

# The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



**November 2024 - Issue #331**

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



Spring, a time for  
nests and chicks



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## CONTRIBUTIONS

For the December issue by  
Wednesday 4 December

To Rowena Whiting

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

Phone: 6953 2612

*Celebrating our*  
**30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

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

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<b>Secretary:</b>	Dionee Russell	0428 536 290	<b>Website Co-ordinator:</b>		
<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

**Bank details for direct deposit:** BSB 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 the November issue

No space for me this month! Many thanks to all the contributors and apologies to those whose copy I've had to trim.

We have two important events this month with our **AGM** on 14 November and our **30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** on 22/23 November - hope we will see you at both.

Enjoy your month, **Rowena**.

All members are invited to submit any favourite, unusual or interesting photos for a slideshow to be shown at the dinner

Please send to Eric Whiting – [ericwhiting4@bigpond.com](mailto:ericwhiting4@bigpond.com)

### 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration on the w/e 22-23 November

**Friday 22 November** - informal dinner at the Leeton Soldiers Club 6:30 for 7pm

**Guest Speaker:** Rahula Perera, a field biologist, nature photographer and nature based tourism product developer

Please let Dionee Russell know by the 15 November if you are attending.

Email: [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com) or phone 0428 536 290

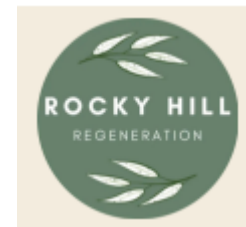
**Saturday 23 November** - a re-enactment of our first field trips

**Morning:** Fivebough Wetlands morning walk at 7am

**Afternoon:** Brobenah Hills - "Yarrabimbi", Colinroobie Road - Andrew and Ana's property for a BBQ or picnic lunch and walk  
(note: camping is available on their property)

## Rocky Hill Regeneration Project

Milena Dunn is one of our Wagga members and Milena gave an excellent presentation via Zoom at our 10<sup>th</sup> October Yellow Room meeting. It was on the Rocky Hill Regeneration Project on which numerous volunteers are working on at Koorinal, Wagga. The project's focus is encouraging Exploring, Enjoying and Engaging with the Rocky Hill site. It is a 52 hectare reserve situated less than 3km from Central Wagga.



Milena explained: a) how the project started and the work done by volunteers over the past 4.5 years, b) the importance of the grassland at the corner of Koorinal Rd and Copland St for Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Golden Headed Cisticola, Pobblebonk Frog. It is currently classified as light industrial. c) their future plans.

She also introduced us to their website <https://rockyhill.com.au/> which was launched on World Environment Day this year, 5th June. It contains numerous bird & plant images along with information, nearly all the work of botanist and photographer, Geoff Burrows. It's a terrific website, which is still under development so is a work in progress and will be continually updated.

Thanks Milena, for this very informative talk.

### Glenn Currie (with input from Milena)

Explore, Enjoy, Engage with Rocky Hill if you can possibly visit or, Explore [rockyhill.com.au](https://rockyhill.com.au) yourself or Explore the 12 screenshots at <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1RRyUpNEwoIIAqRTvd6u0By57tcru67of>

## Rocky Hill Bird Walk

13 October 2024

With Wagga Wagga City Council loaned binoculars, 14 intrepid starters met at Rocky Hill Main Entrance Gate at 99 Simkin Cr for Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists outing. This was held to identify birds and to share our birding skills with members of the public on Rocky Hill before the Aussie Bird Count on Monday 14- Sunday 20th October.



Led by experienced Bird watcher, Janet Hume, and with a young 7 year old learning the ropes we slowly walked the fire trail.

### Milena Dunn

### Photos by Geoff Burrows – participants and a Rufous Whistler

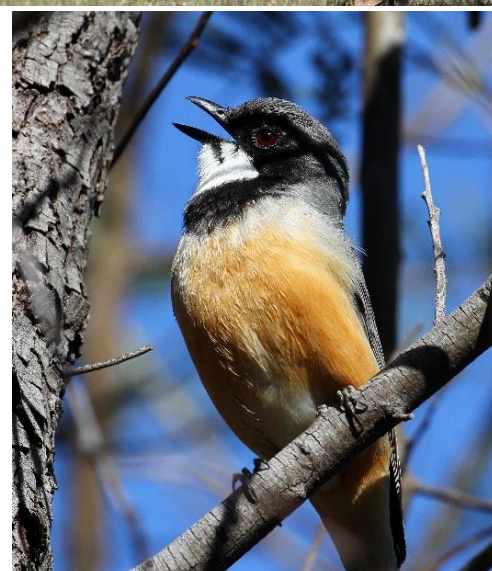
#### Rocky Hill Reserve Birdlist:

Australian Magpie, Australian Raven, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Common Blackbird, Common Starling, Crested Pigeon, Crimson Rosella(yellow variant), Double-barred Finch, Eastern Rosella, Galah, Grey Fantail, Grey-shrike Thrush, Laughing Kookaburra, Rainbow Lorikeet, Red Wattlebird, Rufous Whistler, Silvereye, Southern Boobook, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Superb Fairy-wren, Weebill, Yellow Thornbill.

#### For full survey details see

<https://birddata.birdlife.org.au/survey?id=10226138&h=23106130>

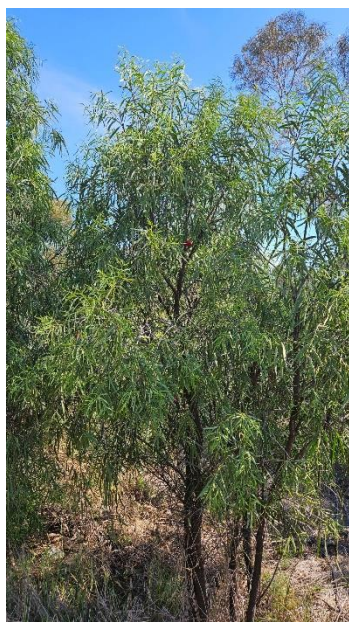
<https://rockyhill.com.au>





## Griffith Wetlands - 12 October 2024

On Saturday 12th October, the cool fine day was perfect for our field trip to walk the road track along the **South Lake Wyangan** with 8 observers, 3 were newbies. We noted the healthy propagated Eremophilas of numerous species and many trees that were planted decades ago. I directed the group to a patch of Quandong trees. We feasted, others some tasted, on the ripe fruit that were red and favourable. Had our Vitamin C for the day!



Meanwhile 3 Purple-backed Fairywrens flew past us from the Melaleuca (Teatree) bushes. Other vegetation included patches propagated She-oaks, along with Red River Gums [*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*], Blackbox [*E. largiflorens*], Bimble Box [*E. populnea*], Boree [*Acacia pendula*], other acacias, Puntly Bush [*Senna artemisioides zygophylla*], Boxthorn, White Cypress Pines [*Callitris glaucophylla*], Small Ruby Saltbush [*Enchylaena tomentosa*] to the large 'Old Man Saltbush' [*Atriplex nummularia*] and much more.

The Red River Gum that was surrounded by the flood water of 2022/23 has the large stick nest of the White-bellied Sea Eagle that I had observed last year with 2 juveniles; not so far

this year, though we spotted a similar nest on a skeleton tree in the distant lake water and one on a nearby skeleton tree, and another soaring about. Great to know that both are about!

There were a few butterflies about, one being the Caper White Butterfly (12+)[*Belenois java*] and Common Brown Butterfly [*Heteronympha merope*] feeding from the Eremophilas. Ww also saw a Brown Quail race off into the long grass.

From the water's edge, we walked up the gradient slope of grasses and bushes (following kangaroo tracks), then walked back amongst propagated trees to the car park. We found evidence of fresh Echidna digs, a Golden Orb Spider on her Web and a couple of golf-balls.



Next after a well-earned cuppa, we drove diagonally across the Lakes Rd to Alexander Lane that has an upgraded double gate that we can access down to **Tharbogang Swamp**. Plenty of water with many waterbirds to be seen as we drove slowly and stopping frequently along the bottom of the Almond Orchard (permission given by owner). With me, I had Reanna who is very keen on all birds, and with my long distant binoculars, was able to take photos from her iPhone through the one binocular lens.... She is saving up for a good camera! Between Graham and Reanna,



we should be able to get good photos and a list of birds.

After saying our goodbyes to Margaret, Neil, Bev & Steven (newbies) we drove to **McCann Rd Reserve** and found a cleared area to park inside to have lunch. The birds were fairly quiet, not the usual choughs, apostlebirds, or babblers that are normally there as we sat in the shade of Acacia and Eucalyptus trees.

The Russell's had to leave, so keen Reanna and I drove further in and stopped near a grove of Hakea bushes, plus Acacias and Eucalyptus. Reanna spotted a Shingle-back lizard that didn't like being photographed. With the huge amount of Mistletoe in this reserve, we found many small birds, Mistletoebirds, Yellow Thornbills,

Photos, clockwise from top left by Virginia Tarr South Lake Wyangan Old Man Salt Bush & eremophilas, Quandong tree; Tharbogang Swamp



Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, Singing Honeyeaters, and other Honeyeaters that were darting about. Reanna recorded on her iPhone 2 sounds of the Painted Honeyeaters in different areas when we walked further into the woodlands, but unable to see them in the thick wooded area. I verified the sounds with my Morcombe bird sound app.

By then it was 3pm and Reanna asked if we could go to **Campbells Wetlands!** We walked the track down to where the burnt-out board walk was to find it had been removed,



and in its place they (council workers) had laid red

gravel all along the same pathway. I've been trying to find information about their future construction work. I spoke to Jason, one of the Griffith City Council, 'Urban Design' employees and his information was that they are putting in a composite walkway now with the grant that was given prior the flooding of Campbells Wetlands.

We were able to walk to the bird hide comfortably and it has escaped the fire, but not the vandals. Still standing intact with a couple of metal panels kicked outwards and further graffiti on the billboard. The original information is now a blur.

We walked back and along the length of the shore track and more, through the grass to the dried mud flats at the NE end. There we found a huge number of water birds including Black-winged (pied) Stilts, Black-fronted Dotterels and Red-kneed Dotterels.

At 4pm we called it a day!

**Virginia Tarr**

**Photos: Female Mistletoebird - Graham Russell  
Council work on the path to the hide – Virginia Tarr**

**Birdlists compiled by Reanna Floriani**

**1 - Lake Wyangan South Arboretum:** <https://ebird.org/checklist/S198411307>

A list of confirmed (ID'd/observed by 2 or more people): 39 species

Pacific black duck(2), brown quail (1), rock dove (Feral pigeon 2), crested pigeon (4), silver gull (6), Whiskered tern (6), Australian darter (2), great cormorant (4), little black cormorant (1), pelicans (6+), great egret (1), straw-necked ibis(25+), whistling kite (1), white-bellied sea-eagle (2), sacred kingfisher (2), cockatiel (4+), galah (2), little corella (3), mallee ringneck (4+), red-rumped parrot (6+), purple-backed fairywren (3), yellow-throated miner (6+), spiny-cheeked honeyeater (4), white-plumed honeyeater (4), blue-faced honeyeater (heard)(2), striated pardalote (heard)(1), yellow thornbill (3), grey-crowned babbler (3), grey shrikethrush (1), white-breasted woodswallow (2), grey butcherbird (3), magpie-lark (2), white-winged chough (2), Australian raven (2), little raven (2), reed warbler (3), tree martin (8+), common starling (2), mistletoebird (2)

**2 - Tharbogang Swamp:** <https://ebird.org/checklist/S198411866>

A list of confirmed (ID'd/observed by 2 or more people): 29 species

Black swan 1), grey teal (80+), chestnut teal (50+), pink-eared duck (1), hoary-headed grebe (6), horsfield's bronze-cuckoo (1), eurasiatic coot (15+), pied stilt (10), great cormorant 1), pelicans (4), white ibis (1), straw-necked ibis (20), whistling kite (1), rainbow bee-eater (1), nankeen kestrel (1), mallee ringneck, red-rumped parrot, purple-backed fairywren, yellow-throated miner, striated pardalote, black-faced cuckooshrike (1), white-breasted woodswallow (2+), pied butcherbird (1), Australian magpie (1), magpie-lark (2), Australian raven (1), fairy martin (4+), starling (10+), mistletoebird (2)

**4 - McCann Rd** (travelling & on foot): <https://ebird.org/checklist/S198412691>

Confirmed: 30 species

Crested pigeon (3), peaceful dove (3H), straw-necked ibis (1), whistling kite (1), rainbow bee-eater (5), mallee ringneck (2), red-rumped parrot (5+), purple-backed fairywren (3), superb fairywren (2), yellow-throated miner (5+), spiny-cheeked honeyeater (4+), white-plumed honeyeater (4), Singing Honeyeaters



(4+), painted honeyeater (confirmed, heard, audio recorded, from 2 locations (2 individuals), yellow-rumped thornbill (4), yellow thornbill (4), black-faced cuckooshrike (2), grey shrikethrush (1), rufous whistler (1), white-breasted woodswallow (2), Australian magpie (1), willie wagtail (4), grey fantail (2), magpie-lark (2), white-winged chough (2), Australian raven (1), silvereye (1), starling (2+), mistletoebird (4+), double-barred finch (1), european goldfinch (1H)

#### Links to each bird checklist:

1 - Lake Wyangan South Arboretum: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S198411307> - 8 birders - 43 species

2 - Tharbogang Swamp: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S198411866> - 8 birders -

3 - McCann Rd (stationary): <https://ebird.org/checklist/S198412110> - 4 birders - 30 species

4 - McCann Rd (travelling): <https://ebird.org/checklist/S198412691> - 2 birders - 31 species

5 - Campbells Swamp: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S198413031> - 2 birders -

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## Nature Conservation Council - Picnic for Nature 2024

Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Wagga Wagga branch hosted an NCC Picnic for Nature Sunday 20th October 2024 in the Australian Flora Section of the Wagga Wagga Botanic Gardens. There were eleven attendees. We conducted several bird counts for the BirdLife Australia Aussie Bird Count and we discussed preliminary ideas for a group to be formed to volunteer in the garden, whilst having a walkabout the Australian Flora Section.

Sarah, Adrienne, Janet, Shokoofeh, Marilyn, John, Paul, Sue and Glenn took the photo, Craig and Greg arrived later

We resolved to:

1. Set out a plan of action and liaise with Wagga Wagga Botanic Gardens Team Leader for feedback and approval prior to implementation
2. Each volunteer will complete Wagga Wagga City Council Volunteer Application Form and membership with the Friends of the Botanic Gardens Wagga Wagga is highly recommended
3. Maintain a record of plans, actions and volunteer attendance
4. Message the Wagga Wagga Botanic Gardens Team Leader each day on commencement and completion of volunteer work - requesting any action required from staff eg removal of prunings or weed pile
5. Meet fortnightly on the 2nd & 4th Tuesday and Friday of the month at 8:00am during spring/summer/autumn and 9:00am during winter
6. Volunteers are required to provide their own gardening equipment
7. Consider aesthetics, plant diversity, ecosystems and applicability to Wagga Wagga residents in garden design and plant selection
8. Start small, one garden bed at a time
9. Survey and map the plants currently on site
10. Remove weeds from the garden beds
11. Remove dead plants where not providing habitat, with consideration for garden aesthetics
12. Plan plant selection considering species endemic to the Riverina and ability to source seedlings or propagate on site
13. Plan for any new plants to not require watering once established
14. Pursue options for labelling of plants within the garden
15. Seek feedback from volunteers, Wagga Wagga Botanic Gardens staff and Wagga Wagga residents regarding our work and plans for the garden



While this reads like minutes to a business meeting, in fact our time was very relaxed and collaborative and delicious Fruit Cake, Apple Cake and, perfect for the Australian Flora Section, Anzacs were shared for dessert.

**Sarah Danckert**

## Yenda Flora + Fauna Reserve Warrior Bush and the Caper White Butterflies

Caper White Butterflies (*Belenois java*) migrate through our region each Spring and early summer. For the past few years, I have observed them visiting the Warrior Bush (*Capparis anomala*) that is on the fence line of the Yenda Flora and Fauna Reserve along Schwab Street. There is another Warrior Bush on the other side of the reserve that is not the focus of this report, due to very muddy conditions near it.

I arrived there on September 14<sup>th</sup> just as a female Caper White had finished laying a small batch of eggs (pictured). They were a creamy, pale yellow colour which had turned pale orange a week later when I called by again. Three weeks later, 15-20 Caper White males and females were fluttering around the same plant. Many more batches of eggs were on the branchlets – some pale yellow and others showing orange (pictured).



By now, I expect that there would be larva and even pupa to be seen on the plant, which would have white branchlets after the green outer layer has been eaten. There could also be fresh eggs laid by more females that are still migrating through NSW. The Warrior Bush life-cycle suits the Caper Whites by also providing nectar from its multitude of tiny flowers.

Other than the southerly direction of the winds, the reasons for the avid migrating behaviour of this species isn't understood. They aren't as brightly coloured as other species we see, but they are very elegant and beautiful creatures that highlight the significance of one of our unique native plants.

It was an interesting sight in the afternoon shade to watch the social behaviour of the individuals on and around the host plant. Females, with their wings open flat on the branchlets, could have been some of the egg-layers and the males were fluttering around them and the plant. Perhaps the boys were just along for the journey, as it's most likely that courtship took place at a previous location when the females were freshly emerged from their chrysalis.



**From left: Caper White female after laying eggs; Caper White male resting; Caper White female with fluttering male**

The subtlety of butterfly behaviour can be investigated through high quality resources, both on line and in books found in our Public Libraries. Not all 'fluttering' is simply a part of flying, as not all 'resting' is due to fatigue or refuge. Unmistakable messages are given to those of their own species by specific posture and movement that is observable by us.

These resources indicate that after pupating at Yenda, females will emerge first, closely followed by males that will court and mate with those females (presumably from various batches) before they all continue their annual migration, in many generations, across southern Australia.

### Margaret Strong

Reference: Butterflies of Australia: their Identification, Biology and Distribution by M.F.Braby. CSIRO, 2000, Vol 1



## Nesting activity seen in the Wagga Area through September 2024

### *Rawlings Park, Eastern end, Mitchell Road entrance. Lake Albert*

Unfortunately the most common bird seen entering hollows in the trees in is the **Common Starling**. Their nest is a rough cup of grass, straw, wool, feathers, leaves in a cavity that is natural or man-made. Photo right.



A **Galah** was also seen adding leaves to a hollow. They nest in a tree hollow, living or dead. They strip bark from a large area around the entrance then add green eucalypt leaves and twigs. Photo far right.

A pair of **Noisy Minors** were observed adding twigs to their nest which is an untidy cup of twigs, grass, spiders' web, wool. The nest is in a fork of a leafy branch 2-13m high. Photo below left.



A **Magpie** pair were seen delivering food to their nest which is a compact bowl of sticks, twigs and lined with grass, rootlets, wool, hair and occasionally wire. The nest is in a fork or branch in the outer part of the tree 5-16m high. Sometimes in a shrub near the ground. Photo right.



### **Maleblo P, Tatton**

A pair of **Eastern Rosellas** have been seen entering the nest box in our back yard. They nest in tree hollow, stump, fence post, burrow in a bank and a termite mound. They have been seen using man-made nesting hollows, or boxes. Photo right.



And a pair of **Yellow Rosella** have been seen entering the box we have in our neighbour's street tree. They will nest in a tree-hollow often high, also in a cavity in a building. Photo above left.



### **San Isadore Crown Reserve, San Isadore**

Two families of **White-plumed Honeyeaters** have been building their nests along the walking track in the reserve. The nest is a deep cup of grass and spiders web which they line with plant down, horsehair. It is slung from outer leafy branches 1-25m high. Photo right.

Janet Hume



## Birds on Farms - Spring nesting 2024

Janet Hume and I volunteer with Birdlife Southern NSW Woodland Birds, Birds on Farms project. Each season we survey 14 2ha sites for 20 minutes across 5 grazing properties all near to each other at Mundarlo, Book Book and Mt Adrah. The sites on each property have different habitats e.g. grassland, revegetation, remnant woodland, house garden, and each site has its own name. Despite their close proximity, it's surprising how each property has slightly different birds, this sets a fun scene though for a little competition between the farmers! Spring always adds surprises and new discoveries, but for me it is the learning and engagement with the landholders that gives me greatest satisfaction and joy.

First survey action shot with Rebecca Gorman and Janet spying the Fairy Martin colony at their overlapping (Sarah's photo right), entirely mud pellet, bottle shaped nests in the culvert at *Cattle Grid*. Janet's photo (lower right) of inside the culvert.

**Cattle Grid** is a Box-Gum-Cypress grassy woodland with an ephemeral creek running through it, the only water on site that day was what you see in the culvert. We sighted 14 different species which is a lot for these sites. As well as the Fairy Martin nests, we located a Peaceful Dove nest - a flattish collection of sticks on a horizontal fork 2m from the ground, bearing two chicks. Next to the road were two more nests, the classic cups of Magpie-lark and Willie Wagtail. The Magpie-lark's appears to be entirely of mud, however embedded within is grass and other plant material, whereas the Willie Wagtail binds grass with cobwebs. Both are allocated on horizontal branches, sometimes incorporating a horizontal or upright fork. Another sighting highlight were two Brown Treecreepers as these are classified as Vulnerable species in NSW.

At **River/House Plot** the breeding was more advanced. We were lucky to see the Spotted Pardalote, I so often see the Striated. The Spotted was so close on this day. There's a reason of course, their two chicks had only recently left the nest. They weren't moving far and certainly not into their usual top canopy haunt. Notice the pale colouring of the chick in Janet's photo. Another species uncharacteristically hanging around were a small family of Red-browed Finches, close to their nest. We also saw a recently fledged Laughing Kookaburra, like the Pardalote, its colouring was a lot paler and its tail short. Lastly there were three White-throated Treecreepers, young out of the nest.

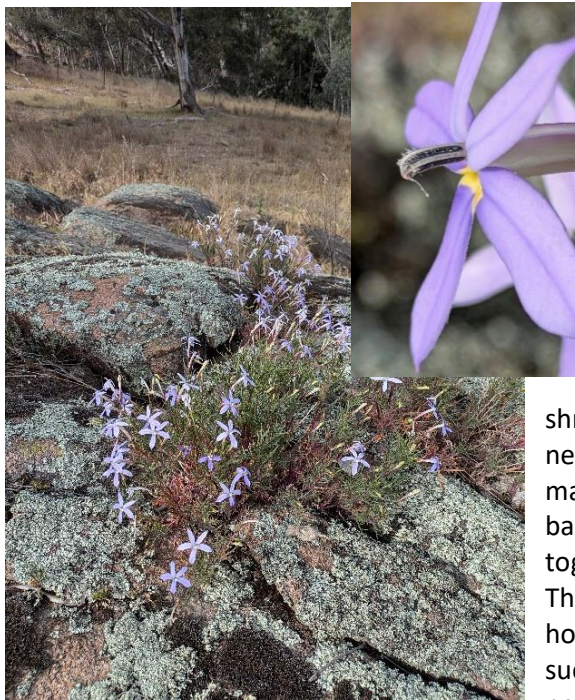


Kookaburra (left); Spotted Pardalote (right) – Janet Hume.



On our way back to the car, Rebecca discussed adaptive rotational grazing. In the photo, the two paddocks were grazed three weeks ago. The paddock on the left has recovered much more quickly than the one on the right, and recovered so well, seed heads had returned, indicating that it could be stocked again.

Neighbouring Rebecca, we deviated from our surveys to visit Nick Austin's parents home. It is a new(ish) beautiful, rammed earth structure with a very well designed and relatively young native garden amongst mature river redgums and an ephemeral creek. There was abundant birdlife with wrens, fantails and honeyeaters right next to the house in the strategically placed habitat. Nick showed us a photo of Zebra Finches he had seen recently. I know they move through this region but I'm yet to see them myself. Nick holds the bragging rights!



At **Point Rocks**, true to its name amongst the granite was Rock Isotome *Isotoma axillaris* (photo left – Sarah), the paddock had been grazed only 3 weeks prior and this plant had bounced back. Nearby was another nest - the Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, such a small and tidy nest built of fibre-like plant matter: casuarina branchlets, bark or rootlets bound together with spiders' web. The nest is usually at a horizontal fork, large enough such that the small nest is only noticed when the bird is on it.



Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike on nest – Janet Hume

Brown Falcon left below; Binos from the ute right below - Janet Hume



With Peter Lawson we survey at two locations, so although it may appear that we waste no time, starting the clock from the ute (those birds might fly off by the time we park & get out of the car), at the previous site, **Woodcutters**, we had paused after time was up to observe this beautiful Brown Falcon. Birds seen off-site, like the Australasian Pipit are recorded on a separate list and we watch them carefully, willing them to "fly over", like the Rainbow Bee-eater did, pictured here glowing in the sun at **Hillas Creek**, or we keep them in our memories to look out for next time so they can be counted "in".





Rainbow Bee-eater – Janet Hume

Peter had baited Janet to bring her camera, truly sometimes she doesn't bring it. In *Pine Gully Reveg*, when he had moved cattle through just days before, he had seen a Rufous Whistler nest, its sturdiness provided by twiggy shrub branches and forks, with loosely woven twigs forming a cup. In the same *Acacia paradoxa* Red-browed Finches were nesting. Smaller bird, bigger nest (three to four times), making a bulky tangle of grasses forming an oval bottle. In the gully vertical faces there were hollows with Fairy Martin burrows, a deviation from their bottles seen previously. Rainbow Bee-eaters and Pardalotes were sighted; however I couldn't sit and wait long enough to see if they had nests. Fencing and revegetating this gully has slowed the erosion, Peter described the gully being 1.5m shallower as a kid, you can see how well the grasses are established now.

Sarah sitting waiting, waiting – Janet Hume



*Park Paddock* had surprises in store. We disturbed 26 Wood Ducks, adults and juveniles from the dam, there were three Cockatiels off-site (Janet and I noticed these for the first time in the Wagga region this spring), and eight Superb Parrots flew over with many more off-site. Peter had selected this site for surveying because he had seen Superbs intermittently in the past. We could hear Grey Butcherbirds calling near the dam, but our eyes popped when we moved up the creek to find three very young chicks. Note how short their tails are, and they sat silently and very still, except for one who clambered higher as we passed through below. If I could understand the adults song, I think the translation may have been, "stay put, don't say anything, only move if you really have to, until I bring you a snack", because after we passed on we saw the adult fly across with a skink hanging out its beak, and down the gullet it went!!

Getting to *Mt Adrah* to join David Bray we were held up by Double-barred Finches and Rainbow Bee-eaters, can't just drive past! *Carex*, which usually spoils us, was absent of Diamond Firetails, and we recorded more species off-site than on.

*Turquoise Parrot* on a conservation area, didn't disappoint, although its namesake remained elusive. Eight Brown Treecreepers, three each of Crested Shrike-tits and Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters, 10 Fuscous Honeyeaters were feeding in the flowering gums.

Dusky Woodswallows were on the nest in an opportune gap between tree trunks, only a metre off the ground! It looks rough, however that's just an illusion as their nests are neatly lined and shaped on the inside. They adapt to the building materials available, there is a very neat twig, cup nest in a fork of a river redgum at Lake Albert at the moment, and they also use tree hollows.



Grey Butcherbird and chick above; Dusky Woodswallow on nest left – Janet Hume





On our way back to the car, David showed us a Restless Flycatcher on her nest (their colouring and nest are so similar to the Willie Wagtails, the grass and bark not so tightly pinned down and woven in with cobweb), and an abandoned Grey Shrike Thrush nest in his shed. The grass bowl nest looks similar to a European Blackbird however it is usually enclosed in a hollow, crevice or rock ledge. I'm yet to sight one on her nest, one day.....



Willie Wagtail (left) and Restless Flycatcher nests – Janet Hume

Michael Morcombe's *Field Guide to Australian Birds* is an excellent reference for nests with clear drawings and differentiative descriptions.

Sarah Danckert

## Avian Influenza - H5N1 strain

This is a notice from **BirdLife Australia** to inform you about avian influenza and how they and the Australian government is preparing to protect wild birds.

Avian Influenza, or bird flu, is an infectious disease of birds caused by strains of Influenza A virus. It affects poultry and wild birds and can be spread to mammals including humans. The H5N1 strain is a highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) being closely monitored by Australian authorities due to the potential risk of spread to Australia.

Large-scale outbreaks of the H5N1 strain of bird flu in the past two years have killed millions of wild birds and tens of thousands of mammals around the world. H5N1 bird flu has spread to all continents apart from Australia and experts predict it could arrive here with the spring migration of waders, shorebirds and seabirds from the Northern Hemisphere.

BirdLife has developed a website and information sheet that tells you about the symptoms of bird flu in birds, what you need to do if you find a sick or dying bird, and the number to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline (1800 675 888).

The website also has an informative webinar on how Australia is preparing for bird flu impacts on Australian wildlife and a FAQ section.

Even though bird flu mainly affects waterbirds and shorebirds, we should all be alert for any signs in the wild bird population. Early detection is imperative.

Unfortunately, we don't know what impact bird flu will have in Australia. All we can do is stay informed and be prepared.

Any other questions or concerns please don't hesitate to use the 'contact us' on the BirdLife website <https://birdlife.org.au/avian-influenza/>

## Member Observation



A Young Kookaburra on my front fence – Ilse Katalinic



# MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

## Significant sightings

Cockatiel [1] first sighting here	Flowerdale Lagoon, Wagga Wagga	15/10/24	Birdcount Outing
Red-capped Robin [2]	San Isadore Reserve, San Isadore	03/10/24	J Hume C Reid
Silvereye [1]	Settlers Village, Wagga Wagga	21/10/24	Janet Hume
Sitting on nest 1 m off ground and less than a metre from parked cars			
Caper White Butterfly [15]	Yenda Flora & Fauna Reserve	20/10/24	Margaret Strong
Male and female multiple egg batches laid on Warrior Bush. Seasonal migrants			
Dusky Woodswallow [2] on nest	Lake Albert, Wagga Wagga	19/10/24	Sarah Danckert
Brown Treecreeper [4] fledglings	Marrambidya Wetland, Wagga Wagga	20/20/24	Sarah Danckert
Superb Parrot [4] Regular sighting	Flowerdale Lagoon, Wagga Wagga	20/10/24	Sarah Danckert
Crested Shrike-tit [1]	Flowerdale Lagoon, Wagga Wagga	20/10/24	Sarah Danckert
Pacific Golden Plover [1]	Fivebough Wetland	26/10/24	Paul Maytom

## Other sightings of note

Dollarbird [2]	Flowerdale Lagoon, Wagga Wagga	20/10/24	Sarah Danckert
Brown Falcon [1] rare sighting here	Flowerdale Lagoon, Wagga Wagga	20/10/24	Sarah Danckert
Fan-tailed Cuckoo [1]	Flowerdale Lagoon, Wagga Wagga	20/10/24	Sarah Danckert

Compiled by Janet Hume, reviewed by Nella Smith.

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## Temperate Woodland Bird Conservation Action Plan (CAP) species in Riverina & MIA

1. **Ground foragers** - Diamond Firetail, Southern Whiteface
2. **Pouncing robins** - Scarlet Robin, Jacky Winter, Flame Robin, Red-capped Robin, Hooded Robin
3. **Shrubby understory specialists** - Speckled Warbler, White-browed Babbler, Western Gerygone,
4. **Bark & foliage gleaners** - Brown treecreeper, Crested Shrike-tit, Grey-crowned Babbler, Restless Flycatcher, Varied sittella
5. **Nectar sippers** - Blue-faced Honeyeater, Dusky Woodswallow, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Fuscous Honeyeater, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
6. **Hollow-dependent Parrots** - Superb Parrot
7. **Arboreal insectivore specialists** - Forty-spotted pardalote
8. **Mistletoe Specialists** - Painted Honeyeater
9. **Seed-eating Parrots** - Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Gang-gang Cockatoo
10. **Nocturnal predators** - Barking Owl

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## Member Observations

### Graham Russell

This is an **Eastern Striped Ctenotu, *Ctenotu robustus***. I see these regularly in my Garden around my bearded Iris when I am watering them. This is the first time that I have been able to get an Id as this one decided to remind me that I shouldn't leave the back door open in late October, even for a minute, it came inside (glad it wasn't a snake) so I had to catch it to get it back outside. It is nice to be able to finally know what they are.



# \*\*\*\* 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 November Thursday**      **Annual General Meeting and Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7pm.  
**Presentation:** Nella Smith on her recent trip to Grampians and Little Desert  
Finalise preparations for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
**Bring** photos for the slide show  
**Contact:** Dione Russell 0428 536 290  
**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com)
- 22/23 November**      **30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**      see page 2 for details
- 22 November Friday**      **Informal dinner at Leeton Soldiers Club – RSVP required**
- 23 November Saturday**      **Morning - Fivebough Wetlands walk at 7am**  
**Afternoon - Brobenah Hills – “Yarrabimbi”, Colinroobie Road – lunch & walk**
- 4 December Wednesday**      **Copy for the December newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**  
**Email:** [ericwhiting4@bigpond.com](mailto:ericwhiting4@bigpond.com) Phone: 0429 726 120.
- 5 December Thursday**      **Committee Meeting @ 7pm via Zoom**  
All members are welcome to participate.  
**Contact:** Dione Russell 0428 536 290  
**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com).
- 12 December Thursday**      **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7pm.  
Show and Tell  
**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com)
- 14 December Saturday**      **Nothing Night - End of Year outing**  
**Narrandera Food Garden, located at the Showgrounds**  
**Time 6:30pm**  
**Bring your own supper**  
We'll have sheets and lights for observing to attract moths and other insects from dusk (8:30ish)  
**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com).

## Other Events

### MFN volunteering at Wagga Botanical Gardens – ongoing

Complete a WWCC volunteer application form prior, contact Sarah 0427276306

**2nd & 4th Tuesdays 8am - contact Paul Walker**

**2nd & 4th Fridays 8am - contact Sarah Danckert**

**8-17 November - Frog ID Week.** This is run by the Australian Museum and uses the free FrogID app, where you can record the frogs calling around you and help count Australia's frogs.

### 28-30 March 2025. Moths and Butterflies Australasia (MABA) Annual Event

**Venue:** Field Naturalists Club of Victoria (FNCV) Hall, Blackburn (Melbourne).

Registration is due by **30 November 2024** via the MABA Website <https://www.maba.org.au/upcoming-events>

There are five events over the weekend, which focus on moth ID, photography and preservation.