

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



September 2021 - Issue #296

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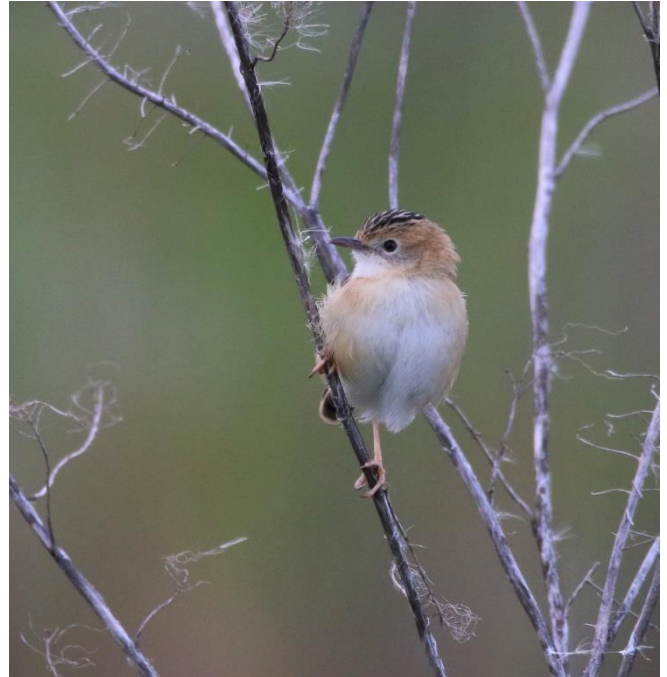
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

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



Waxlip Orchid *Glossodia major*
Nella Smith



Golden Headed Cisticola
Phil Tenison

IN THIS ISSUE

| | |
|---|----|
| Office Bearers and Subscriptions..... | 2 |
| Riverina Landcare Champions | 2 |
| Remembering Col Sell..... | 3 |
| Bats and Rats with Andrew Peters | 4 |
| Local Wildflowers – Mt Bungabil..... | 5 |
| Griffith Wetlands | 6 |
| Fivebough Wetlands – where are the birds?..... | 7 |
| MFN Landcare Community Award | 9 |
| Disappearing Frogs | 10 |
| Know your daisies, part 8 Fireweeds / Groundsels .. | 11 |
| Observations from members..... | 12 |
| Members' Sightings | 13 |
| Flora guides | 14 |

CONTRIBUTIONS

For the October 2021 issue by
Wednesday 6 October 2021

To Rowena Whiting

Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com.

Phone: 6953 2612

**Some people just quietly go on
and get things done not expecting
any recompense or reward.**

Nella Smith

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 Henry Lawson Room, Leeton Library, Sycamore Street, Leeton at 7pm.

FIELD TRIPS NORMALLY TAKE PLACE ON THE FOLLOWING WEEKEND.

INTENDING NEW MEMBERS, GUESTS AND VISITORS WELCOME.

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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 September

Here we are again confined to our own little spaces. It couldn't have come at a worse time of year, with all those plants we'd seen budding up, now flowering where few can enjoy them. I hope everyone is finding a way to appreciate the great outdoors within their allowed area.

It is not often an editor finds themselves in the unenviable position of too much copy!! I do appreciate the response I had to my request and thank you all; regrettably there are quite a few I haven't been able to include in this issue. I have chosen items that are more relevant to the newsletter rather than 'show & tells'. I will try and collate the remaining items separately.

Future activities are on hold until it is known what the COVID restrictions will be. We can only hope we will be able to meet in October.

Enjoy this month's read, Rowena.

This month we have to congratulate ourselves - we have been awarded the **2021 Riverina Landcare Community Group Champion award**. Special thanks to those people who contributed to our nomination and collated the supporting information and images required for our application; Nella, Eric, Rowena and Kathy Tenison. Read about 'us' on their website where there is also a video of our activities at [2021 Riverina Landcare Champions](http://mli.org.au/2021-riverina-landcare-champions) (Murrumbidgee Landcare) or via their website: <http://mli.org.au/2021-riverina-landcare-champions>. The information can also be found on page 9.

So lovely to be recognised.

We must also send our congratulations to one of our members, **Glenn Currie** for achieving the **Individual Landcare Champion** for the work he has been doing for the Narrandera Landcare group and in the community. Again you can read about Glenn's achievements and see him in action at [2021 Riverina Landcare Champions](http://mli.org.au/2021-riverina-landcare-champions) or at the website: [mli.org.au/individual-landcare-champion](https://narranderalandcare.wordpress.com/). For further information on Narrandera Landcare visit their website <https://narranderalandcare.wordpress.com/> **Much deserved, well done, Glenn.**



Remembering Col Sell

It is with sadness that we learnt of the death of one of our long time members last week, Col Sell, he was 91. He and June joined MFN in 1997.

Our sincere condolences go to June at this sad time, memories live on.

Louise Harrison, a member from Griffith in the 1990s, has written this tribute.

I met Col and June in about 1997 at the first meeting of the MFN in Griffith and on local field trips thereafter but it wasn't until 1998 when I started work with Greening Australia to set up a local seedbank that I really got to know them. I was recruiting volunteers to help collect seed of native trees and shrubs across the Lower Murrumbidgee catchment and it wasn't long before Col (& perhaps also June for a few trips) became my number one volunteer.

Col joined me on many trips to Booligal, Hay, Coleambally and Narrandera and everywhere in between to check and or collect seed. Most of the Acacia seed was ready for collection around Christmas and during the hottest months but that didn't deter Col at all. Once the seed was collected, he also gave freely of his time to help clean the seed, ensure it was all packaged and stored correctly and germination testing at his home. As a retired Accountant he paid great attention to detail and this was always greatly appreciated.

He spent time at home researching the different species and couldn't wait to share his discoveries on our next excursion. He was thrilled (as we all were) when Sturt Desert Peas germinated from seed trash and thrived in his driveway. He became passionate about the local orchids and was always keen to share his knowledge. Col was quietly spoken, devoted to June and it was wonderful they shared their love of nature.

from Melanie Baulch

I would like to acknowledge Colin Sell's time with MFN. He lived in Griffith with his wife June and was a member of MFN's for over 20 years. During this time he became an invaluable advocate for the local flora and fauna by developing his hobby of growing local native plants.

After we built our home in the bush, a few kilometres north of Griffith, I wished to return the plant species that had been removed during building and Col provided many of the plants. I'd give Col a plant list and he'd do his best to provide! He also gave me planting advice and when he and June visited he would invariably go off for a walk to see how the plants were growing. Thank you Col Sell for sharing your knowledge and doing your bit to help protect our magnificent natural world

from Nella Smith

Some of the long-time members of MFN remember Col and June Sell as regular members and attendees of Field Trips. They would do some of the long walks that we are attempting to do now.

June had great knowledge and a good ear for birds and could spot and identify any bird from a long way.

Col was keen on re-vegetation. He was a keen seed collector and was very good at collecting some of the rarer seeds including some uncommon *chenopodium*. He was also good at propagating some species from seed.

He has lived for many years on the edge of Scenic Hill and he would walk there regularly and observe the changes in the plants from season to season. In particular he noted the Terrestrial Orchids.

Col was also a great help when the boardwalk and the bird hide were being constructed in early 2000 at Campbell's Swamp (now Wetland). He also helped with some of the re-vegetation works around Griffith.



Plants Col grew from seed - Hop Bush, Senna, Sturt Desert pea, Showy Daisy Bush, Ruby Saltbush

'Supervising' work on the boardwalk at Campbell's in 2006



Bats and Rats with Andrew Peters

What a lovely night. Thanks Andrew for giving us a run down on bats and rats: the unlikely heroes in the land down under. Zoom is a great option for us during these Covid days at MFN meetings.

We often think about the common native mammals and don't give much thought to the rats and bats. This will probably change over time as research on these species and their importance in ecosystems is unravelled. Andrew has a wonderful knowledge on this topic.

It seems we as humans certainly do have an opportunity to impact wildlife health. There is a surprising hidden side to these mammals.

We have already lost one of the rat species due to climate change through high water levels here in Australia (Whiskered Rat). We have also lost large numbers of Smoky Mice due to the summer bush fires on the south coast of NSW.

The recent drought crippled food supplies which caused problems for the bat populations in Northern Queensland. They are adapting to higher temperatures to some extent by heading to the cooler parts of the trees. But are they adapting fast enough? Andrew showed photos where large numbers of bats died in the heat.

Millions of years ago rats arrived in Australia on rafts of trees that collapsed into the ocean and carried these tiny animals to Australia. Can't believe how scary 'tree surfing' in the waves would have been.

Since arriving in Australia they have adapted to use every single habitat on the land. There are desert specialists, Rock Rats in the Kimberley, Rabbit Rats in tropical woodlands and open forests of northern Australia and Smoky Mice in areas around eastern Victoria, south-east NSW and the ACT. Tree Rats and False Water Rats are also found in Australia. Stick-nest Rats are now extinct in Australia.

Cats and foxes have caused major decline in the rodent population. The fact that the cats arrived in 1788 meant our rodents who had been here for some time had forgotten about their original relationship with the felines and they succumb to their predatory nature. Foxes cause similar problems for small mammals.

Fungal disease, spread by cavers, is also causing a problem for cave roosting bats in North America. Lucky we don't have huge numbers of cave roosting bats in Australia. However, those in caving pursuits are very mindful of the risk of transmission of disease.

It seems increasingly important we look after remnant vegetation and ensure the bats and rats have somewhere to live and feed.

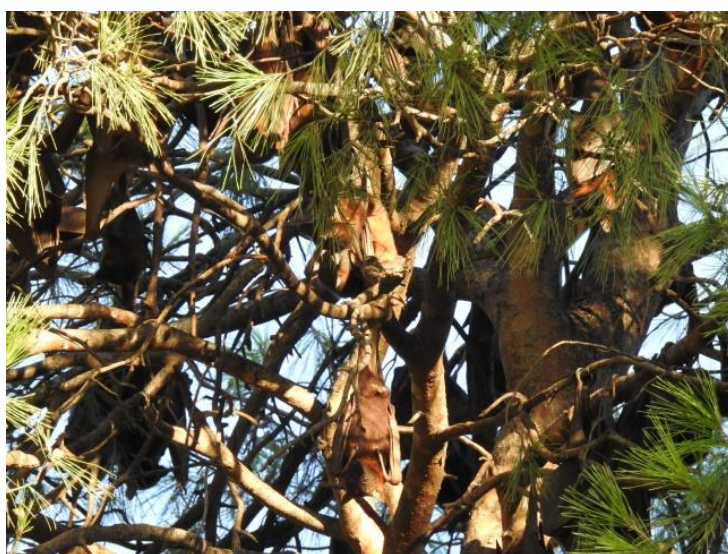
Nella commented that Wagga was one of the last local places the Bilby was seen hopping around. We don't want to continue to lose species.

It seems at this point in time there is not a lot of monitoring of mammals in the Riverina so it would be nice to improve this situation.

Of course funding is a problem. There are some Bioacoustic instruments that are available now to listen to bats which was interesting to a lot of the MFN members. The instruments have adaptors which fit to a phone and track the sound of bats.

Besides being pollinators, the insectivorous bats are great at 'gleaning' to pluck insects off vegetation. We should not underestimate the impact this has in reducing harmful insects that impact on our agricultural pursuits. We need to keep things in balance.

One thing we can do to protect these mammals is remove barbed wire off the top row of the fencing in the area. Andrew has seen many of these beautiful animals die the most horrible death on barbed wire fences.



**Little Red Flying Fox (*Pteropus scapulatus*)
at Yanco - Kathy Tenison**

Andrew reminded us not to touch bats unless you have had the rabies vaccine. You won't last too long if you don't abide by this.

We would love to have Andrew come in person next year to check out some of the bats we have here in our region. Thank you so much Andrew. We came away with a much better knowledge of a different set of Australian mammals.

Kathy Tenison

Bats die a painful death on barbed wire fences. Plain wire preferred for the top wire to avoid this situation.



Local Wildflowers

Before the hard lockdown I had the opportunity to climb a few hills in our local area, Mt Bunganbil, Mt Misery and Mt Brobenah. It occurred to me that all these hills are steep on the way up and then there is a plateau of amazing biodiversity that is not found lower down. The sheltered areas hold water for quite a long time allowing plants to persist. Some plants like the *Zieria cytisoides* survive in the crevices in sheltered areas. We have been monitoring this plant on Mt Bunganbil for a long time and there were maybe 20 plants. This plant is considered rare in the region. I have heard that there has been some goat management



Zieria cytisoides
Philotheca myoporoides
 Scarlet Sundew *Drosera glanduligera*

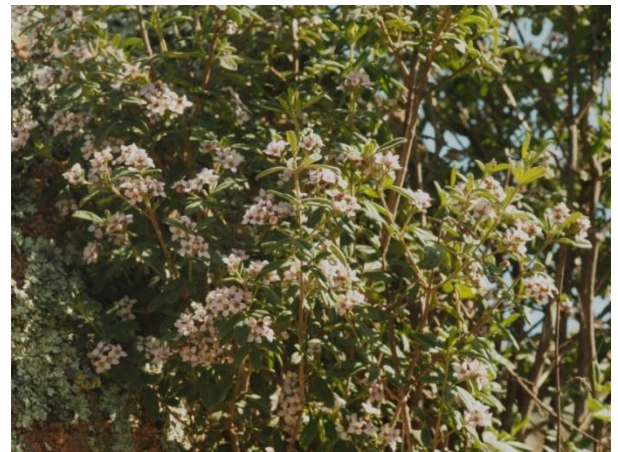
undertaken by local landholders recently which improves the

range of species and the numbers of individuals.

The other species I was excited to see on the top of Mt Brobenah and Mt Bunganbil was the *Philotheca myoporoides*. Both of these species are also found at The Rock. The Scarlet Drosera *Drosera glanduligera* is also found on the tops of these hills in wet patches.

Nella Smith

Nella has also contributed some orchids she has photographed on Bundidjarie Hill at Narrandera – here is one, Pink Fingers *Caladenia fuscata*



Griffith Wetlands

by David Kellett Principal Officer Environment – Griffith City Council (GCC)

In early August we saw the names of Campbell's, Nericon & Tharbogang Swamps being officially changed to Campbell's, Nericon & Tharbogang Wetlands, to coincide with the recently written Plans of Management (PoM's) for each of these sites. Although the names have changed, this will not change the way we utilise these wonderful natural assets, and we are so lucky to have three very different wetlands right here in our backyard.

Wetlands are highly diverse and productive environments, and are crucial for the conservation of biodiversity and ecological productivity. All three of our wetlands are Ephemeral and usually only receive water from large rain events. Campbell's is an exception from this, and receives Environmental Water Allocations throughout the year to help support the birdlife through our harsh summers and periods of drought.

Tharbogang (Aboriginal word meaning old woman) Wetland only retains water for less than ten percent of the time and has become quite saline as a result from millions of years of filling and evaporating which is very common for this type of wetland. Tharbogang may be dry and salty, but is a fantastic spot for some unique photography, and when it does flood, attracts thousands of waterbirds.



In the last few months we have seen a lot of extra visitations to Campbell's Wetland where the carpark and walking track have been upgraded, three hectares has been slashed along the road and walkway for tree planting and direct seeding once COVID restrictions ease. A Cultural Heritage Survey was conducted before on-ground works commenced with one artifact being discovered on the eastern side. The entire Lake Wyangan basin is rich with cultural heritage and Council is installing gates to restrict vehicle access to protect the area.

Griffith City Council recently celebrated National School Tree Planting Day held on the 30th of July where students from the

Marion College planted 200 native trees along the newly installed walking track at Campbell's Wetland. Nella Smith gave an introductory speech on why Wetlands are so important and gave a demonstration on how to plant a tree before the students got planting. Owen Toyota provided a BBQ for everyone and the day was a great success. I would like to personally thank everyone who attended and helped me make the day go so well, thank you.

A funding application has been submitted into Crown lands to fund a new boardwalk and we have been notified by Crown Lands that we should expect to hear if we are successful around December. The MFN's have been successful in receiving a grant through the Murray-Darling Healthy Rivers Program where we will see more works completed in the near future with new signage and improvements to the entrance.

Photo top: Campbell's Wetland at dusk by Cheryl Tucker (GCC)

Photo above: Kangaroo Skull at Tharbogang Wetland taken by David Kellett (GCC)

Photo right:: National School Tree Planting Day taken by David Kellett (GCC)

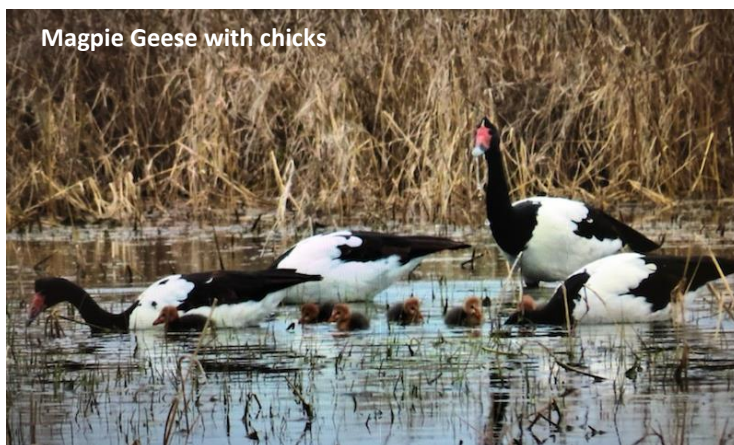


Fivebough Wetlands – where are the birds?!

To the casual one-time visitor, Fivebough would appear to be pretty birdless as so many people have commented to me over the past month. However, to the keen observer and almost daily visitor, things are not as bad as they seem. Before lockdown, I had been frequenting the wetlands seeing what birds come and go and since we have restrictions in place in Covid-free Leeton, I have continued using the area as my 'exercise' area. Since then, Fivebough has been a mecca for dozens of people using the wetlands for the self-same reason as I do, namely, to exercise.

These days it is not uncommon, especially at weekends, to find a dozen or more cars parked along Petersham Road with family groups doing the circuit but not really taking much notice of what they see. There are, however, a very dedicated group of daily birdwatchers, like me, who go to see what changes have occurred and what new birds have come in and which ones have disappeared.

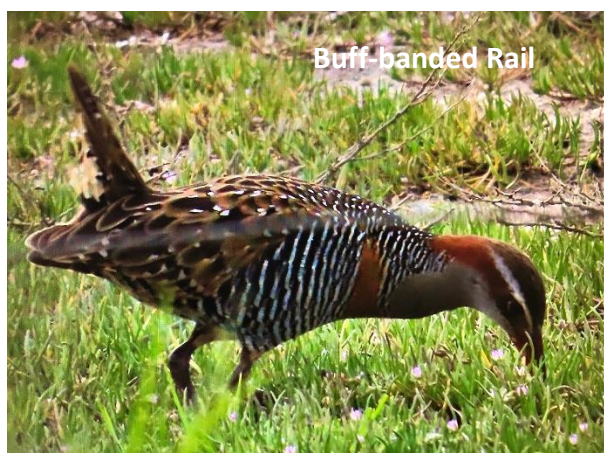
There was great excitement when a family of **Magpie Geese** ended up in the main northern pond with 10 goslings in tow! They were there for several days but on Monday the 23rd of August, they were nowhere to be seen and since then have not reappeared. What happened to them is a mystery as a fox or two couldn't take all 10 goslings overnight nor would the 4 accompanying escort adults allow that to happen as they are very defensive of their young. If they were moved it is inconceivable that the 10 chicks could have been moved any great distance. So their disappearance remains a complete mystery. The regulars still hope they will reappear but so far that hasn't happened so I suspect they have departed the wetlands – where to is anyone's guess.



A similar regular watch is kept on the nesting **Black Swans**, which have been endeavouring to nest in the middle of the northern section of the wetlands. Some have been successful and there are quite a few with cygnets that are not that easy to see from the pathways unless you have binoculars or a good camera. The original clutch of 4, now down to 2 survivors, are rapidly taking on adult plumage whereas most other clutches are of varying size with fluffy smoky-grey down still.

Foxes are ever-present and are very bold in wandering about in broad daylight with people everywhere. So, I suspect a number of swans nests have been raided by them over the breeding period as there are quite a number of abandoned swans' nests in the open water. Keith Hutton feels that some go through the procedure of nest building but don't actually go through with egg laying and incubation. And a pair in the main northern pond as seen from the first viewing platform have only just mated and taken an interest in their nest which they constructed in July – a very late starter! They've obviously given raising a family a lot of thought!

Apart from the obvious **Magpie Geese** and **Black Swans**, the wetlands have a lot of surprises in store for the observant birdwatcher with plenty of time to spend waiting patiently for the more elusive birds to show



themselves. Birds like crakes and rails are present in numbers and if you stand long enough, you can hear them calling all along the tracks. One site has been very productive at the spot we refer to as the T-intersection where the Brolga sculptures are. Many have been rewarded with good views of **Spotted** and **Baillon's Crakes** as well as a very co-operative **Buff-banded Rail** providing you stand still long enough for them to show themselves in the open. Also, the more secretive **Spotless Crake** is heard frequently but rarely shows itself -the very loud 'whirring' in the reeds right beside the track being the only indication of their presence.

Superb Fairy-wren



I have met up with Anne Lepper on many occasions at the wetlands and she is a very keen photographer who is absolutely besotted by the antics of the wrens – **Purple-backed** and **Superb** that occur all around the pathway and at the Petersham Rd carpark as well. My car has evidence of them ‘attacking’ themselves in my rear vision mirror leaving their deposits behind on my door!

The migratory waders are just beginning to return. I, along with Anne, saw a small flock of **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers**, about 12 or so birds. They were on the eastern side of the T-intersection but landed in grass and we couldn’t get a look at them on the ground. I saw them again that

afternoon in the same spot but they haven’t been seen since. No doubt, they used the place as a stopover to refuel after their epic journey from their breeding grounds in Siberia and then fly further south to Victoria – possibly to Werribee Wetlands. Also seen, and photographed by Anne were two **Latham’s Snipe**. They too, only stayed a day as they haven’t been located since. They were seen just near the T whilst we were watching 4 **Black-tailed Native-hen** feeding with the loads of **Purple Swamphens**.

The other casual visitors to the wetlands are 3 and sometimes 4 **Brolgas**. They have been absent for quite a while but reports have been made of them being seen in the area. So it was very pleasing to see them on a couple of occasions in recent days during this last week of August.

One other unexpected bird to appear was a juvenile **Banded Lapwing**. Again, Anne was able to get a photo of it. It stayed around for just 2 days and hasn’t been located since.

Finally, at the settling ponds, there have been 10 or so **Freckled Ducks** along with a pair of **Pink-eared Ducks** and up to 4 **Blue-billed Ducks** basically for most of the month. Both **Magpie Geese** and **Black Swan** have nested there in the reeds but once again, the young seem to disappear after a few days. Perhaps the parents move them elsewhere or worse still they become victims of foxes or raptors. Raptors I can accept but foxes no!

I have, in this article, concentrated on just a few species but there are lots of others to see in walking around the wetlands. I did a count on 26th August and reported 57 species on the eBird site so there are still plenty of birds to be seen there.

Max O’Sullivan Photos by Anne Lepper



Black Swans with cygnets taken at Beelbangara by Meredith Billington



An addition to the “bin chicken” bird group. The Purple Swamphen was bold and vocal in the carpark at lunchtime at Lake Wendouree Ballarat. Almost intimidating. I’m guessing it gets lots of scraps thanks to its insistent behaviour – Neil Palframan

Wiradguri Trail, Wagga Wagga, Melanie Baulch has sent this link regarding the Wiradguri Trail Master Plan which circumnavigates Wagga Wagga. You may be interesting in providing feedback on the recommendations

Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Landcare Community Award

It all started in 1994.....

When the group formed in 1994 regular excursions and meeting nights were held. Today there are two chapters, one which holds meetings in Leeton and includes members from Narrandera Griffith and Leeton, and a new chapter that has begun in Wagga. These MFN groups participate in organising and leading weekend camps, conservation projects, workshops and biodiversity surveys. Other activities like the Twitchathon, koala and bird counts are part of their program which supports various environmental causes. They also participate in national environmental events such as the Wild Pollinator Count, Malleefowl Monitoring events and Frog Surveys.



Fivebough Wetlands information session

Working with the wider community

MFN has worked together with government agencies, councils, school students and bird enthusiasts from all over Australia to acknowledge the importance of wetlands to the local natural environment. The group has representatives on several advisory committees including BIGnet, Environmental Water Advisory Groups (EWAG), Fivebough and Tuckerbil Wetlands Advisory Committee (FTWAC) SDLAM Community Advisory Group (Yanco Creek) and Western Rivers Advisory Group NPWS.

The group has been heavily involved and continues to be a major contributor to the development of three local wetlands in the Murrumbidgee region, Fivebough Wetlands, Tuckerbil Wetlands and Campbell's Wetlands. MFN FTWAC representatives advise on the management of these wetlands and attend EWAG meetings to discuss the management of environmental water in the Murrumbidgee.



Monitoring nest boxes

Impactful projects

Fivebough & Tuckerbil Wetlands: MFN was instrumental in the preservation of Fivebough and Tuckerbil Wetlands and their recognition as RAMSAR sites. This ensured that the wetlands did not become a passive boating site, and would instead remain an internationally renowned site for migratory and local wetland birds. MFN also manage walking tracks and bird hides. Over a thousand trees and shrubs were planted for small bird habitats and an information centre was constructed to improve the wetlands further.

Campbell's & Nericon Wetlands: In a similar manner, Campbell's and Nericon Wetlands were rehabilitated as wildlife reserves. Bird hides, walking tracks and information signs were constructed with trees and shrubs planted to enhance the biodiversity of the area. These two wetlands are now managed by Griffith City Council.

Narrandera Ranges: A project to promote the environmental values of the Narrandera Ranges was commenced in the 1990s with a biodiversity survey, fencing for protection of natural values, nature initiatives, and installation of nest boxes for Glossy Black Cockatoos. The project has continued with regular monitoring of the numbers of Glossy Black Cockatoos.

Community biodiversity surveys: These surveys were organised by MFN with help from 'Caring for our Country' funding. The group organised six field trips for the public, including school groups, to foster awareness of our unique local habitats. The group continues to conduct biodiversity surveys regularly.

Community work: MFN has hosted various conferences for state and national organisations, and regularly supports local organisations such as the Annual Narrandera Koala Count (including providing team leaders), and community tree planting days organised by other groups and government agencies.



Display at Narrandera Show

Sharing knowledge in the community

A [monthly newsletter](#) is published with regular articles on natural history and records of local sightings. The newsletter is freely available to the wider community as a means of environmental education. A brochure on Bird Routes in the district and a book written by one of the MFN members, "Wildflowers of the Narrandera and Cocoparra Ranges," have been published (the latter being the only local flora book).

Disappearing Frogs from a Zoom meeting with Dr Jodi Cowley

There 243 native species of frogs in Australia. At least 4 species are extinct. 15 species are critically endangered, 36 species are threatened with extinction. 12 species are vulnerable.

It is thought that the reason for this dreadful prognosis is Habitat modification, introduced species, climate change and disease. One disease Chytridiomycosis caused by an amphibian chytrid fungus is widespread and invades the skin of frogs. It has driven extinctions and declines in frog species and populations.

Why do we care about frogs anyway?

They connect aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.

They are a key part of the food web. They make up an enormous part of the aquatic ecosystem. Streams would clog up with algae with the absence of frogs. The tadpoles keep that under control.

They are bio-indicators.

And they are pretty.

Some MFN members are using a fantastic app produced by the Australian Museum called FROG ID. It is simple to use and a lot of fun and you get to know which frogs are found in your local area. A recording of frog calls is taken using the app on your smart phone and this is submitted to the museum where some experts analyse the calls and send you an email telling you which frogs were recorded on that day. 23,600 people are recording frogs across Australia using the FROG ID app.

Frog ID has informed the Museum and the researchers a lot about frogs.

1. That frogs have persisted after the devastating fires in 2019.
2. Records of Threatened Species have increased.
3. Informs the impact of drought.
4. Informs the impact on frogs of changes in land use.
5. Tracks invasive species for example Cane Toads
6. Some species have been discovered in unexpected places
7. Useful for searching for missing species.
8. That some frogs are disappearing. Dying or dead frogs are being found. Green Tree Frogs whose skin is normally bright green are becoming darker and are thin and shrivelled. Other frogs that seem to be affected are Peron's Tree Frog, Striped Marsh Frog and Eastern Banjo Frog. All these frogs are found in our local area.!!

Researchers are considering the causes of the deaths: Chytridiomycosis, Bacterial septicaemia, Ranovirus infection, Myxosporidia (a single celled parasite), other fungal pathogens, ecological disturbance, toxins, novel/exotic pathogen.

WE ARE URGENTLY ASKED TO KEEP WATCH FOR SICK OR DEAD FROGS. You can report these to: frogid.net.au. It is also planned to get frozen dead frogs sent to the museum for analysis.

Nella Smith

Great Southern BioBlitz 2021

David Glastonbury has also drawn our attention to the **Great Southern BioBlitz 2021** run by the Australian Citizen Science Association. This could be a worthwhile project of interest to members to lodge their observations during the period 22-25 October. Find out more at <https://citizenscience.org.au/2021/08/13/great-southern-bioblitz-2021/> Maybe someone would like to coordinate a club event.

An update on the Bitterns in Rice Project website:

NEW PAPER: Finding Australasian bittern nests is a serious challenge so we're particularly thrilled to have the first in-depth, field-based breeding study published this week. <http://www.bitternsinrice.com.au/new-paper-increasing-water-use-efficiency-in-rice-fields-threatens-an-endangered-waterbird/>



Know your daisies, Part 8 Fireweeds / Groundsels

Senecio

Within the daisy family having the involucre bracts in only one row together with yellow flowers and alternate leaves virtually defines the genus *Senecio* in our region. All our species are herbs or semi-shrubs. The number of bracts around the flowerhead is a prime feature for the identification to species level. The length of ray florets (distinct, small or absent) is also a key feature.

The pappus is always of slender hairs but may not always be persistent. Nevertheless they undoubtedly assist in the wide dispersal of the seeds as most of the species are associated with rapid and prolific colonisation of disturbed ground especially after fire. This is the reason for one of the common names – Fireweed.

Groundsel comes from Old English *grundeswelge*, *grund* = ground and *swelgen* = swallow (either referring to the rapid growth or the use of the plant to reduce swelling, presumably of the throat).

***Senecio quadridentatus*, Cotton Fireweed**

Erect or ascending perennial herb, mostly 40-100cm high, much branched from base, usually densely white-cobwebby. Widespread in disturbed situations especially in the Cocoparra Ranges and on river floodplains. Flowers with no ray florets and with 10-13 involucre bracts plus 1-4 bracteoles. Leaves linear to narrow lanceolate, mostly finely toothed but revolute so appearing entire. Lower surface densely cobwebby



Cotton Fireweed

Senecio prenanthoides

Erect perennial herb, 20-100cm high similar to *S. quadridentatus* except plants are usually unbranched from base, and leaves regularly toothed, lower +/-oblanceolate, and middle leaves narrow oblanceolate tapered into a petiole-like base. One record in our area in eucalypt woodland nr Temora.

***Senecio phelleus*, Rock Fireweed (syn *S. tenuiflorus*)**

Erect perennial herb, to 1.5m high, similar to *S. quadridentatus* except in being sparsely to moderately appressed-cottony and middle leaves sessile, oblanceolate to 25mm wide. Two records in our area, one near Ariah Park and the other east of West Wyalong

Senecio runcinifolius

Erect perennial herb, 15-80cm high, several stemmed, glabrescent with new growth pubescent; Ray florets absent. Leaves runcinate-pinnatisect, 50-100 x 20-40mm, with several retrorse coarsely toothed lobes on each side. Involucre bracts 12-14, with 3-6 small bracteoles usually present at base. Recorded chiefly in sclerophyll woodland or saltbush plains, often near water on the lower flood-out regions of our river systems.

***Senecio hispidulus*, Hill Groundsel**

Erect herb, mostly 30-100cm high, simple or much-branched from a woody base, minutely to densely hairy with crisped multi-cellular hairs. Ray florets absent. Involucre bracts 11-13. Leaves +/-lanceolate or oblanceolate, usually 30-80mm x 5-25mm, margins finely to coarsely toothed or +/-pinnatifid, upper surface scabrous, lower surface +/-densely covered with erect hairs ending in long filaments. Recorded in disturbed areas mostly in the Cocoparra Ranges.

Senecio bathurstianus

Erect annual herb, to 1.5m high similar to *S. hispidulus* except stems are +/-densely coarse-hairy, density reducing upwards and mid-leaves broader leaves to 55mm. and auriculate. Ray florets absent. Involucre bracts (9-)11-13 plus small bracteoles. Only one record in our area on a disturbed site near the Brobenah Hills.

***Senecio glossanthus*, Slender Groundsel**

Erect ephemeral sparsely hairy herb, mostly 8-30cm high. Usually growing in temporarily wet situations on the heavier soils of the lower floodplains. Ray florets absent or 4-8 only 1-2mm long. Involucre bracts 7-9 plus 2 or 3 small bracteoles. Leaves lanceolate to broad lanceolate, 10-40mm long base tapered or +/-stem-clasping and auriculate, sparsely hairy.

***Senecio lautus*, Variable Groundsel**

Erect or decumbent perennial herb occasionally locally recorded in the Cocoparra Ranges, 10-75cm high, sometimes much branched, usually glabrous. Ray florets 9-14, 8-12 mm long. Involucral bracts 12-20. Leaves variable, +/-terete or linear to lanceolate or oblanceolate to spatulate, pinnatifid to pinnatisect, 10-80 x 10-30mm, with margins entire, toothed or lobed.

***Senecio anethifolius*, Feathery Groundsel**

Erect semi-shrub, 50-100cm high, +/-glabrous, new growth mainly from woody branches. Occasionally seen growing after fire or other disturbance. Ray florets absent. Involucral bracts 7-8, plus 2-4 small bracteoles. Leaves ovate to broad-ovate in outline, 50-80 x 20-60mm, deeply pinnatisect into 7-15 linear or filiform segments, entire or further divided.



Variable Groundsel

Senecio cunninghamii

Erect or spreading sub-shrub, 50-100cm high, stems white-tomentose, usually glabrescent. Occasionally recorded in our area but more common to the west. Ray florets absent. Involucral bracts 7-9 plus 2-4 smaller bracteoles. Leaves linear to oblanceolate, 20-150mm x 2-20mm, base narrowed and +/-petiolate, margins entire or variously toothed, surface light green or glaucescent, leathery or +/-fleshy, often with tooth-like auricles

***Senecio platylepis*, Toothed Groundsel**

Annual herb, 10-50cm high, sometimes much branched from base, glabrous or more commonly sparsely cobwebby. Infrequently recorded in mallee, mulga and saltbush communities. Ray florets 9-11mm long. Involucral bracts mostly 16-20 with 0-6 small bracteoles. Leaves +/-irregularly pinnatifid, 40-80 x 5-20mm, margins of lobes +/-coarsely toothed, surfaces cobwebby to glabrous, base tapered and petiole-like, dilated and +/-stem-clasping, auriculate.

Senecio murrayanus

Annual herb, 20-50cm high differing from *S. platylepis* in leaves pinnatifid to bi-pinnate and ray florets only c8mm long. Involucral bracts 19-21. Only one record in sclerophyll woodland north of Hillston. More frequent to the west.

Eric Whiting

A few observations from members

Virginia Tarr has been visiting Scenic Hill in Griffith where there is a mass of green vegetation and flowers including the Austral Indigo bushes (*Indigofera australis*) that are prolific and colourful, Purple Coral-pea (*Hardenbergia violacea*), Twining Fringe Lily (*Thysanotus patersonii*). Among the orchids she has seen Orchids include: Pink Fingers (*Academia fuscata*), Dwarf Greenhoods (*Pterostylis nana*) many, Midget Greenhoods (*Pterostylis mutica*) some scattered, Common Donkey Orchid (*Diuris orientis*) (photo right) Green-combed Spider Orchids (*Caladenia tentaculata*) just starting to come into flower.



David Glastonbury reports that native orchids are beginning to make their appearance in Livingstone National Park near Wagga Wagga with three in flower recently; Leopard Orchid (*Diuris pardina*), *Pterostylis nutans* (Nodding Greenhood), *Caladenia caerulea* (Blue Caladenia).

And at San Isidore Reserve, Wagga Wagga *Hymenochilus nutans* (Minature Greenhood)(photo left) and a very tiny *Diplodidum sp* (Hairy Stemmed Snail Orchid).



MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

| | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|----------|---------------------|
| Southern Boobook | Cypress St, Leeton – seen and heard | 30/07/21 | Eric Whiting |
| Superb Parrot [40+] | Leeton Golf Course | 02/08/21 | Max O'Sullivan |
| The birds were feeding on the ground in groups of 6 and one of 20 birds. | | | |
| White-breasted Woodswallow | Petersham Rd – season return | 05/08/21 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Fairy Martin | Fivebough Wetlands – season return | 06/08/21 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Flame Robin [male] | McCaughey Lagoon Yanco | 06/08/21 | Anne Lepper |
| Magpie Goose [25] | Fivebough Wetlands | 08/08/21 | Keith Hutton |
| Hobby [pr] | Fivebough Wetlands | 08/08/21 | Keith Hutton |
| Wedge-tailed Eagle [3] | Newell Hwy, south of Narrandera | 09/08/21 | Susan Whitehead |
| Emu [32] | Newell Hwy, south of Narrandera | 10/08/21 | Alan Whitehead |
| White-necked Heron | Newell Hwy, south of Narrandera | 10/08/21 | Alan Whitehead |
| Superb Parrot [9] | Sally St. Leeton – flyover | 10/08/21 | Kathleen Lewis |
| Stubble Quail | Koonadan and Stony Point Rd corner | 12/08/21 | Graham Russell |
| Echnida | Narrandera Common | 12/08/21 | Warrick Bradney |
| Buff-banded Rail | Fivebough Wetlands | 14/08/21 | Keith Hutton |
| Australian Reed Warbler [4] | Fivebough Wetlands | 14/08/21 | Keith Hutton |
| Red-necked Avocet [80-100] | Fivebough Wetlands | 14/08/21 | Keith Hutton |
| Pied Stilt [200+] | Fivebough Wetlands | 14/08/21 | Keith Hutton |
| Red-rumped Parrot [90] | Peter's lawn outside his office | 15/08/21 | Peter Draper |
| Pink-eared Duck [200+] | Peter's dam Koonadan | 17/08/21 | Peter Draper |
| Superb Parrot [30] | Whitton turnoff Irrigation Way | 17/08/21 | Kath & Phil Tenison |
| Common Bronzewing [pr] | Koonadan – Peter's house garden | 17/08/21 | Peter Draper |
| Magpie Goose + 9 goslings | Fivebough settling ponds | 18/08/21 | Anne Lepper |

There is also a family of 4 goslings at The Basin Dam at Koonadan – both lots accompanied by 4 adult birds, a male and adult females one or two of which are possibly immature birds from last season. The male has several females which nest together and the family look after the young when hatched.

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------|----------------|
| Spotless Crake [1] | Fivebough Wetlands | 18/08/21 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Gull-billed Tern [1] | Fivebough Wetlands | 21/08/21 | Keith Hutton |
| Magpie Goose + 10 goslings | Fivebough Wetlands – northern pond | 21/08/21 | Keith Hutton |

23/08/21 The family including the young were nowhere to be seen – strange as they must be somewhere there and the goslings couldn't have all been taken overnight by a fox!

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|----------|----------------------|
| Southern Boobook | Peter Draper's property, Koonadan | 20/08/21 | Kath&Phil Tenison |
| White-winged Wren [6+] | Peter Draper's property, Koonadan | 20/08/21 | Kath&Phil Tenison |
| Glossy Ibis [1] | Fivebough Wetlands – season return | 20/08/21 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [8+] | Fivebough Picnic Shelter – flyover | 21/08/21 | Paul Maytom |
| Whiskered Tern [2] | Fivebough Wetlands – season return | 22/08/21 | Keith H & Max O'S |
| Glossy Ibis [10] | Fivebough Wetlands | 22/08/21 | Keith H & Max O'S |
| Spotted Harrier [Immature] | Fivebough Wetlands | 22/08/21 | Keith H & Max O'S |
| Sharp-tailed Sandpiper [15-20] | Fivebough Wetlands – season arrival | 25/08/21 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Banded Lapwing [juv] | Fivebough Wetlands | 25/08/21 | Anne Lepper, Max O'S |
| Rufous Songlark [1] | Cantrill Rd, Koonadan – season arrival | 25/08/21 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Black-tailed Native-hen [5] | Fivebough Wetlands | 26/08/21 | Keith Hutton |
| Western Gerygone [1] | Fivebough Wetlands | 26/08/21 | Keith Hutton |
| Brolga [3] | Fivebough Wetlands | 26/08/21 | Anne Lepper/ Max O'S |
| Latham's Snipe [2] | Fivebough Wetlands | 26/08/21 | Anne Lepper/Max O'S |
| Nankeen Night Heron [6] | McCaughey Lake, Yanco Park | 26/08/21 | Max O'Sullivan |
| Red-kneed Dotterel [8] | Fivebough Wetlands | 27/08/21 | Anne Lepper/Max O'S |
| Brolga [3] | Tabain Dam McCracken Rd Leeton | 28/08/21 | Kath & Phil Tenison |
| Brolga [4] | Fivebough Wetlands | 28/08/21 | Keith Hutton |
| Rufous Songlark [4] | Evans Smyles Rd | 28/08/21 | Keith Hutton |
| Striated Pardalote [2] | Narrandera Wetlands | 28/08/21 | Alan Whitehead |

MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS continued from previous page

| | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|----------|----------------|
| Superb Parrot [6] | Narrandera Wetlands | 28/08/21 | Alan Whitehead |
| Straw-necked Ibis [40] | Narrandera Wetlands | 28/08/21 | Alan Whitehead |
| Whiskered Tern [9] | Fivebough Wetlands | 29/08/21 | Keith Hutton |
| Silver Gull [25+] | Fivebough Wetlands | 31/08/21 | Keith Hutton |

Virginia's list for August

6/8/21 Palla St Griffith:

Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike [1]
Purple-backed Fairy-wren [1m 2f]
Red Wattlebird [1]
White-plumed Honeyeater [2]

Scenic Hill:

Red-capped Robin [2]
Mallee Ringneck [many]

Joy Ellen Young's list:

Belah St Leeton

White-plumed Honeyeater [daily]

17/8/21 Scenic Hill Griffith

Pied Currawong [2]
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo [many]
Yellow Thornbill [4]
Striated Pardalote [3]
Yellow-throated Miner [many]
Red Wattlebird [many]
Apostlebird [8]
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater [2]
White-plumed Honeyeater [3]
Grey-crowned Babbler [2]



Blue-billed Ducks - Phil Tenison

Keith's notes on Swamp Harriers and Common Walleroos:

26/08/21; Three **Swamp Harriers** were seen over Fivebough Wetlands in a co-ordinated flight together low down over the cumbungi followed by synchronised soaring and circling high up in the clouds with some interaction and sky diving, not calling in flight but interesting to watch.

06/08/21; At Tullys Hill 2 very large and dark **Common Walleroos** seen sparring watched by a much smaller light-coloured female – half the size of the males. These walleroos are rarely seen around Leeton and over the past 40 years the only record was in the vicinity of Bents Hill.

Margaret Strong reports that the **Welcome Swallows** have returned to Whitton after their winter absence.

Glenn Currie also reports that **Black-shouldered Kites** have been seen at Oolambeyan National Park – a bird he hasn't recorded in the park since he started working there.

Be ready for Spring with MFN's Flora Guide

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.

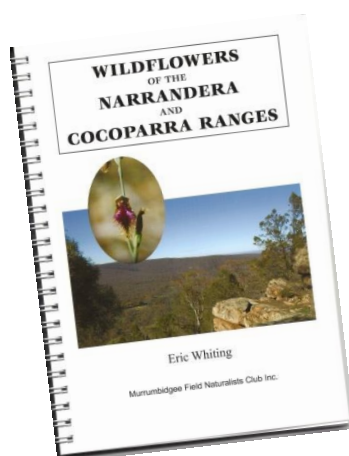
A simplified key aids the identification of the plants,

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.



Another useful wildflower guide is Narrandera Landcare's [Spring Wildflower Walk 2-page guide](#).

This has been prepared by Glenn Currie and contains photos of some of the common species flowering around this time of year, with QR codes which open links to give more information on each species, so you can increase your knowledge as you walk! You can download it from the Murrumbidgee Landcare website mli.org.au/wildflower-walk-guide if the link doesn't work.