

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



April 2022 - Issue #302

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



"A palette of ochres and shadow -
greens in the slanting sun's rays"
Rowena Whiting

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For the May 2022 issue by
Wednesday 4 May

To Rowena Whiting

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Conservation is a state of
harmony between men and land.

Aldo Leopold

Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

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MEETINGS are held on the second Thursday each month, except January, at the Henry Lawson Room, Leeton Library, Sycamore Street, Leeton at 7pm.

FIELD TRIPS NORMALLY TAKE PLACE ON THE FOLLOWING WEEKEND.

INTENDING NEW MEMBERS, GUESTS AND VISITORS WELCOME.

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Welcome to the April issue

Back to a full issue this time; my appreciative thanks to those who have sent copy. Whilst there is no meeting this month an outing is planned for later in the month, 24 April which Alan Whitehead is leading to Rocky Waterholes and the Narrandera Wetlands - places close to home that he knows well. You may like to send in any Show and Tell items for the newsletter. We are looking for someone to organise an outing in May, location is your choice.

Despite deciding to postpone our guest speaker for the March meeting as many regulars were apologies we had a very worthwhile evening. Penny and Phillip Williams gave a presentation about their recent travels. They chose to tell us about their time in and around Wyndham; its history, geomorphology, some of the flora with detailed descriptions of the Boab tree, Kapok Bush. Their visit included a couple of bird sanctuaries, both Ramsar sites so plenty of bird photos, the Gouldian Finch is always a favourite. Another place that is fascinating is Horizontal Falls explaining how the water flows. A very enjoyable presentation, our grateful thanks to you both.

Also Penny gave us an excellent insight into the Spoonbill bird beginning with their presence worldwide and then focusing on the 2 we are familiar with around here, the Royal and Yellow-billed. One thing I found particular intriguing was their different feeding method.

Finally I would like to draw your attention to a photography exhibition,

MOMENTS IN TIME, by Narrandera, Leeton Camera Club which is currently at the Narrandera Arts & Community Centre (opposite Marie Bashir Park) until 29 April - Monday to Friday 9am-4pm | Saturday 9am-3pm | Sunday 10am-2pm.

There are plenty of landscapes and other nature topics. Many are by MFN members. 'Autumn' Image by Fiona Stevens, 'Harlequin Mistletoe' by Eric Whiting.

Make the most of the Autumn weather and enjoy the delights the wetter conditions have brought.

Rowena.



Early Autumn is a lovely time of year for an afternoon of birdwatching; and Sunday March 13 didn't disappoint. A still, warm day favoured our little convoy as we headed south from Narrandera to a scenic string of wetlands in the general region of the Narrandera Inland Fisheries Research Centre. At our first stop we were greeted by a variety of swamp denizens; like a couple of juvenile Night Herons; a Great Egret; some Black Ducks, and several White Ibis.

Quite a few bush birds flitted through the canopy of the towering River Red gums standing sentinel over this tranquil scene. One welcome arrival was a Peaceful Dove, who surveyed us curiously, anointed our senses with one of bushland's most sonorous calls, and continued on its way.

There were also quite a few White-plumed Honeyeaters frolicking in the treetops, also singing beautifully; as was a Grey-shrike Thrush.

But Betty's gimlet gaze was fixated on more lowly things, like a large fan-shaped lichen growing on the bridge rails – which she generously described as “magnificent”. What was probably more magnificent was the Superb Parrot she and Warrick spied on our way to the next stop.



**Nankeen Night Herons (Left) ; water alongside Sandigo River Road – Rowena Whiting
Australasian Grebe – Graham Russell**

The River Gum vistas here too were Hans Heysen-esque in their splendour – every one a masterpiece. Again the still, perfumed air was filled with birdcall, from such maestros as Pied Butcherbirds; Kookaburras; Little Friar Birds – and even the keening of an aptly-named Whistling Kite. Here too – though sans song – was observed both Royal and Yellow-billed Spoonbills, quietly preening in the soft, afternoon shade.

Our next stop (not much walking on this outing) was a more open but extensive body of water, most of which wouldn't exist in the absence of good recent rains. But rains we've had, which invited visitations from avians aplenty; such as Black Swans; Great Crested Grebes; Great Cormorants (Nella reported a hundred or more of these impressive birds in the same area the following day); and best of all a White-bellied Sea-Eagle, being harassed by lesser birds – as usual!

A small mob of Eastern Grey Kangaroos browsed happily on the far water's edge, with one large buck coming down to drink. There was even a sizeable flock of waterbirds skittering around on the lake's surface, which Nella later identified as Hoary-headed Grebes: a rare sighting in such numbers. As well, there were a couple of resident Darters, and many Wood Ducks.

Then to our supper stop, a fisherperso's shelter bathed in the golden light of the setting sun. This was on the bank of the mighty Murrumbidgee River; which was indeed flowing mightily. Nella's (rather optimistic I thought) enticement to us to visit this site was the chance of hearing a Barking Owl. Alas, after sounding out the attraction call, we were visited only by a family of White-winged



Choughs; obviously flying in to find out why a potential nocturnal marauder was trespassing into their territory.

Another non-attendee was a Platypus, which we hoped would make a showing in the gathering dusk. (And thank you Nella for organising such a lovely afternoon.)

One resident that did make her presence known (Yes, it was a “her”.) was an impressive Golden Orb Spider, which draped her splendid web right over one of the picnic tables. As well, also taking advantage of the shelter of the Shelter, was a Peron's Tree Frog chirping away – and some seriously large nests of both Paper and Mud Dauber Wasps.

As an indication of our small assembly's eclecticism, we spent some time discussing the merits of the various gnarled eucalypts across the river as sketching subjects. These were perfectly displayed in a palette of ochres and shadow-greens in the slanting sun's rays, and reflected in the water. It's not all about birds, you know!

Our final image of this serene scene was of a solitary White-faced Heron stalking to and fro along a fallen log on the river's edge. Obviously it was hoping for a before-bed treat prior to twilight finally closing in.

A scene serene, indeed.

Alan Whitehead

Birds List for Sandy Creek and Green Swamp 13/3/22 compiled by Nella Smith

Wood Duck 100+	Sacred Ibis	Great Egret 50	Night Heron
Black Duck	White-plumed Honeyeater	Little Pied Cormorant 31	White-faced Heron 3
White-necked Heron 5	Grey Teal	Little Black Cormorant 20+	Peaceful Dove
Australian Raven	Yellow Rosella	Striated Pardalote	Grey Shrike-thrush
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Magpie Lark	Little Friarbird	Brown Treecreeper
Pied Butcherbird	White-winged Chough	Magpie	Little Raven
Superb Parrot	Red-rumped Parrot	Tawny Frogmouth heard	Kookaburra
Brown Falcon	Grey-crowned Babbler	Eastern Rosella	Willy Wagtail
Kestrel	Royal Spoonbill	Yellow Spoonbill 16	Great crested Grebe
Black Duck	Whistling Kite 5	White bellied Sea-eagle	Intermediate Egret
Darter	Hoary-headed Grebe 30+ juveniles		Australian Grebe
Spur-winged Plovers	Pelicans 30	Great Cormorant 150	

A couple of items I found interesting from other Field Naturalists newsletters

A way to study the platypus. Zoos Victoria is training sniffer dogs to detect live platypus in their burrows as part of a research project to determine how the monotremes look after their young. The Kelpie dogs were taught to recognise the odour of a platypus using scent-capturing polymer tubes which absorbed the smell of platypus sleeping in their nest boxes at Healesville Sanctuary. The tubes were then placed in the field for dogs to find. If the detection method works, it will give scientists a way to collect much-needed data on wild platypus populations, without disturbing or interacting with the wild animals. Very little is known about them it is hard to see them in their natural environment particularly as they are nocturnal.

Here is the link to the article by Calla Wahlquist, It has a great video of the sniffer dog in action

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/feb/04/weve-never-seen-a-platypus-lay-an-egg-sniffer-dogs-to-aid-researchers-by-detecting-occupied-burrows>

Altruism in magpies?

When tiny, backpack-like tracking devices were attached to five Australian magpies for a pilot study, researchers didn't expect to discover an entirely new social behaviour rarely seen in birds. The researchers' goal was to learn more about the movement and social dynamics of these highly intelligent birds, and to test these new, durable and reusable devices. Instead, the birds outsmarted them. As the newly published paper explains, the magpies began showing evidence of cooperative “rescue” behaviour to help each other remove the tracker. While we're familiar with magpies being intelligent and social creatures, this was the first instance that showed this type of seemingly altruistic behaviour: helping another member of the group without getting an immediate, tangible reward.

Reference: Crampton, J. Frere, C.H. & Potvin, A (2022) Australian Magpies *Gymnorhina tibicen* cooperate to remove tracking devices. *Australian Field Ornithology* 39: 7-11.

We had a small party of 10 at Flowerdale Lagoon Sunday 6 March, Joanne Connolly returning with a platypus refresher. She gave a fact filled & practical presentation about platypus. I always learn something - this time, if you see a platypus on every 25th survey - you're doing fine, and every 10th - you've reached platypus heaven. Alas we didn't see any, however some of the kayakers at the Clean Up Australia Day effort saw 2!

Highlights of our bird sightings were 1. A pair of Darters with 5 large nestlings, their snaky necks stretching, circling like Medusa or collapsed in sleep, and 2. A family of Rainbow Bee-eater, fledglings with their stunted tails. Some members stayed on for Clean Up Australia Day, led by Wagga Wagga City Council in conjunction with MFN Wagga chapter, Wagga Urban Landcare and Wagga Bidgee Canoe Club.



Bird list

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Striated Pardalote, Magpie-lark, Yellow Rosella, Grey Shrike-thrush, Superb Fairy-wren, Australian Magpie, Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal, Common Starling, Australian White Ibis, White-faced Heron and fledglings, Australasian Darter nest with 5 chicks, Australian Raven, Willie Wagtail, Australian Wood Duck, White-plumed Honeyeater, Red Wattlebird, Rainbow Bee-eater and recently fledged young, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Masked Lapwing, Rock Dove.



(above) Darter chicks (from Video); (left) Rainbow Bee-eater feeding on dragonflies – by Janet Hume (below) Members bird watching, photographing along track – by Sarah Danckert

Tony Phelps of Wagga Wagga City Council, has applied for a grant to install a gross litter trap. Once he receives the result of his application he will call upon interested community groups, landholders and members of the public to plan a rehabilitation process for Flowerdale. MFN Wagga chapter will be participating.

Sarah Danckert



Bring Back the Glossy Black

On Thursday the 24th of March Murrumbidgee Landcare and Biodiversity Conservation Trust held a Bidgee Biodiversity Day. One of six in the Riverina to create awareness of the need to improve biodiversity in the region.

Murrumbidgee Landcare along with the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists and Narrandera Landcare thought a Glossy Black-Cockatoo (GBC) day would be a valuable way of celebrating biodiversity in the district.

Gathering a team of people who have been involved in the monitoring, protecting, research and understanding of the Glossy Black-Cockatoo was one of the aims of the workshop. Understanding what has been done in the past will help us to determine what needs to happen in the future.

Rankins Springs farmer and Naturalist Rodney Guest started the day telling us about farmers in the Rankins Springs region who have been involved in educating the local community (Farmers and School children) in the habitat required for the GBC.

They installed large nest boxes made from recycled material with cherry pickers 6 meters high in large Eucalypts to hopefully attract the GBC to the nest. Being so high they are very difficult to monitor which has been a problem for the evaluation of the idea. Major Mitchells have been seen nesting in smaller versions that have lids. But at this stage no GBC has been found in the larger open topped ones.

There have been times over the past 20 years where up to 95 GBC have been counted at the annual Glossy Black Count in February. This involves people sitting on the edge of dams dotted over the Rankins Springs area recording visitors to their allocated dam.

Nella Smith spoke about the GBC population in the Narrandera, Brobenah Hills and Cocoparra National Park areas. She believes the population has stayed quite steady around the 30 mark varying over the years due to drought when numbers recorded were as low as 4.

MFN started monitoring the GBC in 2000 and also installed nesting boxes to attract the birds. Clearing of large trees that would normally provide homes for these birds has been a major problem in this area. The birds are known to travel 12-15 km from their feeding area to nest.

Matt Cameron provided a wonderful presentation on the GBC. He has spent a lot of time researching the GBC. One of his papers is on 'Group size and feeding rates of Glossy Black-Cockatoos in central New South Wales'. He spoke about the need to plant as many of the feed trees as possible to provide feeding sites for the birds as the risk of trees drying out during droughts is very real. Climate change is shaping up as one of their biggest threats.

Planting trees on the slopes and better soil areas would provide a safety net of feed for the Glossies who are quite happy to travel to find food. They are very selective feeders and in this area are most likely to feed on the *Allocasuarina verticillata*.



Group attending the Glossy Black-Cockatoo Day.
Photo Kathy Tenison
(below) Matt Cameron sharing his knowledge.
Photo Phil Tenison



The birds are very social and like to nest in groups so placing nest boxes in groups would be an option. Glossies produce one egg per year and juveniles stay with their parents for up to 18 months so they can learn to feed themselves by cracking open the cones.

It's tricky to get the seed from the cone. Matt explained how the birds like trees that are high yielding, and those trees are the preferred trees for collecting seed for nurseries. Chewings are often found at the base of these trees. The colour of the chewings can indicate how long since the birds have been feeding on the tree. More colour means fresher chewings in general while the pale colours are faded older ones. They range from orange through yellow and eventually to white.

Andrew Thompson provided a great opportunity on his farm 'Yarrabimbi' for attendees to walk through the GBC country and see the trees the birds feed on and the cones they eat. This property which has a Property Vegetation Plan has benefited greatly from Andrew's dedication to weed and feral pest management allowing the growth of local endemic species to establish and flourish.

This biodiverse vegetation provides a home to birds like the Painted Buttonquail and Diamond Firetail which are both birds seen in good quality woodlands.

Peter Beal who was a Soil Conservationist prior to his current position with Local Land Services (LLS) spoke of the thin and somewhat fragile soils that cover the hills and the need to protect them (as Andrew is doing) to reduce runoff and erosion in the hill areas.

Andrew along with Mason Crane and Colleen O'Malley from Biodiversity Conservation Trust treated us to a guided tour of a portion of the farm where we discovered plates created by the Painted Buttonquail, Rusty Spider Flower *Grevillea floribunda*, and Butterbush *Pittosporum phyllireaoides* which Andrew had fenced for protection.

Glenn Currie from Narrandera Landcare along with wonderful volunteers have grown 1000 Drooping She-oak *Allocasuarina verticillata* to give away to farmers and Landholders in the area. Trees and tree guards are all free. Contact Glenn via email on narranderalandcare@gmail.com See next page for details.

If you're interested in protecting your patch of paradise on your property and being paid to do it contact the Biodiversity Conservation Trust on info@bct.nsw.gov.au or phone 1300 992 688.

Thanks to all those who came to share the day. To Andrew and the speakers who provided us with a wide range of experiences in the conservation of Glossy Black-Cockatoos, woodland birds and the beautiful plants that choose to live in this sometimes harsh environment.

Kathy Tenison



(top) Group stop on walk to study the tree cover and other vegetation. Photo Rowena Whiting
(above) L to R Mason Crane, Colleen O'Malley (BCT) and Andrew Thompson share knowledge. Photo Kathy Tenison

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR DROOPING SHE-OAK SEEDLINGS

Narrandera Landcare was awarded funding last year from Landcare Australia through their Michael King Nurseries Grant Program. The grant allowed us to grow what we need for our National Tree Day plantings in 2022, some improvements to our native nursery at Narrandera's Community Food Garden, and also to propagate 1000 *Allocasuarina verticillata* (Drooping She-oak) seedlings to promote awareness of the habitat requirements for the Glossy Black Cockatoo.

Our volunteers did a sterling job with the She-oaks starting last September, and we are now looking to distribute these 1000 seedlings. Many attendees at Murrumbidgee Landcare's "Bringing Back the Glossy Black" morning took some home and we have committed 50 to interested landholders in the McPherson's Ranges at Griffith.

We need to keep some on hand to plant with Narrandera schools for National Tree Day as they will provide a great talking point about the specialised diet of the Glossy Black Cockatoo's and Threatened Species in general.



We're looking for takers for around 800 seedlings. If anyone is interested please email narranderalandcare@gmail.com. In your email, please state the minimum (we're ok with just 1!) and the maximum you can plant. Please don't be shy with the quantity you're interested in. The important thing to our Landcare Group is to get them out into the landscape! If we're oversubscribed, we'll divvy up the seedlings as best we can.

The grant has allowed us to provide a choice of two guards with each seedling. One is a degradable

cardboard type, the other is a re-usable Corflute style. Hardwood stakes are included with each guard.

We expect to be able to notify applicants by the end of April about what we can provide them. For small quantities you may have to pick them up from our nursery at Narrandera Showgrounds. For larger quantities we may be able to deliver them. The most important thing is to register your interest.

Glenn Currie

Know your daisies Part 13 Shrubs - Cassinias

Members of the Daisy family are mostly annual or biannual herbs. Notable exceptions in the Northern Riverina are the Cassinias and shrub everlastings that are shrubs or semi-shrubs. A few wet sclerophyll forest species attain tall shrub status but none in the family are trees in Australia. Cassinias are noticeably aromatic or sticky to the touch.

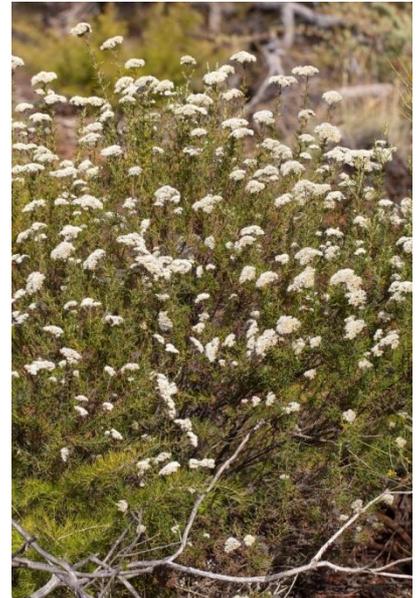
***Cassinia aculeata*, Dolly Bush**

Strongly aromatic shrub, 1-2.5m high, recorded in sclerophyll forest, woodland and heath on sandy or gravelly soils. Stems pubescent with rusty or yellowish glandular hairs. Leaves linear to oblong, often crowded, 10-30mm long, margins recurved, apex mucronate, upper surface sticky, lower yellow-tomentose. Flowerheads in dense corymbs, florets 4-7 per head; florets creamy-white. Involucral bracts alternating.

***Cassinia uncata*, Sticky Cassinia**

Erect sticky shrub, 1-3m high, stems yellowish or greyish. Recorded in mallee or in dry sclerophyll forest, on ridges in gravelly or silty soil. Leaves linear, 10-30mm x c1mm, decurrent, margins tightly revolute, apex

mucronate with a recurved hook, upper surface shiny, glandular, lower obscured but finely pubescent. Flowerheads a dense corymb. Involucral bracts in 4-5 longitudinal ranks, ovate, apex obtuse, opaque white or pale yellow. Florets creamy-white.



***Cassinia heleniae*, (syn *C. adunca*)**

Erect aromatic shrub, to 1.5m high, stems reddish or yellowish, with spreading glandular hairs, leaf scars prominent. Recorded usually in mallee on ridges with stony soil, or on sandy red soil. Leaves linear 10-30mm long, margins revolute, apex mucronate with a recurved hook, base stem clasping, upper surface shiny, scabrous, lower obscured but with a few glandular hairs. Flowerheads in a dense corymb. Involucral bracts in 5-6 longitudinal ranks, ovate with firm glandular bases, apex keeled, thickened, opaque white. Florets creamy-white.

Cassinia hewsoniae

Erect shrub, 0.8-2m high, young stems green to reddish, viscid, with moderately dense glandular hairs. Recorded in mallee or eucalypt woodland on a range of soils, generally on flat terrain. Leaves terete, shortly decurrent, 8-50mm long, margins revolute to midrib, apex straight to reflexed, mucronate, upper surface dull- to glossy-green, viscid at least when young, lower densely white tomentose. Flowerheads in a flat or rounded corymb. Florets cream with green base

***Cassinia sifton*, Drooping Cassinia, Sifton Bush (Chinese Scrub), (syn *C. arcuata*)**

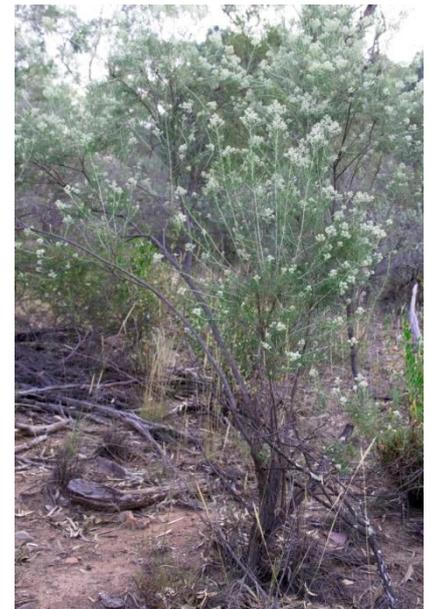
Shrub, to 2m high, stems with very fine white hairs, leaf scars prominent. Recorded in wide variety of habitats on a variety of soils. Leaves linear, 0.4-15mm long, margins revolute, apex obtuse and slightly recurved, upper surface glabrous and sticky, lower surface obscured but ±tomentose. Flowerheads in a dense to loose pyramidal panicle. Involucral bracts in 4-5 imbricate ranks, widely spreading, inner broad-acute, entire, usually deep red- brown or straw-coloured, hyaline. Florets deep red or cream.

***Cassinia laevis*, Cough Bush**

Erect shrub, to 3m high, stems white-woolly, usually with prominent leaf scars. Recorded in a variety of communities on ridges in stony soils and in mallee on red sands. Leaves linear, 10-50mm long, margins revolute to midrib, apex aculeate, upper surface shiny, lower obscured but finely glandular pubescent.



Flowerheads in a dense or diffuse pyramidal panicle. Involucral bracts cartilaginous, in 4-5 longitudinal ranks at maturity, ovate with opaque white apex. Florets creamy-white.



Cassinia quinquefaria

Erect shrub, 1-3m high, stems olive or yellowish, usually resinous and with spreading glandular hairs. Recorded in open sites in dry sclerophyll forest and woodland on a variety of soils. Leaves linear, 20-40mm long, margins revolute, apex acute, surfaces concolorous, upper minutely pubescent, with 2 prominent lateral parallel main veins above. Flowerheads in a dense pyramidal panicle. Involucral bracts in 4-5 longitudinal ranks at maturity, ovate with opaque white limbs. Florets creamy-white.

Eric Whiting

A Visit to the Taleeban Mining Reserve

15 February 2022

With a predicted temperature of 36 degrees on the day, I left home well before 7am and arrived at the Taleeban Reserve just before 8. I tried driving down Anderson Lane to the far end of the reserve where there is that dam on the opposite side of the road. I only managed to get just over halfway and was confronted with a bog across the road with water and mud so opted to park and walk the rest of the way to the dam. That was a good move for at the bog, there were many mallee trees in blossom with lots of honeyeaters feeding on the flowers and also flying down to the muddy water to drink.



Unfortunately, for them and me, bees had occupied the edges of the puddles so the birds were very skittish in trying to get a quick drink without being attacked! I did identify lots of **Yellow-plumed** and **White-eared Honeyeaters** both in the trees and at the water.



I proceeded down the road to the dam where we had seen a good number of birds on previous visits and this time didn't disappoint with loads of birds, mostly honeyeaters coming in to drink. The gate was open so I sat down under a tree beside the dam where I could get a close look at the birds. As well as the above mentioned honeyeaters I did identify a number of **Grey-fronted** birds along with some **Brown-headed Honeyeaters**. In the tree above my head, a male **Hooded Robin** flew in and took no notice of me and went down to the water to drink!

By then, it was starting to warm up so I headed back to my car and went into the reserve. Where we normally park there were 12 or more bee hives so I parked close to the dam, got my chair and breakfast and sat in the shade watching the comings and goings at the rapidly drying pool of water in the dam. It too was surrounded by bees and the birds were again very reluctant to stay long at the water – just flying in for a quick drink and then off again. The honeyeaters were mostly **Spiny-cheeked** or **White-eared** – I have never seen so many **White-eared Honeyeaters** before.



Whilst sitting there, I kept hearing a **Crested Bellbird** calling not far away so I got up to investigate. I located it easily on a low branch calling. It was a male and lovely to see it so close. I then went to check a flowering tree near the dam and to my surprise, a **Shy Heathwren** appeared in a bush beside the path and showed itself for several minutes – a wonderful surprise!



By then it was getting really hot so just before midday I decided it was time to leave and head for home.

Photos from top, all by Marie Lister
Hooded Robin, Crested Bellbird, Shy Heathwren,
Yellow-plumed Honeyeater

Bird list:

Diamond Dove	Peaceful Dove	Bar-shouldered Dove	Rainbow Bee-eater
Mallee Ringneck	Mulga Parrot	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Yellow-throated Miner
Yellow-plumed Honeyeater	Grey-fronted Honeyeater	White-plumed Honeyeater	White-eared Honeyeater
Brown-headed Honeyeater	Striped Honeyeater	Shy Heathwren	White-browed Babbler
Crested Bellbird	Grey Shrike-thrush	Rufous Whistler	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike
Hooded Robin	Willie Wagtail	Apostlebird	White-winged Chough

Max O'Sullivan

MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

Cockatiel [10-20]	Murrumbidgee Rd from mid-January	Daily	Graham Russell
Goanna [large]	Belah St, Leeton	16/01/22	Joy E Young
Golden Orb Spider	Belah St, Leeton – in garden	16/01/22	Joy E Young
Tiger Snake [?]	Belah St, Leeton	Sometimes	Joy E Young
Pink Cockatoo [10]	'Mountain Dam', Colinroobie Rd	28/01/22	Dione Russell
Little Egret [2]	Fivebough Wetlands – not often seen here	04/02/22	Max O'Sullivan
Golden-headed Cisticola	Fivebough Wetlands	05/02/22	P&P Williams
Buff-banded Rail	Fivebough Wetlands	05/02/22	P&P Williams
Nankeen Night Heron	Fivebough Wetlands	05/02/22	P&P Williams
Swamp Harrier	Fivebough Wetlands	05/02/22	P&P Williams
Little Eagle	Tuckerbil Wetlands	07/02/22	Nella Smith
Blue-billed Duck	Tuckerbil Wetlands	07/02/22	Nella Smith
Magpie Goose [50+]	Campbell's Wetlands – 15adults + 35goslings	08/02/22	Max O'Sullivan

There were 2 broods of 9 birds still with the orange heads but the rest were well grown chicks with grey-black bodies and head.

White-breasted Woodswallow	Murrumbidgee River, Narrandera	09/02/22	Susan Whitehead
Bluebonnet [2]	'Mountain Dam', Colinroobie Rd	10/02/22	Graham Russell
Great Egret	Yanco	10/02/22	Alan Whitehead

Keith Hutton's report for 12 February 2022:

Brown Goshawk [1], Hobby [2], Little Egret [1], Latham's Snipe [2], Swamp Harrier [2], Whistling Kite [1], Collared Sparrowhawk [1], Brown Falcon [1], Whiskered Tern [21], Magpie Goose [12], Pied Stilt [23], Kestrel [2], Cattle Egret [20], Black Kite [1], Night Heron [3].

Nankeen Night Heron [12]	Fivebough Wetlands 2 Adults & 10 Juveniles	17/02/22	Max O'Sullivan
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Birds were all together in the main pond seen from the viewing platform.

Great Crested Grebe [1]	Campbell's Wetlands	18/02/22	Max O'Sullivan
Little Eagle [2]	Campbell's Wetlands	18/02/22	Max O'Sullivan
Glossy Black Cockatoo [pr]	Wattle Dam, Binya State Forest	20/02/22	Max O'Sullivan

Birds flew into a tree beside the dam and sat preening with the male feeding the female. They came in about 11.30am but didn't come down to drink whilst I was there.

Common (Indian) Myna [6]	Irrigation Way near Narrandera Airport	26/02/22	Kath&Phil Tenison
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March 2022 sightings:

Nankeen Night Heron [14]	Fivebough Wetlands	01/03/22	Keith Hutton
White-necked Heron [13]	Fivebough Wetlands	01/03/22	Keith Hutton
Australian Hobby [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	01/03/22	Keith Hutton

The following birds were sighted within 5 minutes and 5 metres in Cypress scrub Barellan Rd Narrandera by Alan Whitehead on 6 March 2022:

Weebill [6], Yellow Thornbill [4], Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater [2], Red-capped Robin [2], Rufous Whistler [2], Yellow-rumped Thornbill and Willie Wagtail

Macleay Swallowtail Butterfly	Coastal Vagrant found dead in Joy's garden	06/03/22	Joy E Young
Pelican [12]	Fivebough Wetlands	06/03/22	Keith Hutton
Cattle Egret [41]	Fivebough Wetlands	06/03/22	Keith Hutton
Great Egret [7]	Fivebough Wetlands	06/03/22	Keith Hutton
Intermediate Egret [21]	Fivebough Wetlands	06/03/22	Keith Hutton
Little Egret [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	06/03/22	Keith Hutton
Magpie Goose [10]	Fivebough Wetlands	06/03/22	Keith Hutton
Rainbow Bee-eater [27]	Evans Smyles Rd, Leeton	13/03/22	Keith Hutton
Tree Martin [250-300]	Evans Smyles Rd, Leeton	19/03/22	Keith Hutton
Buff-banded Rail [juv]	Fivebough Wetlands	28/03/22	Keith Hutton
Spotless Crake [5 incl 1 chick]	Fivebough Wetlands	28/03/22	Keith Hutton
Pied Stilt [12]	Fivebough Wetlands	28/03/22	Keith Hutton

Rufous Whistler [Imm male]	Fivebough Wetlands	28/03/22	Keith Hutton
Striated Pardalote [6]	Fivebough Wetlands	28/03/22	Keith Hutton
Brolga [10]	Fivebough Wetlands from Hooey Lookout	29/03/22	Anne Lepper
First sighting of the brolgas for over 3 months.			
Spotted Harrier [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	31/03/22	Max O'Sullivan
Grey Shrike-thrush [Imm]	Whitton	March '22	Margaret Strong
Peaceful Dove [H]	Whitton – first time in town	March '22	Margaret Strong

Margaret also reports numbers of **Sacred Kingfisher** and **Rainbow Bee-eaters** passing through town on their autumn migration north.

Bits and pieces / Member's show and tell

Meredith Billington has sent a link to an article about the recent release of Plains-wanderers on a property near Hay. This reflects the great work by David Parker of National Parks & Wildlife Service.

<https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/wildlife/2022/03/released-critically-endangered-bird-no-longer-wanders-alone/>

I found a link to a **Glossy Black-Cockatoo Field Guide**. This booklet was available at the Bring Back Glossy Black day. It is a fantastic guide, full of information about these birds; their breeding, feeding and more. It is produced by Birdlife Australia.

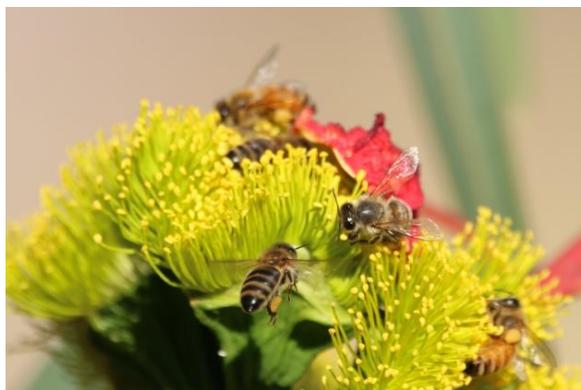
<https://glossyblack.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/SEGBC-Field-Guide-LR.pdf>

The winning species for the **eucalypt of the year** was the Mountain Ash, *Eucalyptus regnans* for 2022 with *Corymbia ficifolia* Red Flowering Gum and *Angophora costata* Sydney Red Gum coming in close behind at second and third place respectively.

Those of you at the March meeting will remember Betty Bradney had a sprig of last year's winner

Eucalyptus erythrocorys
Red Cap Gum, a Western Australian mallee species which is flowering in her garden and she has seen Mallee Ringnecks in it.

Max O'Sullivan also has one and Phil Tension took a photo of some bee pollinators on it, also a Brown Honeyeater feeding.



This photo by Rowena Whiting is of a dead butterfly which Joy Young found in Leeton, it was identified as **Macleay's Swallowtail *Graphium macleayanus***, a rainforest, coastal wet sclerophyll sub-alpine species: blown inland by the recent storms?



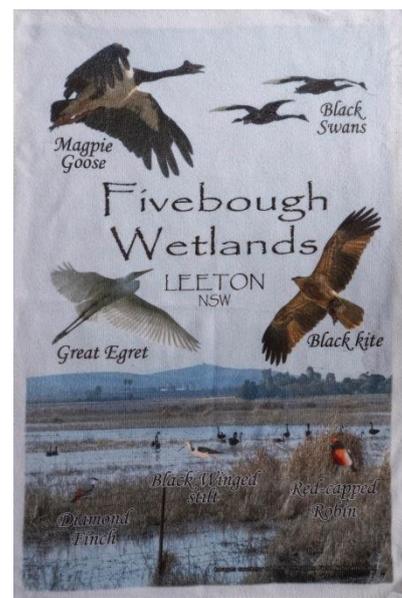
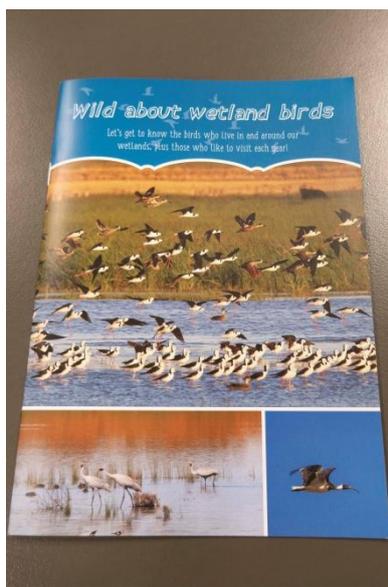
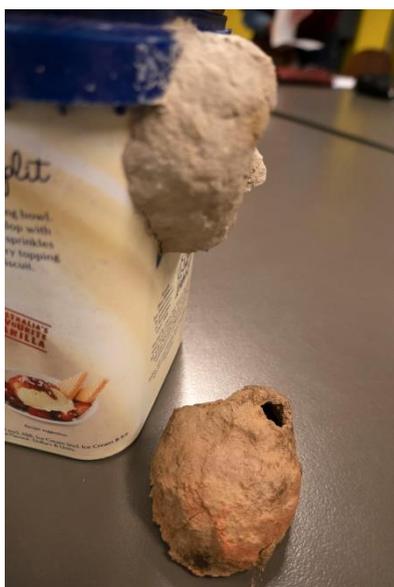
Photo by **Phil Tenison** of a **Small Dinky Swallowtail *Papilio anactus*, alias Black & White Jobbie**; found in his backyard in Leeton.



Susan- Whitehead showed 2 Wasp mud nests, one in clay, another in grey clay on plastic container. She also reported seeing a Hawk Moth with red underneath, another probably a female.

Kathy Tenison showed a poster 'Jewels of the Bush' with wild orchids of the Murray region, southern NSW. Also a brochure of the Birds at Fivebough she has collated.

Rowena Whiting – A tea towel of Fivebough Wetlands which has images supplied by MFN members; available at the Leeton Visitors Centre.



Identifying a Mulga Snake

We spotted this beautiful snake basking on the road. About a metre long. Got a few good pics. So I flicked through my excellent "Complete Guide to Reptiles of Australia" and was unable to find anything like it. So starting again with the rule that it is most likely to be the commonest snake around, because we rarely see rarities, I failed again. Back home, Max sent a picture to Keith Hutton who thought it probably was a Mulga Snake, yes, a very common and widespread snake. So how did I fail with the guide?

This snake was clearly grey with tinges of green. The guide states "colour highly variable, pale brown, olive to rich reddish brown". I guess "colour highly variable" is the key, it certainly wasn't brown. Later, scanning online I found a couple of pictures of this colour. Also you can see it has a flattened head, and on reading the intro to the genus it says "When threatened they flatten their necks ..."

The moral of the tale ... go straight for the most common possibility.

I have had similar experiences in bird id with birds less known to me. As good as the drawings in the guides are, and I think they are fantastic artwork, the apps (I use PK Birds) also have photos and often give a much different impression.

Neil Palframan

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist

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**** COMING EVENTS ****

Please note all outings are subject to weather conditions.

Covid-19 restrictions need to be adhered to, for outings you must register with the nominated person by email (preferred) or phone to participate, do not come if unwell. By registering you declare that 'I am symptom free and have not been in contact with a confirmed case of Covid 19, or directed to isolate'. Masks and social distancing are required as per current Covid rules.

- 14 April Thursday** **Monthly Meeting has been cancelled due to Easter long w/e**
- 24 April Sunday** **Outing to Rocky Waterholes and the Wetlands, Narrandera.**
Meet at the Lake Talbot Rotary Lookout, Narrandera.
Time: 9am
We will walk along the north track and return (there are some steep steps). Morning tea will be at the Narrandera Wetlands followed by a circular walk. Outing will probably conclude around 1pm. Bring lunch if you like.
Contact/leader: Alan Whitehead Please register with him.
Phone 02 6959 3779 Email: alanwhitehead41@gmail.com
- 4 May Wednesday** **Copy for the May newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**
Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com. Phone: 6953 2612.
- 12 May Thursday** **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7pm.
Topic: Intelligent Tourism
Guest Speaker: John Collins
Contact: Dione Russell 0428 536 290
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- 14 or 15 May** **Outing TBA,**
Saturday or Sunday **Leader is required. Location is your choice. Please contact Eric Whiting**
Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com. Phone: 6953 2612.

OTHER EVENTS

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

[The turquoise parrot: Back from the brink](#) (Murrumbidgee Landcare) -27 April, 10.30 am to 2.00 pm. Once on the verge of extinction, this fascinating little bird has achieved a remarkable feat! Come along for a walk & talk to learn more about creating homes for the Turquoise Parrot and a range of other native woodland species.

[Catchment Keepers workshop](#) (Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc) -28 April, 10.00 am to 4.00 pm, Whitton. Join us for a day of practical learning, inspiring stories, and relaxed chatting with other women from local farms. Featured sessions include: A farm walk with Emma Ayliffe (Crop Doctor & Australian Young Farmer of the Year 2020-21), a rural journey with Andrea Mitchell, growing Australian native flower and grass seeds with Joanne Diver (The Backyard Garden Enthusiast), and a creative workshop to try some fabric dyeing.