The Murrumbidgee Naturalist

March 2026 - Issue #344
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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

Lace Monitor
Varanus varius
Photographed by
Lisa Parker in Red Gum near the Lachlan River at Booligool

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CONTRIBUTIONS

For the April issue by Wednesday 1 April

To Rowena Whiting

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All my life through, the new sights of Nature made me rejoice like a child

- Marie Curie

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

INTENDING NEW MEMBERS, GUESTS AND VISITORS WELCOME.

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

Welcome to March

This month's issue is full of interesting items with a good variety of topics, pictures and writing: our thanks go to the various members who have taken time to collate their thoughts and in the process, researched species and other relevant items. In Margaret's case, a concerted effort to understand the history of the Mirrool (Merool) Creek and surrounding area as written in the 1800s. This month's segment features the vegetation where she has sought to match the genus names with probable species. Remember it was written in the 1850's as you read. Margaret would welcome your feedback.

Do share your nature observations of interest that you find on your walks, travels or in the garden. There is usually an interesting story to go with it. Just relate what you said to someone when showing them a photo!

Coming up this month, our Guest Speaker is **Bill Handke** who will be discussing **"The Myna problem"**. While this will be via Zoom we will still be meeting in the Leeton Library. We will be visiting our local wetlands and other birding locations with the Ovens & Murray Bird Group.

How lovely was it to have some rain particularly for us in Leeton which so often misses out. Hopefully it will start the regeneration process and the real Autumn will soon be with us.

Enjoy your read and your month, your feedback is welcome, **Rowena**.

Call for Applications for MFN Environment Fund Grants

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

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

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

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

A Focus on Fruit Bats

At the February meeting in the Yellow Room at Leeton Library our knowledge of Fruit Bats was undoubtedly enriched.

This was through watching a video of a recorded talk **Dr Andrew Peters (CSU)** gave to Wagga Wagga Urban Landcare in the field in 2020. He is an **Associate Professor in Wildlife Health and Pathology** at Charles Sturt University and is involved in various aspects of wildlife health. The video covers bats in general, their physiology, their role in the environment, virus transmission and how susceptible they are to thermal thresholds, amongst other things.

Little Red Flying-Fox *Pteropus scapulatu* at McCaughey's Lagoon

They represent a quarter of all mammal species; in Wagga over half of its 36 mammal species are bats. The next abundant is rodents. Bats rank among the world's least understood animals.

There are 4 Flying Fox species in Australia. The Little Red Flying-fox is found locally; at Yanco (McCaugheys Lagoon), Narrandera (Lake Talbot), Griffith (Jubilee Park) and Wagga Wagga (Bat Island). The Grey-headed Flying-fox is the dominant species at the latter; it is a vulnerable species while the Little Red Flying-fox is protected.

Little Red Flying-Fox caught on barbed wire in Griffith – Sarah Danckert

They are fruit and flower eating megabats and are important/critical to the pollination and dispersal of seeds. They are also insectivores and help control many agricultural pests and other disease-spreading insects such as mosquitoes. They are renowned for the immense distances they fly to forage covering much larger distances (up to 50km) than birds or insects. As such they play a crucial role in ecosystem health.

Some hazards are getting caught in barbed wire and netting, also being attacked cats and dogs. He pointed out that we can help by not putting barbed wire on the top row of a fence. If you find one in distress the message is don't touch unless you are vaccinated; call your local wildlife care group.

While the bats are immune to the viruses they carry, they are well known for the part they play in their spread. Hendra is the main one which is deadly to horses but not contagious in humans: others include rabies, covid. It is when they are under stress that they shed the virus mainly through urine. Heat stress is not uncommon and mortality occurs when the thermal threshold exceeds what they can cope with. This has become more prevalent with the hotter conditions being experienced. A case in 2018 in one day a third of the world's population of Spectacled Flying-foxes in far north Queensland died. As one of the main pollinators in tropical rainforests this is a major concern.

Alongside this is we see drought and starvation mainly caused by deforestation, playing a major role along with fire causing mass mortalities up and down the east coast of Australia. These species have already declined significantly. However, they are adaptable of which there are a few signs – roosting in the lower canopy where it is cooler. Drones are being used to scare them down on very hot days, misters are also being used to reduce the temperature. With these ecological pressures, just like us, when they are stressed they can get sick; they already have these viruses so will shed a lot more and there is a risk it will spread into other species.

The pressure we put on the natural environment is changing the relationship between species, putting them under pressure which can lead to these disease spillovers. Wildlife diseases correlate very strongly with areas of deforestation. Reforestation is regarded as the key strategy to solve the Hendra problem.

He concluded by saying these are massive problems far beyond the scope or resourcing of governments, mainly due to scale and human behaviour. Hence not easily solvable with technological innovation. That's where community engagement and wildlife health becomes important – detect diseases early, convey these

stories so people can understand how these types of behaviours come back to us and what these species do for us. There is a need to engage community seeking what they want and what they can offer to relieve pressure on ecosystems for wildlife.

The more you learn about them the more fascinating they are. WIRES 1300 066 055

Rowena Whiting

PS. It seems we do not know where our local colonies travel to feed. This question was asked by a Griffith member last year but no feedback was forthcoming. Anyone up for a nighttime excursion?

Here is the link to the video for those not at the meeting, or you may like to re-watch:

https://vimeo.com/485898638/cd4cd5c69a
Suggestion is to download it first, then view it. Ed.

A little more…

Lisa Parker has checked out the colony in Griffith:

I had a look at the bat colony to try to get you some pictures. They have been living in the pine trees on the north western corner of Jubilee Oval for as long as I can remember - at least the last 10 years.

Bats: Flying Mammals of the Night Webinar

Janet Hume sent this link to the recording of a recent webinar from Biolinks Alliance on bats which she says is "is very interesting, informative and worth listening to. Has a slight emphasis on Victoria, but applies equally to round here."

https://biolinksalliance.org.au/knowledge-hub-blog/2025/5/5/bats-flying-mammals-of-the-night-webinar

Myna or Miner – Not a minor problem

Have you seen one of these birds?

Common or Indian Myna: photo Kathy Tenison

Noisy Miner: photo Kathy Tenison

They are both very aggressive birds, however while the Noisy Miner is native, the Common (or Indian) Myna is introduced, is ranked as one of the worlds 100 most invasive species and is impacting our native small birds.

Report any sightings of Indian / Common Mynas to http://www.feralscan.org.au/mynascan, mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com, https://ebird.org, or https://birdata.birdlife.org.au with the place, numbers of Mynas and date of sighting. Approximate sightings from 2025 are also welcome.

Any sightings in urban, bushland or roadside locations need to be reported.

Sighting records are needed to understand the scope and size of their invasion so that we can lobby Shire Councils to inform residents about actions to take."

Glossy Black Cockatoo Count - February 2026

MFN conducted a regional count in a limited way due to that many dams in the Narrandera Hills and Cocoparras were dry. The landscape was also dry across the region so the birds are forced to the farm dams to drink if only we knew which ones…

North of Narrandera 3 groups visited dams with 9 birds being sighted. These appeared to be in groups of 3, perhaps male and female and a youngster from last year. In the Brobenah Hills 14 birds were sighted in total. In Narrandera and Walleroobie none were seen. Some landholders in Rankins Springs observed a few flyovers.

It is always interesting to see what other fauna visits the dams at this time of the year and how variable that can be across the region and from dam to dam.

One dam had many turtles showing their heads every now and again above the water. The same dam had little other birdlife. Another dam had half a dozen Black Wallabies and more than 20 Common Bronzewing. Other pigeons were Crested Pigeon and Peaceful Dove. Eastern Rosellas, Galahs and Red Rumps as well as a few Glossy Black Cockatoo were the parrots. All of these species must drink every day as they are seed eaters. Commonest honeyeaters were White-plumed and Striped. White-winged Chough, Apostlebirds, Magpies and Mud Larks came to every dam. One dam had Rainbow Bee-eaters and some had Pardalotes.

This is a difficult area to survey as it is mostly on private land, the roads can be sinuous, the dams can be difficult to find and there can be 500 kangaroos on the roadside on the way home.

Nella Smith

From Virginia Tarr, organiser of the Griffith area.

Inspecting ALL the dams in the Binya State Reserve and Cocoparra NP, Trevor and I found them ALL bone dry and one with 3 upturned vehicles in it. The surrounding property owners also had dry dams, except Bill Kite who had one dam near the road that had 2 Glossy Black Cockatoos fly over and another dam, both with water, near The old Binya homestead, not any Glossy Black Cockatoos seen there. His Mt. Pleasant dams were dry.

In the Rankins Springs region, Mark Dwyer reported dry dams on all properties he notified. Rodney Guest stated that one property owner had a large number visit his dam weeks earlier. Rodney will report if any in the coming weeks.

Did you know that March 23rd is National Eucalypt Day?

This year's theme is Our Eucalypt Home: Unique. Irreplaceable. Treasured.

Look out for events and you can vote for your favourite Eucalypt.
https://eucalyptaustralia.org.au/national-eucalypt-day/

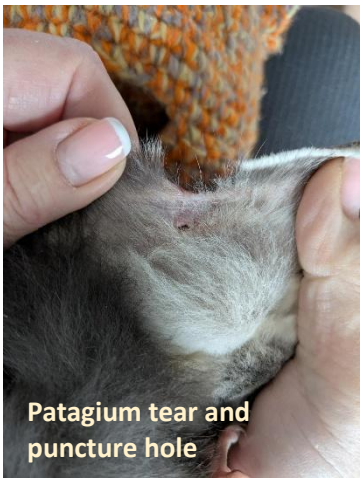
Eucalypts support our Australian wildlife in a surprising number of irreplaceable, ingenious and often invisible ways.

Caterpillars and the Squirrel Glider

As a licenced wildlife carer through WIRES, I was out last week looking for eucalypt branches to provide food for a Squirrel Glider, *Petaurus norfolcensis* I'm looking after. Squirrel Gliders are nocturnal, arboreal omnivores.

Squirrel Gliders conservation status is listed as Vulnerable in NSW, but the population in the Wagga Wagga LGA is further classified as an Endangered Population. The key threats are:

- Loss and fragmentation of habitat
- Loss or reduction in numbers of hollow-bearing trees from forestry activities and timber collecting.
- Loss of flowering understorey and midstorey shrubs in forests and woodlands.
- Individuals can get caught in barbed wire fences while gliding



Patagium tear and puncture hole

This Squirrel Glider was fortunately seen by a home owner, the long dense fur of her tail caught on a barbed wire fence. She is a juvenile and had sustained a tear to the right patagia (the skin-like membrane between her wrist and ankle) as well as a puncture hole.

Squirrel Gliders are a little larger than Sugar Gliders, have a pointier, a dark fur stripe from between the eyes to the mid-back and a long furry, bushy tail as wide as the body at the base. Body length 20cm, tail 27cm.

They feed on insects (caterpillars, beetles and stick insects), pollen and nectar (mostly from eucalypts), and plant exudates like sap, gum or resin from acacia or eucalypt.

I was doubly thrilled when I found caterpillars on a eucalypt I had cut. At home using iNaturalist, I was able to identify them as Black Slug Cup Moth (BSCM) *Doratifera casta* (although this one is more green than

Black Slug Cup Moth *Doratifera casta* has sharp spines that hold venom causing stinging.

Above: you can see the caterpillar fully attached to my hand along its length.
Above left: The underside of the caterpillar.
Left: the cocoon.

black, it is the only *Doratifera* I could find that had the slug feature - an absence of legs and instead a sucking-slug like under surface). I had seen this caterpillar's cocoon before! I'd seen the empty cup. I wanted to go back to the tree to see if there was a full cup,

But first, how did I know if my glider would eat the caterpillars? A Google Scholar search found a paper reporting the BSCM DNA in Squirrel Glider faeces! And were they delicious such that I didn't need to supply meal worms? The meal worms were easy to track, they could not climb out of the food container. The BSCM could traverse any surface in its slug-like propulsion. I decided to put a few leafy twigs with caterpillars into the nest box at 5:30pm. On return from Tuesday's Wetland Birdwalk I found the leaves were barren, caterpillars gone, and a happy wildlife carer.

The edge of her patagia and the puncture hole has healed and she is due for release. She will go back to her territory, the resident is working through options with her neighbour to manage the risk of a second tear.

I have one more piece to complete my ID, the moth will emerge within 2 weeks.

Sarah Danckert

References:

https://threatenedspecies.bionet.nsw.gov.au/profile?id=10602

https://australian.museum/learn/animals/mammals/squirrel-glider/

https://connectsci.au/am/article-abstract/11/2/109/36311/Diet-of-the-Squirrel-Glider-Petaurus-norfolcensis

10,000 Bogong Moths tagged in the Australian Alps

Thousands of male and female Bogong Moths**, *Agrostis infusa*** that have newly emerged from their pupal cases in areas of southeastern Australia, fly hundreds of kilometres to the Australian Alps each Spring where they remain for the Summer. The larva (caterpillars) feed on native grasses, small shrubs and agricultural crops in those lower altitude areas, but the adults cannot survive the hot and dry weather conditions that follow the pupal stage, so they migrate to find more favourable conditions in the mountains.

Mountain Pygmy Possums, ***Burramys parvus***, live only in the Australian Alps and emerge from their seven-month winter hibernation in Spring with the snow melt and the arrival of the Bogong Moths. These critically endangered, tiny possums live exclusively in the alpine and subalpine boulder fields of Victoria and NSW, to where Bogong moths also migrate. The diet of the possums is mainly Bogong Moths, but they also eat other insects, nectar, fruit and seeds.

Female Bogong Moths that have survived fly back to their breeding grounds in Autumn to lay eggs onto their larval food plants. Areas across southeastern Australia, hundreds of kilometres from the High Country, are the supposed destinations for the Autumn migration.

However, as a part of conservation efforts for both Mountain Pygmy Possums and Bogong Moths, more research is needed to know the exact destinations and migration routes for the moths.

A new project to address this is underway with the aim of tagging and tracking 10,000 female Bogong moths. The Guardian reported on 17.2.26 that Researchers and Citizen Scientists were successfully attaching tiny paper tags, using eyelash glue, to the backs of 10,000 female moths which have been released unharmed to migrate. This has been a somewhat tedious task, but reportedly very successful and easier than it sounds.

The tags have **letters and a number** that can be recorded by anyone who sights a tagged Bogong Moth and reported on <**bogong.org**>. Trapping stations have been set up on properties of various volunteers on known and predicted migration routes to record numbers of tagged moths. The success of the project depends on people reporting the tag letters and number.

We'll look forward to the ongoing research and results of this significant project.

Bogong Moth (f) with tag, Guardian 17.2.26

Margaret Strong

Merool Creek Part 2 **Continued from The Murrumbidgee Naturalist Issue #343, February 2026.**

The Goulburn Herald and County of Argyle Advertiser Correspondent gave a general location of the country he described at the end of Part 1, as being 'between the Murrumbidgee River and the Bland country' meaning between Moombooldool, Ardlethan and Ariah Park on either side of the Merool Creek. There were no British urban settlements in that region in 1856, hence no specific place names were mentioned.

***Please note:** Digitised text edited by Margaret Strong. Original article from <Trove.nla.gov.au>. Common and Botanical names in parentheses reviewed and added by Margaret Strong and Eric Whiting. (?) indicates uncertainty. Photos: Rowena & Eric Whiting.*

The field naturalist journalist (author) uses Botanical Family + Genus names and no Common English names as many of the plants he described didn't have English names in 1850s. Fortunately, he was well educated enough to write about these complex topics and thanks to our National Library of Australia, we can read this historic article.

An extensive field is open to the lover of natural history in this district, and particularly to the botanist. Many of the forms are both highly interesting and new. The large natural family **Leguminosae** here finds numerous representatives. Some of the **Acacias**, of which there are about **twenty varieties**, are very lovely and many of them well worth a place in our gardens or the greenhouses of colder climates. There are **four species of acacia with sweet-scented wood**, all of which are confounded under the one name of **Myall**, but which are perfectly distinct. The native names of the different species are the **Boree**, **Yarran**, Mowa(?), and **Mulga**; an abundant supply of each kind may be obtained and no doubt would be of considerable value for various kinds of ornamental work. The only use to which it is now applied is the manufacture of stock-whip handles. For the information of those unacquainted with the **Myall**, I may mention that it is a dark cold wood, with a slight purple tint, very heavy and with a most exquisite scent of violets which appears to be more brought out the longer the wood has been cut. The bark also contains a large quantity of tannin and would be valuable on that account.

Above: Boree *Acacia pendula*, Left: Broughton Pea Below: Red Parrot-pea

On the ranges also is to be found a new and beautiful Tecoma, with much finer leaves than T australis (**Wonga Vine**, *Pandorea pandorana*) and larger flowers. The Boree Plains contribute a fine Astragalus (? *Trigonella suavissima* **Cooper Clover**) also found on the Murrumbidgee Flats and two or three **Swainsona** (? Broughton Pea *S. procumbens*).

In the forests are three or four Dillwynias (**Red Parrot-pea**, *D. hispida* + **Showy Parrot-pea**, *D. sericea)*, a Pultenaea (**Twiggy Bush-pea**, *P. largiflorens*) all tolerably pretty.

A person accustomed to an intertropical vegetation will be struck with the almost total want of the forms commonest in those localities. The palms are quite wanting, not even a Zamia (Cycad)! Of **ferns** there are only two kinds (*Doodias*), both insignificant. Epiphitical orchids are totally wanting. There are but few terrestrial ones and only two or three of these that are not common to other parts of the colony. One of these is, however, a very fine *Dipodium* (**Hyacinth Orchid**). The large order-**fungi**-has, again, few representatives if we except the edible mushroom, which certainly makes its appearance after rain in thousands and is particularly acceptable in a place where few cultivated

vegetables are to be obtained. Another deficiency is one that I was rather surprised at—the **lichens and mosses**. I have only been able to discover about four, two certainly common to other places, and the others probably new.

After this list of deficiencies, let me proceed to describe some of the most interesting of what may be considered to be the novelties. First in order stands a new and lovely Aseclepia, (? **Native Jasmine**) with large branches of cream-coloured blossoms, with the most exquisite fragrance. It is met with in some of the pine scrubs.

Above Left: Vanilla Lily; right: Austral Hollyhock
Below left: Garland Lily; right Grooved Dampiera

Another most lovely and remarkable plant is a fringed *Arthropodium* (**Pale Vanilla-lily**, *A. milleflorum*) with flowers as large as the common large variety and of the most beautiful lilac, quite equal to the **Fringed Violet** (*Thysanotus*), which also finds a representative here in the shape of a very pale variety, almost blue, pretty, but by no means equal to the varieties about Sydney, Camden, &c. The Malvaceae are not wanting. There is a pretty **Hibiscus** (?**Austral Hollyhock** *Lavatera plebeia*) and some three or four Sidas and Grevilleas, the latter not particularly interesting.

A most lovely Veronica (?**Creeping Veronica**, *V. plebeia*) is particularly common - lovely, not only from the beauty of its form, but also from its rare colour, almost a perfect blue, a colour only to be found in **Blue Pincushion**, *Brunonia australis* besides which also grows in the same locality. It is by no means uncommon to find the Veronica white, but this is by no means equal to the blue variety.

To go from shrubs to timber trees. We find three species of Callatris (**Pine**), all handsome, and one yielding a fine description of timber; also three Casuarinas (**Sheoak / Allocasuarina**), one really a very handsome tree, having dark green shining leaves, not at all like the dull green peculiar to the rest of the species. There are the usual quantity of the **Eucalyptus** found in other parts of the country, but only one worthy particular notice: it has large round leaves, dark cold and shining, which has a very singular effect in the forest: it is called by the natives '**Bimbul**'. A true Dodonaea (**Hopbush**), beregin of the natives, is common on the Boree Plains and produces a handsome wood - very fine in the grain and fit for cabinet work. Fruits, so rare in Australia, are here in the shape of the **Quandong** (tusanus) which is particularly abundant in the month of November; and a species of native currant, (Leptomeria /? **Leafless Cherry** *Exocarpos aphylla*), which, if it has no other merit has that of producing abundantly.

Returning to the ornamental, I may mention a blue (**Grooved**) **Dampiera (***D. lanceolata***)**, three Prostathera (**Mint Bushes**), one lilac, one white and one scarlet, all lovely; also three **Goodenias**, apparently new; two **Solanums**, one a dwarf variety, pretty and worth cultivating. Calostemmas (**Garland Lily**) are in great abundance, both on the plains, the sides of the creeks and on the tops of the high hills among the rocks: there appear to be five species.

Parasites **(Mistletoes**) in places are particularly abundant, and some of them very handsome. I have seen six species of Dendrophthoe (Amyema species) all but two growing on various species of Acacia. The Xerotes (**Lomandra**) is also a particular numerous genera, but not of much interest, with the exception of one species flowering in the end of autumn and which is very sweet scented (**Scented Mattrush**, *Lomandra effusa)*.

Above: Fleshy Mistletoe
Below: Desert Phebalium

Grasses are numerous, but most of the species are to be found elsewhere. I have not observed more than five or six which appear to be peculiar to the locality, amongst the latter number is a new species of Athisteria(?) not unlike an Australis but larger and with purple flowers. In the Spring and Autumn the banks of lagoons are covered with a prostrate Euphrasia **(Eyebright ?** *Mimulus sp*. Monkey-flower} a lovely thing, which at first sight might be taken for a Nolana; the flowers are lilac, but it is by no means uncommon to see a white variety.

The Rutaceœ are numerous, considering the distance inland, as they are a family of plants generally confined to the neighbourhood of the coast. There are two very fine Eriostemons, both new, one **Downy Waxflower** (?) *E. brevifolius* and the other with small leaves and beautiful rose-coloured blossoms(?); a

(**Desert**) **Phebalium**, with yellow blossoms, is met with on the borders of the Mallee scrubs; a pretty **Philotheca** and a dull-looking pink (**Whorled**) **Zieria**, complete the list of this class of plants. The natural family, Epacridaceœ has only two representatives, one rather pretty - an Astroloma (**Native Cranberry**). In the spring, the Campanulaceae (**Bluebells**, *Wahlenbergia sp*) are very abundant and gay; there are also numerouse varieties of composite flowers (**daisy**-type of many genera), some of them **Everlasting**; one with lilac flower, well worth a place in any garden.

I now come to the "**Salt Bushes**"; these form a very large group, composed of Rhagodias, Mesembiryanthemums (**Ice-plants**) and two or three other genera, of which I have at present been unable to ascertain the names. I have collected upwards of thirty distinct varieties, many of them quite new; from their value as food for animals, they are of particular interest: it would be highly desirable to ascertain if they could be successfully introduced into other parts of the colony; any quantity of seed could be obtained in the autumn; in many places the different kinds grow together on one of the Boree Plains. I gathered fifteen kinds on a single acre of ground; this great variety of food is no doubt one of the causes of the value of the land for pastoral purposes. The Salt Bushes are of all sizes, from a shrub ten feet high (**Old Man Saltbush**, *Atriplex nummularia*) to small weeds and the prostrate Mesembryanthemums (**Pig's faces**). The only Proteaceae that I have seen are **Grevilleas**, two certainly new, and two or three Persoonias (now one, **Geebung**) - no beauties.

Murray Darling Basin Plan

This year the Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) is reviewing the Murray–Darling Basin Plan, as required under the Water Act 2007 (Cth). They have released a Discussion Paper, which signals the beginning of a 12-week consultation period and while anyone can make a submission. At the committee meeting it was proposed that the Club make a submission.

This discussion paper draws on available evidence to highlight issues and propose options for Basin Plan water management. Your knowledge and experience can help shape the Review's recommendations of how our water is managed in the future.

If you would like to share your views, raise any issues please send them to the club email murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

Member observations

(left) **Jo Roberts** spotted a pair of blue-banded bees (Amegilla cingulata) on the native basil during the recent rainy morning

Did you know males have five stripes, females four.

Blue banded bees are buzz pollinators playing an important role in pollination services to flowering plants in particular to species that require buzz pollination.

(right) **Glenn Currie** came across this small stick nest; iNaturalist suggests it might be by a Case Moth.

From Neil Palframan, a note regarding the Bird Outing to Campbell's

I missed the outing to Campbell's Wetland on Feb 1st, I was out of town. I noticed that the bird count was 50 which is a pretty good number. It prompted me to look back at my eBird counts for Campbell's. A normal count has been between 30 and 40 and the highest was 55 on Sept 2023.

But also, this 55 is the highest number I have recorded for anywhere, at any time, which illustrates what a rich wetland this is. I am sure I too often take it for granted and then get frustrated when I travel elsewhere and find spare pickings.

White-breasted Woodswallow at Lake Albert Wetland.

On 20th of January on our first Tuesday evening walk to Lake Albert Wetland, Wagga Wagga we were excited to see a few White-breasted Woodswallow, either perched on a high exposed branch and then foraging on the wing. We saw them between the 2 main ponds at the southern end of the lake. We continued our walk along the path that separates the ponds and heard the chicks in their nest

We returned to Lake Albert for our Tuesday walk on the 17th February and were even more excited to see both adult and juvenile White-breasted Woodswallows in the area between the ponds.

It was pleasing to see that the parents had been able to keep their family alive through period of high temperatures we experienced from the 23rd until the 31st of January. On most of the days during this time we had maximum temperatures over 45C and overnight minimums in the 20'sC

Janet Hume

White-breasted Woodswallow adult & juvenile -mid February
White-breasted Woodswallow perched - mid January

MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

Significant sightings

Grey-crowned Babbler [4]	'Trewalla', Book Book	12/02/26	Birds on Farms
Superb Parrot [17]	'Trewalla', Book Book	12/02/26	Birds on Farms
Pied Honeyeater [6]	Cocoparra National Park, nr Griffith	19/02/26	Virginia Tarr

Highly mobile, often irrupts into a district after a long absence

Latham's Snipe [1]	Flowerdale Lagoon, Wagga Wagga	27/02/26	Lyall Sweck

Sightings of interest

Brown Falcon [1]	'Trewalla', Book Book	12/02/26	Birds on Farms
White-breasted Woodswallow [5]	Lake Albert Wetland, Wagga Wagga	17/02/26.	MFN Birdwalk
Peregrine Falcon [2]	Princetown, Great Ocean Road. Vic	20/02/26	Janet Hume

Adult and juvenile on cliff along Gellibrand River mouth, Princetown, Vic

Collared Sparrowhawk [1 Juv].	Princetown, Great Ocean Road. Vic	20/02/26	Janet Hume
Double-barred Finch	Nericon Village	20/02/26	Neil Palframan
Buff-rumped Thornbill	Nericon Village	20/02/26	Neil Palframan

Two new additions to my all-time Nericon list on the same day, perhaps these shyer dryland birds are struggling in the bush with the drought and coming in closer to our gardens in search of food. A family of White-plumed Honeyeaters also returned after years away.

Sooty Oystercatcher [3]	12 Apostle Lookout, Great Ocean Road	24/02/26	Janet Hume

Adults x 2 plus a juvenile

Compiled by Janet Hume

Other Events / Items

20 and 21 March Harvest Riverina 2026

A two-day festival celebrating local produce, sustainability and community resilience.

Day one is Conference day at CSU Riverina Playhouse, Wagga Wagga, 9am - 5.30pm, featuring expert speakers and panel discussions. The conference is also available online this year - you're all welcome to attend: https://events.humanitix.com/harvest-riverina-festival-conference-day-2026

Day two is a Free Festival at Wagga Wagga Beach Precinct, 10am – 7pm, with markets, music, workshops, and local food.

For more information including the conference program see: https://mli.org.au/harvest-riverina/

Malleefowl Monitoring 2026

Save the Date - we will be running our annual training & monitoring weekend on Sat 17 & Sun 18 October 2026 – location to be advised.

Celebrating our nocturnal environment (Riverina Local Land Services)

16 April, 6.30 to 10.00 pm, Mount Adrah

Come along for an evening under the clear, unspoilt night skies, to celebrate the beauty and importance of our nocturnal environment. Share a picnic dinner; hear from Highfield Farm about balancing eco-tourism, biodiversity and sustainable farming; learn about dark sky preservation and how light pollution impacts wildlife; and join a nocturnal creek walk, offering insights into the unique wildlife that calls Highfield home.

**** 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.

12 March Thursday

Monthly Meeting in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore Street Leeton, please join in person or on Zoom at 6.45pm to start at 7.00pm
Topic/speaker: **"The Myna problem - a Major issue"**
Bill Handke is president of the Canberra Indian Minor Action Group (CIMAG) and will discuss (via Zoom) how this problem can become a major issue unless community-wide action is taken. His advice is informed from challenges and successes in eastern regions. His presentation will take 40 mins as well as time for questions.
Accessible to all members via Zoom. Do attend in person, if possible, to enjoy Show and Tell, a light supper and chat following the Zoom session.
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com if you have any queries

14-15 March Saturday / Sunday

Ovens & Murray Bird Group are visiting Leeton
Take the opportunity to meet them and share your favourite birding spots.
Nella Smith is co-ordinating nellasmith0@gmail.com

17 March Tuesday

Wagga evening birdwalk – Lake Albert Wetland
Meet in Bosley Memorial Park, Nelson Drive at 6pm.
Contact: *Janet* 0408 238 890 or *Sarah* 0427 276 306

24 March Tuesday

Wagga evening birdwalk – Wiradjuri Reserve
Meet in the car park near the boat ramp at 6pm
Contact: *Janet* 0408 238 890 or *Sarah* 0427 276 306.

1 April Wednesday

Copy for the April newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.
Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com Phone: 0429 726 120.

2 April Thursday

Committee Meeting held at 7pm by Zoom
All members are welcome to attend and submit agenda items
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

9 April Thursday

Monthly Meeting in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore Street Leeton, please join in person or on Zoom at 6.45pm to start at 7.00pm
Topic/speaker: **New South Wales Malleefowl Recovery Group (NSWMRG) is proud to share a new promotional video - presented by President David Kellett.**
Produced to raise the profile of the NSWMRG, the short film highlights the vital work being undertaken to protect and monitor the remarkable Malleefowl across New South Wales. It aims to inspire community members to get involved - whether by volunteering to monitor mounds, supporting field activities, or through donating. The video was proudly sponsored by MFN Club in 2025. Questions and comments are warmly welcomed and can be directed to David.
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com if you have any queries

24 April Friday Date is to be confirmed

Barren Box Swamp outing
Meet 9:00am
An opportunity to observe the birdlife in the vast storage and wetland.
A bird list will be provided to Murrumbidgee Irrigation on completion.
Bring morning tea, clothing for an exposed landscape - check the forecast Contact: Sarah Danckert 0427 276 306.

Note: Attendees are required to complete online training prior to attending. Those who completed this training in 2024, your certification is still current.