

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



April 2021 - Issue #291

Journal of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc.

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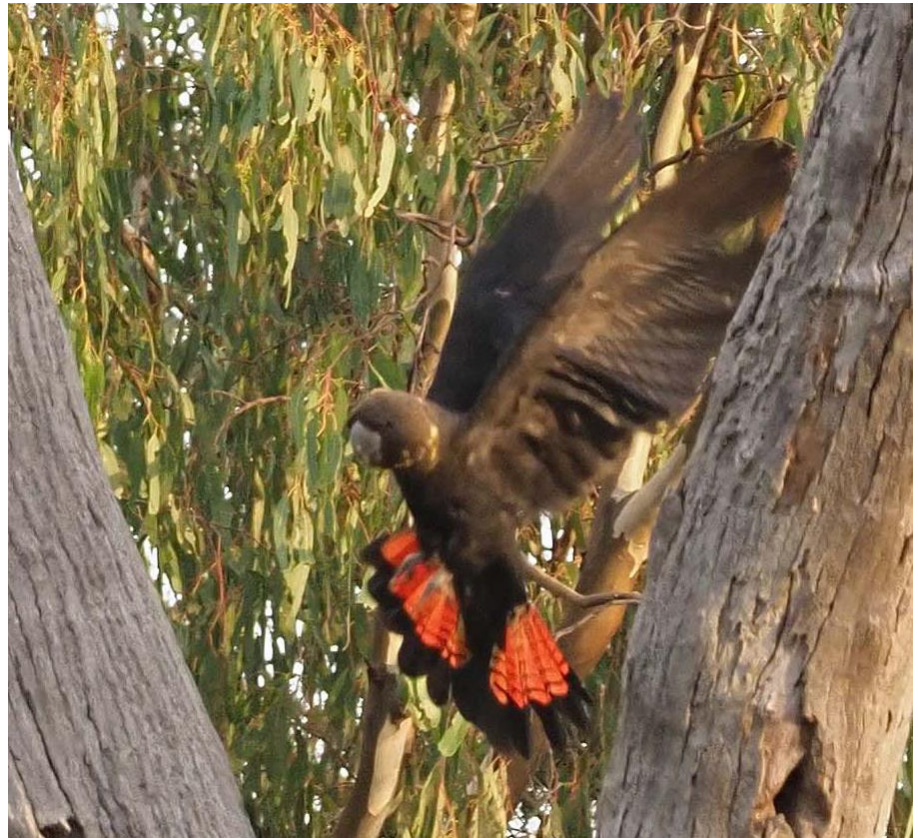
Website: www.mfn.org.au

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

**Glossy Black
Cockatoo**
by
Nella Smith



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CONTRIBUTIONS

For the May 2021 issue by
Wednesday 5 May

To Rowena Whiting

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**“You never know what you can
do until you try, and very few
try unless they have to”**

C. S. Lewis

Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

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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.

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Annual Subscriptions: Family \$45.00 Adult/Single \$35.00 Journal only/Concession \$25.00

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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 your April newsletter

This month's newsletter has been a bit of a challenge - what to put with what so I decided to go with 14 pages and include a bit more!!

See you all on Thursday with lots of interesting show and tells.

Enjoy your read. **Rowena.**

A Special birthday celebration this month,

John Wilkinson has turned 100,

Congratulations, Wilko,

as he is affectionately known. John has been a member since the early days and of course our first member to attain this milestone.

Here he is with his cake that recognises his love of camelleering.

Photo courtesy Jan and Garth Strong



Here are a couple of videos to watch during the darker evenings



Watch: Music could be key in finding rare bird species

In the middle of NSW there's a cryptic bird so elusive that SoS has turned to music to detect it. Threatened species experts have been recording birdsongs - through bioacoustic technology - to monitor and track the critically endangered red-lored whistler (*Pachycephala rufogularis*) in the Central West's Round Hill and Nombinnie Nature Reserves [Watch the video](#)

This one is a link to a short 2 minute amateur video of a family of Tawny Frogmouths taken in Melbourne by a Field Naturalist:

<https://youtu.be/CEWIFghQVGQ>

Andrew Peters on Fruit Bats

At our March meeting we watched a video of a talk by Andrew Peters which was recorded at a Wagga Urban Landcare event.

There are 4 Flying Fox species in Australia. A quarter of all mammal species are bats. In Wagga there are 36 mammal species and more than half of the species are bats (This includes the tiny microbats). There are more bats in the world than rats or even humans. We have the Little Red Flying Fox around here and Wagga also has the Grey-headed Flying Fox.

Bats emerged quickly after the demise of the dinosaurs and they quickly spread across every continent except Antarctica because they could fly.

All Australian Flying Foxes are fruit and flower eating. They disperse seeds in the landscape when eating fruit and spitting out the seeds. They are also key pollinators, and thus disperse genetics across the landscape. Importantly however they are also insectivores. Our system depends on these. When a fungus called white-nose fungus was spread by an unwitting caver millions of bats died of this disease in the US, an additional \$2 billion was spent on insecticides showing clearly the ecological services that these mammals provide to us.

Bats are hosts to viruses like the Beta Corona viruses, rabies and ebola but disease is not the main threat to flying foxes. They themselves have immune tolerance to these. Heat stress is a problem and could become more so with climate change. In 2018 1/3 of all Spectacled Flying Foxes in Queensland died of heat stress, drought and starvation. Flying foxes normally live in the mountains in summer and in winter they live on the Spotted Gum on the coast. A lot of these forests have disappeared so the bats have to travel further for food. So when the bats come to the lowlands they are nutritionally stressed.

When you put ecological stress on them they shed the virus that they carry maybe to other mammals. An example of this was when the Hendra virus that arrived in Australia in 1994. Hendra is deadly to horses but not contagious to people. The bats may roost in a paddock tree where it is cool. This is also where horses like to be. Stressed bats will spill their viruses in their urine onto the horses which get infected. Fencing paddock trees would prevent this problem Andrew Peters suggested.

Covid 19 is not found in our bats but they are at risk of us infecting them. Ebola outbreaks are associated with de-forestation and we in Australia also need to reduce clearing and do a heap of re-forestation for the sake of the bats, other fauna and US.

Nella Smith

Here is the link to the video for those not at the meeting, or you may like to re-watch:
<https://tinyurl.com/Andrew-Peters-on-fruitbats>. Suggestion is to download it first, then view it. Ed.



Little Red Flying-foxes roosting
in River Red Gums - Nella Smith

Nature Walk, Flowerdale Lagoon, Wagga Wagga

On Sunday 7th March 2021 fifteen keen birdwatchers and nature lovers from The Wagga Wagga Chapter of MFN met at The Boat Shed, Lake Albert, Wagga Wagga, at 7am.

The sun was barely up, birds were calling, other birds bathed in the shallow water's edge at the lake while ducks fed on nearby grasses.

After the new-comers introduction and welcomes were done we walked slowly around the southern edge of the lake spotting birds as we went.

It was a glorious morning. We had close-up sightings of many birds including Black fronted Dotterel and Red-kneed Dotterel and they gave us great opportunities to confirm their ID in our bird books. It's certainly very special to identify a bird species the first time. Also good for refreshing one's memory!



After an hour or so, we stopped under some shade trees where Richard Green, local Plant Specialist, informed us of local plants growing around the lake and some seeding and flowering characteristics.

All agreed it was a wonderfully enjoyable and informative outing with new members joining up and then sharing a social coffee chit-chat afterwards at the coffee shop at The Boat Shed. Thanks to those who participated, the leader Melanie Baulch and plant specialist Dick Green.

Our next field trip is to be held on Sunday April 11th at Flowerdale Lagoon, Wagga Wagga. For details see Coming Events on the last page.

Bird List of Lake Albert (south western end) on 7 March 2021.

Full survey details at: <https://birddata.birdlife.org.au/survey?id=5303248&h=a1863ce7>

Date: 7 March 2021 Time: 7:00 am Location: Lake Albert (south)
Coordinates: -35.172918, 147.367015 Survey type: 500m area search

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Australian Magpie	Crested Pigeon	Magpie-lark
Masked Lapwing	Galah	Grey Teal	Common Starling
Welcome Swallow	Noisy Miner	Red-rumped Parrot	Purple Swamphen
Red-kneed Dotterel	Black-fronted Dotterel	White-plumed Honeyeater	Cattle Egret
Australian White Ibis	Red Wattlebird	Little Pied Cormorant	Little Black Cormorant
Laughing Kookaburra	Australian Raven	Pacific Black Duck	Little Egret
Superb Fairy-wren	Crimson Rosella– Yellow	Red-browed Finch	Willie Wagtail
Grey Fantail	European Goldfinch	House Sparrow	Australian Pelican
Australian Wood Duck	Fairy Martin		

Melanie Baulch

Lake Albert, Wagga Wagga – The backwater story to MFN field trip, 7 March 2021

Contributed by Dick Green

'Guniagal giyimbirr,' is the approximate Wiradjuri language translation name of the natural wetland referred to as 'Swampy Plains' by early settler Australians. From 1868 the wetland has been progressively transformed into an artificial lake and named 'Lake Albert' after Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria.

As part of Wiradjuri Ngurambang (Wiradjuri Country) it was a shallow ephemeral wetland with a closed catchment of approximately 200 ha and an estimated maximum depth of 60cm.

Construction of Lake Albert road across the wetland and two channels diverting Crooked Creek (1912) and Stringy Bark Creek (1974) has resulted in a current catchment area for the Lake of around 7650 ha and a lake with a surface area of 125 ha with an average depth of 3.6m when full.

An undesirable side effect had been that the increased inflow has brought with it huge amounts of eroded sandy sediment and dispersible clay soil which makes the water cloudy.

An assessment of current and predicted future sediment levels by CSIRO, the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and Wagga Wagga City Council (WWCC) in 1982 estimated the Lake would be largely unusable for water craft in 40 years time (about now) unless remedial measures were taken.

Consequently the WWCC, SCS, landholders, the Federal Government, and an Aboriginal Works team cooperated in undertaking a large catchment restoration project to control soil erosion. This included fencing and tree planting along gullies and waterways, construction of soil conservation works and water detention basins.

This has had the desired effect with sedimentation greatly reduced. The irony is that with slower runoff, greater infiltration, increasing droughts and lower rainfall since the 1980s, the Lake now has much lower

inflows and hence lower water levels causing some to call for pumping water from the Murrumbidgee River (Murrumbidgee River) to top up the Lake.

One of the above works was the establishment of an artificial wetland, with aquatic and woodland plants, at the entrance of the Stringy Bark Creek Diversion Channel (SW corner of the Lake) to slow inflows and trap sediment.

This was the subject area of the MFN morning walk (7/3/21) where approximately 35 budyaan (bird) species were recorded (See associated article) and some aquatic and woodland plants were identified and described as in the table following.

Wiradjuri plant names, where available, are given first to acknowledge their first naming by Wiradjuri, followed by botanic names and lastly common English names.

Sample Native Plants Identified/Described Lake Albert SW Wetland 7/3/2021

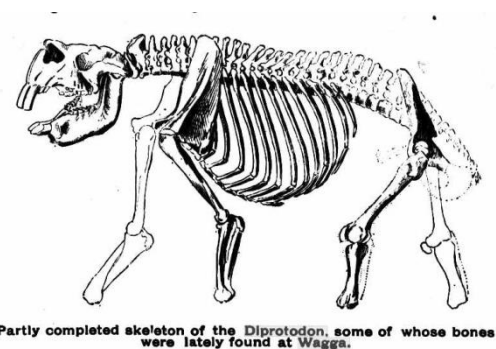
Wiradjuri name	Botanic name	Common name
Madhan		Trees
Yarra *	Eucalyptus camaldulensis *	River Red Gum *
Murrung	E. microcarpa	Grey box
Birri	E. albens	White box
Birgan	E. polyanthemos	Red box
Bilawi	Casuarina cunninghamiana	River she oak
Buguwiny		Grasses
?	Chloris truncata	Windmill grass
?	Bothriochloa macra	Red Grass
Dyrill	Phragmites australis	Common reed

* Currently approx.30,000 seedlings have established by natural regeneration around the Lake edges.

INVITATION TO TIME TRAVEL Jason Richardson

Among many distinctions the concept of time travel must rate as one of the greatest flights for the imagination. Many still remember the exhilaration they felt when first asked: What would you see if you travelled back in time?

You and your imagination are invited to attend a screening of the classic dinosaur film, The Lost World. It excited audiences nearly a century ago with dinosaurs from 68-160 millions years ago. That story originated with Arthur Conan Doyle in 1912 but recent discussion of megafauna on subantarctic islands brought to mind the fascinating discoveries of megafauna in the Murrumbidgee. Over the last century more diprotodon remains have been found in our region.



Partly completed skeleton of the Diprotodon, some of whose bones were lately found at Wagga.

Megafauna — including oversized kangaroos and mega-lizards — died out thousands of years ago, but the Diprotodon could have survived on the Liverpool Plains of NSW until about 7,000 years ago, according to the Australian Museum.” <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-06-28/giant-wombat-monaro-fossil-museum/11258792>>

Please come to the screening of The Lost World on Saturday 17 April at CWA Hall from 7pm and we will discuss the local species that might be considered as time travellers. See coming events page for details of screening under other events.

Jacks Creek Outing 27 March 2021

This was a combined outing with the local Camera Club and was very well attended by both groups.

It was also a last minute change to the proposed trip to Oolambeyan National Park but the rain during the week made the Oolambeyan trip impossible because of the road into the park.

However, the group happily started the trek up the escarpment in a clockwise direction which we thought would be easier in the damp conditions. The walk/climb was more of an exercise experience and a chance for the participants to chat and discuss what they were seeing as there wasn't much by way of wildflowers to photograph. Once up on the hill, good views were had of the surrounding countryside and there were many opportunities for the members to get some interesting photos. There was plenty of talk about various cameras and what each felt about their equipment and preferences.



The rock faces of Jacks Creek with its distinct bedding also provided interest and we learnt of the amberrat, a black gooey substance in rock crevices was the fossilised crystalline urine of native rats that could be centuries old, maybe millennia. See photo on left. At much the same point the rocks are daubed white with the guano from a peregrine falcons perch. Although not investigated this time some fossilised ripple rocks have been exposed with some parts breaking off and sliding down the scree slope to the creekside below. Ripple rocks show that the rocks

were laid down in a watery environment as a sandy beach, just like our beaches along the Murrumbidgee.

Surprisingly, there was very little water in the creek itself as we had expected that after the rain the few days before, there would have been some flow in the upper part of the creek. It would seem that they had not had as much as Leeton and Narrandera. Even the road into Cocoparra National Park was reasonably dry whereas in other parts further east of Griffith and Yenda, the unsealed roads were still fairly slippery.

Birding-wise, the best birds, as usual, were to be found around the carpark area and picnic grounds. Whilst the list isn't long, there were some nice birds seen, including a family of White-browed Babblers busily building a roosting nest in a small pine near the toilet block. They were quite unperturbed by all of us having lunch close-by after we got back from the walk – they just kept bringing beakfuls of grass and sticks to the nest site.



White-browed Babbler – Phil Tenison



Eastern Yellow Robin – Kathy Tenison

After the BBQ lunch and plenty more chat, we all dispersed by about 3pm.



Jacks Creek picnic ground Virginia Tarr
Walking down Jacks Creek – Rowena Whiting

Bird list:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Mulga Parrot | Grey Fantail | Speckled Warbler |
| Eastern Yellow Robin | Willie Wagtail | Red-capped Robin |
| White-browed Babbler | Rufous Whistler | Golden Whistler |
| Grey Shrike-Thrush | Peaceful Dove | Striped Honeyeater |
| Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater | Magpie | Kestrel |
| White-plumed Honeyeater | Australian Raven | |

Max O'Sullivan

I ventured further to The Pines picnic area and walked up to the Woolshed Flats waterfall. There was a trickle of water down the rockfall then disappeared underground a couple of feet away! A dry stream after that!

As I walked to the falls a frog was sending out booming croaks. I've recorded it and as I crept close to where the croak was coming from, it stopped and was camouflaged so well that spending a good half hour sitting, I could not see it, even with binocs. On the way up to the falls, I came across a strong, well constructed Golden Orb-Weaver web and spider.

Then found a further 3 Golden Orb-Weaver Spiders on their webs. They were beautiful in the late afternoon sun.

I then drove up to Mt Bingar to check out our Autumn Greenhoods patch. Sure enough after a thorough search I eventually found this small patch of 5. And they were small, still growing...



Red-capped Robin - Phil Tenison



What a perfect day

Virginia Tarr.

Glossy Black Cockatoo Count 13 March 2021



The Count was conducted a few weeks later than usual. We all probably wished that we hadn't done it at all when the wind blew up and bent the trees in half.

I think that this year we were counting breeding pairs and perhaps a young one hanging around from last year. (maybe to learn the ropes). This thinking makes it more significant than ever.

One pair from the Narrandera Hills is already nesting which makes it an early starter. Most birds have already paired up and are getting ready to nest by finding a hollow that she approves of. Some of the birds in Rankins Springs are just getting going. When she finds a suitable nest, she finally lays her one maybe two eggs. She stays in her hollow and he comes past and feeds her every evening. She's hanging out for a feed by the time he comes and starts calling. This could also be so that he doesn't get lost.

The birds I saw were not at the dam, I came across them as I was driving home. I think they fly around early in the season and check out potential nesting sites. Many of the pairs nest in great old tree hollows, dead or alive, often near water and they often nest in clusters.

A great effort was put in for the survey this year. Of the 16 sites surveyed in Brobenah, Narrandera Range and Cocoparra National Park 6 dams yielded none. (not counting Rankins Springs). A nil result is still a result. It simply means that they are not feeding around there at the moment. These are wild birds and we actually don't know where they would be on Saturday night.

The Cocoparras group counted 10 birds. The Brobenah group counted 8 birds. The Narrandera Range group also counted 8 birds. A spectacular count from Rankins Springs yielded 34 birds. Thanks to Rodney Guest and the crew from the Lachlan Fold for organising the count there.

Thanks for all your efforts. These counts can be hard. You could get lost, you could get bogged. You could have fun.

Some interesting sightings included 70 Wood Duck at one dam and a list good enough for a wetlands.

Glenn spied a koala swinging in a tree in unison with the wind at a dam near Narrandera. Probably 13 km from the river! Was he/she lost?

Nella Smith

And a big thank you to Nella for contacting all the property owners / leaseholders so this count can take place. Ed.

Beak Technique Project Grows

Jason Richardson discussed the Beak Technique project at the March meeting of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists.

If you have photographs of the species listed below or would like further information, please email spacing@bassling.com

The project has been funded through Create NSW to develop a series of children's activity sheets that link local bird species with their habitat. We're now able to print a colour flier to promote the sheets and illustrate the bird species, through additional support for Orana Arts. These activities will link bird identification with their diet and native plant species. The project has grown in scope as funding became available, from support through Leeton Shire Council for a Country Arts Support Program grant through Western Riverina Arts and NSW Government's Create NSW.

Each sheet will promote four birds and five plant species and we've now added a fifth activity sheet for cockatoos. Jo and I have been finalising bird and plant species that will be included in the designs.

Your contributions at the March meeting helped to narrow the decision-making process and your comments were invaluable. We wanted the bird species to include a range of everyday and one aspirational species. The choices have also ensured a diversity of colours for the activity sheets.

Photographs will illustrate the bird and plant species, which is where photographic contributions from the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists will assist in developing the project. It is anticipated the images will be used in the flier design and might also be part of an exhibition to support the project. Copyright for the images will remain with the photographers, who will be acknowledged with each image. Please send your images of the following to spaceling@bassling.com



From left: Willy Wagtail
White-plumed Honeyeater
Mallee Ring-necked Parrot

Sheet 1 - Cockatoos (seeds, roots berries and nuts)

- Sulphur-crested Black varieties - Major Mitchell's - Galah
- Plants:** *Eucalyptus melliodora* Yellow Box *Allocasuarina verticillata* - Drooping Sheoke
- Microlaena stipoides* - Weeping grass *Acacia deanei* - Dean's Wattle
- Spiny or hedge saltbush?

Sheet 2 - Parrots (seeds, flowers, nectar)

- Superb Yellow rosella Blue Bonnets Mallee Ring-necked
- Plants:** *Acacia decora* - Western Silver Wattle *Atriplex nummularia* - Old Man Saltbush
- Themeda australis* - Kangaroo Grass *Callistemon sieberi* - River Bottlebrush
- Eucalyptus microcarpa* - Grey Box

Sheet 3 - Honeyeaters (insect and nectar)

- Black White-plumed Spiny-cheeked Striped
- Plants:** *Grevillia* - 'Robyn Gordon *Eremophila longifolia* - Emu Bush
- Acacia pendula* *Amyema quandong* - Grey Mistletoe
- Eucalyptus blakelyi* Blakeley's Red Gum

Sheet 4 - Finches (seed)

- Sparrows Diamond firetail Zebra Finch Double-barred
- Plants:** *Carex appressa* - Tall Sedge *Allocasuarina verticillata* - Drooping Sheoke
- Danthonia* species - Wallaby Grass *Dysphana pumilio* - Clammy Goosefoot
- Poa sieberiana*- Tussock Grass

Sheet 5 -Fantails/Robins (insects and invertebrates)

- Willy wagtail Red-capped Robin Superb blue Wren Yellow-rumped Thornbill
- Plants:** *Acacia doratoxylon* - Currawang/Myall *Acacia montana* - Mallee Wattle
- Callitris glaucophylla* White Cypress pine *Allocasuarina luehmannii* - Bulloak
- Eucalyptus microcarpa* -Grey Box

Jason Richardson

Know your Daisies – Part 3, Brachyscome daisies

If the Common or English Daisy *Bellis perennis* is taken as the 'typical daisy' then the Australian equivalents are the many species of Brachyscome daisies. *Bellis* has been introduced into Australia but is restricted to the cooler climates of southern Victoria and Tasmania.

Brachyscome

Annual or perennial herbs; leaves in a basal rosette and/or alternate, margins entire to pinnatisect; inflorescences solitary terminal heads; heads with tubular disc florets plus one row of ray florets; achenes terete to flattened, sometimes winged, glabrous or hairy or tuberculate; pappus of short bristles or absent.

For a long time Brachyscome was spelt without the 's' as in the initial description but later corrected. The correction was debateable under international naming rules before becoming universally accepted.

Eighteen species have been recorded in the Northern Riverina*, of which four have only a single record each (*B. aculeata* at Mayrung, *B. ciliocarpa* at Mt. Narriah, *B. diversifolia* at Mt. Wammera, *B. microcarpa* near Grenfell).

Growing on floodplains and/or on heavy clays - numbers 1-7

Growing in woodlands, mallees or drier grasslands – numbers 8-13

Ray florets yellow - number 14

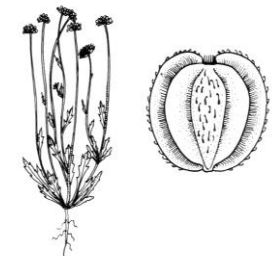
1. *Brachyscome basaltica*, Swamp Daisy

Perennial herb to 60cm high; leaves entire; achenes faces tuberculate; pappus a microscopic rim; grows on heavy soils often subject to inundation; recorded from Murrumbidgee Red Gum forests and from Willandra Creek



2. *Brachyscome curvicarpa*, Curved-seed Daisy

Annual herb, to 41cm high, erect, branching, glandular and woolly hairs on stems and leaves; rays florets white, or violet,; achenes strongly curved with entire wings, smooth, hairy; recorded in open saltbush and on floodplains in the Jerilderie area and near the Murrumbidgee River near Carathool.



3. *Brachyscome dentata*, Lobe Seed Daisy

Perennial herbs to 50cm, ray florets white or bluish, achenes flattened with broad flat, dissected wings, faces and wing margins with curly hairs, surfaces tuberculate at maturity; recorded in a variety of habitats, often on floodplains.



4. *Brachyscome goniocarpa*, Dwarf Daisy

Annual herbs to 23cm, ray florets white; leaves lobed or pinnatisect; achenes variable, , 4-angled, marginally ridged; pappus an oblique ciliate rim; recorded in saltbush and Black Box communities mostly on grey soils of floodplains.



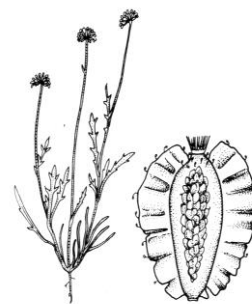
5. *Brachyscome melanocarpa*, Black-seeded Daisy

Perennial herbs to 45cm, hairy; differs from 4 in that the achene is flat, black and the pappus is central; rays white to violet; recorded on heavy clay soils subject to flooding.



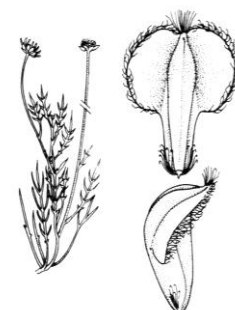
6. *Brachyscome papillosa*, Mossgiel Daisy

Perennial herbs to 36cm, ray florets mauve or white; achenes broad-ovate, , faces with dense flat papillae, wings as broad as body, margins ciliate, entire and undulating; recorded from areas subject to inundation and on saltbush plains.



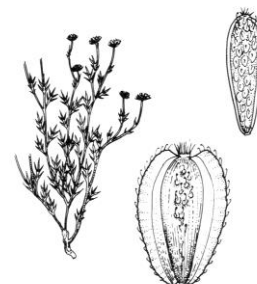
7. *Brachyscome smithwhitei*, Large White Daisy (syn. *B. sp. B*)

Annual herbs 12-40cm; ray florets white; leaves pinnatisect; achenes with well developed wings in upper half, , hairy apically, faces smooth and hairy; recorded in depressions and on floodplains, in saltbush generally on the Hay Plains



8. *Brachyscome ciliaris*, Variable Daisy

Perennial herb to 45cm high; leaves linear, pinnatisect or lyrate, margins acutely lobed; ray florets white to mauve; achenes dimorphic, disc florets flattened, winged, surfaces tuberculate; ray florets wingless; recorded growing on red-earths and rarely on sandy or clay soils.



9. *Brachyscome gracilis*, Dookie Daisy

Annual herbs to 30cm, usually <10cm; leaves spatulate to cuneate, deeply lobed or pinnatisect apically; rays florets white; achenes winged, curved inwards, faces hairy especially nearer apex; recorded growing among rocks in dry areas.



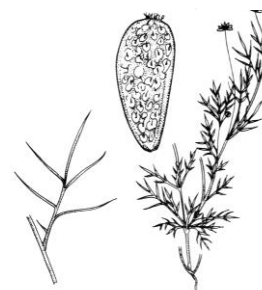
10. *Brachyscome leptocarpa*, Small Hairy Daisy

Differs from 9 in that leaves are mostly basal and the achenes are not curved



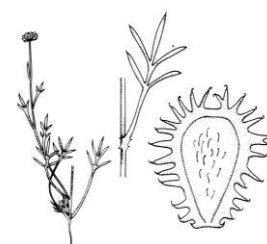
11. *Brachyscome multifida*, Cut-leaved Daisy

Perennial herbs to 45cm, glabrous; leaves pinnatisect with 7-10 linear-lobes; rays florets mauve, pink or white; achenes slightly flattened, margins narrow, smooth, faces tuberculate each tubercule with a minute bifid hair; recorded in sclerophyll forests or grasslands



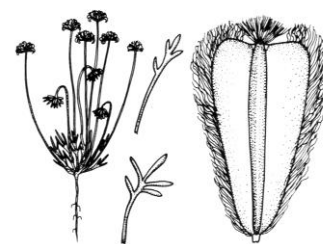
12. *Brachyscome perpusilla*, Rayless Daisy

Annual herbs to 10cm; leaves pinnatisect, segments linear, glabrous; ray florets white, to c1mm long; achenes flattened with deeply lobed wings, faces smooth; pappus absent; recorded in mallee and woodlands



13. *Brachyscome lineariloba*, Hard-headed Daisy

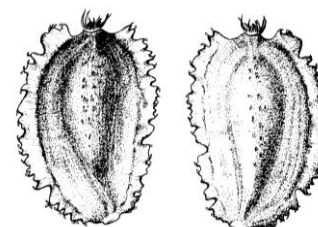
Annual herbs to 15cm, hairy; leaves mostly basal, pinnatisect with 3-9 linear, obtuse segments; rays florets white; achenes 4-angled, margins very thick, silky with glandular hairs to 2mm long; recorded in a variety of habitats, quite common.



14. *Brachyscome chrysoglossa*, Yellow-tongue Daisy

Perennial herb 15-40cm high, erect; leaves entire or 3-5 (sometimes to 10) lobes towards apex, sometimes with 1 or 2 lobes near base; ray florets yellow in one series; achenes with irregularly lobed wings, faces smooth hairy; recorded from the Jerilderie – Urana area and from Bland Creek near Quandialla.

*I define the region as the Local Government Areas of Carrathool, Griffith, Leeton, Bland, Murrumbidgee, Narrandera and Coolamon



Eric Whiting

A Colourful Grass hopper

I came across this colourful “bug” whilst working in my mother’s garden. It had to be a Grasshopper/Locust of some sort and it was unique enough to make me want to try and i.d. it.

Some research came up with a “Gaudy Grasshopper” family – *Pyrgomorphidae*. The name seemed apt, so I pursued that lead and a bit more time on the net revealed it “may” be a Blistered Pyrgomorph (*Monistria pustulifera*) which is a species of wingless grasshopper endemic to Australia.

This species is commonly found on *Eremophila*, and garden plants such as Buddleja, dahlias, honeysuckle and privet- all of which are in this garden.



Glenn Currie

Do leaf-eating insects always harm plants?

When I was living in Bendigo a favourite walk was up One Tree Hill, one of the woodland reserves that nearly circle the city. A track led up a ridge line to a fire tower. The western city-side of the ridge fell away fairly steeply down to Spring Gully and a fairly busy road. The slope was well covered with Red Box trees (Victorian name for *Eucalyptus polyanthemos*) and all sight and sound of road traffic was effectively blocked.

That is until one summer of severe drought. An outbreak of cup-moth caterpillars the grotesque Chinese Junks with their turrets of stinging hairs – had completely denuded the trees. Road traffic was easily observed even from the highest point. Everyone thought it was a disaster, but not so. Researchers discovered the Box trees actually changed their physiology in response to the distressingly dry conditions. They altered the leaves to become more attractive to be eaten. The resultant denudation drastically reduced the loss of water from transpiration leaving the trunks and roots to survive on what was left in the soil.

Although called evergreens, eucalypts regularly replace their leaves with fresh ones, just not cast off in one go like deciduous plants. So when the rain finally returned the trees soon had a new covering of fresh growth. It was not long before the road was one again effectively masked.

So the answer is – not always.

Eric Whiting

MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

Spotted Harrier	Paynters Siding Rd via Narrandera	28/02/21	Nella Smith
Fuzzy Box <i>Eucalyptus conica</i>	Jumberoo National Park	01/03/21	Eric, Glenn,
Further west than other Bionet records			Nella, Rowena
Peregrine Falcon	Narrandera Wetlands	01/03/21	Alan Whitehead
Grey Fantail [Family with 3 juv]	Gordon St Narrandera	04/03/21	Warrick Bradney
Brolga [11]	Fivebough Wetlands	06/03/21	Max O'Sullivan
Latham's Snipe [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	06/03/21	Keith Hutton
Magpie Goose [20]	Fivebough Wetlands	06/03/21	Keith Hutton
Rainbow Lorikeet [3]	Narrandera Wetlands	06/03/21	Susan Whitehead
Noisy Friarbird [2]	Narrandera Wetlands	06/03/21	Susan Whitehead
Nankeen Night Heron [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	07/03/21	Keith Hutton
Spotted Harrier [Imm]	Fivebough Wetlands	08/03/21	Max O'Sullivan
Turtle	Petersham Rd, Leeton	08/03/21	Barry Allen
Plumed Whistling Duck [7]	The Basin Dam, Koonadan	09/03/21	Max O'Sullivan
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [2]	Middle Rd, Leeton	13/03/21	Jason Richardson
Brolga [20]	Fivebough Wetlands	14/03/21	Keith Hutton

Keith also reported raptors – Black Kite, Whistling Kite, Brown Falcon [3], Peregrine Falcon, Kestrel [4] and Swamp Harrier.

Black-tailed Native-hen [4]	Fivebough Wetlands	20/03/21	Keith Hutton
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Other birds seen by Keith on 20/03/21 include: Pied Stilt [70], Australian Shelduck [18], Grey Butcherbird [Imm], Silver Gull [60], Red-necked Avocet [25], Masked Lapwing [13], White Ibis [119], Straw-necked Ibis [253], Glossy Ibis [1], Yellow-billed Spoonbill [3], Royal Spoonbill [19], Pelican [7], Black Swan [57], Great Egret [6], Intermediate Egret [2], White-faced Heron [6], White-necked Heron [2], Cattle Egret [120], Magpie Goose [11], Nankeen Night Heron [3], Chestnut Teal [1], Grey Teal [380].

Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [24]	Colinroobie Rd, Leeton – perched	23/03/21	Allan Richards
Buff-banded Rail [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	23/03/21	Allan Richards
Wood Sandpiper [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	25/03/21	Keith Hutton
Little Eagle [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	26/03/21	Max O'Sullivan
Olive-backed Oriole [6]	Galipoli St, Griffith	28/03/21	Virginia Tarr

Virginia also reported Purple-backed Wren [3], Red Wattlebird [2], Blue-faced Honeyeater [2], Pied Butcherbird [1] and Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike [1] in her local area for the month.

Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [9+]	Koonadan – Penny and Phil's place	29/03/21	Phillip Williams
Double-barred Finch [4]	Mallinson Rd, Griffith	31/03/21	Virginia Tarr
Grey Goshawk	Mallinson Rd, Griffith	31/03/21	Trevor O'Brien
Grey Shrike-thrush [Imm]	Whitton – slowly perfecting its call	Daily	Margaret Strong

There has been an increase in the number of Black Swans and also in Ibis, Egrets and Heron numbers at Fivebough over the month but a scarcity of ducks. Since the rain, the ducks have dispersed with plenty of alternative water about.

Max O'Sullivan

Thornbills; Yellow Rumped Thornbill (left) & Yellow taken by Phil Tenison at Fivebough Wetlands



**** COMING EVENTS ****

Please note all outings are subject to weather conditions.

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

- 8 April Thursday** **Monthly Meeting** will be held in the **Henry Lawson Room** at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St, Leeton commencing at **7pm**.
Topic: Show and Tell
Please bring along any items of interest that have interested.
Contact: Graham or Dione Russell 0428 536 290 (Dione) or 0419 350 673 (Graham) **Email:** murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- 10 April Saturday** **Field Trip to Campbells Wetlands**
Meet at the Campbell's Wetlands Carpark.
Contact Max O'Sullivan 0434 923 766 maxosul@hotmail.com to register
- 11 April Sunday** **Wagga Wagga Chapter - Nature Walk at Flowerdale Lagoon**
Walk around the Lagoon or double back if inaccessible, observing and recording.
Meet at Car Park - Corner Sturt Highway and Edward Street West, Wagga Wagga
Time: 7:00- 9:00am
Contact leader: Sarah Dankert 0427276306 spdanckert@gmail.com – **RSVP 7 April 2021** (because of Covid-19 rules you must register.)
- 24 April Saturday** **Ironbark Creek in the Cocoparra National Park**
Meet at Ironbark Picnic Area
Contact ericwhiting4@bigpond.com Phone 6953 2612
- 5 May Wednesday** **Copy for the May newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**
Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com. Phone: 6953 2612.
- 8 May Saturday** **Global Big Bird Day**
Watch birds in any spot and do a 20 minute surveys organised by eBird.
Contact: Max O'Sullivan 0434 923 766 maxosul@hotmail.com
- 13 May Thursday** **Monthly Meeting** will be held in the **Henry Lawson Room** at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St, Leeton commencing at **7pm**.
Topic: Any suggestions or volunteers to do a presentation
Contact: Graham or Dione Russell 0428 536 290 (Dione) or 0419 350 673 (Graham) **Email:** murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- 15 or 16 May** **Field Trip to Lake Urana – this still needs to be confirmed with a local guide.**
Saturday or Sunday **contact Nella** 0428 890 537 nella.smith0@gmail.com
- 30 May Sunday** **National Tree Planting Day at Narrandera**
Contact Nella 0428 890 537 nella.smith0@gmail.com
- Other events**
- 17 April Saturday** **Time Travel Experience, screening of classic dinosaur film *The Lost World* with a soundtrack composed by Jason Richardson.**
7pm at the CWA Hall, Wade Avenue, Leeton, Gold coin donation.
Supported by Western Riverina Arts and Create NSW.
- 30 April Friday** **Hay Plains Landcare '4 Seasons of Seed' – Second workshop**
Autumn– seed propagation. Propagation kits and seed will be available for the practical component. For more information: [4 Seasons of Seed: Seed propagation](#)