

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



December 2021 - Issue #299

Journal of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc.

PO Box 541, LEETON 2705 ISSN-1327-1172

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



Sturt's Desert
Pea
Rowena Whiting

IN THIS ISSUE

Office Bearers and Subscriptions	2
Welcome to December -	2
Bryophytes	3
Field Trip to Mejum State Forest	4
Mind where you drive or park	5
Campbell's Wetland – Sussan Ley's visit	6
Narrandera Camera Club photograph(s) of the year ..	6
President's Report	7
MFN Wagga Wagga 2021	8
Fivebough Musings: November 2021	9
Reconnecting River Country	10
Know Your Daisies part 10 – Lettuces and Chicory ...	11
Members' Sightings.....	12
Bringing Back the Bunjip Bird – Summit.....	13
Coming Events.....	14

CONTRIBUTIONS

For the February 2021 issue by
Wednesday 2 February

To Rowena Whiting

Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com.

Phone: 6953 2612

*Wishing you all a
very happy and safe
time at Christmas*

Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

President:	Nella Smith	0428 890 537	Editor:	Rowena Whiting	6953 2612
Vice President:	Max O'Sullivan	0434 923 766	Committee:	Jo Roberts	
Vice President:	Meredith Billington	0498 711 165		Peter Butler	
Vice President:	Sarah Danckert			Alan Whitehead	6959 3779
Secretary:	Graham and Dione Russell	0419 350 673 (Graham)		0428 536290 (Dione)	
Treasurer:	Glenn Currie	0488 563 321	Website Co-ordinator:	Kathy Tenison	6953 4869

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.

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	0428 914 702	melaniebaulch@bigpond.com		

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

Bank details for direct deposit: 082 672 account no. 722043387, a/c name: Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Include your own name and description of payment in the reference box.

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

Welcome to December

Another issue full of our activities and information on various topics; Eric has summarised the presentation on bryophytes (the remaining part will be shown at the coming meeting), Nella tells of our vegetation observations along Narrandera's roadside reserves, Max has related the bird life at Fivebough, our meeting with the Environment Minister, Sussan Ley, at Campbells Wetlands is noted. Along with the President's annual report as tabled at the AGM along with the activities of the Wagga Wagga chapter. Unfortunately the outing to the Cocoparras had to be cancelled at the last minute due to rain

There are a number of changes to the executive and committee to report. Alan & Elleneé have stepped down and Nella & Glenn have stepped up as President and Treasurer respectively; Sarah Danckert from Wagga has accepted a vice-president's role; new committee members are Jo Roberts & Peter Butler. We extend our thanks to Alan and Ellené for their work over the last few years and welcome the new comers. Margrit Martin has volunteered to be the keeper of our library books so if you would like to borrow any please contact her tirgram.nitram@gmail.com. Running a club like ours does take time and energy so please put your hand up if there is something you can contribute. Nella would love to hear from you.

Sandra McDougall has produced a calendar of images from various MFN members, they are selling fast, she may still have some at the meeting or contact her sjmcdougs@gmail.com.

Last but certainly not least a big thank you to all of those contributors to the newsletter which of course makes it what it is.

So time for me to sign off for 2021!

Enjoy your read and your break.

Rowena.



Introducing Bryophytes

When we talk of plants it usually is restricted to trees, shrubs or herbs. There is one group that is invariably overlooked – the bryophytes. Don't know them? Well they are all around us. They are the mosses, liverworts and hornworts. After the AGM we were fortunate enough to have a recorded presentation by Alison Downing of Macquarie University given to Orange Field Naturalist Club. (Actually we watched only half of it due to time. The second half will be shown next meeting.)

Alison began by explaining what they are – small green plants without conductive tissue i.e. non-vascular, do not have stomata – the closable pores in principally leaves that regulate air flow and thereby water loss, and they reproduce by spores. Bryophytes had a long history being among the first to leave a marine life to live on land.

Mosses are the largest group of the three in the number of species. They are recognised by having leaves spirally arranged around a stem, the leaves mostly have a mid-rib called a costa as it is a strengthening structure only. Spores are developed in capsules usually situated on a coloured stem or seta. Each capsule has two caps the inner rather like the cap of eucalypts. A ring of hygroscopic teeth surrounds the mouth of the capsule and these regulate the release of spores. Vegetative reproduction in some mosses is by gemmae, minute plantlets of a cluster of cells formed as buds.



Liverworts have two distinct life forms, thallose and leafy. Thallose liverworts are simple pads of tissue usually a few cells thick and growing flat on the ground. Leafy liverworts have stems with two rows of lateral leaves and often a third row on the underside. Leaves do not have mid-ribs, are always one cell thick (as are most moss leaves), but can be quite complicated with many fine divisions or well defined projections called lobules. Some lobules can be pitcher-shaped. Liverworts have brown or black spherical capsules formed on fine clear seta. Capsules split open to release the spores to be spread by special cells (elators) that have spiral thickenings that act like springs.



Hornworts are a small group often mistaken for small grasses usually tucked away in very secluded places. The capsules are tall narrow cylinders that split to release the spores. They have a unique feature of having only one or two large chloroplasts in each cell.



The small size of bryophytes belies their importance. They can grow almost anywhere and have adapted to grow in extreme environments, from deserts to rainforest canopies, from mountain tops of bare rock to Arctic tundra or even Antarctica. Not reliant on a root system, they have only simple hair-like rhizoids to anchor themselves, they can grow on any surface including artificial ones like garden furniture, roofs, concrete paths etc.

In rainforests bryophytes absorb moisture importantly also from clouds, and slowly release it, thus slowing the movement down to the forest floor. Cloud rainforests are entirely dependent on the capturing bryophytes. The same absorption function keeps deserts alive. A short video showed how the moisture is captured. Another video showed how a moss cushion absorbs a raindrop which otherwise bounces off bare soil to run away to cause erosion.



Bog mosses have adapted to retain more volumes of water than the dry weight. Each leaf is composed of large hollow dead cells sandwiching smaller chlorophyllose cells in a delightful pattern.

From top: Moss & sporophytes; Moss capsule;
Liverworts – thallose; Moss cushions in rock crevice

Bryophytes do not have waxy cuticles to prevent water loss. To minimise desiccation and also UV radiation, terrestrial bryophytes of open areas fold or curl up to only expose resistant mid-ribs, silvery hair points or in liverworts scales. Also bryophytes do not die on desiccation – growth may be ephemeral but plants can exist for years in a dormant state. A moss was found to be still alive after being covered for 400 years under a glacier.

In addition to dormancy in the whole plant, spores and sometimes tubers or similar structures can survive for long periods and from extreme conditions. Spores carried from dust storms originating from Australian deserts often are found growing for a short while in New Zealand.

Bryophytes are not immune from accidental introduction There are a number of Northern Hemisphere species introduced here particularly in urban or disturbed areas. It is however a two-way affair, an Australian moss is now a serious pest in Europe.

The presentation ended with questions. One could not be answered – were bryophytes used by Aborigines? Has anyone got examples of use?

Unlike this summary the presentation was amply illustrated and well worth watching. Thanks go to Alison for such a clear overview, to Orange Field Nats for recording it and allowing us to have a copy and to Rosemary in Orange and our own Nella for organising to show a copy. If you missed our viewing or want to watch again there is a link to it in Orange Field Nats webpages.

Eric Whiting

Field Trip to Mejum State Forest

27 November 2021

The roadsides were very wet to our advantage, we were able to remove a clump of the invasive St John's Wort while we were waiting for others. Our first stop was on a sweeping corner which had had major roadworks and re alignment of the road to make it truly safer. Of course little by little a little more roadside vegetation is removed. This area adjoins the Midgeon Swamp which is on private land and has a forest of Red Gum regrowth. It is here that 3 Wedge-tailed Eagles were riding the air currents. We don't often see 3 individuals.



The next stop was the Mejum State Forest which is a long thin forest along the road. Here we puzzled over the identification of the gums. One tall tree which looked like a *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* was probably *Eucalyptus blakleyi* due to its location higher in the landscape. Other large trees seen were *Eucalyptus melliodora*, *Eucalyptus populneas* and *Eucalyptus microcarpa*



Wedge-tailed Eagle – Phil Tenison
Significant roadside vegetation cleared on bend
Midgeon – Kamarah Road – Rowena Whiting
Group on roadside, Mejum Forest – Kathy Tenison

A few shrubs and forbs were still flowering.

Along the road a Central Bearded Dragon *Pogona vitticeps* was warming himself on the road. He huffed and he puffed to make himself bigger when he thought we would eat him.



**Bearded Dragon –puffed up - Phil Tenison
Night Flowering Lily – Rowena Whiting**

We drove further up the road where a travelling stock reserve has some lovely remnant vegetation. *Laxmannia compacta* a night flowering lily was fairly common here together with other grasses and herbs that we would normally see flowering in spring.. The shrub layer included *Dampiera lanceolata* and *Hibbertia sericea*. A mixture of *Euc dwyerii*, *Allocasuarina verticilla* and *Callitris glaucophylla* completed the third layer. A roadside vegetation scoring survey was done and all the sites we visited scored high on the scale of good roadside.

There is still some good roadside vegetation around in the Narrandera Shire that needs to be protected as this is often all that remains in a largely cleared landscape.

Nella Smith

Birdlist

Cockatiel	Eastern Rosella	Striated Pardalote	Pied Butcherbird
Galah	Pee-wee	Apostlebird	Wedge-tailed Eagle
Rufous Whistler	Grey Fantail	Red-capped Robin	Western Gerygone
Eastern Yellow Robin	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Grey-crowned Babbler	Yellow Thornbill
Weebill	White-winged Chough	Common Bronzewing	Peaceful Dove
Australian Raven	Kookaburra	Grey Shrike-thrush	Striped Honeyeater
Grey Butcherbird	Rufous Songlark	White-browed Babbler	

Mind where you drive or park

With all the rain we have been getting lately our minds aren't thinking about bushfire hazards at the moment. However the rains have produced abundant grass growth and we are just starting summer. When it comes with its scorching heat the grasses will rapidly dry out. Driving over dried grass can result in some getting trapped on hot parts of the car like engines or exhausts. Parking on long grass can give the same contact. There is a high chance that the grass can catch fire resulting in the car going up in smoke or the grass smoulders and drops of in more grass. The latter scenario is the start of a bushfire.

Wild grass fires may not have the publicity as forest fires but they are just as deadly. With a strong wind behind it a grass fire front can travel faster than you can run and can travel tens of kilometres in a day.

So do be careful where you drive and park and don't forget to check the underside of your vehicle. Also be mindful that it is Club policy to cancel all outdoor events if a Total Fire Ban has been declared.

Eric Whiting [Eric is a representative to the NCC Bushfire Program]

Campbell's Wetland – Sussan Ley's Visit

On the 18th of November Sussan Ley (Minister for the Environment) visited Campbell's Wetland to meet up with members of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists and myself to get an overview of the project and to see where funds were going to be utilised.

Nella Smith recently submitted a funding grant application with the Murray-Darling Healthy Rivers Program and the MFN's received \$50,000 to go towards the upgrade of the walking track and new signage for Campbell's Wetland.



A week or so before Sussan's visit, we had the walking track slashed and approximately 3 km's of direct seeding completed, this along with the 200 trees planted in June will see around 1000 trees to help shade visitors in the future when strolling to the bird hide.

We are still waiting to hear if we have been successful with the funding from Crown Lands to get the boardwalk replaced and fingers crossed we will find out in December.

Thank you to everyone who turned up to welcome Sussan on the day and a huge thank you to the Murrumbidgee Field Nat's for all the work you have done in the past looking after Campbell's Wetland.

If anyone would like more information please feel free to contact David Kellett on 0437 948 826

David Kellett, Griffith City Council

Narrandera Camera Club's photograph(s) of the year

Nature was to the fore so I thought I would feature the most popular images. My Sturt's Desert Pea (on cover) took first spot and Mark Stevens birds came equal second. The red flowers give it a Christmassy look. It was growing along the roadside in wetter spots on Arcadia Lane, Goolgowi with a Sony RX100M3, ISO 400 f9 1/200. Hand held.

Mark's images (below) are of a Southern Whiteface (left) and a Yellow Thornbill taken on Bundidgery Hill, Narrandera. He used a Canon TD Mk 1, Canon EF 100-400mm F4.5-5.6L IS II USM lens. Rowena Whiting



PRESIDENT'S REPORT – 6-11-2021

There seems to be a charmed circle around our Western Riverina area. First we escaped the ravages of the cataclysmic wildfires of last year. Secondly, as Covid-19 spread its malevolent reach in a great arc all around us, our own region remaining relatively unscathed.

Even the severe floods and storms of the last two years, which raged all round the periphery, rarely penetrated. And the terrible drought, though not without pain for many, was not as dust-bowl dire in the Riverina as in most other equivalent regions in NSW. In fact one could overlay four recent Catastrophe Maps of the state, one each for the drought, fires, storms and covid, and find our home reasonable unaffected by all four, leaving a reassuring blank space within.

This curious beneficence not only enriches ourselves, but our precious plants and animals, for which we all so passionately care. As such, our work and influence on conservation and appreciation over 2021 has continued from a relatively high bar. This work includes vital collaborations with like-minded organisations like Camera Club, Landcare, Clean-up Australia and Western Riverina Arts. For example, the last recently hosted, with MFN support, a wonderful traveling arts exhibition on the enigmatic Plains Wanderer.

But if the pandemic has had a minimal health affect on us, its toxic offshoots, like the banning of gatherings and the like, has. So there were no camps this year. As well, outings – and or meetings – were restricted or cancelled. Though how easy to track these events throughout the year, whether cancelled or not, with Sandra's lovely nature-photos calendar: a first for the club. Thanks to all contributors.

Mind you, members still remained active, even if only individually, as evidenced by the many rich accounts in our newsletter, *The Murrumbidgee Naturalist*. A thousand plaudits to Rowena Whiting for yet another excellent annual folio of information and artistry.

One trip worthy of special mention, for its historic significance as well as fun, was the very first assembly of members from both the club's north and the Wagga Wagga Chapter. This was at Livingston National Park on June 26 where, on our rollicking walk though this stunning ecology, we experienced "four seasons in one day". Two other events were especially memorable; the first to Urana (June 12) with its remarkable sandhills and dry lake topography; the second, though not run by us, an event to raise awareness of platypus habitat and habits at Morundah (June 16-17).

Another day of great value and enjoyment was the 2021 Twitchathon, where our club fielded three teams in a citizen science enterprise of great moment. (So, who spotted a family of White-winged Fairy Wrens? The Bidgee Boobooks, that's who! Not that it's a competition ... (Well, it is, actually: Ed.)

Two achievements of individual members (among many) should be applauded. First the indomitable Nella Smith was instrumental in the success of a sizable government

grant (around forty thousand dollars) for restoration of Campbell's Wetlands. Second, Glenn Currie won a prestigious award for his work with Narrandera Landcare. His tireless efforts were foundational in the cultivation and planting out of thousands of native flora, in the national Tree Day and elsewhere, in places like the Narrandera Wetlands. In decades to come visitors to these special places will pause at a sturdy black box or casuarina and ponder, "Who planted that?"



**Seedlings at Landcare food garden – Glenn Currie
Susan & Alan at the tree planting – Kathy Tenison
Purple-backed Fairywren – Phil Tenison**

Just as we do today at the arboreal results of toilings of MFN members who popped tree seedlings into the good earth at some of these same sites many years ago.



I would like to specially thank our co-secretaries, Dione and Graham Russell who, in this unprecedented time of dislocation, kept the administrative boat afloat; and also of providing alternative accommodation for our meetings.

So even with all the gloom surrounding us in wild Australia, things could be worse; as emphasized to me, as I write, by two families of fairy wrens, one Superb the other Purple-backed, bathing in a puddle together – yes, *together* – just outside my window.

Stay safe, stay happy, stay committed.

Alan Whitehead

MFN Wagga Wagga 2021

Less than a year ago, 11 prospective members met with MFN president Alan Whitehead in Wagga. Today there are three times that number, all new members, meeting to explore the natural environment in the Wagga Wagga region and share knowledge and self discovery.

Every month excluding January and September there has been an outing:

Feb - World Wetlands Day, Marambidya Wetlands led by Mel Baulch

Mar - Lake Albert led by Mel Baulch & Dick Green

Apr - Flowerdale Lagoon led by Sarah Danckert

May - Livingstone National Park led by Susan Campbell

Jun - Mates Gully TSR led by Mel Baulch

Jul - Springvale Dam led by Marilyn Esler

Aug - Livingstone National Park - orchids by David Glastonbury

Sep - cancelled due to CoVID-19 restrictions

Oct - Flowerdale Lagoon platypus with Joanne Connolly & Dick Green

Highlights of the year have included sighting Regent Honeyeaters at Livingstone NP, so many orchids - several locations & new species to many, Wiradjuri connections, commencing platypus monitoring and discovering little known urban reserves and meeting & learning from long standing members of MFN.

Plans for 2022 are to continue a monthly field trip, establish the platypus monitoring network and commence meetings in Wagga for planning, education - possibly every 2 months.

I'd particularly like to thank Rowena, Eric, Nella, Margrit, Max, Glenn, Alan, Kathy and Phil who have travelled to join our events, Dione & Elle who have assisted by phone & email and those who have made our events happen.

Sarah Danckert

**Members at Lake Albert (left),
Mates Gully (right)**



Fivebough Musings: November 2021.

Prior to the rains we had from Wednesday 17 November, Fivebough Wetlands was still good to visit for a variety of water birds like migratory waders along with crakes and duck species. However, since the downpour, I recorded 88mls in the 3 days, most birds seem to have moved on. I have always been aware of this over the years with departures and arrivals after a reasonable rain event. Some birds just move elsewhere and others seem to benefit by the increase in the water level as a result of the rain.

Just before the recent downpour, the wetlands were looking perfect for wading birds with shallow water and plenty of areas for feeding in the shallows – a situation preferred by all the smaller wading species. However, with the increase in water levels throughout the wetlands, these birds have all but disappeared - even the **Red-necked Avocets** and **Pied Stilts** have been absent these past weeks since the rain. Because of the height of the grass that has grown in the northern and eastern sections where the cattle usually feed, it is not easy to see birds and it takes a low flying raptor such as a **Swamp Harrier** or **Black Falcon** to frighten the feeding birds up out of hiding. It is then that you get an idea of just what is still lurking in the undergrowth! You might then be fortunate enough to be there at the right time and to see flocks of **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** erupt and fly in a group only to land in another area of long grass and disappear from view.



Some birds, such as **Black Swan**, **Australian Shelduck** and **Brolga** do leave in the late Spring and return in the cooler months but others remain throughout the summer. Of course, you must also account for the fact that there is an abundance of water everywhere this season so the birds are not short of places to go to feed. And now, with the rice season underway, there are even more wetlands to attract the various species.

One interesting aspect of the recent rain is the return of **Whiskered Terns** to the wetlands. They and the **Glossy Ibis** are usually present in huge numbers >1,000 birds at this time of year but this year their numbers are very low, <100 at best. Again, the availability of so much water everywhere is the main reason for this situation.

The photos accompanying this article were taken by Anne Lepper in late October and early November when the birds were more prevalent.

Max O'Sullivan

Purple-backed Fairywren (above)
Glossy Ibis (front) and Pied Stilts (below left)
Wood Sandpiper and
Red-kneed Dotterel (front) (below right)



Reconnecting River Country (another look at constraints on the rivers) is being led by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's Water Infrastructure NSW in partnership with the department's Biodiversity, Conservation and Science Division and the Department of Regional NSW's Local Land Services.

At present, a range of constraints (physical, policy and operations) limit the flow of water for the environment along river systems in the Southern Murray Darling Basin (that's us).

As a result, rivers connect to their wetlands and floodplains less often than is needed.

Why do we need to consider flow options?

Flows of different sizes and durations achieve a range of outcomes for river and wetland health, connectivity, productivity and wildlife.

At present, managed flows are capped at relatively low levels. This means rivers and floodplains are connecting less often than they used to and need to be. River and floodplain health are at risk. By allowing more flexibility in the delivery of flows, water managers will be able to:

Reinstate some natural flow patterns

Release and transfer carbon and nutrients that underpin the aquatic food web.

Improve the health of forests, woodlands and shrublands along river corridors and on low-lying floodplains.

Trigger breeding and movement of native fish, waterbirds and other water-dependent animals.

Regulate the accumulation of leaf litter on the forest floor which may help to reduce the risk of low oxygen 'blackwater' during moderate-scale natural flow events.

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment has conducted an initial analysis of environmental benefits from relaxed constraints. This analysis shows:

The health of iconic river red gum forests improves, and water can be delivered to larger areas of both red gum forest and black box woodland.

More habitat for water dependent birdlife can be provided, allowing them to breed, feed and support their young to maturity.

The area of available habitat for native fish to breed, feed and move is increased, providing additional nursery habitat and a significant boost to fish numbers.

The likelihood of low oxygen 'blackwater' events may be reduced by providing more regular flows that shift debris from the floodplain floor. This provides a more regular boost to river productivity through additional inputs to the aquatic food web. Pers comm: the high river right now with associated overbanking and floodplain, wetland and billabong wetting is the ideal scenario which is causing a flurry of activity in the fish and birds. My.. what year!!

For more information visit the website:

dpie.nsw.gov.au/reconnecting-river-country-program

Nella Smith

**Photos by Rowena Whiting
Sunshower Lagoon (left) and Turkey Flat (right)**



Know your daisies Part 10 Lettuces and Chicory

Flowerheads all ligulate (all florets with rays), **leaves** basal and cauline, **stems** exuding a milky sap on breaking and achenes with a long beak. **Flowers** yellow except Cichorium (blue) and Tragopogon (deep purple).

***Lactuca serriola** Prickly Lettuce** (pictured)

Common biennial weed of gardens, roadsides, wastelands, cultivation and degraded pastures. Stems glabrous or bristly; lower leaves obovate-oblong, usually deeply pinnatisect; cauline leaves stem-clasping with acute to obtuse auricles, usually held in a vertical plane; achenes elliptic to obovate, 5-9mm long, ribbed on each face and minutely spiny below the long beak; pappus of many rows of fine hairs.

***Lactuca saligna** Willow-leaved Lettuce**

Common annual or biennial weed of gardens, roadsides, wastelands, cultivation and degraded pastures. Stems glabrous, whitish. Basal leaves pinnatisect with narrow lobes or runcinate; upper leaves entire to pinnatifid, stem-clasping with acute auricles; leaves sometimes with spines along lower midrib. Achenes elliptic to obovate, 7-8mm long, ribbed on each face, minutely muricate below the long beak; pappus of many rows of fine hairs.

***Chondrilla juncea** Skeleton Weed**

Perennial herb 50-100cm high, stems openly branched above, ribbed, hairy at base. Basal leaves oblanceolate, runcinate-pinnatifid, soon withering: cauline leaves few, lanceolate to linear, entire, mostly reduced and bract-like. Achenes compressed-fusiform, ribbed, beak filiform; pappus of many rows of barbellate hairs.

***Helminthotheca echioides** Ox-tongue**

Annual or biennial herb. Basal leaves elliptic to lanceolate; lower cauline leaves lanceolate grading to ovate above, stem-clasping. Flowerheads numerous in a panicle. Achenes ellipsoidal, abruptly narrowed to a beak; pappus of one row of hairs.

Picris squarrosa*

Biennial or perennial weed in disturbed areas. Basal leaves elliptic to narrow lanceolate, sinuate toothed to ± entire; cauline leaves similar to basal leaves but smaller, sessile, stem-clasping with rounded auricles. Flowerheads in loose terminal clusters. Achenes fusiform tapering into a beak; pappus of plumose hairs.

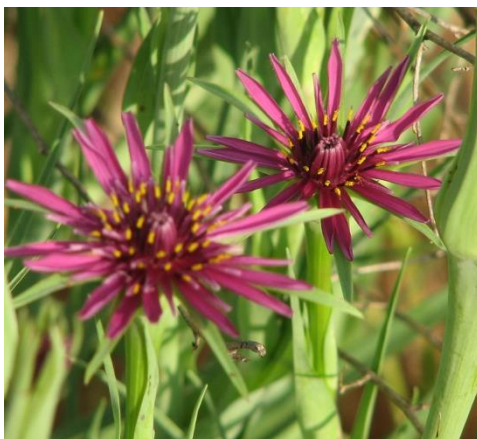
***Cichorium intybus**, Chicory**

Common roadside and wasteland herb. Stems grooved. Basal leaves oblanceolate, with acute apex, pinnatisect with toothed lobes; cauline leaves similar, gradually becoming smaller and bract-like. Flowerheads solitary, blue (rarely white). Achenes obovoid, smooth to finely wrinkled; pappus of 1 or 2 rows of minute scales

***Tragopogon porrifolius** Salsify**

Biennial weed of roadsides, grasslands and wastelands. Basal leaves grass-like, linear, half-sheathing at base; cauline leaves stem-clasping, linear to lanceolate. Flowerheads solitary or few, florets deep purple. Achenes fusiform, ribbed with a long beak; pappus of 2 rows of plumose hairs.

Eric Whiting



MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

Rainbow Lorikeet	Near Duesbury Estate	late Oct	Jason and Jo
Painted Honeyeater [2]	McCann Rd, Lake Wyangan	04/11/21	Allan Richards
Caspian Tern [1]	Lake Wyangan causeway	04/11/21	Max O'Sullivan
Spotted Nightjar [2]	Road to Barry Heihr's property	05/11/21	Vincent Mourik
Little Curlew	Bringagee Rd off Brogden Rd, Griffith	09/11/21	Mick Todd per Keith H.
Plumed Whistling-duck [200+]	Coleambally settling ponds	mid Nov	Neil Palframan
Marsh Sandpiper [9]	Fivebough Wetlands	14/11/21	Keith Hutton
Red-kneed Dotterel [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	14/11/21	Keith Hutton
Australian Crake [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	14/11/21	Keith Hutton
Spotless Crake [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	14/11/21	Keith Hutton
Red-necked Avocet [4]	Fivebough Wetlands	14/11/21	Keith Hutton
Black-tailed Native-hen [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	14/11/21	Keith Hutton
Glossy Ibis [3]	Fivebough Wetlands	14/11/21	Keith Hutton
Mistletoebird	Bilbul – from mid-Nov onwards	15/11/21	Meredith Billington
Sacred Kingfisher [2]	Near Leeton Pool	18/11/21	Kathy Tenison
Caspian Tern [3]	Lake Wyangan Picnic Area	18/11/21	Max O'Sullivan
Superb Parrot [20]	Leeton MFN meeting venue – flyover	18/11/21	Phil Tenison
Superb Fairywren	Belah St, Leeton	Daily	Joy E Young
Black Falcon [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	18/11/21	Keith Hutton
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper [>200]	Fivebough Wetlands	18/11/21	Keith Hutton
Wood Sandpiper [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	18/11/21	Keith Hutton
Marsh Sandpiper [12]	Fivebough Wetlands	18/11/21	Keith Hutton
Red-necked Avocet [25]	Fivebough Wetlands	18/11/21	Keith Hutton
Magpie Goose [3]	Fivebough Wetlands	18/11/21	Keith Hutton
Spotted Bowerbird [2]	Mt Hope – malleefowl survey	19/11/21	Melanie Baulch
Southern Whiteface [5]	Mt Hope	19/11/21	Melanie Baulch
Melanie said she felt the birds seen were heavily marked on the flanks similar to the ssp castanieventris which is the race in Western Australia.			
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [2]	Mt Hope	19/11/21	Melanie Baulch
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper [64]	Fivebough Wetlands	21/11/21	Keith Hutton
Masked Lapwing [35]	Fivebough Wetlands	21/11/21	Keith Hutton
Buff-banded Rail [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	21/11/21	Keith Hutton
Stubble Quail [4]	Fivebough Wetlands – calling	21/11/21	Keith Hutton
Keith didn't see any Red-necked Avocet on 21/11/21, they seem to have moved on.			
Brolga [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	23/11/21	Canberra Bird Group
Nankeen Night Heron [1]	Fivebough – in the main pond	27/11/21	Max O'Sullivan
Wedge-tailed Eagle [3]	Mejum Forest outing	27/11/21	Kathy & Phil Tenison
Platypus	Flowerdale Lagoon, Wagga	27/11/21	Sue Lidden
Royal Spoonbill [2]	Lake Albert, Wagga	28/11/21	Melanie Baulch
Pink-eared Duck [10]	Fivebough Wetlands	28/11/21	Keith Hutton
Cattle Egret [9]	Fivebough Wetlands – with cattle	28/11/21	Keith Hutton
Straw-necked Ibis [95]	Fivebough Wetlands	28/11/21	Keith Hutton
Whiskered Tern [>200]	Fivebough – return after the rains	28/11/21	Keith Hutton
Magpie Goose [5]	Fivebough Wetlands	28/11/21	Keith Hutton
Olive-backed Oriole	Narrandera Wetlands	28/11/21	Max O'Sullivan
Budgerigar [4]	Middle Rd via Leeton	29/11/21	Peter Draper
Dollarbird [2]	Flowerdale Lagoon, Wagga	29/11/21	Melanie Baulch
Plumed Whistling-Duck [19]	Fivebough Wetlands	30/11/21	Keith Hutton
Brown Honeyeater [calling]	Karri Rd, Leeton	Daily	Keith Hutton
Common Blackbird [nesting]	Karri Rd – Keith's backyard	November	Keith Hutton
Little Bittern [calling]	Narrandera – Rocky Waterholes (?)	30/11/21	Nella Smith

Swamp Wallaby

Cypress St, Leeton – become a resident in our garden Eric & Rowena Whiting

Janet Hume reports **Dollarbirds** at Marrambidya Wetlands, 3 **Rainbow Bee-eaters** at San Isidore Reserve

Wagga and **White-winged Trillers**, 2 **Pink Cockatoos** and a nesting **Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike** at Ardlethan.



Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike (left) and Dollarbird – Janet Hume



**Sacred Kingfisher – Phil Tenison
Taken at Flowerdale Lagoon, Wagga**

From Margaret Strong, Whitton

The only unusual sighting was of a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike swooping a magpie, while the magpie was on the ground. That’s something I’ve never seen before, but you might not want to add that to our sightings list.

I think there’s a second Grey Shrike-thrush calling. Our resident bird has increased the sophistication of his calls with trills, pauses, extra notes and elaborate arrangements added. Another bird is mimicking the end notes of his phrases, so after spending a few hours outside this morning I may be a bit clearer. Our bird can hardly put in a better effort, so I hope it’s a mate for him.

I keep hearing a Sacred Kingfisher calling from the same location, but haven’t seen one in that tree or anywhere for several weeks. I suspect it is Starlings mimicking, which

they’re very good at doing, as they have a nest in that same tree. Again, I’m sharing something interesting but it’s probably not for the list.

Compiled by Max O’Sullivan

BRINGING BACK THE BUNYIP BIRD - AUSTRALASIAN BITTERN CONSERVATION SUMMIT 2022

The Bringing Back the Bunyip Bird Australasian Bittern Summit 2022 is a unique opportunity to connect with scientists, conservationists, wetland managers, birdwatchers and farmers who share a passion about the iconic Australasian Bittern.

Hosted by Riverina Local Land Services, the Summit will be held in Leeton NSW and from 1-4 February 2022.

The Bringing Back the Bunyip Bird – Australasian Bittern Summit is the first time such a conference has been held and an amazing opportunity to see and hear about all things Bittern.



We are offering an interesting and engaging program with unique tours to some of the key bittern wetlands of the Riverina including the internationally recognised Fivebough Wetland and bittern-friendly rice crops. Expert speakers from across Australia and New Zealand will cover a range of topics including innovative monitoring methods, wetland management and bittern-friendly rice.

Bitterns are considered a flagship species for encouraging and promoting healthy wetland management. There are many projects currently being undertaken to improve the long term outlook for this species.

The Summit will bring together all those interested in this curious bird to discuss and find out about what is happening and what can be done in the future for the long term survival of the species.

[Download the Summit Registration Pack](#) to find out more about this unique event.

Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists have been asked to help with some of the field trips for the local knowledge that we can offer to visitors. We will be asking for volunteers to assist on the Tuesday, Thursday and possibly Friday. If you think you can help let me know. nella.smith0@gmail.com

**** COMING EVENTS ****

Please note all outings are subject to weather conditions.

Covid-19 restrictions need to be adhered to, for outings you must register with the nominated person by email (preferred) or phone to participate, bring proof of double vaccination and do not come if unwell. By registering you declare that 'I am symptom free and have not been in contact with a confirmed case of Covid 19, or directed to isolate'. Masks and social distancing are required as per current Covid rules.

- 9 December Thursday** **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7pm.
Topic: Video of a presentation of Bryophytes (mosses & liverworts) (continued)
Bring: Show & Tell
Contact: Dione Russell 0428 536 290
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- 11 December Saturday** **End of Year gathering at Middle Beach, Euroley.**
Meet at 5.30pm Spotlight walk after dinner.
This will be a BYO everything to be COVID safe. Please register with Dione Russell 0428 536290 **Email:** murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com
- 2022**
- 2 February Wednesday** **Copy for the February newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**
Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com. Phone: 6953 2612.
- 2 February Wednesday** **World Wetlands Day**
Wetlands action for people and nature
- 4/5 February Fri/Sat** **Glossy Black Cockatoo Count - Rankin Springs area**
Contact Nella Smith if you are interested in participating
Email: nellasmith0@gmail.com Phone 0428 890 537
- 10 February Thursday** **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7pm.
Topic: to be decided Show & Tell
Contact: Dione Russell 0428 536 290
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- 11/12 February Fri/Sat** **Glossy Black Cockatoo Count – Leeton, Narrandera, Griffith**
Contact Nella Smith if you are interested in participating
Email: nellasmith0@gmail.com Phone 0428 890 537