

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



December 2022 - Issue #310

Journal of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc.

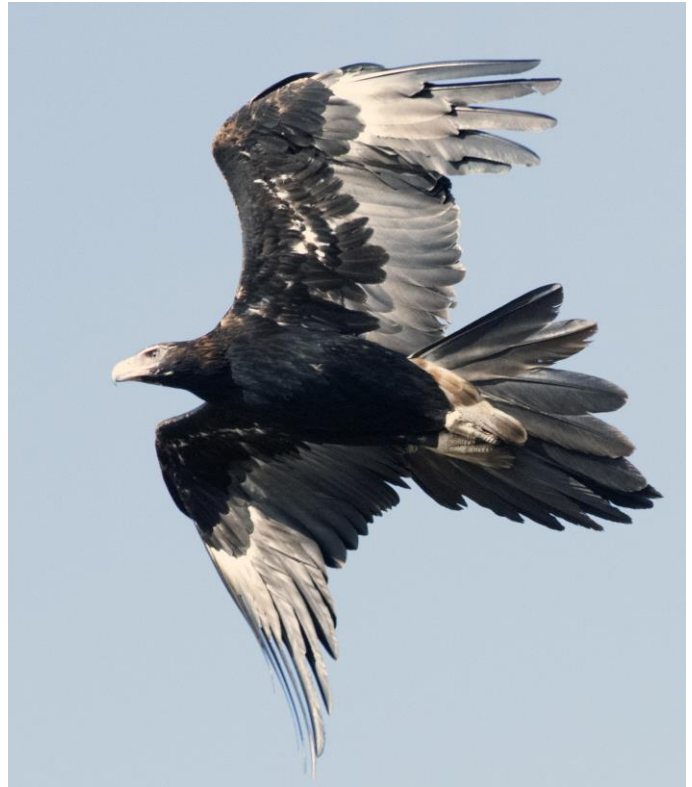
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Objectives

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



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Images by Graham Russell, recent sightings of Glossy Black Cockatoos at "Mountain Dam", Colinroobie Road via Leeton and Wedge-tailed Eagles at the Koonadan crossing, Irrigation Way

CONTRIBUTIONS

For the February 2023 issue by
Wednesday 2 February

To Rowena Whiting

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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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Welcome to the December issue

This last month or so has seen a number of roads and reserve areas closed due to flooding and wet conditions so it has made it difficult to venture far off the beaten track. In fact it has not been easy to find the situation of closures and encountering a heavy storm could easily make the return route impassable. Copy for the newsletter was a little slow coming. It has given me the chance to include one of the interesting articles I pick up from other organisations and rarely have space to include. This is about how plastics and other wastes are damaging not only the environment but destroying species; it appeared in the Far South Coast Birds newsletter in August.

The AGM was held last month; with Nella standing down as president the position is yet to be filled as are a couple of Committee vacancies which need filling. These are on the agenda at the General Meeting on December 8th. Our thanks go to Penny Williams for standing in for Dionee doing the minutes and sending emails.

At the meeting it was decided to hold our Christmas party inside due to the flooding and mosquitoes, see coming events on the back page for details. Looking forward to this get together and chinwag.

Nella has taken on the role of sightings coordinator so please send your significant sightings directly to her, email nella.smith0@gmail.com by the newsletter copy date each month.

Before I sign off for another year I need to make amends for a couple of mistakes in the November issue. The juvenile Peregrine Falcon on page 3 should have been attributed to Phil Tension and Janet's image on page 6, Rufous Whistler should have been a Fan-tailed Cuckoo. My apologies.

Enjoy your read,

your festive season and
your break.

Rowena.



Silvalite, Wagga Wagga – 6 November 2022

On the 6th of November Sarah, Iain and I met with Glenn to have a walk through this small patch of remnant grey box woodland. It was grey overcast afternoon with rain threatening. The area runs along the Olympic Way between the Sturt Highway and Red Hill Road. It is also part of the Wiradjuri walking track and Wagga Wagga active travel plan.

We saw 27 species on our 1½ hour stroll.



Grey-crowned Babbler (above)
Female Rufous Whistler (left)

One of the first species we saw was small group of Grey-crowned Babbblers foraging.

The Rufous Whistlers were very active in the tree tops and we eventually managed to catch site of a couple. A Pied Butcherbird entertained us as we stood swatting mosquitos prior to heading home.

Janet Hume

Nesting Birds at Flowerdale Lagoon, Wagga Wagga



Sarah and I ventured down to Flowerdale Lagoon during the afternoon on Friday the 2nd of November afternoon. The area was impacted greatly by the recent flooding of the Murrumbidgee, inundated for 3 weeks. It was great to be able to walk the tracks again, which are also part of the Wiradjuri Walking track.

There was lots of activity and we recorded 32 species of birds in total. We also saw multiple nests and were excited to see that 5 of the 9 had a parent in residence.

The highlights being the White faced Heron who has taken over the lease from the Australasian Darters. They successfully raised 5 chicks in the same nest earlier this year. Also exciting to find the Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike on their nest.

Janet Hume



White-faced Heron with chick (above)
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike (left)

On Saturday 19 November 14 members & friends visited Mates Gully TSR instead of a long anticipated visit to Tarcutta Hills Reserve, Bush Heritage. Mates Gully excelled with lush grasses and wildflowers, such growth rarely seen at the site. Dick Green started us off with the Spear grasses *Austrostipa densiflora* - Brush Spear Grass and *Austrostipa elegantissima* - Elegant Spear Grass. We knew all about their distribution strategy in the short distance to where he then discussed the role of mistletoe. I was fortunate to catch a glimpse of the Mistletoebird, plus two varieties of Chocolate lily *Arthropodium fimbriatum* (nodding) and *Arthropodium strictum*. Kelly Price was expert at spotting a couple of *Fuligo* - Slime moulds and David Glastonbury found *Microtis unifolia* - Common Onion Orchid. The *Cheiranthra linearis* - Finger flower was particularly striking. Dick was pleased to see many *Indigofera australis* - Native Indigo and just one *Microseris lanceolata* - Yam Daisy in flower.



Bird List: Rufous Whistler, Noisy Friarbird, Australian Magpie, Galah, Grey Fantail, Australian Raven, Western Gerygone, Laughing Kookaburra, Grey Shrike-thrush, Striated Pardalote, Superb Fairy-wren, Common Bronzewing, Sacred Kingfisher, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Olive-backed Oriole, Willie Wagtail, Eastern Rosella, White-throated Treecreeper, Peaceful Dove, Magpie-lark, White-winged Chough, Weebill, Eastern Yellow Robin, Singing Honeyeater, Mistletoebird, Red Wattlebird, Restless Flycatcher

Plant List (Paul Walker): *denotes introduced sp. ?indicates probably (Ed)

- Acacia genitifolia* - Early wattle
- Acacia sp. (hakeoides?)*
- Acacia lanigera* - Woolly wattle
- Acacia paradoxa* - Kangaroo Thorn
- Aristida behriana* - Brush Wiregrass
- Arthropodium (syn Dichopogon) fimbriatum* - Nodding chocolate lily
- Arthropodium strictum* - Chocolate lily
- Austrostipa densiflora* - Brush Spear Grass
- Austrostipa elegantissima* - Elegant Spear Grass
- **Briza maxima* - Quaking Grass
- Brunonia australis* - Blue Pincushion
- Calotis cuneifolia* - Purple Burr-daisy
- Carex appressa?* - Tall Sedge
- Cassinia longifolia* - Shiny Cassinia
- Cassinia laevis?* - Cough Bush
- Cheilanthes sp. (sieberi?)* - Rock Fern
- Cheiranthra linearis* - Finger flower
- Chrysocephalum apiculatum* (leaf 5cmL, upright form to 40cm)
- Daviesia leptophylla* - Narrow-Leaf Bitter Pea
- Dichondra repens* - Kidney Weed
- Dillwynia sericea* - Showy Parrot Pea



Onion Orchid (above left), Blue Pincushion (above right) – Susan Campbell
Slime Mould (left) Sarah Danckert

Dianella revoluta - Black Anther Flax Lily
 **Echium plantagineum* - Pattersons Curse
Einadia nutans - Climbing Saltbush
Eucalyptus albens - White Box
Eucalyptus macrorhyncha - Red Stringybark
Eucalyptus polyanthemos - Red Box
Eucalyptus rossii - Inland Scribbly Gum
Eucalyptus sideroxylon - Ironbark Gum
 **Galium aparine* - Goosegrass/Cleavers
Glycine sp. (canescens/tabacina?)
Goodenia hederacea - Ivy Leaf Goodenia
Goodenia/Velleia sp? Scapes 20cmH
Hardenbergia violacea- Sarsaparilla
Helichrysum bracteatum - Golden everlasting
Helichrysum semipapposum - Clustered everlasting
Hydrocotyle laxiflora - Stinking Pennywort
 **Hypericum perforatum* - St John's Wort
Indigofera australis- Native Indigo
Lomandra multiflora- Many flowered mat-rush
Melichrus urceolatus - Urn Heath
Microseris lanceolata - Yam Daisy
Microtis unifolia - Common Onion Orchid
 **Orobanche minor*
Ptilotus sp? 15cmH with trifoliolate leaves, head turning pink
Pultenaea sp.
Rhagodia spinescens? - Berry Saltbush
 **Rubus polyanthemos* - Blackberry
Rytidosperma sp. - Wallaby Grass
Themeda australis - Kangaroo Grass
 **Tolpis barbata* - Black eyes
Vittadinia sp. - Fuzzweed
Wahlenbergia spp. - Bluebells
Xerochrysum viscosum- Sticky Everlasting



**Painted Lady Butterfly (top),
 Common Brown Butterfly (above) –
 Susan Campbell**

NARRANDERA LANDCARE'S 2023 ENDEAVOURS

In 2021 our Narrandera Landcare Group was thrilled to be invited by Landcare Australia to apply for funding through their nursery grant program. This is a program funded by a donation made by Michael King to Landcare Australia to assist small nurseries like Narrandera Landcare's.

We applied for and received a grant then used it for several projects. We made some improvements at the nursery to expand its capacity and make it more user friendly. The funding also helped us with the propagating of seedlings required for our 2022 National Tree Day (NTD) plantings.

Then the bulk of the funding was used for a project enabling us to grow 1000 Drooping She-oak seedlings to give away to landholders in the district to promote awareness of the habitat requirements of the threatened Gloss Black Cockatoo.

These She-oaks were enthusiastically taken up by landholders and schools from north of Griffith, all the way south to Lockhart. We were able to lodge a very satisfying final grant report to Landcare Australia detailing what their funding achieved.

BUT some things happen out of anyone's control and the various seedlings planted at Narrandera Wetlands on NTD are currently underwater again and I don't expect they'll survive this second, longer immersion.

I've had feedback from some people who planted the She-oaks we provided, and they seem to be growing well and powering on. These trees could be a vital food source for the Glossies in 10+ years' time.

For next year's NTD planting we will be planting at the Narrandera Fisheries Centre in late July. They have some areas they would like planted with acacias, hophushes and bottlebrushes and we've started propagating the seedlings needed. We hope schools and the community will again help us plant on National Tree Day.

Landcare Australia has subsequently invited us to again apply for a Michael King nursery grant. We seized that opportunity and will be using the grant to publicize another threatened species and will be growing seedlings beneficial to the habitat of the Superb Parrot. The planting of these will of course benefit a lot of other woodland birds.

If our propagating efforts go well, we'll be asking for EOI's from landholders next year willing to plant these shrubs. Anyone who would like to help with the growing of these seedlings is welcome to join us at Narrandera's Community Food Garden on Saturday mornings.

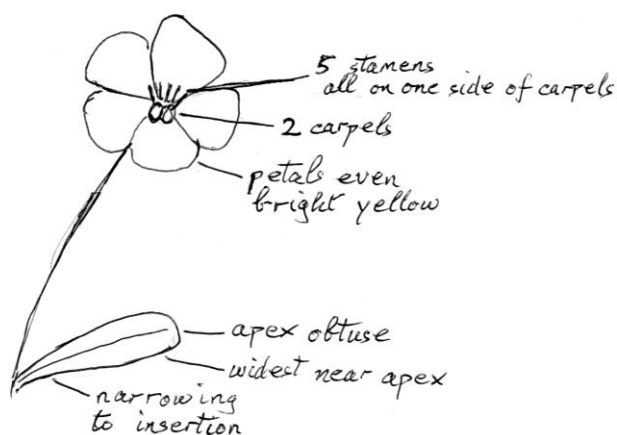
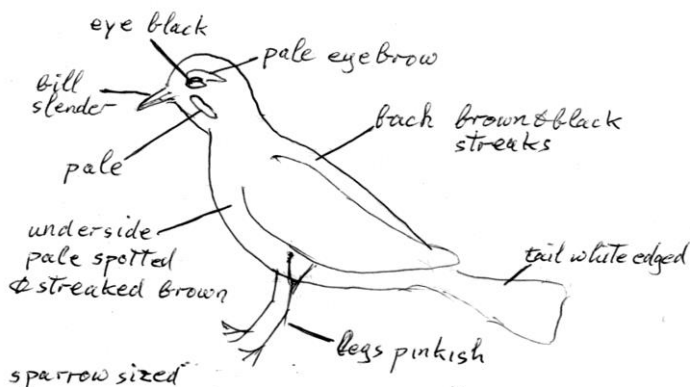
Glenn Currie

Has the skill of drawing natural things been lost?

In these days where even phones can take worthwhile images it is easy to take a quick snap and hope to get an identification from it. I say hope because identification often relies on features that are not seen in the image. How often does a bit of foliage mask out the tell-tale eye, beak or tail? With plants most people will try to get a good photo of a flower only to find that the shape of the leaf or even small features such as hairs on stems are required.

Early field naturalists always carried notebooks and pencils to record their sightings. They well knew that a picture is worth a thousand words, so if unsure of an identification they made a quick sketch and labelled it with salient features. Botany and zoology students were taught to draw everything and hours of practical lessons were spent in just doing that!

There are many benefits in a drawing, even a quick sketch that photography cannot attain. Firstly, unwanted and obscuring detail can be eliminated. Secondly, a drawing can be done from several views of the subject, even if any of the views is only a quick glimpse. Most animals won't stay around for photos taken from different angles. Thirdly, obscuring matter can be mentally removed (the brain is very adept at that). With flowers this means no time consuming 'gardening' that is also damaging to the environment. Fourthly, a drawing makes you think about every part – is it important in identification, do you even need to put it in?



A quick sketch for aiding identification does not have to be perfect – they are not intended as candidates for art prizes. A few labels can overcome wobbly pencil strokes or inaccurate proportions, and don't forget to indicate colouring, texture or any other useful features. For small features a separate sketch at a larger scale can easily be added. (How often have you zoomed in to that feature in a photograph only to get a pixelated blur?)

So sharpen your pencils and slip a notebook into your pocket.

Eric Whiting

Know your daisies Part 19 Podolepis and allies

Podolepis species differ from the Beauty Button group in that the outer florets of the flowerheads have very short rays (not long enough to be recognised as 'daisy-type' flowerheads). Flower colouration is also usually glossy golden- to brownish-yellow as opposed to the distinctly yellow of Beauty Buttons. Involucral bracts are opaquely coloured on narrowed cartilaginous bases (claws).

***Podolepis arachnoidea*, Clustered Copper-wire Daisy**

Erect perennial herb, to 80cm high, recorded in mallee and open woodland on sandy soil. Stems below the involucral bracts are naked. The sessile flowerheads 6mm diam and 10mm long in clusters. Involucral bracts with transverse wrinkles.

***Podolepis canescens*, Large Copper-wire Daisy**

Similar to *P. arachnoides* except flowerheads 15-25mm diam, 15mm long and plants are woolly. Recorded in mallee and open woodland on sandy soil.

***Podolepis longipedata*, Tall Copper-wire Daisy**

Flowering stems have scale-like leaves grading into the involucral bracts. Intermediate involucral bracts triangular, not obscuring the claws of adjacent bracts. Recorded usually in mallee and Callitris communities, on deep sandy soils, north from Roto-Euabalong district.

***Podolepis jaceoides*, Showy Copper-wire Daisy**

Similar to *P. longipeda* except intermediate involucral bracts ovate and ±obscuring the claws of adjacent bracts. Recorded in woodland and grassland on heavy clay floodplains or sandhills.

***Podolepis muelleri*, Small Copper-wire Daisy**

Small generally woolly sparsely branched annual to 22cm high (often much less). Recorded in woodland, grassland and saltbush shrubland on heavy soils or stony sites. Basal leaves die early leaving few stem-clasping lanceolate leaves. Flowerheads few in elongated cymes. Involucral bracts straw coloured with the inner bracts fused to form a leathery cup. Pappus is absent on outer florets and of plumose bristles on inner florets.

***Schkuhria pinnata**, Dwarf Marigold**

Much branched annual to 50cm high, recorded in disturbed areas and roadsides. Leaves pinnate with filiform lobes. Flowerheads terminal on filiform peduncles. Involucral bracts with hyaline apices. Ray florets solitary. Pappus of scales with non-pungent awns.

***Tagetes minuta**, Stinking Roger**

Mostly unbranched aromatic, annual, 1-2m high, weed of roadsides and in disturbed areas and woodlands. Leaves mostly opposite, pinnate with 3-9 leaflets. Flowerheads in dense panicles. Involucral bracts herbaceous, fused into a tube. Ray florets 2-4, obovate. Pappus of 5-6 scales unequal, the longest with slender awns.

Eric Whiting



Images from top;
Clustered Copper-wire Daisy
Showy Copper-wire Daisy
Small Copper-wire Daisy

LORD HOWE ISLAND SEABIRD DEATHS

ABC Mid North Coast

By Madeleine Cross and Nick Parmenter

Scientists studying the impact of plastic debris on a seabird colony that nests on Lord Howe Island say they found an increasing number of dead chicks during the latest fledging season — one with 200 small pieces of plastic in its digestive system.

- Researchers say Lord Howe Island seabirds are ingesting "huge quantities" of plastic
- Every year a team of scientists travel to the island to study the impact of marine plastic pollution
- One flesh-footed shearwater chick was found with more than 200 pieces of rubbish in its stomach

They are studying whether the young flesh-footed shearwaters are failing to make it off the World Heritage-listed Island and begin their migration journey due to the vast amounts of plastic they're consuming.

"The proportion of birds at risk of ingesting plastic from our oceans is increasing," Jennifer Lavers from the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies in Tasmania, said. "The debris they're picking up includes huge quantities of bottle caps, clothes pegs, pen lids."

A dead shearwater chick on Lord Howe Island had ingested more than 200 pieces of plastic. (Supplied)

Every year Dr Lavers and a team of scientists at Adrift Lab travel to Lord Howe Island to study the impact of marine plastic pollution and the health of the flesh-footed shearwater.

"We've been monitoring a couple of Australian shearwater species for the past 15 years or so, in particular the flesh-footed shearwater, which is a fairly large species that breeds primarily on Lord Howe Island," Dr Lavers said.

While some healthy chicks were tagged and released, the team of scientists dissected the growing number of dead birds found on the island.

The plastic is coming from the waters off east coast Australia. Not some foreign country, not some far-flung location, but here in our own backyard.

Researchers said it pointed towards wider consequences caused by plastic pollution.

"The situation on Lord Howe Island is very serious," Jack Auty, a lecturer at the University of Tasmania's School of Medicine and a researcher at Adrift Lab said. "These birds go right up to the coast of Japan, so they're able to be exposed from plastics almost globally. By looking at them, we're looking at the future of all wildlife and potentially even humans as we expose ourselves to more and more plastic."

Dr Auty said even a plastic toy that had not been produced since 1970 was found inside a bird's stomach last year. "Plastics are here forever. If we are forced to use plastic, we need to make sure we dispose of it in the most responsible way that we can."

Why do birds eat plastic?

According to Dr Lavers, "plastic is a really good mimic, often mistaken for food. Fragments of plastic that had been floating in the ocean for decades could accumulate a 'biofilm', similar to the bottom of a jetty or boat. The pieces of rubbish probably don't look or smell like plastic to things like a sea turtle or a seabird. So, they mistakenly consume it."

This year, the Adrift Lab is using tracking devices attached to juvenile shearwaters to learn if the ingested plastic affects how the species flies, migrates and survives.



MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

Compiled by Nella Smith

Nella has taken on the task of compiling this list so please send yours to her by the newsletter copy date.

NOVEMBER 2022 - FIVEBOUGH WETLANDS Keith Hutton

06/11 Magpie Goose 62 adults plus 3 more adults with 12 downy young, plus another 3 adults with 5/6 downy young.

17/1 Australasian Bittern 1 calling at sunset 2 x 3 booms.

18/11 Swamp Harrier 1; Peregrine Falcon 1; Hobby 1; Black-shouldered Kite 1.

23/11 Black-winged Stilt 30 returned after absence after heavy flooding; Australasian Shoveler female with 5 downy young.

26/11 Australasian Bittern calling between 7.00 - 8.15pm 4 x 3 booms.

27/11 Australasian Bittern calling from 09.30am 1 x 3 booms every 5 minutes, then from 09.50 - 10.19am 4 x 3 booms every 5 minutes before it flew low for less than 50 metres into tallest cumbungi and stopped calling.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT SIGHTINGS

24/11 Glossy Black Cockatoo [5] Flying over	"Yarrabimbi", Colinroobie	Andrew Thompson
06/11 Common Mynah (1) slowly expanding range despite control programs in some cities.	Brobenah Road	Keith Hutton
11/11 Glossy Black Cockatoo (7)	Colinroobie Rd	G&D Russell
11/11 Superb Parrot (2)	Colinroobie Rd	G&D Russell
15/11 Great Crested Grebe (1)	Campbell Swamp	Nella Smith
15/11 Common Mynah	Narrandera/Leeton Airport	Nella Smith
22/11 White-throated Gerygone	Livingstone National Park	Nella Smith
25/11 Wedge-tailed Eagle (2)	Koonadan Crossing Irrigation Way	Graham Russell

From Wagga Wagga

23/11 Superb Parrot 20	Pomingalarna	Sarah Danckert
23/11 Yellow Tailed Black Cockatoo	Pomingalarna	Sarah Danckert
24/11 Golden Headed Cisticola	Rocky Hill	Sarah Danckert
25/11 Dollarbird (5)	Marrambidya Wetland	Sarah Danckert
25/11 Crested Shrike-tit	Marrambidya Wetland	Sarah Danckert
25/11 Olive Backed Oriole	Marrambidya Wetland	Sarah Danckert



Superb Parrot by Janet Hume

We went to Pomingalarna yesterday (3/12) and saw 20 plus superb parrots feeding in the wattles along the eastern boundary with Wagga City golf club.

**** COMING EVENTS ****

Please note all outings are subject to weather conditions.

Please register with the nominated person.

8 December Thursday **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7pm.
Bring along your 'show & tell'
Contact: Dione Russell 0428 536 290
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

10 December Saturday **Christmas/end of year get together**
The Party is a chance to wine, dine, socialize with others and challenge yourself to a quiz or 2 about knowledge of the local environment.
Place: Leeton Presbyterian Church Hall, Sycamore St.
Time: 5 pm.
People are asked to bring food to share. Are you able to bring:

- * A platter of nibbles or
- * Cold meat, a quiche or the like or
- * Salads or
- * Deserts?



Please RSVP with what food you would like to bring to share to murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com by Wednesday 7th Dec so that arrangements can be finalized.

2023

2 February Wednesday **Copy for the February newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**
Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com. Phone: 6953 2612.

OTHER EVENTS

Bringing back the Bunyip Bird: Australasian Bittern Summit 2023

31 January to 3 February 2023, Leeton.

This summit will present a unique opportunity to connect with scientists, conservationists, wetlands managers, birdwatchers and farmers who share a passion about working to protect the iconic Australasian Bittern. *Tickets cost \$110 for the Summit, and \$55 for field trips.*

Here is a link to the summit's registration pack with further information.

[Bringing Back the Bunyip Bird: Australasian Bittern Summit 2023 - Local Land Services \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.local-land-services.nsw.gov.au/bringing-back-the-bunyip-bird-australasian-bittern-summit-2023)

Images of a Masked Lapwing family were taken by Phil Tension at Lake Albert, Wagga Wagga in October.

