

# The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



March 2024 - Issue #323

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



Woodland bird and water bird  
Superb Fairy-wren  
and Darter catching fish  
Janet Hume

## IN THIS ISSUE

Office Bearers and Subscriptions .....	2
Welcome to March .....	2
MFN environment grants.....	2
Onyx, Cobalt and Flame at Rocky Waterholes .....	3
Could we do a Bioblitz?.....	4
Tuesday Evening Bird Walks .....	5
Glossy Black Cockatoo (bird of the month) .....	6
Scenic Hill observations .....	7
New additions to Club library .....	7
Scott sisters: naturalists and artists in colonial NSW..	8
Members' Observations/Contributions.....	10
Members' Sightings .....	12
Other Events / Items.....	12
Platypus – Flowerdale Lagoon .....	13
Coming Events .....	14

## CONTRIBUTIONS

For the April issue by

Wednesday 3 April

To Rowena Whiting

Email: [ericwhiting4@bigpond.com](mailto:ericwhiting4@bigpond.com).

Phone: 6953 2612

Nature is pleased with  
simplicity

Sir Isaac Newton

## Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

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<b>Treasurer:</b>	Glenn Currie	0488 563 321		Virginia Tarr	0434 831 031

**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; (Leeton, Griffith, Narrandera areas) AND ON THE FIRST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH (Wagga Wagga area)

INTENDING NEW MEMBERS, GUESTS AND VISITORS WELCOME.

### Membership enquiries:

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

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

## Welcome to the March issue

Another full issue and I'm sure you'll find plenty of interest. Many thanks to all the contributors.

Alan has related our outing to Rocky Waterholes where we enjoyed a walk along the channel bank followed by refreshments and chat. Janet has collated the bird sightings from the evening walks held at various locations around Wagga Wagga and Margaret has embarked on enhancing our knowledge of butterflies and moths found in our area. She has listed the ALA records of these species and included some wonderful images of paintings by the very talented Scott sisters from the mid 1800s. There are also a number of small items from members of their observations, queries, information and appreciation of the club.

While Summer is still making its presence felt our late afternoon outing this month will be ideal - sit at a dam and watch the wildlife. It is time of our annual count of Glossy Black Cockatoos, a very special species that frequent many spots in the hills from the Cocoparras to Narrandera. Do contact one of the organisers to find out more and be part of the evenings. Page 6 has pictures and a description. A visit to Livingstone National Park is planned in early April.

We have a call out for applications for grants from our Environment Fund, You may know someone or a group that has a project associated with the natural environment that could benefit. See below.

Enjoy your month, **Rowena**.

## Call for Applications for MFN Environment Fund Grants

The Fund was set up to provide financial assistance for projects delivering the enhancement of biodiversity, conservation or enhanced understanding of the natural environment within the region covered by the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Club (MFN).

Applications are now open to interested individuals or groups to apply for funding and forms can be obtained by contacting the club secretary via our email address: [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com)

Or use the link that Murrumbidgee Landcare have kindly provided <https://mli.org.au/mfn-environmental-grants/>

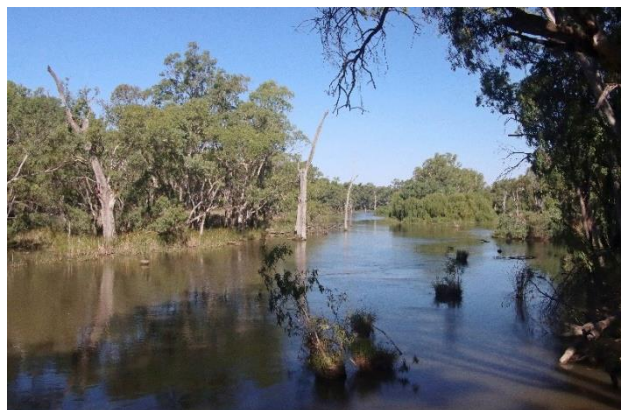
Applications close on 1<sup>st</sup> May and the Environmental Grants Committee of the club will consider all applications and notify people of the result of their respective application after the closing date.

## Onyx, Cobalt and Flame

Ten minutes after our scheduled start time of 5pm, I delivered a short admonishment on the virtues of punctuality. Yet still they came! Finally I could, as Trip Leader of the February 10, 2024 outing to Rocky Waterholes, Narrandera, present the theme for the afternoon. (Which, on reflection, was immediately forgotten.) This was **Habitat Contact Zones**.

These are where there is a dramatic change from one environment to another; as in a forest edge abutting grasslands. Birdwatching success is amplified in such areas, not only because two specific faunal communities inhabit them, such as seed-eaters in the grass and nectar-lovers in the adjacent canopy, but because of birds that benefit from the close proximity of both environments.

So Rocky Waterholes is an excellent example of a contact zone, with tall Redgum forest immediately adjacent to a large reed-adorned waterway.



Three examples of birds exploiting both aspects of this natural beneficence are the Dollarbird, Tree Martin and White-breasted Woodswallow. All three nest in tree hollows in the area, and all three are aerial feeders; the ideal conditions for the latter being over water surface areas, with their unobstructed visuals and other benefits. As it turned out, the day provided only the Dollarbird to validate my postulations.

The dozen or so attendees then sallied forth on a perfect summer afternoon; cloudless, warm, and with light, cooling breezes. As with many of these excursions, initially bird sightings did not seem promising; but again, as usual, by the time we returned to base we had a good collective list; in this case of 25 birds. Thus is the persuasive power of the incremental.

In fact a couple of us added six birds in just a few minutes at the very end of the walk. This was while we were standing on the wonderful Terry Smith Bridge admiring the easterly vista. This extended over a mile or so of forest and reed-beds, with distant cumulus clouds reflecting in the placid water surface. The six added avians were: Royal Spoonbill; Eurasian Coot; Purple Swamphen; Wood Duck; Pacific Black Duck, and Little Pied Cormorant.



An aside re. cormorant naming: the ignorant call them all shags; the better-informed, the generic cormorants; the better still, in this case, pied cormorant. And only the distinguished members of the MFN and their ilk refer to them correctly as Little Pied Cormorants. (Of course there's always *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos* – the latter meaning black-white! A step too far; even for us.)

Without those pleasant moments of reflection on the bridge, the list may well have been six birds less. In birdspotting, it often pays to stay put from time to time.

Throughout my life I have routinely associated specific times and places with special bird sightings. An example of this is a trip to Southern Queensland in the 1980s. In a dappled clearing just off the road, I was astonished and enthralled by a family of Red-backed Wrens. The male's onyx-flame plumage shone jewel-like in the sunlight; making it still one of my favourite birds. So the *Red-backed Wren Trip* became immortalised – and I'm still talking about it! So, Saturday's outing became my *Superb Fairy-wren with Moth Trip*. With perfect angled sunlight and rustic lakeside location, a member and I witnessed a family of Superb Fairy-wrens happily hopping about beside the reeds.



Lovely. But nothing special. Right? That is until the onyx-cobalt-attired male alighted on a

From top: View from the bridge – Eric Whiting  
Dollarbird – juvenile – Graham Russell  
Striated Thornbill and adopted Bronze Cuckoo – Graham Russell

branch with a large moth in its tiny bill. The subsequent cavorting for the next minute or so by this pint-sized assassin with its prey was positively ... Attenboroughesque!



**Intermediate Egret Breeding  
– Graham Russell**

As the sun set the camp chairs were circled and a convivial supper ensued. To demonstrate that the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists were capable of more than light badinage, we embarked on the most Byzantine of all natural history debates – taxonomy. Here we attempted to solve, once and for all, the question of “What is a species?”. The frustration of “What species is a Crimson (Yellow!) Rosella?” finally stumped us. My helpful addition of “What about sub-species?” was curiously ignored.

At least with the Koala as a definitive species we were on more solid ground, metaphorically speaking. We were disappointed that 12 sets of eyes in a whole afternoon in known Koala habitat had failed to spot any. That is until, after a twilight wander across the bridge, I returned with at least a 'hearing' if not a sighting. This was received with, I thought, barely-disguised skepticism; that is until within minutes we all heard the tell-tale grunting of a male Koala. But this time it was quite close to our gathering – on our side of the bridge. So, two Koalas.

Only then did we permit ourselves to pack up and go home, concluding a memorable (for me at least; wren-moth) excursion to one of the true beauty spots of the Riverina. How lucky we are.

#### **Alan Whitehead**

**SIGHTINGS LIST:** Sulphur-crested Cockatoo; Galah; Eastern Rosella; Superb Fairy Wren; Pied Mudlark; Pacific Black Duck; Grey Fantail; White-plumed Honeyeater; Dollar Bird; Dusky Morehen; Peaceful Dove; Kookaburra; Willy Wagtail; Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike (Poorly named; it's neither a cuckoo or a shrike – but it does have a black face!); Yellow Rosella; Darter; Australian Raven; Royal Spoonbill; Little Pied Cormorant; Purple Swamp Hen; Eurasian Coot; Brown Treecreeper; Wood Duck; Great Egret (more likely a breeding Intermediate Egret (see photo) Ed.); Common Bronzewing Pigeon; Hare; Koala (heard).

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### **Could we run a Bioblitz ?**

The Concept of a Bioblitz is to record as many flora and fauna species as possible in a given area over a given period of time.

Time is necessarily short, hence blitz. It is usually one or two days (like a weekend) or as much as a week. Timing is usually spring to maximise the numbers of species recognisable or active at the time. The drawback is that some species will never be recorded. A Bioblitz is never intended to gather a total biodiversity list for an area. That can only be built up over many years.

The given area is usually relatively small in the landscape and is largely governed by the number of observers/recorders and their feasibility of covering the area. As an example we could concentrate on a couple of our members' properties near Leeton, the Narrandera Flora and Fauna Reserve is another.

The scope of flora and fauna to be surveyed is very much dependent on the availability of people competent in identifying a particular group. Often this means co-opting outside people with necessary (specialist?) skills (eg universities). Birds and plants would be easy for us. Mammals and reptiles may depend on the extent of the survey, (Nella holds a wildlife trapping permit for MFN – it has to be in a person's name). We do own some Elliot traps etc but would probably need to borrow more. Bats required specialised equipment and skills that we do not have. Amphibians (ie frogs) can be covered by using the Frog ID app.

At the moment we lack anyone that can identify insects (mostly beetles, butterflies and moths) so we would need outside help there. Other invertebrates are unfortunately rarely included despite being an important part of biodiversity. There is an Australia-wide dearth of people studying them.

So could we run a Bioblitz this Spring? We managed one with State Forests at Stackpoole in 2001 (It was still a State Forest then). We also had one around Griffith in 2009 although wet weather rather restricted that one.

#### **Eric Whiting**

## Tuesday Evening Bird Walks

We have had four successful evening bird walks through the month of February.

Sites visited were Flowerdale Lagoon, Marrambidya Wetlands, Lake Albert Wetlands and "Hildasid".

The walks have been well attended with between 2-7 MFN members and 2-5 visitors at each outing. It has been fabulous to have the club binoculars for our visitors, new to birding to use.

Highlights for the month have been 11 Yellow-billed Spoonbill at Flowerdale Lagoon, 9 Australasian Darter at Marrambidya, one catching a fish and juggling it a bit before swallowing. A Crested Pigeon taking a drink at Lake Albert and a Brown Goshawk at "Hildasid".

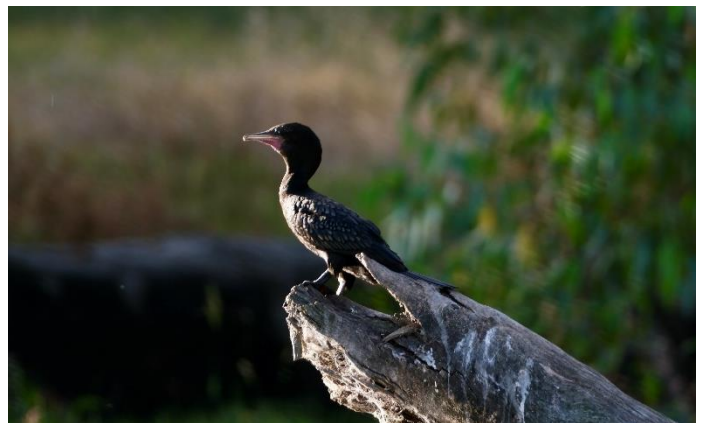


**Bird list for the month** Australasian Darter, Australian Magpie, Australian Pelican, Australian Raven, Australian Reed-warbler, Australian Wood Duck, Australian White Ibis, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Black-shouldered Kite, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Brown Falcon, Brown Goshawk, Common Blackbird, Common Starling, Crested Pigeon, Crimson Rosella( yellow), Dusky Moorhen, Dusky Woodswallow, Eastern Rosella, Eurasian Coot, European Goldfinch, Galah, Great Egret, Grey Fantail, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Teal, Laughing Kookaburra, Little Black Cormorant, Little Corella, Little Pied Cormorant, Magpie-lark, Masked Lapwing, Noisy Minor, Pacific Black Duck, Purple Swamphen, Rainbow Lorikeet, Red-browed Finch, Red-rumped Parrot, Sacred Kingfisher, Silvereye, Straw-necked Ibis, Superb Fairy-wren, Welcome Swallow, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, White-faced Heron, White-plumbed Honeyeater, White-winged Chough, Willie Wagtail.

**Clockwise from top: Flowerdale; Yellow-billed Spoonbills Marrambidya; Little Black Cormorant Lake Albert; Crested Pigeon Flowerdale; Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**

We also saw a Swamp Wallaby, Fox and Eastern Sign Bearing Frog at "Hildasid".

**Janet Hume**



# GLOSSY BLACK COCKATOO

*Calyptorhynchus lathami* (hidden bill)

[Note: this article was published in February 2014, one of Sue's Bird of the Month series. Photos were taken later. Ed]

We are very fortunate to have this fairly scarce bird living in our area as there is little known about them despite the many enthusiasts wishing to know more.

Their natural habitat is the eastern side of Australia along the coastal forests, ridges and inland woodlands wherever casuarinas are plentiful. Even though the casuarinas nut is favoured, they have been known to eat acacia seeds and pine cones plus a few larvae of the wood-borer. They are not a timid bird, and if disturbed while eating will fly to another branch or nearby tree and continue their repast.

They do not have a crest like many other cockies and the female is more colourful than the male with her yellow neck patches. The juvenile has many yellow spots on its wings.

The nest is in a high tree hollow and a single white egg is laid on soft decayed wood stuff between March and August. The female alone hatches the egg while the male is in constant attendance for her feeding. Both parents nurture the single chick.

Other names; Leach's black cockatoo, Leach's red-tailed cockatoo, casuarina cockatoo, Latham's cockatoo.

Size: 450-500mm.

Male body dark brown, undertail brown black, bright red band near end of tail.

Female has similar colour but has yellow neck patches and the red tail band has yellow through it.

Immatures: similar to female with yellow spots on wings.

Voice mainly grating caws or guttural alarm calls.

**Sue Chittick-Dalton**

**Glossy Black Cockatoos**  
- male above, female below by Nella Smith  
**Glossy Black Cockatoos at the dam on Brobenah Hall Road showing the male (higher) and female (lower) tails by Graham Russell**  
Tail feathers – drawing by Melanie Baulch



## Scenic Hill Bird Observations

One of the things that surprises me most about working in Griffith is the variety of birds.

As someone who grew up among the Brindabellas, there's a deep sense of satisfaction about seeing the hills rise around me on the drive to work. It starts with three gentle crests along Irrigation Way after one turns north past Whitton.

Scenic Hill is another of these increasing landmarks and from there I can see they become mountains like Binya, Bingar and Brogden.

Griffith Pioneer Park Museum's grounds on the Hill feature a mix of older Grey Box trees and younger Cypress Pines, which provide shade for the gardens maintained by a group of volunteers. On these branches and among the flower beds I get glimpses of communities of birds.

There's a family of magpies and over recent months I've watched as they teach an offspring to be wary of me. Mallee ringneck parrots have also been breeding and they used a hollow in the Grey Box near the Goolgowi Train Station for a while. Earlier this year I observed a parent showing their bird where to find a meal from a succulent, which might've been a pigface.

In previous years a college of noisy [apostle](#) birds could be heard making a mess by tearing off plant limbs.

This season might be the first that the Museum has been visited by [white-browed babblers](#). My manager Jenny reckons she'd never seen them at Pioneer Park before and it was good to have assistance from Jo and her bird books to identify them. These babblers seem to share their call with the grey-crowned variety, which Wikipedia notes has earned them names like dog-bird, barker and barking-bird. They will share a cute "ruff" sound excitedly with each other, so I found myself describing it as a canine-esque noise.

You can hear it in this short video I made when a babbler got lost in the Wine & Irrigation Museum building: <https://youtu.be/Wtwpagjv2fo>



White-browed Babbler in Museum

Another recent observation was a trio of [tawny frogmouths](#) sitting in a cypress pine near the Griffith Hospital building.

It's great to see such a variety of birds and so different to those at home in Leeton, although I'm often frustrated by my inability to get a good photo using the mobile phone supplied by Council.

And there are more of my photos at <https://shotwildlife.blogspot.com/>

Jason Richardson

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## We have had the addition of some books to the Club library.

From Hay Public School:

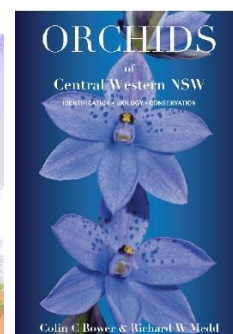
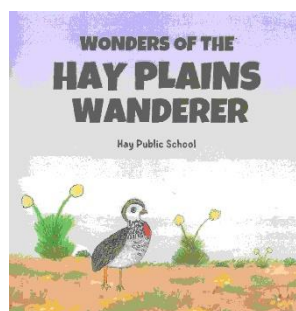
### ***Bedarbidgal***

***The changing sands of time***, my country my place bedarbidgal  
***Wonders of the Hay Plains-wanderer***,

These were produced as part of their studies using a grant from our Environment Fund.

A new book, ***Orchids of Central Western NSW*** by Colin Bower and Richard Medd had been purchased by the Club.

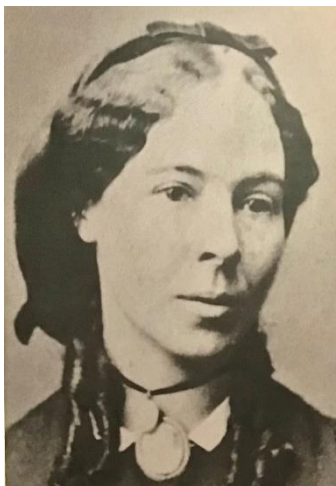
Margrit Martin is the custodian and usually brings some along to the monthly meeting. If you would like to borrow any just contact her [tigram.nitram@gmail.com](mailto:tigram.nitram@gmail.com).



## Helena & Harriott Scott: naturalists and artists in Colonial NSW

An exhibition of their work from the Australian Museum (Sydney) toured regional NSW, visiting the Museum of the Riverina, Wagga, in June-August 2022. From the vast Scott family collection, held by the Australian Museum, curators selected thirty paintings in the form of prints to tour the state. Some of those butterflies and moths are sighted in the Riverina and are pictured in this report.

Helena and Harriet were born in the 1830s in Sydney. The sisters were trained from an early age to observe and draw by their father, an amateur entomologist, and later to paint by their mother. The family moved to Ash Island in the Hunter River in 1846 and there they worked on describing and illustrating all known Australian moths and butterflies.



Helena Scott 1832-1910



Harriott Scott 1830-1907

Harriet preferred painting the fine details of moth scales and colouring, while Helena painted both moths and butterflies. Helena also documented hundreds of other insect and plants species, on Ash Island and across NSW to the Darling River. They were noted for their use of microscopes, magnifying glasses and very fine brushes to portray exact details of their specimens. Both sisters became highly skilled artists who, later in life, earned a living from their art. They're known as Australia's first commercial artists, with Helena being credited with painting Australia's first Christmas cards in 1879.

Volume 1 of the Scott family's *Australian Lepidoptera and their Transformations* was published in 1864, followed by Volume 2 in 1898. Their entire collection was sold to the Australian Museum in 1885 and was used as a scientific reference from 1993 to revegetate the Kooragang Wetlands, which includes Ash Island.

More information about the Scott sisters can be found on the Australian Museum website and all the prints that were on display in Wagga can be viewed in the online shop under the title 'Transformations: the art of the Scott sisters'.

[Notes on the species included here.](#)

**Dainty Swallowtail** (*Papilio anactus*) on Citrus. ALA (Atlas of living Australia) records Wagga x 6, Leeton + Yanco x 1, Griffith x 1, Hillston x 1, West Wyalong x 1.

**Tailed Emperor** (*Charaxes sempronius*) on Kurrajong (*Brachychiton populneus*). ALA records Wagga x 1, Deniliquin x 1, Mildura x 1, Grenfell x 1.

**Varied Dusky-blue** (*Erina hyacinthinus* was *Candalides hyacinthinus*) on Dodda Vine (*Cassytha melantha*). ALA records several SW of West Wyalong at Charcoal Tank in Mallee Woodland.

**Common Brown butterfly** (*Heteronympha merope*) on Umbrella Grass (*Chloris* sp). ALA records a few for Wagga, Narrandera + Murrumbidgee River west, Goolgowi, Yenda Valley and Rankin's Springs.

**Processionary Caterpillar Moth** (*Ochrogaster lunifer*) on Windmill Grass (*Chloris truncata*). ALA records nth of Griffith x 1 and Narrandera x 1.

**White-stemmed Gum Moth** (*Chelepteryx collesi*) on a Eucalyptus species. ALA records one only between Ardlethan and Narrandera.

**Wattle Goat Moth** (*Endoxyla encalypti*). Also known as Carpenter Moth due to sawdust piles along trunks of *Acacia dealbata* (possibly on *A. deanii* in Riverina). The larvae are one of several known as Witchetty Grubs. ALA records one nth of Griffith / west of Oranny sightings ge.

**Emperor Gum Moth** (*Ophidiphthera eucalypti*) on Eucalyptus sp. ALA records Wagga x 2.

Most of the ALA records are collected via iNaturalist and other citizen scientist databases. The low number of butterfly records, as listed above, for our region could be due to the difficulty in photographing them as well as general lack of awareness of the importance of reporting sightings. As for the low number of records for the moths listed above, they fly at night and are therefore more difficult to sight.





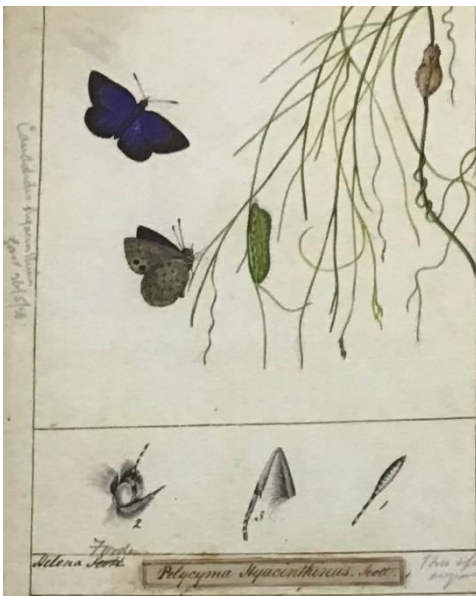
Dainty Swallowtail Butterfly



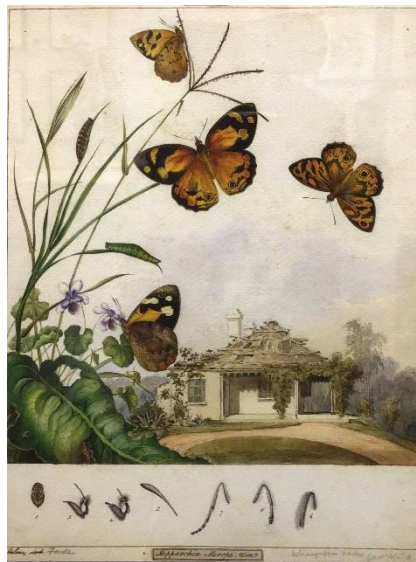
Tailed Emperor Butterfly

Caterpillars can be more easily photographed than adults and reported to iNaturalist, Butterflies Australia or NatureMapr (a new Australia-wide database). Experts check the photographs on these websites and will identify the moth or butterfly caterpillars. More records are needed to know how common or rare species are in our region.

**Margaret Strong**



Varied Dusky-blue Butterfly



Common Brown Butterfly



Emperor Gum Moth



White-stemmed Gum Moth



Wattle Goat Moth



Processionary Caterpillar Moth

## Member Observations/Contributions

### Virginia Tarr

White-bellied Sea Eagle family I had been observing occasionally in Sept/ Oct/Nov 2023.



In the September 2023 period, I had been observing one **White-bellied Sea Eagle** gliding and soaring about the South Lake Wyangan, then two, then found their huge stick nest in the River Red Gum tree surrounded by water, due to the unusually high lake water level from frequent rainfalls earlier that year. In October I noticed that there were two small heads bobbing above the nest when one adult was feeding them. Later observed the two out on the branches next to the nest, sitting tall in their brown camouflage suits. Since January, they all have

completely disappeared.....

The lake water has now receded leaving a dry surface surrounding the tree, making it an easy target for the likes of goannas to visit.

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### David Glastonbury

This is quite a special orchid which I sighted recently at Long Plain near Kiandra, Kosciuszko National Park. Its common name is **Magenta Bunny Orchid** *Eriochilus magenteus*.

Note the colour and rather intricate patterning!

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### Sue Chittick-Dalton

Some years ago in the early nineties, my golfing friend June Sell and I realised we had a mutual interest in birds and asked a nature-loving friend, Enid Atkinson if there was a Bird Club. Enid introduced us to the Murrumbidgee Field Nats.....This opened up a new world for me. Richard Faulder taught me about Bugs and Spiders.....Bill Moller about Water Birds....Eric Whiting and his great knowledge of plants. Max O'Sullivan, the bird man introduced me to David Seims who took Birding tours to South Africa and Nepal which I joined. Rowena Whiting and I drove to Wagga Wagga to attend a Fungi Foray and met the fabulous Allison Pouliot, a world authority on Fungi and Dot Eurell's invitation to join her on a trip down the Amazon River was amazing.

THANK YOU MURRUMBIDGEE FIELD NATS! Without you none of this would have happened to my grateful life.

I think Sue was prompted to write this following a visit from a fellow Griffith member who's moved away. We should thank Sue for all her bird observations and company on numerous outings. May be one on Scenic Hill for you to join. Rowena.

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### Janet Hume

This link to the YouTube video was on the bottom of a newsletter we get from Birds on Farms.

**Birds Meet: From Newbie to Pro - Beginner's Guide to Bird Watching and ID**

<https://youtu.be/kYfcSazLOqk?si=0AvzX1zoKmI5v5We>

This is the link to the newsletter - The Woodland Warbler This has article about the farms where Sarah and I do surveys.

[The Woodland Warbler - Autumn 2024 \(canva.com\)](https://www.canva.com/)

## John Brickhill - 'Sand Poos'

Remember Neil's photos in the last issue there have been a couple of theories; here's John's:

Like Neil Palframan I have often seen these items, especially in the sandy mallee. They are certainly not Echidna poos which are hard, appear to be made of clay-like material, and always contain many undigested hard parts of ants, such as mandibles. The 'sand poos' appear to come from a burrow, as can be seen in one of Neil's photos. I suggest that they may be slugs of damp sand that have been pushed out of a burrow and later dry on the surface, so they are impossible to pick up without disintegrating. One possible insect that could build such a burrow is a large burrowing cockroach *Geoscapheus dilatatus* which is found across a large area of central NSW, and is recorded as having a deep burrow, and comes out at night to feed on leaf litter. This species featured in the MFN Newsletter #286, October 2020, page 11. When I looked up the Atlas of Living Australia for this species, the first record was by an observer Neilatnericon and was seen at Goolgowi!

Here is the photo from that newsletter taken by Jason Richardson in the Matong State Forest and his observation – "It's a soil burrowing cockroach (*Geoscapheus dilatatus*) and about 5cm long. They live underground in sandy soils, constructing burrows to a depth of around one metre. Apparently they are only seen on the ground surface following rain. There had been 15-20mm on the weekend, so there were many puddles on the road."



That newsletter is on our website [mfn.org.au](http://mfn.org.au) – lots of other interesting items too! Rowena.

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**John has also sent information about another way to record butterflies.**

### NatureMapr - a Citizen Science App

In the article on moths and butterflies it was suggested that observers can submit photos of butterflies to Butterflies Australia website, and the record will be added to those in the Atlas of Living Australia.

Another citizen science App is NatureMapr, and observers can submit pictures of plants, fungi, and all animals including invertebrates, such as butterflies and spiders, and they will be identified by moderators. This app started as Canberra Nature Map, and has hundreds of thousands of records. The app now records information across Australia, with Leeton, Griffith and Wagga in the Riverina Murray region. All results will also go to the Atlas of Living Australia.

Using this app, local naturalists can contribute to knowledge of a huge range of species. You can submit photos on your computer, which I find easiest, or use a smart phone, where the location of the siting will be automatically recorded. It is a great way to get all the plants, animals and insects identified, as long as you can take a picture, or pictures of it. Try it, but it can get addictive!

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**BirdLife's Birds in Backyards Autumn survey** is underway (from 1 March). These surveys are run quarterly (each season). All you do is submit at least one 20 min count alongside some information about your garden. They form an important part of their research into the birds that live where people live and allow anyone with a backyard - large or small, urban or rural - to take part. To monitor changes in the distribution and abundance of either whole groups or individual birds that live where people live.

Information can be found at <https://www.birdsinbackyards.net/getinvolved/How-survey>

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**Emma Munro** has been seeing bats seeming to fly over the hospital area in Griffith from north west to south east each evening; many, many bats, perhaps 1000, where do they come from and where do they go?

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**Wagga Wagga Tuesday Evening Bird Walks are continuing until 2 April meeting at 6pm.**

**Bring:** Binos, water bottle, mozzie repellent, sunscreen, hat and snake bite bandages.

**Contact:** *Janet* 0408 238 890 or *Sarah* 0427 276 306.

# MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

<b>Dollarbird</b> [2]	Narrandera Wetlands	04/02/24	Alan Whitehead
<b>Little Corella</b> [20]	Leeton town	08/02/24	Alan Whithead
<b>Grey Shrike-thrush</b>	Narrandera Wetlands	08/02/24	Susan Whitehead
<b>Marsh Sandpiper</b> [38]	Nericon	12/02/24	Nella Smith
<b>Sharp-tailed Sandpiper</b> [10]	Nericon	12/02/24	Nella Smith
<b>Red-capped Plover</b> [8]	Nericon	12/02/24	Nella Smith
<b>Shoveler</b> [14]	Nericon	12/02/24	Nella Smith
<b>Marsh Sandpiper</b> [3]	Campbell's Wetlands	12/02/24	Nella Smith
<b>Singing Honeyeater</b> [2]	Mundarlo Homestead, Mundarlo	01/02/24	J Hume, S Danckert
<b>Stubble Quail</b> [1]	Mundarlo Station, Mundarlo	01/02/24	J Hume, S Danckert
<b>Brown Quail</b> [2]	Mundarlo Station, Mundarlo	01/02/24	J Hume, S Danckert
Heard calling			
<b>Speckled Warbler</b> [1]	Mundarlo Station, Mundarlo	01/02/24	J Hume, S Danckert
<b>Golden-headed Cisticola</b> [1]	Mundarlo Station, Mundarlo	01/02/24	J Hume, S Danckert
<b>Brown Falcon</b> [2]	Mundarlo Station, Mundarlo	01/02/24	J Hume, S Danckert
<b>Yellow-Billed Spoonbill</b> [11]	Flowerdale Lagoon, Wagga Wagga	06/02/24	J Hume, S Danckert
<b>European Goldfinch</b> [8]	Flowerdale Lagoon, Wagga Wagga	06/02/24	J Hume, S Danckert
<b>Straw-necked Ibis</b> [50]	Flowerdale Lagoon, Wagga Wagga	06/02/24	J Hume, S Danckert
<b>Red-capped Robin</b> [1]	'River Run' Oura	18/02/24	J Hume, S Danckert
<b>Wedge-tailed Eagle</b> [1]	Mundarlo Station, Mundarlo	01/02/24	J Hume, S Danckert
<b>White-winged Chough</b> [40+]	Mundarlo Station, Mundarlo	01/02/24	J Hume, S Danckert
Four families seen and one with 4 young at their nest.			
<b>Australasian Darter</b> [9]	Marrambidya, Wagga Wagga	20/02/24	J Hume, S Danckert
<b>Crested Shrike-tit</b> [3]	Wiradjuri Beach, Wagga Wagga	29/02/24	J Hume, S Danckert
Young out of nest.			
<b>Tree Martin</b> [16]	Wiradjuri Beach, Wagga Wagga	29/02/24	J Hume, S Danckert

## Other Events / Items

### Orchid Surveys at Tarcutta Hills Reserve

In 2023 David Glastonbury commenced a project to identify the native orchids at Bush Heritage Tarcutta Hills Reserve. Eight have been found to date.

Co-ordinated by Kelly Price and David Glastonbury, Bush Heritage welcomes MFN to Tarcutta Hills Reserve to seek and survey native orchids in autumn, April - May and spring, August - September. Three groups will be allocated separate sites, there will preferably be a minimum of three people in

each group. It is a large property and each group will have an EPIRB, a map and the surveys will be along roadsides. Each participant will need to be registered as a Bush Heritage Volunteer via an online process. Sarah Danckert can help members where needed. David says you don't need to have any particular expert knowledge of native orchids, just be willing to assist and have keen eyesight for tiny plant specimens! The April - May autumn date will be decided after an adequate rain event (approx 4-6 weeks later) and participants will be notified by email.

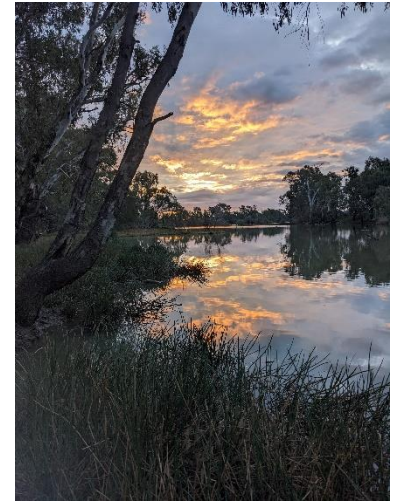
David Glastonbury can be contacted on 0458393488 or [dwglastonbury@gmail.com](mailto:dwglastonbury@gmail.com)



*Caladenia carnea* Pink Fingers (left)  
*Corybus incurvus* Slaty Helmet Orchid  
 Photos by David Glastonbury

## Platypus Project - Flowerdale Lagoon

MFN, Wagga Wagga Urban Landcare (WWUL) and individual members have been working independently and cooperatively for many years at Flowerdale Lagoon, Wagga Wagga to minimise the harm of urbanisation, landscape disturbance, neglect and weed infestation. Yet, despite this it is a haven for waterbirds, frogs, rakali, platypus and hollow bearing River Redgums. It is significant Wiradjuri Country for first nations people and was recognised in 2013 being Declared as an Aboriginal Place by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage.



Through more consistent, pragmatic and novel actions as well as using the platypus as a drawcard we aim to improve the ecology of the lagoon, preserve & restore plant species and improve the management of this beautiful and special place. We (the project) aim to increase awareness of how the community impacts the Flowerdale environment and educate through workshops, activities on location and deep within the

Sunset at Flowerdale - Sarah  
Platypus in the Tumut River –  
Janet Hume

catchment to reconnect the people with the place.

Projects to date have included:

- Clean Up Australia Day on location with MFN, WWUL, Wagga Bidgee Canoe Club and the WWCC Environments team
- Individuals actions in litter removal and woody weed removal
- MFN field excursions for members and bird walks with the community
- eDNA testing in the Great Australian Platypus Search
- High school community service with MFN and WWUL
- Clean Up Australia Day in the catchment with education of litter hazards for the platypus

In process currently is a WWUL Primary Schools education, behaviour change and field activity project to design stencils to label drains and indicate what goes down impacts the platypus. This project is supported by grants from WWCC and MFN.

Keep an eye out for activities in this newsletter and subscribe to WWUL news by emailing [exec@wwul.org.au](mailto:exec@wwul.org.au)

**Sarah Danckert**

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### Wagga Wagga City Council 2050 strategy - call out for your ideas

Ideas to date:

- Wagga Wagga Botanic gardens - MFN to have input in regard to the Native Flora section, plantings and management, support labelling of plant species
- Preserve and restore native plants at Flowerdale Lagoon, continue the Platypus Project
- Create a resource location for local Nature and Environmental documents

It is easiest for me if you email your ideas, then I have your words represented. Otherwise call me..... if you don't, I'll be calling you ;) **Sarah Danckert**

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### Wagga Wagga 2024 ClubGrants funding now open for applications.

Do you have a project you think we should / could apply for Grant funding?  
Email [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com) or [spdanckert@gmail.com](mailto:spdanckert@gmail.com) or  
Phone 0427 276 306 Sarah Danckert

<https://wagga.nsw.gov.au/community/grants-and-sponsorships/club-grants>

# \*\*\*\* COMING EVENTS \*\*\*\*

Please note all outings are subject to weather conditions.

Please register with the nominated person so they can be contacted if there is a change in arrangements. Registering also means that the leader is better able to plan activities.

**14 March Thursday** **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7pm.

**Topic:** CATNIP - where is Wagga Wagga, NSW, Australia & the World protecting native species from cats. Learn of the current strategies tried, true & debated.

**Presenter:** Sarah Danckert

Join in person if you can. Zoom will be available.

**Bring along your 'show & tell'**

**Contact:** Dione Russell 0428 536 290

**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com)

## Annual Glossy Black Cockatoo Count

**15 March Friday** **Narrandera area**

**AND** **Contact:** Email: [nellasmith0@gmail.com](mailto:nellasmith0@gmail.com) Phone 0428 890 537

**16 March Saturday** **Leeton and Griffith areas**

**Contacts -**

**Leeton:** Graham Russell [grahamrussell29@gmail.com](mailto:grahamrussell29@gmail.com) Phone 0419 350 673

**Griffith:** Virginia Tarr [vobrien3@hotmail.com](mailto:vobrien3@hotmail.com) Phone 0434 831 031

Timing will be from 5 pm.

On registration participants will be allotted a dam to go to at various locations in the Brobenah and Narrandera hills and Binya Forest. If you hear them you should still record them even if they don't drink. If you are able, please record sex of glossies. Also please record all species and numbers of fauna that come near the dam or down to drink. There are forms for this and they should be sent to Nella so she can collate the results. Information about the Glossies can be found on page 6 and at [www.glossyblack.org.au](http://www.glossyblack.org.au)

**Remember the more dams we can cover the more accurate the count will be.**

**3 April Wednesday** **Copy for the April newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**

**Email:** [ericwhiting4@bigpond.com](mailto:ericwhiting4@bigpond.com). Phone: 6953 2612.

**4 April Thursday** **Committee Meeting @ 7pm via Zoom**

All members are welcome to participate.

**Contact:** Dione Russell 0428 536 290 or the Club email.

**7 April Sunday** **Livingstone National Park - Fungi Focus** (hopefully we will have had enough rain)

**Meet:** at the northern entrance, Wrigley's Rd at 9am.

**Bring:** morning tea & lunch.

**Contact:** Sarah Danckert 0427276306 [spdanckert@gmail.com](mailto:spdanckert@gmail.com)

**10 April Wednesday** **Monthly Meeting** at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton at 6:30 pm.

**Note change of day** **Author Talk by Andrew Skeoch**

Andrew is one of Australia's best known nature sound recordists and author of Deep Listening to Nature.

Please book with the library 6953 0945

**Contact:** Dione Russell 0428 536 290

**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com)

**11 April Thursday** **Author Talk by Andrew Skeoch at Wagga Wagga Library 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm**

See above for details and Library events.

Bookings are essential - 6926 9700