The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



August 2024 - Issue #328

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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 healthy swamp wallaby at Quandong Park near Milbrulong observed 4th August 2024 field trip to Jeff and Larraine Hoffmans' nature reserve.

Joanne Connolly

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CONTRIBUTIONS

For the September issue by Wednesday 4 September
To Rowena Whiting

Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com.

Phone: 6953 2612

"In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks."

-John Muir

Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

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Treasurer:	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:

Leeton **Eric Whiting** 6953 2612 Griffith Virginia Tarr 0434 831 031 Narrandera Sarah Danckert 0427 276 306 Nella Smith 0428 890 537 Wagga Wagga Adult/Single \$35.00 **Annual Subscriptions:** Family \$45.00 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.

New Local Landcare Coordinator based in Narrandera

Hello Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists! My Name is Jessie, and I am the newly appointed Local Landcare Coordinator for the Bidgee Irrigation area, covering Griffith, Leeton, Narrandera, and surrounding townships. First and foremost, I would like to thank you all for the opportunity to attend your last meeting held on 11 July 2024, it was an absolute pleasure to meet your group and I am in awe of the amazing work you all do.

I am responsible for providing support to and assisting with the coordination of local volunteer Landcare groups. I collaborate with stakeholders including Local Land Services, Local Councils, Landcare committees, Regional Coordinators, and other Local Landcare Coordinators. Effectively, I am a resource for Landcare to develop partnerships, and attract project funding for project delivery.

For the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists, this support may look like:

- Community liaison.
- Communication support.
- Planning support.
- Provide on-ground support during events.
- Rostering and coordination of volunteers.
- Grant submission assistance.
- Local priority action plan.

Currently, the projects I am working on include organising a Biodiversity Conservation Trust workshop being hosted at Allandale in Narrandera, identifying areas across Bidgee Irrigation for future projects, organising a Southern Bio Blitz to be held in Morundah, and building a network for all groups to tap into for assistance.

My office is located at 52 East Street in Narrandera, we have an open-door policy and encourage members to drop in.

Alternatively, you can reach me on 0438 406 417 or imcpherson@mli.org.au



Jessie McPherson

We were very pleased to welcome you at our meeting where you conveyed your enthusiasm and new role. Many thanks for coming to our meeting, Jessie, we all look forward to working with you.

Livingstone National Park July 2024

On a very frosty start to the morning, a group of 19 Ovens and Murray birders and Murrumbidgee field naturalists, led by Darcy Creece (Birdlife on behalf of O&M) and Sarah Danckert (MFN) met at the entrance to the park before setting out on a day of birding and plant sighting. Providing the soundtrack to our first walk was a volley of rifle fire from the shooting club adjacent to the park entrance... apparently the gunfire does not scare off the birds.

Fortunately, the weather didn't stay cold and the fog lifted to make a perfect birding day which clearly the birds didn't know about as we did not see a large number (perhaps a lack of flowering trees): in fact several of the



The view from the saddle across to The Rock



Scarlet Robin around about where Darcy had seen him on a previous visit.

On the naturalist

side of things, some notable plant sightings were Rusty Grevillea see right), Kangaroo Acacia and Ploughshare Wattle.

Unfortunately, no-one got much in the way of bird snaps so there's only one taken by Rob Boehm, a Grey Butcherbird.



Darcy Creece

Birdlist (compiled by Darcy Creece and Sarah Danckert)

Australian Magpie	Australian Raven	Brown-headed Honeyeater	Buff-rumped Thornbill
Common Starling	Crimson Rosella	Eastern Yellow Robin	Golden Whistler
Grey Butcherbird	Grey Fantail	Grey Shrike-thrush	Inland Thornbill
Laughing Kookaburra	Mistletoe Bird	Noisy Miner	Pied Butcherbird
Pied Currawong	Red Wattlebird	Red-rumped Parrot	Restless Flycatcher
Scarlet Robin	Spotted Pardalote	Striated Pardalote	Superb Fairy-wren
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Weebill	Welcome Swallow	White-browed Babbler
White-plumed Honeyeate	er	White-throated Treecreepe	r Yellow Thornbill
Yellow-faced Honeyeater		Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	
•		· ·	

Birdlife Ovens and Murray Branch <u>ovensmurray@birdlife.org.au</u> and check out news of their outings, photos from the field, and all things birds <u>https://www.facebook.com/birdlifeom</u>

Andrew's with a difference

We have had several field trips to Andrew's place, "Yarrambimbi", at Colinroobie, but this time we were on a mission. Andrew had reported seeing a black gooey deposit in the cliffs overlooking his place. Long-time members may recall Enid reported the same in a Mt Caley cave. Her enquiries elicited that the origin was water seeping into mammal droppings. But what mammal was responsible?

After a warming cuppa – after all it was July and although the sun was shining there was a bitingly cold south-westerly blowing – we headed off into the V-shaped valley enclosed by cliffs. After crossing the creek our walk steadily got steeper until after winding through rock defiles, emerged on the cliff tops on the western side (right-hand looking from Andrew's). Despite being in the open woodland the tree cover was sufficient to protect us from the wind, Apart from being rocky ground it was really pleasant walking along the cliff top. Only after a short distance we dived down another rock defile to get to the cave.







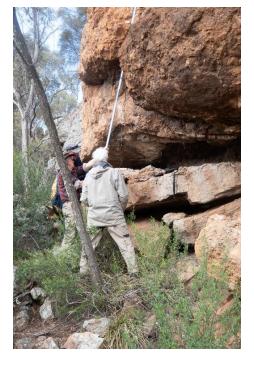
Cave – well it is only an overhang caused by softer sandstone/siltstone being eroded faster than the capping conglomerate. The deposit was easily seen on a chest high ledge with not much headroom. We had carried the group's nest box camera and also a motion camera with us only to find it hard to get the nest box camera into a good position.

Nevertheless we did obtain some images.

Positioning this motion camera was also a problem, settled on strapping it to a small tree far lower than desired. (This was corrected the following week by Glenn and Andrew by carrying a ladder up to the site.) Sarah also managed to scrape off a sample for later examination. It looked soft and moist but proved harder than the fine sandstone it was deposited on.

Whilst the cameras were being set up, some of us went round a big boulder, part of the conglomerate capping that had broken away, to examine an interesting tunnel in the lower side. It was about a metre in diameter, with smooth rounded roof and sides. The floor was covered in rock debris. We speculated on how it was formed. A subsurface stream in the boulder beds before they became conglomerate, or the top of a tight anticline arch resulting from the massive folding during mountain building? Very intriguing, Sarah and I are seeking answers,

Once done at the cave, we regained the cliff top and followed it round to the viewpoint on the eastern side of the 'V'. You can see right down Andrew's valley and across to the Brobenah Hills. Also looking across the V, the cave area and the big boulder can easily be seen.



From here we continued along the cliff tops, rounding the waterfall area to walk down the ridge enclosing Andrew's valley on the northern side. A brief stop at the lookout on southern side of the ridge told us just how protected we had been as the view towards Leeton faced directly into the wind.

A little further on we reached the sheltered BBQ area where Ana and Nella already had the kettle on for lunch. Afterwards we took a diversion below the north facing cliff line to see the wombat holes dug into the overhangs. Then it was back over the ridge to drop back to Andrew's place before sharing our thanks and farewells.

Eric Whiting

Birdlist – compiled by Sarah Danckert

Galah 6, Grey Shrike-thrush 2, Little Raven 4, Australian Wood Duck 2, Magpie-lark 2, Australasian Grebe 2, Pacific Black Duck 1, Willie Wagtail 2, Grey Butcherbird - heard, White-plumed Honeyeater 10, Eastern Yellow Robin - heard, Weebill 10, Red-capped Robin 2, Inland Thornbill 2, White-browed Babbler 10, Brown Treecreeper 2, Peaceful Dove - heard, Mulga Parrot 6, Double-barred Finch 20, Laughing Kookaburra - heard, Wedge-tailed Eagle 1, Australian Magpie 2, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater - heard, Brown Falcon 1

Narrandera Landcare's National Tree Day 2024

National Tree Day was Sunday, 28 July and our Landcare group hosted a community planting morning at Narrandera Wetlands. 35 people attended and helped plant around 200 trees and shrubs, and 600 forbs and grasses.

In the week preceding, local schools got on board again and about 80 students from Narrandera Public, Narrandera High and St Joseph's Primary helped plant on different days. The school groups were all good to work with. The Narrandera High kids were particularly energetic on the Thursday and we had to hold them back a bit to leave some seedlings for Sunday!

Apart from Narrandera High's enthusiasm, the other great thing about Thursday's planting was when we walked around the Wetlands we saw 4 Magpie Geese perched on a dead tree. The kids

weren't as excited as me (to be honest they didn't get excited at all) but I did some research and they've only been recorded at the Wetlands a very few times before, so I've put them down as a sighting.

The seedlings we planted were grown by our group at Narrandera's Food Garden, starting with a propagating workshop we held last September to show Hay Plains Landcare how we do things. Hay Landcare were setting up their own native nursery at the time and were after ideas on how to proceed. I've since visited their nursery, it's up and running and they're kicking goals with their propagating efforts.

Trees and shrubs we propagated and planted included **River Sheoak** *Casuarina cunninghamiana*, **Cooba** *Acacia salicina*, **Boree** *Acacia pendula* and **Nitre Goosefoot** *Chenopodium nitrariaceum*. The forbs included **Bulbine Lilies** *Bulbine bulbosa* and **Tufted Burr Daisy** *Calotis scapigera*. The *Calotis* can form a dense mat in the river country which may help with suppressing the Lippia and other weeds at the Wetlands. We experimented and planted it singularly, in large groups and in rows and will be monitoring it to see how it fares. If it does well, we'll do more next year.

Something like this planting day is always a group effort. The propagating workshop was funded by Landcare Australia from a donation by Michael King. We appreciate the funding they gave us as well as all the help volunteers have given us to propagate and plant. Leeton Toyota assisted us again this year with tree guards, hats, gloves and promotional assistance, and Narrandera Pizzeria once again provided pizzas afterwards for our volunteer planters. These pizzas always go down well and saves us from organising a BBQ so are especially appreciated!

The world is very into social media these days but I'm not so much. I like to submit articles about Narrandera Landcare's doings to the Narrandera Argus. Seeing something printed in a newspaper is a bit more real to me and Liz Lawrence from The Argus has been incredibly supportive of Narrandera Landcare's projects over the years, publishing many stories about our activities. Many thanks Liz. The Argus's support has been very important to our group.

Glenn Currie

Planet Ark Tree Day Planting Event at Lake Wyangan - Sunday 28th July 2024

It was a beautiful fresh sunny day with many willing hands that were keen to get the job done. Some families with young children were having fun sloshing around in the mud planting the grasses?? to stop soil erosion. We loved the idea of using the cardboard guards and staked by the one bamboo only.

There were 36 participants and we planted 350 seedlings. Rushes, sedges and some trees were planted

around the edge of the Fisherman's Swathe area. Guards were placed around the plantings. About 20 trees were planted on the edge of the adjoining grassy slope.

We were rewarded with an early BBQ of sausages, rissoles, coleslaw, and BBQed vegie sticks? Put on by Owen Toyota volunteers. They did a marvellous job.





Some of us were curious about the Pelicans x 6 approximately and great number of Little Black Cormorants circling in a patch out in the middle of the lake as Sarah was saying that, the Pelicans were herding the fish then feeding.

Ema Munro and Virginia Tarr

Keep a look out for an emerging disease in swamp wallabies



Healthy swamp wallaby (as cover)

A potentially lethal disease has recently been detected in swamp wallabies (*Wallabia bicolor*) that the Australian Registry of Wildlife Health (ARWH, the registry) is investigating. Swamp wallabies (and a few red-neck wallabies) with erosive lesions

affecting the ears and cloudy eyes were first observed in Mimosa Rocks National Park near the towns of Tathra and Bermagui in New South

Wales in 2017. One affected wallaby had a draining facial

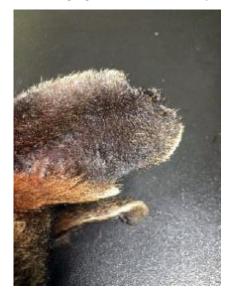
abscess known colloquially as "lumpy jaw". The individual was euthanased and necropsied and a single-celled parasite called *Trypanosoma* was detected in the ear lesions and is currently being further characterised by molecular testing.

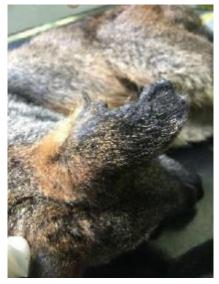
Subsequently, swamp wallabies with eroded ear tips, cloudy corneas and possible evidence of terminal seizures with the same parasite present were identified in Newport and Elvina Bay in the Northern Beaches LGA in Sydney in 2021. It is believed that the disease is spreading widely across New South Wales. I have seen swamp wallabies in Coolamon in 2021 and in Canberra Wildlife Photography Facebook group in 2024 with similar appearing ear tip loss. Whenever I



Joanne with a swamp wallaby

am in the bush anywhere, I am now looking out for swamp wallabies to check if these populations have this emerging ear condition to report to the registry.







Swamp wallaby at Mimosa Rocks National Park with severe erosion of the pinnae, corneal oedema and lumpy jaw. (Source: ARWH).

Swamp wallaby from Lovett Bay. Eroded ear margins with nodular margins. (Source: ARWH)

Additional work is required to demonstrate that the parasite is causing the lesions, rather than just present in the blood of the affected wallabies. Wildlife veterinarians from the registry would like to examine additional animals that may be affected.

The registry is seeking anyone that observes swamp wallabies showing ear erosion, cloudy eyes or abnormal neurological signs such as circling, seizures etc to call or email them with details of where, when and what you observed plus your contact details and any photographs or videos you have taken.

Compiled by Joanne Connelly

References

Australian Registry of Wildlife Health (2021). Project profile: an emerging disease in swamp wallabies. https://arwh.org/project-profile-an-emerging-disease-in-swamp-wallabies/

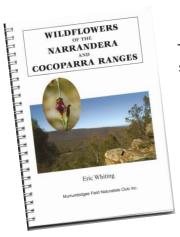
NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (2024). Swamp wallaby.

https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/plants-and-animals/swamp-wallaby

West Pittwater Community Association (2021). Swamp wallaby and links to swamp wallaby ear disease. https://www.westpittwater.com.au/pittwater/fauna/swamp-wallaby/

Contact Australian Registry of Wildlife Health:

Phone: <u>02 9978 4749</u> or <u>02 9978 4788</u> or Email: <u>arwh@taronga.org.au</u>



Be ready for Spring with MFN's Flora Guide

This Field Guide by Eric Whiting covers most of the native wildflowers commonly seen in the Narrandera and Cocoparra Ranges, and which also occur in the other ranges and hills from Narrandera to the Lachlan River.

225 species are described with 136 colour photographs.

A simplified key aids the identification of the plants,

Price is \$25 (inc. GST) or \$20 to MFN members

Copies available at club meetings or Eric Whiting phone (02) 6953 2612 or Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com

Leeton Visitor Information Centre have copies.

Birds On Farms Winter Surveys

Winter was definitely here as we completed our surveys. 12 degrees feels like 8, wind and rain.

At Mundarlo we were lucky enough to see a Dusky Woodswallow, a pair of Striated Pardalote entering a

hollow with nesting material. And the Singing Honeyeater who seems to be a permanent resident at the homestead. At a revegetation site we heard a Fantail Cuckoo calling and saw a flock of 30+ Double-barred Finch.

Later that afternoon at **Yabtree West** we watched a flock of White-naped Honeyeater feeding on the lerps and a small group of Striated and Spotted Pardalote.

The following day in much improved conditions we completed 3 successful surveys near **Mt Adrah**. Highlights being a Little Eagle, 2 Diamond Firetail, 2 Striated Thornbill and 7 Flame Robin.





hollow

We stopped for lunch in the sunshine at the entry to **Ellerslie Nature Reserve**. We were entertained by a couple of Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters feeding in the mistletoe and a pair of Flame and Scarlet Robins dropped down to say hello.

We then walked into the reserve along the fire trail and saw a White-browed Scrub Wren. And we spotted a Wombat was sunning himself along the creek and some interesting fungi and slime mould.

Janet Hume

Photos: Ellerslie Creek and Striated Pardalote at a

Glossy Black Cockatoo Census Chewings

I wanted to show Nella a very large patch of what I thought was maybe Gorse Bitter Pea that I stumbled across recently. It was in some bush just north of Narrandera and whilst trying to find it again we came across these chewings under a Hill Oak. Nella was surprised to see Glossy Blacks feeding this close to Narrandera, just 3.5km from the Post Office. I was talking with Mike Schultz recently and he was also interested to learn of this. I thought this maybe an observation worth recording.







I thought you may find this interesting. I put that Eucalypt leaf with the galls on it, on iNaturalist and came up

with https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/229154999

A suggested identification is the Genus *Apiomorpha* of <u>scale</u> <u>insect</u> that induces <u>galls</u> on species of <u>Eucalyptus</u>.

For more info https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apiomorpha

Glenn Currie

MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

Significant sightings

Barking Owl [1]	Irrigation Way, Leeton	05/07/24	Mike Schultz
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	Livingstone National Park	0707/24	MFN Field Trip
Scarlet Robin	Livingstone National Park	0707/24	MFN Field Trip
Red-capped Robin [2]	Yarrabimbi, Colinroobie Rd, via Leeton	14/07/24	MFN Field Trip
White-browed Babbler [10]	Yarrabimbi, Colinroobie Rd, via Leeton	14/07/24	MFN Field Trip
Restless Flycatcher [1]	Tootool Wetlands	21/07/24	SDanckert, S Lidden
Brown Treecreeper	Tootool Wetlands	21/07/24	SDanckert, S Lidden
Grey-crowned Babbler [6]	Lutheran Church, Milbrulong	21/07/24	SDanckert, S Lidden
Magpie Geese [4]	Narrandera Wetlands	25/07/24	Glenn Currie
Scarlet Robin [2]	Ellerslie Nature Reserve, Mt Adrah	26/07/24	SDanckert, JHume
Yellow-Tufted Honeyeater [4]	Ellerslie Nature Reserve, Mt Adrah	26/07/24	SDanckert, JHume
Flame Robin [2]	Ellerslie Nature Reserve, Mt Adrah	26/07/24	SDanckert, JHume
Diamond Firetail [2]	Ellerslie Nature Reserve, Mt Adrah	26/07/24	SDanckert, JHume
Fuscous Honeyeater [15]	Ellerslie Nature Reserve, Mt Adrah	26/07/24	SDanckert, JHume

Other sightings of note These do not meet the criteria of significant sightings that the Committee are discussing – see Meeting minutes for details.

White-Browed Babbler	Livingstone National Park	0707/24	MFN Field Trip
Brown-Headed Honeyeater	Livingstone National Park	0707/24	MFN Field Trip
White-browed Babbler	Kindra State Forest, Coolamon	11/07/24	S Danckert
Jacky Winter [2]	Kindra State Forest, Coolamon	11/07/24	S Danckert
Apostlebird [10]	Tootool Wetlands	21/07/24	SDanckert, S Lidden
Whistling Kite [1 Juv]	Campbells Wetland, Griffith	28/07/24	VTarr,SDanckert,SLidden
Black Kite [30]	Lake Albert, Wagga Wagga	29/07/24	S Shamsi

Compiled by Janet Hume, reviewed by Nella Smith.

Other events

If you have an interest in native birds, there are three exhibitions by acclaimed printmaker of birds, trees and books, **Martin King**, that will run concurrently for the month of August in Wagga.

He will attend an opening of his artwork 'Now and Then' at 2:30PM Saturday 10 August at **The Curious Rabbit**, 44 Johnston St. Wagga Wagga. The exhibition will run for the month of August.

Two further exhibitions will run during August at Wagga Campus Library Building 13 level 4; at the CSU Winery Cellar Door. Find information about the artist here.

Western Riverina Seed Workshop Series near Tabbita on 25 September and 13 November

to explore the enchanting world of native species seed and regeneration.

For more information please email bidgeewest@mli.org.au or call 0408 629 553.

Time to celebrate our 30th Anniversary

The club's first meeting and outing were held in mid-October 1994.

The committee is looking for ideas - how would you like to celebrate this occasion?

**** 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.

8 August Thursday

Monthly Meeting in the Yellow Room at the Leeton Library, Sycamore St., Leeton

commencing at 7pm.

Guest Speaker: Jessica Todd, Research Officer at DPI, Yanco.

Topic: Monitoring of Feral Animals

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

Bring along your 'show & tell'

Contact: Dionee Russell 0428 536 290

Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.

10 August Saturday

Sandhill Revegetation Site in MIA I and Mad Mile TSR.

Meet at 1:00pm

Where: at the intersection of Irrigation Way and Graham's Grave Road.

Bring afternoon tea.

To register or for more details glenncurrie100@hotmail.com or 0488 563 321

4 September Wednesday Copy for the September newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.

Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com Phone: 0429 726 120.

5 September Thursday

Committee Meeting @ 7pm via Zoom

All members are welcome to participate.

Contact: Dionee Russell 0428 536 290 or the Club email.

12 September Thursday

Monthly Meeting in the Yellow Room at the Leeton Library, Sycamore St.,

Leeton commencing at 7pm.

Topic: TBA

Join in person if you can. The presentation will be available via Zoom

Bring along your 'show & tell'

Contact: Dionee Russell 0428 536 290

Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.

14th September Saturday

Moombooldool / Kamarah area Laneway mallee vegetation.

We'll have a car crawl with frequent stops to see flowering plants in remnant mallee patches along a lane. Local traffic will be infrequent, though protection for personal equipment from dust is recommended. Travelling north a few kms from the end of the lane, we'll explore a Travelling Stock Reserve with the expectation of seeing birds and plants in a different habitat. Bring morning tea, lunch and wear the usual protective clothing for the season.

Meet: 8.45am

Place: Yalgogrin Rd intersection with Burley Griffin Way, Moombooldool. **Contact:** Margaret Strong 0434060973 (text) or strong.margaret@bigpond.com by 12/9/24.

September is biodiversity month -

Is there something you'd like to see the club doing to participate in during this month? A way to promote ourselves? A community event? A display at library. Please bring along any ideas to the monthly meeting or discuss with a committee member.