationship with the host plant, pollination and fruiting and the benefits it provides to other species particularly birds.

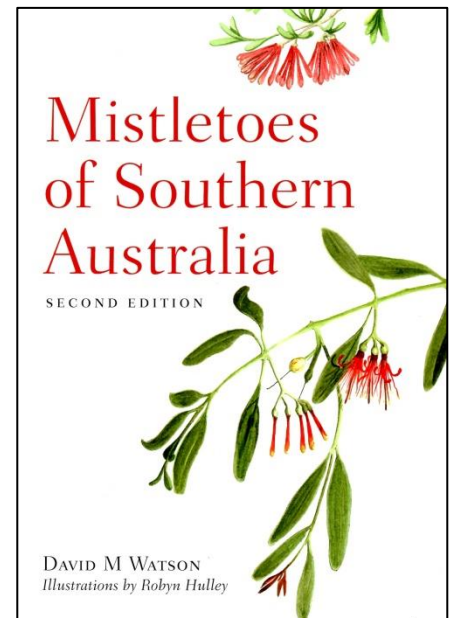
The fifth chapter is on cultural significance – European, early settlers and aboriginal.

Finally, there is a chapter on restoration and management including putting to rest many widespread beliefs like mistletoes kill trees – more often or not they benefit their host.

This book is one of the easiest to read treatises yet packed with information in its 200+ pages that I have the pleasure of owning. It is strongly recommended.

Eric Whiting

Copies are available online or from our local libraries – Griffith, Leeton and Narrandera, Ed.



Often the single paddock tree is full of mistletoe and we slowly see it die. True, if a tree has more than 30% mistletoe in the canopy that's too much. This could be because all the insects and birds and possums have not been able to get to it to control some of the mistletoe. It might also be because the roots are disturbed continuously by cultivation and by the herbicides that are commonly used. We can't blame mistletoe for tree death but ourselves for disturbing the equilibrium in nature.

We were all informed greatly and came away with a greater respect for these much maligned plants and about their important ecological function in the landscape. Thanks

Twitchathon 2020 – Silly Galahs' Report

Our team, Phil and Kathy Tenison and myself, took notice of the weather report for Saturday and we decided not to risk it and put our twitch off until Sunday – all unnecessary as the predicted bad weather didn't eventuate. However, Sunday was predicted to be clear and sunny which it was after the fog lifted!

We left for Griffith intending to start our twitch at McCann Road at 7.30am. By the time we got past the Whitton turn-off, the fog cleared and the day remained warm and sunny for the whole day. I chose McCann Road first in the hope of seeing or even hearing a **Painted Honeyeater** there, but it wasn't – well not while we were searching and listening anyway. We did get off to a reasonable start with about 10 or so usual suspects - **Spiny-cheeked** and **Singing Honeyeaters** and several parrot species **Red-rumps**, **Bluebonnets** and **Mallee (Australian) Ringnecks**.

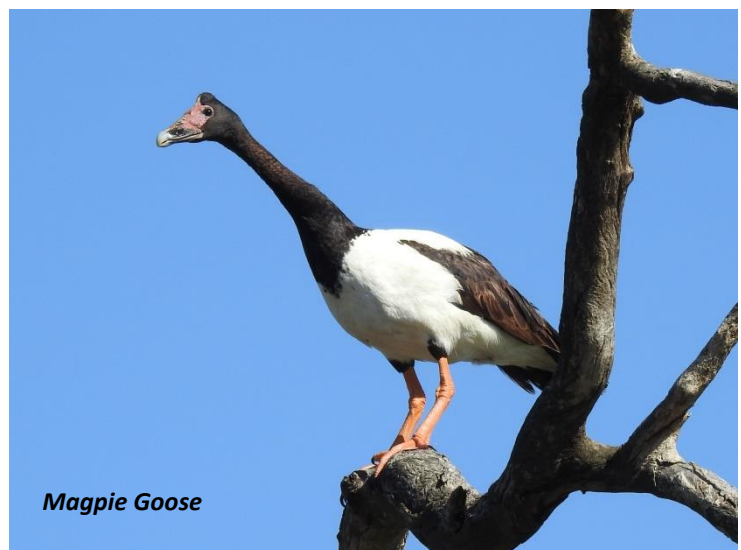
From there we drove to Lake Wyangan Picnic Area to check out the shoreline – a single **Black-fronted Dotterel** was a good sighting there along with a number of waterbirds.

On leaving the picnic area, we stopped at the causeway and got some good birds – **Pied Cormorant**, **Cockatiel**, **Kookaburra**, and **Double-barred Finch** collecting nesting material. This is where we had the first of several encounters with Nella's team.



Budgerigar

Next stop was at the main entrance of Campbell's Swamp where we spent an hour or more checking out the boardwalk, hide and northern end. Lots of good birds were added here – **Black-tailed Native-hen**, **Spotted Crake**, **Magpie Goose**, **Blue-billed** and **Musk Duck** but sadly the **Wandering Whistling Duck** were not to be seen - nor were



Magpie Goose

the bitterns heard even though both **Australasian** and **Little Bitterns** were heard and seen there a few days before. The best surprise was a single **Budgerigar** which flew into a dead tree in front of us. We missed a **Darter** as well but just before we headed back to the car we saw one very high up in the sky circling – tick!

We then drove around to the side entrance of the swamp on the causeway road and got **Red-kneed Dotterel**.

We sacrificed a quick trip into town to look for **Rainbow Lorikeets** – a pair flew over us on the way to our starting point but we didn't count them as we didn't want to start our twitch too early. So, we headed for Cocoparra National Park – Woolshed Flat in particular. It was a difficult choice as it was either there or Wattle Dam and Spring Hill. I'm not sure we made the right choice but we did get some good additions to our list with **Bar-shouldered** and **Peaceful Doves**, **Rufous** and **Brown Songlarks**, **Bee-eater** and **Dusky Woodswallow**.

Time was getting the better of us so we headed back to Leeton via Whitton Road where we accidentally got **Zebra Finch**. On to Euroley Bridge in the hope of finding the pair of **Dollarbirds** I had seen on the Friday but, typically, they were nowhere to be seen or heard. We did get a couple of good birds there before heading

for McCaughey Park at Yanco in the desperate hope of spotting a **Night Heron** in the willows there – no luck there either.

**White-breasted
Woodswallow**



So off to Fivebough we headed and spent the time there searching for more waterbirds that we had missed at Campbell's in the morning. First to show was a **White-necked Heron** in the drain near the carpark entrance. Down at the swamp itself, we got the three Sandpipers – **Marsh, Wood** and **Sharp-tailed** along with **Avocet, Shovelers** and a single **Silver Gull**.

Time was running out and with less than 30 minutes left, we headed for Donaldson Road at the back of the Leeton waste deposit depot. On the way we got a **Common (Indian) Myna** but ran out of time and missed adding a couple more birds on the road itself.

All up we finished with 115 species which was reasonable as bush birds were few and far between and have been for months now so we were lucky to get the ones we did. Without both Campbell's and Fivebough, numbers would have been very low indeed.

Thanks to Kathy for catering for the day with picnic packs and dinner afterwards and to Phil for all the driving – a good time was again had by the team this year.

Max O'Sullivan

Photos by Kathy Tenison

From the Inbox

The inbox, as usual, has been quite full with the various newsletters from other clubs and environment organisations which I use to pass on information and activities.

A couple of interesting items to share this month – one is some feedback on Glenn's favourite tree article and the other from a student in the UK who through researching found our website! A gold star to Noah and his teacher for initiative.

On Measuring Trees

I have had a hobby interest in "Big Trees" for some time, particularly in River Red Gum specimens. As I am an active canoeist and my interest in River Red Gums originated from paddling both the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers and observing specimen trees on the river bank. I have over time visited many other well-known River Red Gums for example at Moulamein, Melrose (SA), Wilpena Pound and most of the riverside reserves up and down the Murrumbidgee near Wagga Wagga. Attached is a photograph of "Big Foot" from Melrose.

I have always used the "point system as for the National Register of Big Trees" and have found it a useful basis for comparison of "size" within species.

As discussed in the newsletter, I use a tape measure for measuring circumference and also canopy spread. Height, I measure by making use of the "phone App" "Arboreal" www.arboreal.se. It works quite well with a satisfactory degree of accuracy. I think a later version of their App will also measure diameter but apparently not canopy spread. I have spoken to the App designers about canopy measurement but without a lot of satisfaction. Members may like to download this App on their phones!



I was aware of the Narrandera River Red Gums specified on the National Register and have previously attempted to locate the tree in the Narrandera forest. Unfortunately I did not have the exact details of location from the Big Tree Register with me. Next time I will be better prepared!

Could I perhaps suggest that a club "Big Tree Measuring Day" could be the basis of a good club activity. As well as the Narrandera tree, members may be able to suggest similar big River Red Gums in the region for measurement and calculation of "points". I am aware of a "big Tree" at Darlington Point that could be included in the measurement activity.

While River Red Gums could be the main "target", measurements could be made of big specimens of other tree species in the area..

I enjoy your newsletter and look forward to my involvement and interest in future club activities.

David Glastonbury

An appreciation of our web site - this is what Noah's teacher has written to us:

Hello,

My name is Chloe and I am an online teacher for an alternative learning program for a special group of kids where we have been discussing nature activities that kids and adults can enjoy. While looking for information, we came across your web page <https://mfng.org.au/taxonomy/term/37/all> and we wanted to say thank you!

One of my students, Noah, did some research and he sent in this article with a lot of really great information on identifying common birds in the UK which is interesting especially for nature lovers!

This is what he found: <https://www.gardenbuildingsdirect.co.uk/blog/common-wild-birds-uk/>

I suggested that he share this with you because it had such great information we thought it could be useful to you and your other visitors. Would you please add a link to it to your web page for them, even if it is just for a little while? I want to show the increasingly large group of students that they can accomplish things if they aren't afraid to come out of their shells and simply ask, especially while being in so much isolation these days! Please let me know if you'd be willing to help so I can share the exciting news with them!

Thank you in advance!

Chloe Wagner, Teacher | Advisor

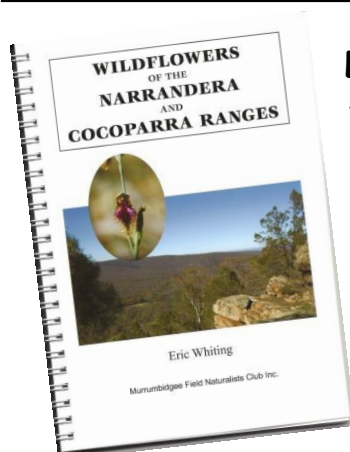
Please contact Dione or me for Chloe's email address if you would like to respond. Rowena.

A couple of links to the Murrumbidgee Landcare website may interest you

[Parrots of the lower Lachlan Valley](#) - A fantastic new resource on the Glossy Black Cockatoo, Major Mitchell's Cockatoo and Turquoise Parrot has been released by Lachlan Fold Wildlife Action Group. It includes fact sheets on the three parrot species, an education package for teachers, and an online presentation that includes audio, video and an interactive word wall.

[Indigenous \(Wurundjeri\) Plant Use guide](#) - This booklet contains information about indigenous plant use, including the medicinal, nutritional and technological use of plants (such as traps, nets and weapons) developed over many, many millennia by Australia's First Peoples.

You may find links to other things of interest on their web site.



Looking for a Christmas gift?

This Field Guide by Eric Whiting covers most of the native wildflowers commonly seen in the Narrandera and Cocoparra Ranges, and which also occur in the other ranges and hills from Narrandera to the Lachlan River.

225 species are described with 136 colour photographs.

A simplified key aids the identification of the plants,

Price is \$25 (inc. GST) or \$20 to MFN members

Copies available at club meetings or Eric Whiting phone (02) 6953 2612 or

Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com

Leeton Visitor Information Centre have copies.

Narrandera Landcare's Plans for 2021

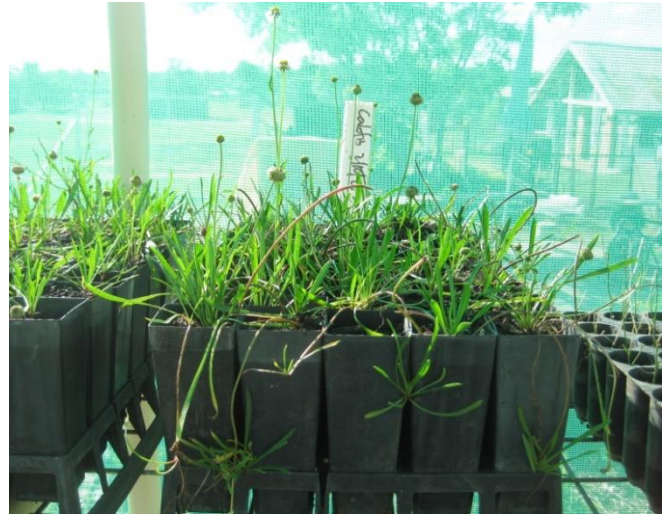
Our Landcare group had an extremely promising 2020 lined up – we obtained a grant kindly provided by the **TransGrid** corporation to engage with the community and local schools to increase knowledge and awareness of our local environment.

With the help of numerous volunteers, we propagated over 1500 seedlings which were supposed to be planted by the schools and during a community planting day. Covid-19 didn't allow that to happen, but we're hoping for a better 2021 and are working towards such.

MFN has provided us a grant through their Environmental Grants Program to allow us to try and achieve the same goals as our 2020's plans. The schools are still keen to work with us when the rules permit it and the community support for our Landcare endeavours is always very encouraging. So in anticipation we've been busy propagating since September and have 100's of various Hopbushes well under way.

There's other species started but one I want to mention is *Calotis scapigera* **Tufted Burr-daisy**. This is the same genus as **Purple Burr-daisy** which a lot of the Field Nats will be familiar with. It has a totally different growing habit though.

Calotis scapigera occurs in River Red Gum communities, on damp clay soils in flood-prone areas. It's already growing at the Wetlands and that's where I first noticed it. What stoked my interest was it forms a dense mat that few weeds seem to penetrate. Closer inspection of it revealed it has a stoloniferous growing habit (think Strawberries).



Photos are of *Calotis scapigera* showing how dense it can be and growing in tubes after propagating.



We decided to try and propagate it by snipping off the runners at each plantlet and putting the crowns into forestry tubes. It seemed too easy but they are off and away! We should have hundreds ready to plant next Autumn (Covid restrictions permitting.)

With this moister season Paterson's Curse and Rye Grass are dominating the Wetlands and we can see the benefit in planting some of this native down there. We're hoping it will help suppress some of the more flammable ground-layer which is now present.

For 2021 we're concentrating on the ground-layer at the Wetlands and have been trying cuttings of the *Wahlenbergia* sp. found there, as well as Sticky Everlastings. These seem to be doing fine. We'll keep experimenting with cuttings of some of the other local forbs and hope to establish them there.

Here's hoping 2021 allows us to capitalize on what we've accomplished so far.

Glenn Currie

MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

Mistletoebird [M]	Teramo St., Leeton	24/09/20	Barry Allen
Spotted Harrier	Gillenbah TSR via Narrandera	27/09/20	Phil Tenison
Tawny Frogmouth – on nest	Gillenbah TSR via Narrandera	27/09/20	Kathy Tenison
Swift Parrot [2]	Kamarah	02/10/20	Graham Russell
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper [34]	Fivebough Wetlands	02/10/20	Max O'Sullivan
Brolga [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	03/10/20	Keith Hutton
Buff-banded Rail [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	03/10/20	Keith Hutton
Yellow-plumed Honeyeater [3]	Taleeban Mining Reserve	04/10/20	Kathy Tenison
White-eared Honeyeater [2]	Taleeban Mining Reserve	04/10/20	Phil Tenison
Little Eagle [1]	Jimberoo NP via Rankins Springs	04/10/20	Kathy Tenison
Sacred Kingfisher [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	05/10/20	Keith Hutton
Glossy Ibis [50]	Fivebough Wetlands	05/10/20	Keith Hutton
Painted Honeyeater [3+]	McCann Rd, Lake Wyangan	06/10/20	Neil Palframan
Black Honeyeater [male]	Mc Cann Rd, Lake Wyangan	06/10/20	Neil Palframan
Sacred Kingfisher [2]	Naradhun Rd Whitton – regularly seen	07/10/20	Margaret Strong
Margaret also reports small flocks of Superb Parrots flying over Whitton most days.			
Cockatiel	'Mountain Dam' Colinroobie Rd, Leeton	08/10/20	Graham Russell
Australian Shelduck [65]	Fivebough Wetlands	08/10/20	Keith Hutton
White-necked Heron [6]	Fivebough Wetlands	08/10/20	Keith Hutton
Whiskered Tern [100]	Fivebough Wetlands	08/10/20	Keith Hutton
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper [100+]	Fivebough Wetlands	08/10/20	Keith Hutton
White-browed Woodswallow	Woolshed Flat Cocoparra National Park	10/10/20	Max O'Sullivan
Swamp Harrier [3]	Fivebough Wetlands	10/10/20	Keith Hutton
Double-barred Finch [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	10/10/20	Keith Hutton
Black-tailed Native-hen [4]	Fivebough Wetlands	10/10/20	Keith Hutton
Black Kite [4]	Fivebough Wetlands	10/10/20	Keith Hutton
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper [280+]	Fivebough Wetlands – 3 first year birds	13/10/20	Keith Hutton
Glossy Black Cockatoo [up to 7]	Koonadan Rd, Leeton – Peter's farm	14/10/20	Peter Draper
Noisy Friarbird [2]	Narrandera Wetlands	14/10/20	Susan Whitehead
Australian Spotted Crake	Fivebough Wetlands	14/10/20	Keith Hutton
The adult bird was feeding 2 downy young.			
Southern Boobook [1]	9 Karri Rd, Leeton	14/10/20	Keith Hutton
The owl was being attacked in the bottlebrush by very aggressive Blue-faced Honeyeaters.			
Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike [pr]	Narrandera Wetlands	15/10/20	Susan Whitehead
Blue-faced Honeyeater [3]	Narrandera Wetlands	15/10/20	Susan Whitehead
Superb Parrot [2]	Narrandera Wetlands	15/10/20	Alan Whitehead
Royal Spoonbill [8]	Fivebough Wetlands	15/10/20	Jo Roberts
Rainbow Bee-eater	Nericon Village – season arrival	15/10/20	Neil Palframan
Malleefowl [male]	West Wyalong area – working his mound	18/10/20	Monitoring Group
Wood Sandpiper [5]	Fivebough Wetlands	18/10/20	Keith Hutton
Buff-banded Rail [downy young]	Fivebough Wetlands	18/10/20	Keith Hutton
Australian Shoveler [+ 9 ducklings]	Fivebough Wetlands	18/10/20	Keith Hutton
Australasian Bittern	Fivebough Wetlands	18/10/20	Keith Hutton
Little Bittern [Heard calling]	Fivebough Wetlands – Settling Ponds	19/10/20	Max O'Sullivan
Keith heard 2 calling in the same area. Also 3 were reported calling at Campbell's Swamp on 22/10/20.			
Whiskered Tern [350+]	Fivebough Wetlands	20/10/20	Keith Hutton

Red-necked Stint [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	22/10/20	Kathy Tenison
Wandering Whistling-duck [3]	Campbell's Swamp	22/10/20	Max O'Sullivan
Pacific Golden Plover [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	25/10/20	Keith Hutton
Caspian Tern [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	27/10/20	Keith Hutton
Plumed Whistling-duck [14]	Yenda Settling Ponds	29/10/20	Max O'Sullivan
Dollarbird [2]	Euroly Bridge Boat Ramp – season return	30/10/20	Max O'Sullivan
Sacred Kingfisher	Cypress st, Leeton	01/05/20	Rowena Whiting

It crashed into one of our windows and did not survive.

There have been many breeding records for Fivebough and Campbell's in October this year with Swan, Black Duck, Shoveler, Magpie Goose, Musk Duck, Blue-billed Duck, Buff-banded Rail, Spotted Crake, Stilt and Moorhen all seen with young.

Compiled by Max O'Sullivan

Monitoring Malleefowl

The Malleefowl is a member of the family of birds called *megapode*, which means “great footed”. Malleefowl have powerful feet for building mounds and moving twigs and litter. Instead of incubating its eggs like other birds it uses the heat of this giant “compost heap” to incubate its eggs.

The Brush Turkey which lives in wetter areas can make a nuisance of itself by building a mound out of the garden is also a megapode. Unlike the Brush Turkey the Malleefowl is found in remote hot dry areas of bush called Mallee Woodland where it probably uses the heat of the sun as well as the heat created by decomposing vegetation. It certainly does not make a nuisance of itself. Mallee woodland is found north and north west of Narrandera.

The Malleefowl has declined in number greatly in recent years probably due to predation of eggs and chicks by foxes and cats and competition for food by goats and other grazers.

In order to work out what we have remaining so that protective measures can be put in place Local Land Services has initiated a Mound Monitoring Program over the next 5 years. This involves volunteers walking through the mallee to previously located and marked mounds and taking various observations including checking of recent scraping and raking by the malleefowl. Up to 10 mounds were visited in one day.



Penny and Phillip Williams checking a mound

The Malleefowl Monitoring Programme occurs every year in October or November at private properties or reserves near West Wyalong and at Mount Hope by volunteers co-ordinated by the NSW Malleefowl Monitoring Group. There are similar activities in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. One woman I spoke to from Perth hadn't seen an active bird in 5 years and we were privileged to see one on our first trip!!

Walking through the mallee can be challenging: it can be thick with strangle vine or closely spaced trees and it looks the same in every direction. So you can easily GET LOST. Volunteers mark their cars before setting off so they can find it again and set off to a GPS marked mound. Despite the tough dry conditions the mallee is very diverse with many flowering plants putting on a great display including terrestrial orchids.

Some teams lost their cars, some teams saw Malleefowl at work (often a once in a lifetime sighting) and some teams were at risk of sleeping outside that night.

Most teams had a great time bushwalking through mallee with purpose and a sense of achievement.

Nella Smith

**** COMING EVENTS ****

Please note all outings are subject to weather conditions.

Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, outings are currently limited to 20 people, you must register with the nominated person by email (preferred) or phone to participate.

- 6-15 November** **Frog ID Week**
This is a great citizen science project from the Australian Museum. It involves downloading an app, then recording frogs and submitting the results.
- 8 – 15 November week** **Spring Wild Pollinator Count**
This gives you an opportunity to contribute to wild pollinator insect conservation in Australia. You can **join in** by watching any flowering plant for just ten minutes sometime during the week.
<https://wildpollinatorcount.com/>
- 12 November Thursday** **Annual General Meeting and Monthly Meeting will be held in the Presbyterian Church Hall, 29 Sycamore St, Leeton at 7.30pm approx. Prior to the meeting at 6.30pm will be a video link to a virtual tour "Breathtaking Birds of the Sri Lankan Rainforest" by Rahula Perera.**
Contact: Graham or Dione Russell 0428 536290 (Dione) or 0419 350 673 (Graham) **Email:** murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- 15 November Sunday** **Bird Surveying along Yanco and Colombo Creeks**
This is in conjunction with Dale McNeil, Environment Manager, Yanco Creek and Tributary Advisory Council Inc.
Meeting in Narrandera we will travel to Morundah via the Newell Hwy, Urana Rd, taking the Coonong Road across to the Newell Highway, south to Thurrowa Road, then back along the Newell Highway stopping at a number of locations for 20 minute bird surveys
Bring lunch or could purchase some home baking from the Morundah Pub. We will need to pool cars, drivers will be re-reimbursed for fuel.
Contact Nella Smith, nella.smith0@gmail.com phone 0428 890 537 for further details. You must register to meet COVID-19 requirements.
- 28 November Saturday** **Outing around Griffith –Campbell's Swamp and McCann Road**
Meet at the aeroplane by Information centre.
Bring: morning tea and a picnic lunch to have at Lake Wyangan Picnic area.
Contact: Max O'Sullivan 0434 923 766, Email maxosul@hotmail.com to register.
- 2 December Wednesday** **Copy for the December newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**
Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com. Phone: 6953 2612.
- 10 December Thursday** **Monthly Meeting will be held in the Presbyterian Church Hall, 29 Sycamore St, Leeton at 7.00pm.**
Topic: to be decided
Contact: Graham or Dione Russell 0428 536290 (Dione) or 0419 350 673 (Graham) **Email:** murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- 12 December Saturday** **Christmas / End of Year gathering – Frogs, moths and birds at Fivebough Wetlands**
This will probably be a BYO everything due to COVID.
Contact: Graham or Dione Russell 0428 536290 (Dione) or 0419 350 673 (Graham) **Email:** murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.