

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



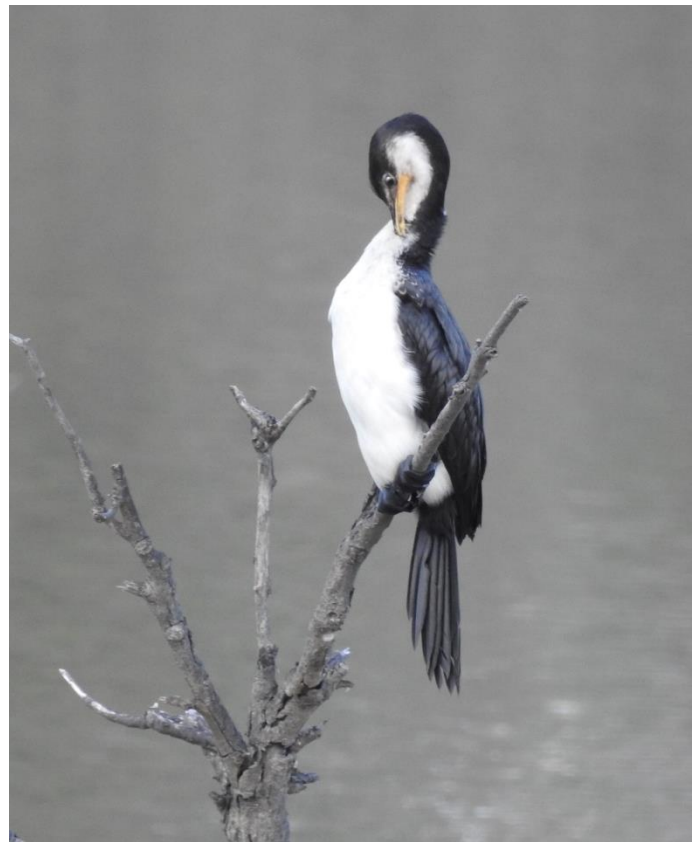
May 2022 - Issue #303
Journal of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc.
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Website: www.mfn.org.au

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



Eastern Great Egret (left) and Little Pied Cormorant
Kathy Tenison

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CONTRIBUTIONS

For the June 2022 issue by
Wednesday 1 June
To Rowena Whiting

Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com.

Phone: 6953 2612

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	6953 7197
Vice President:	Meredith Billington	0498 711 165		Peter Butler	0458 985 202
Vice President:	Sarah Danckert	0427 276 306		Alan Whitehead	6959 3779
Secretary:	Dione Russell	0428 536 290	Website Co-ordinator:		
Treasurer:	Glenn Currie	0488 563 321		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	Sarah Danckert	0427 276 306	spdanckert@gmail.com		

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Welcome to the May issue

I hope you made the most of the Autumn weather as it seems to have changed to Winter almost overnight.

We have a guest speaker this month, John Collins, who has an agricultural tour business but is extending into the area of ecotourism, is interested in how nature and agriculture can benefit each other - think Australasian Bittern Project. The club could have a part to play in this, so do come along. (This was postponed from March.) Our outing will be a walk in the Brobenah Hills.

First we need to correct the identification some member's came to at the March meeting using Michael Braby's book *The Complete Guide to Butterflies of Australia*. It is a **Tailed Emperor** *Charaxes sempronius*.

Jess Murphy (National Parks Ranger) wrote "Quick comment on the butterfly photos on page 12 for your interest. I'm pretty sure the photos are of a Tailed Emperor rather than a Macleay's Swallowtail (having done butterfly surveys in both Coffs Harbour and the Pilliga Forest, I'm familiar with both species!). The picture on the left does look quite like a Macleay's, but Macleay's have a big pale green patch on both the inside and outside of their wing. Tailed Emperors have a similar pattern as Macleay's on the inside wing (except cream rather than light green), but the light brown pattern shown in the photo on the right on the outside of the wing. See photos on the ALA profile here: <https://bie.ala.org.au/species/urn:lsid:biodiversity.org.au:afd.taxon:77e4bd38-1cf5-4e4f-8670-ef91b0cb455b#gallery>

I have seen Tailed Emperors around the Riverina especially on hilltops where they like to congregate, but they aren't very common so always a good day when one is spotted." See photo of caterpillar on Page 6.

Also from Dot Green (ex Leeton) on the south coast who writes "A beautiful fast flying butterfly, whose range has been expanding of late".

Thank you both for bringing this to our attention. Another lesson learnt!

I also need to point out that the Black Kite on the tea towel of Fivebough Wetlands should be Whistling Kite, unfortunately this was not changed prior to printing.

Rowena.

RARE AUSTRALIAN ANTELOPE!

As Trip Leader I had just launched my learned discourse on the natural wonders we may discover on our outing, when a black band of about 25 Great Cormorants skimmed by. However, I regrouped and continued ... to be again interrupted by a flock of some hundred Pelicans, winging aloft over the silk-smooth waters of Lake Talbot, Narrandera.



(A couple of days later the same assembly - probably - circle-soared high over the town, before aligning themselves in a magnificent travelling V form to vanish over the north-west horizon – to destinations unknown!)

The occasion was our trip along the North Track on the morning of April 24. On a perfect Autumn day we descended the escarpment amid an ambient glow of pale yellow. This was created by the profuse budding masses of Deane's Wattle; a foreshadowing - foreilluminating? - of the golden spectacle to bless the

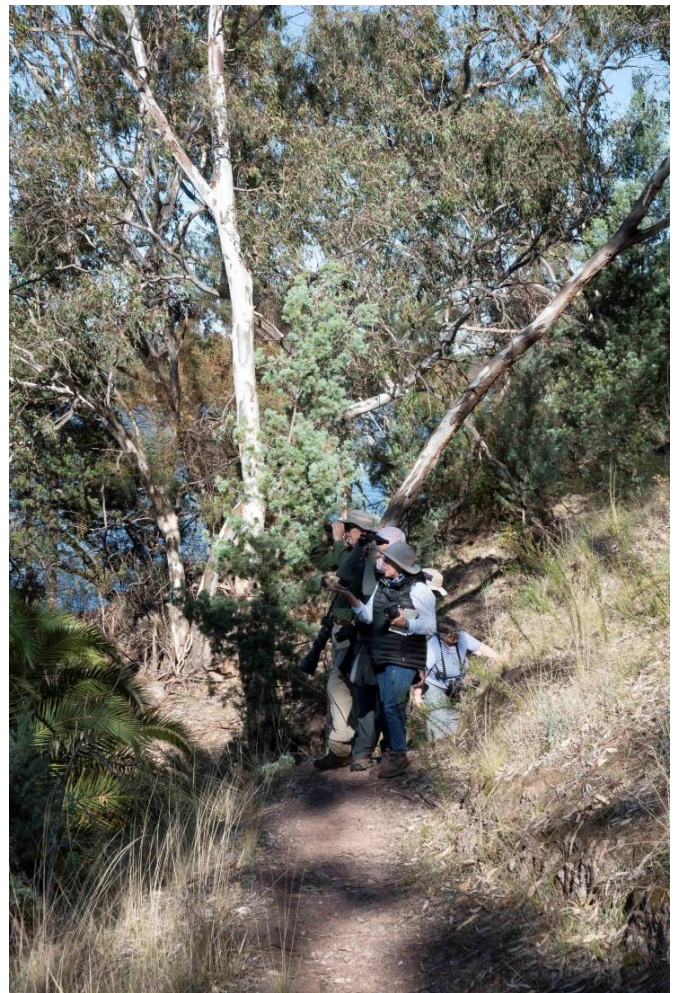
Lake's shores in a couple of months.

The entire walk was more than pleasant, being lakeside, with towering rockscapes adjacent. At one point I prized a piece of gravel from one of these Devonian antiquarians and mused that it had waited for over 360 million years to be liberated. In fact, the pebble's cementation occurred long before any land-based animals or plants existed – let alone Homo Sapiens!

The rocks, whose base colour was a pleasing palette of dark pinks, maroons and dusky violets, provided habitat for an abundant community of microflora, from tiny fungi, to legion varieties of lichens, ferns and mosses – each an artful tracery in its own right.

In fact, the micro-climate in this area is supportive of these shade- and damp-loving plants by being south-facing. Also, the steep elevation is a perennial catchment to passing showers and hill-hugging mists rising from the lake surface – especially in cool weather.

The usual community of bush birds variously made,



many by serenade only, their presence known. Among these were: Grey Fantail; both Grey and Pied Butcherbirds; Rufous Whistler; Grey Shrike Thrush; Whistling Kite; Weebill; Yellow Rosella.

There were sections of the narrow track where masses of fruiting Garland Lilies were evidence of the display of red,

Pelicans – Phil Tenison
On the track – Rowena Whiting
Grey Fantail – Phil Tenison

ivory and white inflorescence of a few months ago.

As a field naturalist, I regard any *first* in my ramblings as special; such as first reptile, mammal or bird; not the least being first plant. But possibly best of all is first orchid. (Confession time: as a boy I grew native epiphytic orchids, which I collected from the rainforest ranges around Coffs Harbour!)

And an orchid first is just what happened in a sheltered rocky enclave some distance along the track. There, waiting to be admired, a personality trait of many orchids, was a veritable garden of Antelope Greenhoods (Thank you Nella the Omniscient for their identification.) These rare and wondrous plants were only formally described in 1968!

Antelope Greenhood? More than any other floral family, hosts of orchid species are named after other things. This is due to their endless multiplicity of forms and colours, examples, being: Spider Orchid; Donkey Orchid; Orange Blossom Orchid; Old Man's Beard Orchid, and more, so many more.



The Antelope Greenhood sits squarely in this mimetic tradition, with a frontal head view including clearly-defined long muzzle, brow and - especially - its long, twin spiral tendrils, so like the horns of its African namesake.

There is almost always something that seems to be the signature of a trip, from which it might even be named; this lovely outing will always be, in my mind at least, The Antelope Greenhood trip.

Further on we began to encounter more water birds; including a pair of Great Crested Grebes – not often observed on the lake. A rowdy “quark – quark – quark” revealed a family of Darters ranged along a log in the water. One became airborne providing a display of aerial mastery not that often seen by this species.

Above these a group of Yellow-billed Spoonbills rested in the tall River Red Gums, which also concealed a couple of nests. A rookery of Sacred Ibis is also a permanent feature of this part of the waterway.

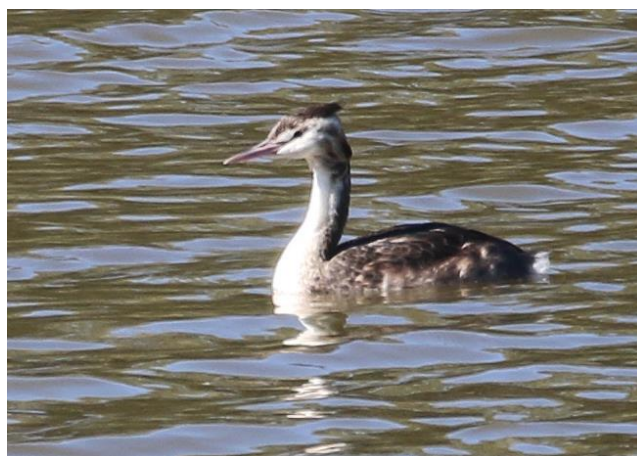
Even though we travelled back on the same path, due to the reverse perspective everything looked different. This included the water and forest vistas; the trackside rock sculptures, the sky and clouds, the light – even many individual trees are unrecognisable when viewed from the opposite side.

On return to the Lookout we convoyed off to the nearby Narrandera Wetlands for lunch. This included a leisurely circumnavigation of this valuable town asset. A lively community of water birds were enjoyed here also, including: Purple Swamp Hen; Dusky Moorhen; Pacific Black Duck; Grey Teal; Little Pied Cormorant.

We also witnessed a gang of magpies driving off a small family of White-winged Choughs!

Especially edifying was how well the various rehabilitation

plantings were doing. Not only those committed to the Good Earth by a large team of volunteers just last year, but some going back over two decades! Some of these were planted by folk on our outing today. Many of these early plantings were today 10 to 20 metres tall, with robust trunks, branches and canopies, such as the various casuarinas and acacias. Even the new grasses,



Antelope Greenhood *Pterostylis laxa* – Eric Whiting
Parson's Band *Eriochilus cucullatus* – Eric Whiting
Great Crested Grebe – Phil Tenison (taken from afar)

like Kangaroo Grass, were doing well, resplendent with heavy seed.

The legacy of this altruism contributes not only to general environmental wellbeing and vital wildlife habitat for the area, but an enriching of the aesthetic experience for human visitors both today and in the future.

Alan Whitehead

Narrandera Outing 24 April 2022 bird list

Lake Talbot Walk:

Great Crested Grebe	Little Pied Cormorant
Darter	Pelican
White-faced Heron	Royal Spoonbill
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	White Ibis
Wood Duck	Black Duck
Grey Teal	Whistling Kite
Black Kite	Quail (sp)
Purple Swamphen	White Cockatoo
Galah	Yellow Rosella
Laughing Kookaburra	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike
Rufous Whistler	Grey Shrike-Thrush
Grey Fantail	Weebill
Chestnut-rumped Thornbill	Spotted Pardalote
White-breasted Woodswallow	Magpie
Pied Currawong (H)	Australian Raven
Magpie	

Narrandera Wetlands walk:

Great Egret
Little Pied Cormorant
White-faced Heron
Royal Spoonbill
Grey Teal
Black Duck
Moorhen
Purple Swamphen
Laughing Kookaburra
Black-faced Cuckoo-sh
Red-capped Robin
Rufous Whistler
Grey Fantail
Superb Wren
Pied Currawong (H)
Magpie
Yellow Rosella

Max O'Sullivan

Know your daisies, Part 14 Shrubs and semi-shrubs - Ozothamnus

Ozothamnus species could have well been included with the white Everlastings group. They were once named Helichrysum the same as Golden Everlasting until that genus was split into several genera. Asteraceae with persistent woody stems as shrubs or semi-shrubs can conveniently form their own group in this region. Along with the Ozothamnus species there are the introduced Wormwoods (*Artemisia* species) and one of the Groundhead genus (*Epaltes*) that occurs westwards from the margin of the Northern Riverina.

***Ozothamnus diosmifolius*, Pill Flower**

Shrub to 5m high, though usually c2m, recorded on the margins of rainforest and in heath in a variety of soils often on ridges. Stems erect, branches with a short rough tomentum. Leaves linear, 10-15mm long, apex reflexed, margins tightly revolute, upper surface green and scabrous, lower white-woolly. Flowerheads in dense corymbs. Involucral bracts broad, rounded, opaque white or pink, appressed, in 3-4 rows, obtuse.

***Ozothamnus obcordatus*, Grey Everlasting**

Erect shrub, to 1.5m high, branches greyish-woolly when young. Recorded in heath on stony ridges in shallow soils. Leaves obcordate or broad-elliptic to obovate, 3-15mm, apex reflexed, base shortly decurrent on stem, margins revolute, upper surface glabrous, lower grey-tomentose. Flowerheads in dense corymbs. Involucral bracts straw-coloured.

***Ozothamnus diotophyllus*, Heath Everlasting**

Shrub, to 1m high, sparsely branched, straggly and aromatic, branches glandular and white-cottony to woolly towards ends, glabrescent with age. Recorded in mallee, on sandy to calcareous red earths. Leaves linear to narrow-hastate, scale-like, 2-5mm, base auriculate and



stem-clasping, margins revolute and obscuring lower surface, upper surface green and shining punctate, lower white-woolly. Flowerheads in numerous small terminal corymbs. Involucral bracts golden hyaline, loosely appressed, with spreading tips.

***Ozothamnus tuckeri*, Small-leaf Everlasting**

Erect shrub, to 2.5m high, finely but densely branched, branches tomentose. Recorded on dry sites in foothills, on light sandy loam. Leaves oblong, 2-3mm, base stem-clasping and auriculate, margins revolute obscuring lower surface, lamina discolorous, upper surface green, glandular and minutely punctate, lower woolly. Flowerheads in globose to corymbose umbels. Involucral bracts loose, membranous, golden at base, opaque white above, ovate, glandular and woolly in between.



Ozothamnus hookeri – a mountain species

***Artemisia arborescens**, Silver Wormwood**

Erect shrub, 1-2m high, stems grey pubescent becoming glabrous, ribbed. Garden escape, sometime persistent. Leaves 1-2 pinnatisect with flat linear to narrow-lanceolate segments, both surfaces silver-tomentose with appressed hairs, upper leaves \pm sessile and unlobed. Flowerheads in an erect panicle, nodding. Involucral bracts in 2-4 rows, imbricate, ovate, tomentose. Florets cream to bright yellow.

***Artemisia verlotiorum**, Chinese Wormwood**

Perennial herb dying back to rootstock annually, c1m high, stems erect, \pm tomentose, becoming glabrous, ribbed, unbranched below flowerheads. Recorded in disturbed areas, often in moist sites. Leaves 2-3 pinnatisect, ultimate segments subulate to lanceolate, upper surface usually glabrous; lower surface tomentose, reticulum of small veins obvious, upper leaves sessile and usually unlobed. Flowerheads in panicles, nodding. Involucral bracts in 2-4 rows, outer herbaceous, inner with broad scarious margins and apex, \pm hiary. Florets yellow to reddish-brown.

***Epaltes cunninghamii*, Tall Nut-heads**

Herb or small shrub, 10-100cm high, stems erect, dichotomously branched, woody at base \pm glabrous. Recorded on clay soils subject to flooding. Leaves oblong to oblong-lanceolate, \pm acute, 10-80mm long, irregularly toothed, sessile, upper leaves smaller. Flowerheads shortly pedunculate in loose terminal panicles; male and female florets in separate heads. Involucral bracts oblong or obovate in 3-4 rows. Florets white to pale mauve.

Eric Whiting

Bits and pieces / Member's show and tell

Both are in short supply this month...

A **Cuckoo Wasp** from Glenn Currie seen in The Food Garden at Narrandera.

And to add to the story of the **Tailed Emperor butterfly** on Page 2 here is a photo of the caterpillar taken recently by our granddaughter in Canberra. Rowena.



Neil Palframan and myself joined 6 members of the Sydney Bird Group to spend 5 nights at Mt Wood Homestead in Sturt National Park in the north-west corner of NSW. We all met at Cobar but with roads opening and closing due to rain, the group got to Tibooburra by several different routes.

Neil and I started birding from the Lachlan River on the Kidman Way – best bird there was a **Restless Flycatcher**. On to Nombinnie where we scored a pair of **Chestnut Quail-thrush** on a side road. At Cobar we went birding along the Ivanhoe Rd where we got lots of **White-browed Woodswallow** as well as **Hooded Robin**. In town we saw a male **Red-winged Parrot** flying past the caravan park and this was the only one we saw for the whole trip!

Between Cobar and Wilcannia we saw several groups of **Pink Cockatoo** and on the Darling Annabranche just out of Cobar was some water beside the road where we saw some good birds – **Red-kneed Dotterel**, **Black-tailed Native-hen**, **Orange Chat** and **Black-faced Woodswallow**.

At Wilcannia, while Neil went to get up-to-date info about the roads, I located a pair of **Red-tailed Black Cockatoo** – again the only ones we saw for the rest of the trip. The trip to White Cliffs was very quiet, and it wasn't until we were on the Henry Roberts Road that we came across more water close to the road where we saw **Diamond Dove**, **Black Honeyeater** and Neil saw a pair of **Chirruping Wedgebill** run across the road in front of him. On the road we stopped and counted a group of at least 20 **Chestnut-crowned Babbler**, our first for the trip.

At Mt Wood Homestead, there were small groups of up to 12 **Budgies** along with lots of woodswallows – **Black-faced**, **Masked**, **White-browed** and **White-breasted**. Also lots of **Zebra Finch** nesting in all the buildings around the homestead!

The homestead was very comfortable with 5 bedrooms in the main house with kitchen and dining in an adjoining building. We did our own catering which worked out well with no clashes over who was doing what in the kitchen! Despite the temperature reaching 39 degrees for the first 2 days there, a storm on the Tuesday night cooled things off to the low 30s for the rest of our stay. Besides, the homestead had a giant evaporative cooler as well, and all rooms had overhead fans so sleeping was comfortable. Once the storm disappeared, so did the most of the budgies, woodswallows and finches.

Days were spent exploring various roads within the National Park and most pairs in the group seemed to be content to do their own thing. Neil and I did the same. On the Tuesday, we all headed for Fort Grey and some to Cameron's Corner on the SA/Qld/NSW border. As we were in Neil's 2-wheel drive and the others in 4WDs we took our time, stopping whenever we saw anything. Our first stop proved successful where a male **Cinnamon Quail-thrush**



flew across the road in front of us, and we had some good views. We eventually got to Fort Grey and passed 4 of the others on their way out. The best bird there was a male **Bourke's Parrot** feeding sedately on the



Red-backed Kingfisher
Bourke's Parrots were everywhere, but do you think they might sit together for a better photo!

ground near a picnic shelter. This is one of the many we saw during our stay. Both Neil and I had only ever seen the odd pair before – we saw well over 50 birds all up at various spots in the park in our time there.

Other birds seen on the Tuesday were **Red-backed Kingfisher, Gibberbird, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Crimson Chat, White-backed Swallow** and a flock of **Little Crow**.

On the Wednesday after a short but noisy and spectacular early morning storm we got a flock of low flying **Pacific Swift** which was quite unexpected. Others reported some **White-throated Needle-tail** in the flock as well.

Neil and I then did the Gorge Loop Road on the Wednesday morning and found some good birds at the various creek crossings – the biggest surprise being a small flock of 16 **Flock Bronzewing Pigeons** that rose up, circled us and landed again on a lush, grassy hillside where they had been feeding. The birds were still there the next day so we showed the others. Also along that road we saw **Red-browed Pardalote, White-winged Wren, more Chestnut-crowned Babbler, Gibberbird** twice and more **Bourke's Parrot**.



Gibberbird in the gibber
Darling Lily (below)

Along the creeks there were masses of lilies in flower which looked a bit like Wilcannia Lilies but were actually **Darling Lilies** as Neil found out once he got home and checked.

Other birds seen in the final two days were a pair of **Banded Lapwing, Barn Owl** in the old Shearing Shed on the property, **Spotted Harrier** and **White-bellied Cuckoo-Shrike**.

On the Saturday morning, we all packed up and left early. Two cars went via Wanaaring to Bourke and beyond while the other two cars went via Broken Hill where we stayed overnight. A short trip out of town to a spot where I had seen **Redthroat** on a previous visit. We got excellent close views of a pair of the birds, bins not necessary they were so close, along with more **Wedgebill**.



After a futile search for **Regent Parrot** around Euston/Robinvale we decided to head for home and arrived on Sunday evening tired and exhausted by the long trip from Broken Hill. The only consolation on the way home was a group of **Gull-billed Tern** flying along the irrigation channel beside the highway between Balranald and Hay.

Birds missed on the trip were **Inland Dotterel, and Australian Pratincole, Black-breasted Buzzard, White-browed Treecreeper** and **Spotted Bowerbird** to name a few of the area specialities.

Max O'Sullivan Photos by Neil Palframan

My star rating would be 4 out of 5!

If you are planning a trip out there check carefully about the drinking water situation. Parks info says take your own, and that would be true of camping grounds. But the homestead where we stayed had a tap clearly labelled "drinking water". Knowing this would have saved us lugging a lot of extra bulk and weight.

Neil Palframan



Sunsets are big out there. Why is the car there? Because someone came to say "Max has dinner cooked for you, where are you?"

MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

Wedge-tailed Eagle [2]	Fivebough Wetlands – displaying	01/04/22	Keith Hutton
Straw-necked Ibis [150]	Fivebough Wetlands	01/04/22	Keith Hutton
Brolga [12]	Fivebough from Hooley Lookout	01/04/22	Anne Lepper
Black Falcon [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	03/04/22	Keith Hutton
White-bellied Sea-eagle [Imm]	Fivebough Wetlands -Hooley Lookout	05/04/22	Malcolm Cousland
Magpie Goose [147]	Fivebough Wetlands	06/04/22	Keith Hutton
Whiskered Tern [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	06/04/22	Keith Hutton
Glossy Black Cockatoo [pr]	Moss Dam, Binya SF – flyover	06/04/22	Neil Palframan
Olive-backed Oriole [2 Imm]	Wattle Dam Binya State Forest	06/04/22	Neil Palframan
Striated Pardalote [20+]	Wattle Dam – birds in a single flock	06/04/22	Neil Palframan
Speckled Warbler [4+2]	Wattle Dam, Binya State Forest	06/04/22	Neil Palframan
Pink Cockatoo [8+]	Quarry Gate, Colinroobie Rd	09/04/22	Max O'Sullivan
Hooded Robin [pr]	Evans Smyles Rd via Leeton	09/04/22	Max O'Sullivan
Restless Flycatcher [1]	Evans Smyles Rd via Leeton	09/04/22	Max O'Sullivan
White-browed Woodswallow [60+]	Evans Smyles Rd	09/04/22	Max O'Sullivan
Masked Woodswallow [2]	Evans Smyles Rd	09/04/22	Max O'Sullivan
Great Crested Grebe [1+3juvs]	Campbell's Wetlands	12/04/22	Nella Smith
Plumed Whistling Duck [8+]	Tabain's Dam, McCracken Rd, Leeton	13/04/22	Anne Lepper
Australian Shelduck [19]	Fivebough Wetlands	15/04/22	Keith Hutton
Egret (sp) [200-300]	Fivebough Wetlands	15/04/22	Keith Hutton
Nankeen Night Heron [2]	Campbell's Wetlands	15/04/22	Neil Palframan
Pelican [166]	Fivebough Wetlands – huge flock	16/04/22	Keith Hutton
Black Swan [277]	Fivebough Wetlands	16/04/22	Keith Hutton
Australasian Bittern [1]	Lawrence Rd Bilbul	17/04/22	Neil Palframan
Pied Stilt [37]	Fivebough Wetlands	18/04/22	Keith Hutton
Pied Cormorant [1]	Settling pond Fivebough – uncommon	20/04/22	Max O'Sullivan
Pied Currawong [3]	Narrandera – season return	21/04/22	Alan Whitehead
Magpie Goose [183]	Fivebough Rd – Terry's farm	22/04/22	Terry McGrath
Great Crested Grebe [2]	Lake Talbot outing	24/04/22	MFN Group
Spotted Pardalote [1]	Lake Talbot outing	24/04/22	Phil Tenison
White-bellied Sea Eagle [2 juv]	Narrandera	25/04/22	Nella Smith
Great Crested Grebe [2+2 juv]	Buckingbong via Narrandera	25/04/22	Nella Smith
Nankeen Night Heron [Imm]	Yanco Weir	29/04/22	Kathy Tenison
Rufous Whistler [2]	Bilbul	30/04/22	Meredith Billington

Brown Honeyeater: These birds seem to be now resident in Leeton with at least 5 reported sites where the birds have established themselves - like Keith's place in Karri Rd and my place in Pendula St, plus three other sites in town. There is also evidence of the birds successfully nesting this past season, certainly at my place!

Max O'Sullivan



Photos by Phil Tenison

Angus and Cattle Egrets Fivebough Wetlands

Spotted Pardalote at Narrandera Rocky Waterholes



**** COMING EVENTS ****

Please note all outings are subject to weather conditions.

Any Covid-19 restrictions need to be adhered to, for outings you must register with the nominated person by email (preferred) or phone to participate, 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.

- 12 May Thursday** **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7pm.
Topic: Intelligent Tourism
Guest Speaker: John Collins
Bring Show and Tell
Contact: Dione Russell 0428 536 290
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- 15 May Sunday** **Outing to "Yarabimbi"**
Meet at the property on Colinroobie Road
Time: 9am
We plan to explore the Green Mallee area.
Bring morning tea and lunch
Contact: Nella Smith Email: nellasmith0@gmail.com Phone 0428 890 537
Please register with Nella
- 1 June Wednesday** **Copy for the June newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**
Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com. Phone: 6953 2612.
- 9 June Thursday** **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7pm.
Topic: To be decided
Contact: Dione Russell 0428 536 290
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- 11 June Sunday** **Outing to Cocoparras National Park, MacGregors Tops**
We will be retracing Cunningham's walk
Meeting place and time to be decided.
Contact/leader: Eric Whiting Please register with him.
Phone 02 6953 2612 Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com.

OTHER EVENTS

[Biannual Swift Parrot / Regent Honeyeater surveys](#) (BirdLife Australia) -23 April to 5 June, various locations. These surveys will utilise the new method, introduced last year, using a 5 minute-50 metre radius survey technique. You are also encouraged to complete a rapid assessment of resource availability (eg flowering, water availability), and also document the status of lerp and Golden Wattle, two known food sources used by Swift Parrots. Full details and local contacts are available via the link, to guide you through the process.