

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



February 2015 - Issue #223
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Objects of the Club

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

Major Mitchell's Cockatoos



A loving couple
Lorna Mee

Along Colinroobire Road
Dionee Russell



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February Meeting speaker is
Matt Herring on the Bittern Rice
Project for this season
Thursday at the Leeton Library

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MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THE SECOND THURSDAY EACH MONTH, EXCEPT JANUARY, AT THE Yellow Room, Leeton Library, Sycamore Street at 7.30 PM

FIELD TRIPS NORMALLY TAKE PLACE ON THE FOLLOWING WEEKEND.

INTENDING NEW MEMBERS, GUESTS AND VISITORS WELCOME.

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Welcome to 2015, our 21st year

First I must go back to our last gathering last year at McCaughy's Lagoon where we enjoyed a meal, a walk through the Red Gums and were also able to catch up with Bill & Patty Moller.



It was also the occasion for a surprise presentation – well to me. I was given a lovely framed picture painted by

Melanie Baulch – as a thank you for all those newsletters. A very big thank you to everyone for this, it is very much appreciated. As are all your wonderful contributions each month which make the newsletter.

This year has started well with our summer camp in the alpine country and in the Riverina where the Bittern Project has been progressing in leaps and bounds. Nest and chicks are being discovered - come along this Thursday to hear all about it, first hand from Matt Herring.

Here are a few photos to give you a taste of what is to come in this issue.....

Garland Lily at Narrandera, Greenhood, Alpine scenery, Scaevola and a Flame Robin.



Cabramurra Weekend

The January outing to the mountains started with the arrival of the 21 participants by 1pm on the Friday (16th) – well most of us did – there were 4 Griffith ladies who arrived a little later!

I arrived around 11.30am at our Scout accommodation and was immediately attacked by masses of March Flies, an attack that persisted the whole time we were there – there were millions of them!



Group on Round Mountain walk Photo: Virginia O'Brien

After everyone found themselves a room and made their beds and had lunch, we headed past Mt Selwyn to Three Mile Lake to explore the Goldseekers Track nearby. The walk was a very good start to the weekend as it was reasonably easy and helped us acclimatise to the change in altitude. A few good birds were seen and lots of wildflowers were blooming all along the track - see Virginia's report re the alpine flowers identified. Best birds were **Flame Robin** and **Grey Currawong**.

The weather was clear, cool and windy but it didn't affect us on the walks during the weekend. Back at camp the other ladies had arrived after missing the turn into Cabramurra it seems.

One surprising highlight for everyone was the attendance of an 8 year old boy. His grandfather, Richard (Dick) Green contacted Penny the week before the weekend to ask if he could join us from Wagga and bring along his grandson, Andre. We agreed as long he took full responsibility for the boy. So they arrived and it took all of 5 minutes for Andre to have us all intrigued by his interest in nature and his fascination with everything – flowers, birds, trees, March Flies everything. He was an entertainment and joy to have in the group and he even managed to get Melanie, Virginia, Andrew and Barry as well as his grandfather out onto the oval for a game of cricket! He obviously is used to being with adults as he had everyone involved in what he was up to – such a privilege for us to have him join us and I commend Dick on such a wonderful young boy. Dick also talked to us on the Saturday night about the aboriginal heritage of the area as well as identifying a few plant specimens collected during the day's walk.

Catering, as usual, was wonderful if not excessive and thanks to Ana, ably assisted by Penny, who provided a wonderful dinner on Friday night. Not to be outdone, Neil and Johanna prepared an enormous delightful dinner on Saturday night. They are probably still eating the left-overs!!

Thanks to them for making the camp such a gourmet experience.

Saturday morning we met at 7am for a pre-breakfast walk in the town and nearby bush. Thrills galore when a flock of **Gang-Gangs** suddenly appeared from lower down the valley and entertained us with their antics for an hour before flying off to feed elsewhere – see Graham Russell's photo.

After breakfast and lunches made, we set off in a convoy towards Khancoban stopping off on the wall of the Tumut Pond Reservoir for a quick look over the long drop. Next was the walk to Round



Mountain Hut which was a challenge for some – me!! Some of us chose not to make the final descent to the hut itself but wandered back to the car park and waited for the others, holding the car

Spotted Pardalote (female)
Pair of Gang-Gang Cockatoos
Photo: Graham Russell



keys!, to arrive back for late morning tea/lunch.

A further drive down towards Khancoban to the Clover Flat Picnic Area in the hope of a lyrebird was a little disappointing once there. Despite there being no lyrebird we did hear an **Eastern Whipbird** calling and found the nest hollow of a pair of **Spotted Pardalote**. They obviously had young as the parent birds returned frequently to the tree near us carrying food and would fly down to the hollow in the grass. Unfortunately for the photographers, the beautifully marked male bird hid in the foliage whilst the female sat in the open in the nearby tree allowing for photos.

Back at camp, Neil and Johanna got to work in the kitchen whilst others went with Andre to the cricket match and others, like me, got out the nibbles and vino!!

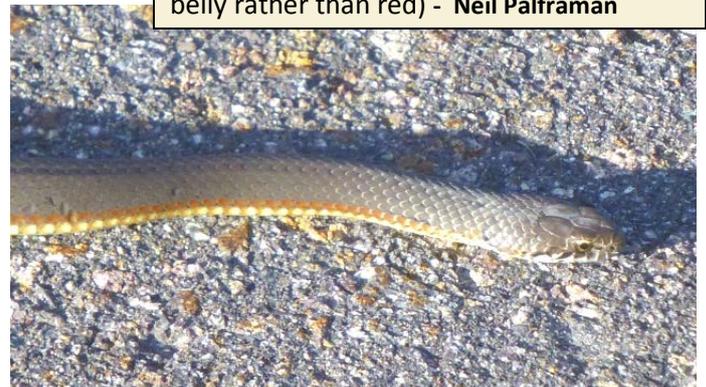


(left) **Derwent Speedwell** - Virginia O'Brien
The pub was very comforting! - Neil Palframan
Red-bellied Black Snake (with yellow under belly rather than red) - Neil Palframan



The early morning walk on Sunday was along the cross-country ski-tracks at the transmission towers just out of town. It was good as the wind had dropped and the day was clear and calm.

Thanks also to Neil for planning the



outing and leading the convoy to various spots for the walks. Breakfast, clean-up and packing followed and Richard showed us some old maps of the area that had been surveyed in the late 1950s showing geology and vegetation distribution for the whole of the Snowies.

I'm sure everyone had an enjoyable weekend and thanks to Penny for all organisation beforehand.

Max O'Sullivan

Cabramurra Bird List 14-16 January 2015

- Australasian Grebe
- Grey Teal
- Eurasian Coot
- Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
- Laughing Kookaburra
- Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
- Golden Whistler (H)
- Grey Fantail
- Striated Thornbill
- Red Wattlebird
- Crescent Honeyeater
- Silvereye
- Pee-wee
- Grey Currawong
- Little Raven

- Little Black Cormorant
- Nankeen Kestrel
- Masked Lapwing
- King Parrot
- Welcome Swallow
- Flame Robin
- Rufous Whistler
- Eastern Whipbird (H)
- Brown Thornbill
- Brown-headed Honeyeater
- Eastern Spinebill
- Spotted Pardalote
- Dusky Woodswallow
- Australian Magpie
- Common Starling

- Black Duck
- Australian Hobby
- Gang-Gang Cockatoo
- Crimson Rosella
- Australian Pipit
- Jacky Winter (H)
- Grey Shrike-Thrush
- White-browed Scrubwren
- White-throated Treecreeper
- Yellow-faced Honeyeater
- White-eared Honeyeater
- Striated Pardalote
- Pied Currawong
- Australian Raven
- Fairy Martin

Extras that Neil and Johanna saw on the way home at 3 Mile Dam, Kiandra and Wumbulgal – still in the area.

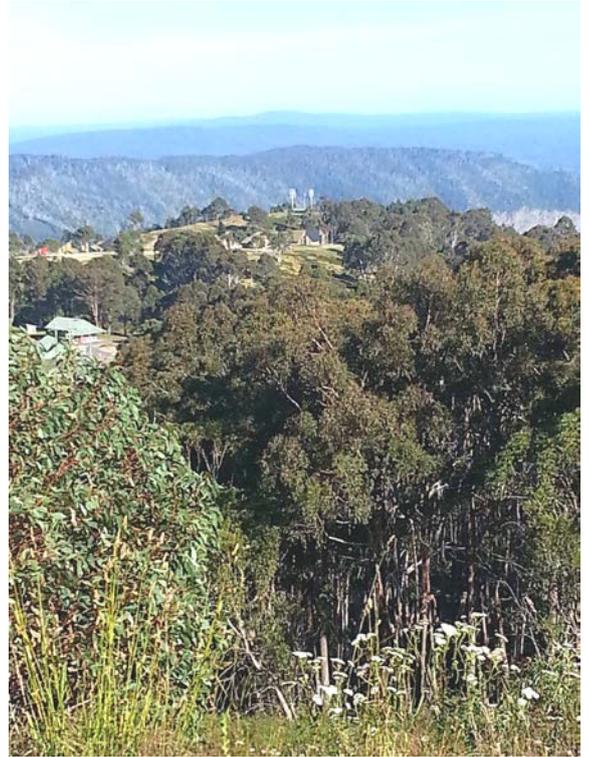
- Wood Duck
- Emu [2 adults with 6 chicks]

- Hardhead
- Great Cormorant

- White-faced Heron

Cabramurra from Virginia

Our long weekend at Cabramurra was well organized with beautiful people, wonderful weather, good accommodation and best of all wonderful healthy meals. An almost completely relaxed time together with some strenuous walking at times along walking trails looking out for flora and fauna. My speciality was the discovery of the many flora species available. They included many daisies; Snow or Silver daisy, Silky daisy bush, Bogong daisy bush, yellow everlasting daisy, white with yellow centred daisy.



Other flora include Anemone Buttercup, Trigger plants, Billy Buttons, St. John's Wort, Royal Bluebells and the wonderful Blue tongue Greenhoods in abundance on the bank of the Cabramurra Dam.

There are many bushes, shrubs and trees out in flower. Too many to mention including the Alpine Grevillea and the Common Oxylobium (*O. ellipticum*). The Alpine Snow Gums and Alpine Ash Eucalyptus. There were ferns, herbfields, sphagnum and peat moss areas in the low valley flats. Much to see and hear in the Alpine, Snowy Mountains region.



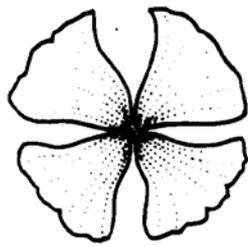
Virginia O'Brien

Photos by Virginia O'Brien, clockwise from top: Cabramurra and beyond, Rough Daisy Bush - *Olearia asterotricha* (Round Mt track), Blue-tongue Greenhood, Trigger Plant, Billy Buttons - *Craspedia uniflora*, Bluebell, Round Mt hut.



Ferns of the Northern Riverina, Part 3 – Nardoos

The Irish say it is good luck to find a four-leaf clover. They may have thought they had found their dream when they saw Nardoos. The four leaflets set on a long stalk certainly look like a four-leaf clover. However Nardoos are not clovers, not even in the same family. They are not even flowering plants; they are ferns.



Marsilea drummondii

The Common Nardoo, *Marsilea drummondii* is the usual species seen being widespread and frequent throughout inland areas of mainland Australia. It is a good indicator of seasonally inundated or moist sites. All Nardoos are perennials, growth being dependant on available water and perhaps temperature as winter is not a growth period.

There are several species of Nardoo, three of them occurring in our area. Common Nardoo is the largest with the four ovate-cuneate leaflets forming a disc 1 – 5 cm in diameter. The stalks can be up to 30 cm high, although in drier areas can be as short as 2 cm.

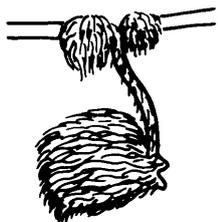
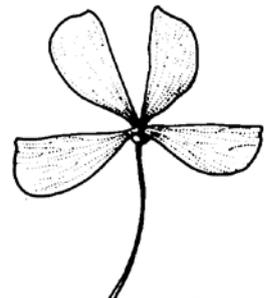
Ferns reproduce by producing spores either on the undersides of the fronds (leaves) or on special fronds. In Nardoos the spores are formed on separate fronds that are curled up to form a pod, the sporocarp. In Common Nardoo the sporocarp is 4 – 9 mm long, densely hairy and on a stalk 8 – 35 mm long.

The sporocarps of our other two Nardoos are also densely hairy but their stalks are always shorter than the length of the sporocarps, i.e. only a couple of millimetres.

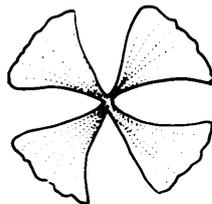
Narrow-leaf Nardoo, *M. costulifera* (formerly *M. angustifolia*) is often small and mat forming. The leaflets are narrow oblanceolate to oblanceolate and distinctly forming two unequal pairs 1 – 10 mm long. The stalks of the fronds are only 1 – 12 cm long and rise in clusters from the spreading rhizomes. The sporocarps are only 2 – 3 mm long, and are ribbed underneath the dense hairy covering. It occurs in similar habitats as the Common Nardoo but nowhere as frequently or abundantly.



Marsilea costulifera



Marsilea hirsuta



The other Nardoo we have is the Short-fruit Nardoo, *M. hirsuta*. This is rather like a smaller version of the Common Nardoo with the leaflets forming a disc 1 – 6 cm in diameter on stalks 1.7 – 17 cm long. The sporocarps are 4 – 5 mm long, again densely hairy, and on stalks less than 4 mm long.

Nardoo became famous as the source of the Aboriginal food that failed to sustain Burke

and his partners at the end of their transcontinental expedition. A starchy dough is prepared from the flour from ground up sporocarps.

There is a related genus with a single species in Australia that also occurs in our area. *Pilularia novae-hollandiae*, the Austral Pillwort, is a threatened species recorded from the Oaklands – Walbundrie area and from Lake Cowal. I have also seen it in our River Red Gum forests (1991) and at Halls Lake, Willandra National Park (2010). It is an extremely difficult plant to find and identify. If you can imagine a small Nardoo without leaflets then that is Pillwort! The only way to distinguish the fronds from grass or sedge seedlings is in the way Pillwort fronds are initially coiled and gradually unwind as they grow (as is typical of fern fronds).

A note about the names: *Marsilea* is after L. F. Marsigli, an Italian naturalist whose name was l. *Pilularia novae-Marsilius*. *Pilularia* is from the latin *pilula*, a pill, alluding to the shape of the sporocarps.



Eric Whiting

[Illustrations are from Flora of New South Wales, Gwen J. Harden]

Lake Tutchewop and the Long-billed Dowitcher

The above heading would ring no bells with our newsletter readers so let me explain. Lake Tutchewop is in northern Victoria between Kerang and Swan Hill. It is a saline lake between the highway and the Murray River. On the southern side of the highway is Lake Kangaroo, a very large fresh water lake which may be known to people who have been in that area.

The **Long-billed Dowitcher**, on the other hand, is another matter. The bird is an American wader species that breeds in Siberia, northern Alaska and north-west Canada and migrates to North and Central America for the summer. What it was doing at Lake Tutchewop in early summer in full breeding plumage is still open to debate. The best suggestion was that it got caught up in a flock of returning waders to the Australian mainland and ended up in Victoria. The bird has only been recorded once before when a bird in non-breeding plumage was captured and identified at Corner Inlet, Victoria on 18 June 1995 (Pizey).



The bird had been reported in late November and was seen by hundreds if not thousands of birdwatchers up until early January when it disappeared. The main attraction for me was that on the lake there were

thousands of **Banded Stilt** along with other waders. As I hadn't seen these stilt for many years, Nella and I decided before Xmas to go down for a look. We left at lunch time and got to Kerang by 4pm booked into a cabin and then drove out to the lake which we eventually found as it couldn't be seen from the highway. We saw the 2+ thousand Banded Stilt along with many **Red-capped Plovers**, **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** but no Dowitcher, despite one birdo directing us to a spot where he said the bird was feeding in the shallow lake. So we called it a day and went back to Kerang and decided to try our luck next morning early. Well when we arrived at the lake, there was not a wading bird on the lake at all. We drove up side roads and eventually found another lake full of stilts but no waders to



Photo by
Paul Johnstone

speak of. We did find a field full of hundreds of **Australian Shelducks** which was good.

By 10am we decided to go back to Lake Tutchewop and were quite surprised to find all the waders were back! In a search amongst the hundreds of **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** along the lake's edge we eventually spotted THE BIRD – as people said 'it stands out like dog's whatevers' when you finally get onto it and it did. We were joined by a Sydney birder, Paul Johnstone, who took photos and I have included his photo of the bird. With the bird seen, we drove back home well satisfied by the experience and long trip.

Max O'Sullivan

Narrandera Wildflowers

Interesting things lurk underground which seem to appear in response to rain in this country.

At the moment Willcania Lilies (otherwise known as Garland lilies) which shoot annually from a brown-covered bulb are flowering in profusion around the Rocky Waterholes area.

The interesting thing about them is that they can occur in colours ranging from white to pink, from yellow to orange and from dark pink to maroon, all in the same vicinity.

Come to the field trip on Sunday 16th to view a spectacle better than Western Australian flowers.

Nella Smith



Martin's Visit to Australia – Part 2

[The first part of Max's trip to north Queensland with Martin Odino appeared in the December 2014 issue.]

After leaving my sister's place on the Gold Coast hinterland, we drove up to another friend's place, Ken Cross, at Mapleton near Montville on the Sunshine Coast hinterland. We stayed there for two nights and spent the full day birding along the coastal areas of the Sunshine Coast. At a wader roost at Torbul we eventually located, in an over-wintering flock of **Bar-tailed Godwits**, a lone **Asian Dowitcher**. As we were there at the weekend, the crowds at all the beaches had an influence on the birds present, although **Brahminy Kite** and **Eastern Osprey** were seen gliding over the coastal headlands.



Martin was desperate to see black cockatoos and with only a fly-over look at a pair of **Glossy Blacks** at Andrew Thompson's place whilst in Leeton, we saw none until Ken finally located a spot somewhere in suburbia where he had seen **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos** before. Fortunately, after much searching, the recognisable call was heard in some pine trees in a forested gully and we eventually got close-up views of several birds. Martin was very pleased.

That night Ken took us to a nearby National Park and we located a pair of **Marbled Frogmouth** but no **Sooty Owl**.

We left early next morning for Biloela via Gympie. Eric and Rowena had advised me to avoid the Bruce Highway as it being school holidays, the traffic and road works made it slow going. So I decided on the inland route hoping for some dryer country birds – not a lot of luck there unfortunately. We arrived in Biloela around 3pm and booked into a cabin before going to the local power

station and lake. We got good views of **Chestnut-breasted Mannikins**, **Red-backed Fairy Wrens** and **Grey-crowned Babblers**.

Next morning, we again made an early exit and drove towards Charters Towers stopping on the way whenever we saw birds. At one spot, I noticed a huge gathering in a paddock up ahead that looked like a flock of sheep. Imagine our surprise when we found they were **Brolgas** - hundreds of them! We also almost hit a pair of **Squatter Pigeons** on the edge of the road which was another good sighting. Martin was again horrified by the huge number of road kills as we made our way north, something unfortunately we in the bush just accept as normal.

At Charters Towers we booked into a cabin and went out late afternoon to the local weir. A big shock was to find a pair of **Australian Bustards** on the edge of the road with one obviously injured. It had just been hit by a car as there were feathers all over the road. The female was obviously badly injured and whilst deciding what to do about it, a young couple in a ute pulled up and said they had hit the bird just a few minutes before. After phoning WIRES and a vet, it was not possible to get help at that time of day so I asked the guy if he had a gun and he said he did have one at his home nearby. He had an empty sulo bin on the

back of his ute and I said we could catch the bird, put it in the bin and he could take it home and put it down. Martin caught the bird and on close inspection it had both legs broken so had to be destroyed, unfortunately.

That put a dampener on the afternoon as we both felt terrible about what had happened. There was nothing much at the weir but on the return trip, we spotted a pair of **Black-faced Woodswallows** in a dead tree. We stopped for Martin to take some photos and when we were on the road, I heard the call of **Red-tailed Black Cockatoos** flying towards us. Imagine our delight when they landed in a close-by tree.



There were about 8 birds but they were a little camera shy and Martin didn't have time to get the close-up shots he wanted.

The next day, we drove down to Townsville and located the Palmetum where we got some good tropical species, **Olive-backed Sunbird**, **Yellow Oriole**, now more appropriately called **Green Oriole**, **White-bellied Cuckoo-Shrike** and **Pallid Cuckoo**. Because of the masses of over-friendly mosquitoes we moved on to the Townsville Common but, because it was close to the hottest part of the day, the birds were few and far between – the story of the trip so far!

I decided I didn't want to stay in Townsville that night so we drove on to Ingham. Again Eric and Ro recommended the Tyto Wetlands there was a good birding spot so we settled on a motel close by and spent the late afternoon wandering the wetlands.

In the early afternoon we drove towards the coast in search of estuarine mud flats for waders but couldn't find any that was open enough to be safe from crocodiles lurking in the mangroves! We did locate a family of **Lovely Fairy-Wrens** though and Martin got a good photo of the male. See photo and notice the tail markings with white feathering compared with our local variegated birds.



The Tyto Wetlands is named after the **Eastern Grass Owl (*Tyto longimembris*)**. However, despite many reported recent sightings of the owl, we didn't find any – besides the sun was setting and we were a long way into the park so needed to get out whilst there was still light – knowing how short dusk is in the tropics from my time living in Cairns.

Max O'Sullivan

Snail or Slug ?

I photographed this pair of molluscs whilst looking for insects during our week's Alpine get-away at Mt. Hotham, Victoria. They were together partly hidden in a curled up strip of peeling Snow Gum bark.

At the time I thought they were Soft-shelled Snails. With the help of an enquiry to the Terrestrial Invertebrates Group of the Victorian Field Naturalists Club, they were identified as *Cystopelta purpura* – a native slug. OK. Slug not snail – or was it! Now with a scientific name I could chase up some references and as luck would have it, I had a copy of one of them (so it was worth keeping those journals from way back!).



The first sentence of the article, by Brian Smith the then curator of invertebrates at the National Museum of Victoria stated "Victoria has only one native species of terrestrial slug, and even this is not considered a true slug by many experts, but a shell-less intermediate between a slug and a snail with most features more akin to the snail form".

This native slug is endemic to south-east Australia (ie. virtually only Victoria), and found in forests from just above sea-level to the tops of the Ranges. Closely related species occur in New South Wales and Tasmania.

Cystopelta has superficial similarities to the Helicarion group of snails that have fragile reduced shells and were lumped into the same family in the past. However anatomical studies revealed unusual features that made the association untenable.

My verdict – not quite a snail but not a real slug. It's nice to sit on the fence in taxonomy.

Eric Whiting

MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

Australian Little Bittern [6 H]	Fivebough Wetlands	06/12/14	Max O'Sullivan
The birds were heard calling in separate clumps of cumbungi but none seen.			
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper [20+]	Fivebough Wetlands	06/12/14	Max O'Sullivan
Marsh Sandpiper [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	06/12/14	Max O'Sullivan
Superb Parrot [85]	Koonadan property in oat crop	07/12/14	Peter Draper
Superb Parrot [50]	Murrami property in oat crop	07/12/14	Bill Draper
Painted Honeyeater [5]	Cocoparra National Park	08/12/14	Melanie Baulch
White-winged Triller [2]	Cocoparra National Park	08/12/14	Max O'Sullivan
Brown Treecreeper [8+]	Woolshed Flat, Cocoparra National Park	08/12/14	Melanie Baulch
Buff-banded Rail	Fivebough Wetlands	09/12/14	Nella Smith
Brolga [2]	Koonadan in rice crop	11/12/14	Peter Draper
Dollarbird [4]	McCauchey Swamp, Yanco	11/12/14	Neil Palframan
Freckled Duck [6+]	Fivebough Wetlands	13/12/14	Max O'Sullivan
Australian Hobby [juv]	Gordon Ave, Griffith	18/12/14	June Sell
Emu [3]	Irrigation Way in rice crop!	19/12/14	Max O'Sullivan
Wandering Whistling-duck [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	24/12/14	Max O'Sullivan
Keith Hutton reported seeing 2 at Tuckerbil in his quarterly bird survey in November.			
Marsh Sandpiper [8]	Fivebough Wetlands	24/12/14	Max O'Sullivan
Superb Parrot [30+]	Fivebough Wetlands flying overhead	24/12/14	Max O'Sullivan
Black-tailed Native-hen [6]	Fivebough Wetlands	24/12/14	Max O'Sullivan
Koala [6]	Channel bank, Narrandera	27/12/14	Nella Smith
Wood Sandpiper [3]	Fivebough Wetlands	29/12/14	Nella Smith
Wandering Whistling-duck [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	29/12/14	Nella Smith
Freckled Duck [4]	Fivebough Wetlands	29/12/14	Nella Smith
Pink-eared Duck [20+]	Fivebough Wetlands	29/12/14	Nella Smith
Australian Shelduck [1 juv]	Fivebough Wetlands	29/12/14	Nella Smith
Australasian Shoveler [10]	Fivebough Wetlands	29/12/14	Nella Smith
Whiskered Tern [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	29/12/14	Nella Smith
Glossy Ibis [30+]	Fivebough Wetlands	29/12/14	Nella Smith
Australian Little Bittern [2H]	Fivebough Wetlands	29/12/14	Nella Smith
Pectoral Sandpiper	Fivebough Wetlands	late Dec	Keith Hutton
Cattle Egret [104]	Petersham Rd, Leeton	early Jan	Keith Hutton
Black Kite [32]	Circling near the Golden Apple, Leeton	early Jan	Keith Hutton
Cockatiel [20+]	Whitton Stock Route Rd	02/01/15	Max O'Sullivan
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [12]	'The Winery' site, Binya State Forest	02/01/15	Lorna Mee
White-fronted Honeyeater [1]	'The Winery' site, Binya State Forest	02/01/15	Max O'Sullivan
Brown Honeyeater [3]	'The Winery' site, Binya State Forest	02/01/15	Lorna Mee
Painted Honeyeater [1]	Binya State Forest - southern section	02/01/15	Max O'Sullivan
Painteds were also seen along Apostle Yard Rd, Koonadan on the way home.			
Spotted Harrier [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	03/01/15	Max O'Sullivan
Brown Quail [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	03/01/15	Max O'Sullivan
Marsh Sandpiper [20]	The Basin dam Koonadan/Tuckerbil	04/01/15	Max O'Sullivan
Horsfield's Bushlark [4]	Cantrill Rd, Koonadan	04/01/15	Max O'Sullivan
Brown Songlark [male]	Cantrill Rd, Koonadan	04/01/15	Max O'Sullivan
Turquoise Parrot [16+]	Wattle Dam, Binya State Forest	08/01/15	Max O'Sullivan
Yellow-plumed Honeyeater [4+]	Galah Dam, Binya State Forest	08/01/15	Neil Palframan
Little Bittern [juv]	Causeway, Lake Wyangan	08/01/15	Max O'Sullivan
Tawny Frogmouth [on nest]	Griffith Golf Course	08/01/15	Max O'Sullivan
One juvenile and parent bird were sitting on a branch near the nest when I checked on 3 February.			
Plumed Whistling-duck [60+]	Fivebough Wetlands	10/01/15	Max O'Sullivan
Australian Little Bittern [adult]	Fivebough Wetlands	12/01/15	Max O'Sullivan

Freckled Duck [3]	Fivebough Wetlands	12/01/15	Max O'Sullivan
Latham's Snipe	Fivebough Wetlands	12/01/15	Visitor from Adelong
Mistletoebird [F]	Yenda Catholic Church car park	24/1/15	Jan & Tom Condon
Sat on our side view mirror looking at itself in the mirror enabling us to have a long look/ Great!			
Grey-crowned Babbler [3]	Leeton Golf Course	30/01/15	Max O'Sullivan
Little Eagle [2]	Evans Smyles Rd via Leeton	31/01/15	Max O'Sullivan
Hooded Robin [pr]	Evans Smyles Rd via Leeton	31/01/15	Max O'Sullivan
Superb Parrots seem to have disappeared from the Narrandera/Leeton area since early January.			
Black Falcon	Causeway, Lake Wyangan	03/02/15	Max O'Sullivan
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [6]	Colinroobie Rd, Leeton	03/02/15	Keith Hutton
Glossy Black Cockatoo [2]	Colinroobie Rd, Leeton	03/02/15	Keith Hutton

Keith saw the Pink Cockies at a water trough on the Hidden Valley property and the Black Cockies at a dam close to the road on Andrew Davies' property.

Peregrine Falcon The Basin Dam, Koonadan 04/02/15 Max O'Sullivan
Ground Cuckoo-Shrike [4] Cantrill Rd, Koonadan 04/02/15 Max O'Sullivan
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [11] Russell's property, Colinroobie Rd, Leeton 04/02/14 Dione Russell
Dione took a photo of the birds with her mobile phone as they sat on the fence along their driveway. I went out the next evening and they were again seen. This time at the dam in the middle of the property. I asked Graham if the birds were being seen as a possible threat to the Walnut plantation opposite their farm on Colinroobie Road. He said he had spoken to the manager recently who said they weren't worried and if they did attack the ripening nuts, they wouldn't eat enough to make a difference to the crop, which is encouraging. The only fear is if the Sulphur-crested Cockatoos find the nuts and come in large numbers at this time of year in the future – so far they haven't been seen in the area.

Fivebough Wetlands visit on 4 February was very good for the numbers of birds. First up were at least 4 **Horsfield's Bushlark** plus **Golden-headed Cisticola** on the way down to the swamp itself. At the pond near the T-intersection, I saw 8 **Freckled Ducks** with a male showing the prominent red at the base of the bill indicating it is in breeding plumage so let's hope they breed there as the habitat is perfect still with plenty of shallow water. Both **Australian Shelduck** and **Black Swan** have reappeared after several months absence. The **Swamp Harriers** have bred and 5 birds were seen flying over the swamp. Keith reports that the pair had three young this season. Also, there were 8 **Marsh Sandpipers** on the way up to the main hide and a flock of well over 100 **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** flew out of the swamp and circled for several minutes before landing somewhere in the middle again. **European Goldfinch** and **Zebra Finch** are also regularly seen on the walk towards the original hide overlooking the settling ponds.

Keith reported that the **Little Bitterns** had successfully bred this season but that the **Australasian Bittern** nest with 4 eggs was deserted and the eggs were found floating in the water nearby – something disturbed them it seems.

Sue Chittick-Dalton has sent in a report of birds seen over the Dec/Jan period at her place at Mcnabb Cres in Griffith. The list includes:

Grey-crowned Babbler	Rainbow Lorikeet	Australian Hobby	Blue-faced Honeyeater
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Grey Butcherbird	Boobook Owl (H)	Red Wattlebird
Apostlebird	Yellow-throated Miner	Yellow Thornbill	Mallee Ringneck
King Parrot			

Sue Chittick-Dalton has sent a succession of photos of a fungi in her garden.

It is about 14 cm in diameter, similar in height with the girth of the stem 35cm. At first it was white, then with black spots, a black edge becoming a brick red colour. It is fairly smooth underneath and very hard, and I can't smell anything. No name is forthcoming



**** COMING EVENTS ****

12 February Thursday **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton, commencing at 7:30pm
Topic: Bitterns in Rice Project update – Matt Herring
Contact: Penny Williams 6953 3524
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

15 February Sunday **Rocky Waterholes, Narrandera**
A twilight meeting for a walk along the channel bank followed by nibbles at the new picnic area by the bridge.
Meet at the Rocky Waterholes Bridge (off the Old Wagga Road) at 5pm.
Bring nibbles and drink to share.
Contact: Max O'Sullivan 6953 4726
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

1 March Sunday **Spring Hill Picnic Area, Cocoparra National Park**
Again a late afternoon outing. Meet at the car park at 5pm for a walk to Falcon Falls followed by nibbles etc at the Picnic Area.
Contact: Max O'Sullivan 6953 4726
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

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

12 March Thursday **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton, commencing at 7:30pm
Topic: Neil and Johanna's recent trip to Malaysia
Contact: Penny Williams 6953 3524
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

15 March Sunday **Koonadan Historic Site, Cantrill Rd Leeton**
Another late afternoon outing. Meet at the gate over the railway line off Cantrill Rd at 5pm for a walk to The Basin Dam that overlooks Tuckerbil Swamp.
This will be followed by nibbles etc at the picnic shelter.
Contact: Max O'Sullivan 6953 4726
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com



Left- birds eye view of the game, The Skillion, Terrigal, Xmas - Neil Palframan



Right: Skinks seen in the high country – Phillip Williams