

Newsletter 111 September 2003

Description

Dear Friends

Spring rain didn't dampen our enthusiasm for the flora survey of the Dillwynia block and many new species were added to the list. Orchids were plentiful in the ironbark and stringybark community, dainty Blue Fairies, Caladenia caerulea, tiny Dusky Caladenias, C fuscata grew in little groups. Donkey Orchids, Diuris pardina, were plentiful and teased us with their variable colour, from lemon to deep gold and their markings from plain yellow to heavily spotted with brown. Pert little troops of Dwarf Greenhoods, Pterostylis nana and huge patches of Nodding Greenhoods P nutans meant we had to tread very carefully. Leaves and buds of Sun Orchids, Beard Orchids and the later Caladenias along with abundant Chocolate Lilies promise a beautiful late spring.

After morning tea we visited the lower section of the block which is dominated by Grey Box with a grassy understorey. Here on the clay soils there were many weeds throughout in contrast to the ironbark and stringybark community on the drier ridge where weeds were few and confined mostly to the track edges. Several species of Bluebells, and quite a few weeds were added to the list, Gold-dust Wattle, Acacia acinacea was in flower but the Golden Wattle A. pycnantha had very few flowers. The remaining Olives were removed.

The plant list total for the block stands at 128 species and I am sure it will increase over the next two surveys.

The birdwatching group for the block reported that birds were scarce and no eucalypts were flowering. Calls of the Little Cuckoo-shrike were common. The sharp eyes of Mark spotted some interesting fungi called Dung Buttons, Poronia ericii. This fungus is found only on herbivore dung and is a little brown disc or series of discs covered in fine pores. Fungus generally has been scarce this season but the warmer and damper weather may bring on a better late display. One species that is abundant is the Morel which some people enjoy eating.

Rain forced us to conclude our day with lunch and a meeting under the shelter at the tourist centre in town.

Rainfall:. Total for August was 119.2mm which fell on 15 days. Yearly total to end of August: 430.8mm over 64 days.

Around the park:

It goes without saying that all the park dams are full! However areas that should be very wet are still quite dry.

It is disturbing to see the surrounds of the Honeyeater Picnic area being constantly degraded. Breaking down of saplings and chopping of stumps is a problem. The treecreepers which provide enjoyment for visitors have lost their natural breeding hollows.

On a brighter note the discovery of as many as 200 plants of Blue Devil, *Eryngium ovatum* in a grassy woodland area was exciting as it extends the range of this plant in Victoria. Another scarce orchid for this area, the Bluebeard *Caladenia, C deformis* has flowered well this year in both the Chiltern section and the Mt Pilot section of the park. Its vivid blue flowers make it easy to spot. There are thoughts that the smoke from the fires may have some part to play in this irruption

The Depot plantings are all showing signs of growth and a Gold Dust Wattle from a previous planting is in full flower. The Capeweed is knee high and doing far too well!

The ecological burn sites on Depot Rd and Donchi Hill are bursting with new life and particularly pleasing is the number of *Grevillea alpina* seedlings which have appeared and the masses of Chocolate Lilies forming a green carpet which should be a purple haze later in the month.

Phillip and Eileen surveyed the western part of the Indigo Shire as part of the annual Grey-crowned Babbler survey run by Doug Robinson. Initially our searches were disheartening as the birds close to Chiltern could not be found. However west of Rutherglen most known groups were located and two new sites found. Other interesting birds for the day were Brolgas on the swamps, Apostle Birds, hundreds of Swans and ducks, Mountain Ducks with young.

Traveling Birds: If you missed this spectacular documentary there is still time to see it in Albury. The *Promise to Return*• certainly proved hard to keep for the migrating birds faced with the hazards of hunger, pollution, storms and predators both natural and human. Spectacular photography, wonderful scenery and a bird's eye view of the world. Not to be missed.

Speaking of traveling birds on September 12th a Painted Honeyeater was calling at Depot and the cuckoos and Dusky Woodswallows have returned. On the downside the Regents found on count day appear to have gone elsewhere in search of blossom. Anyone traveling in the Thurgoona area please keep an eye out for Regents there, the pair seen a few weeks ago also appear to have moved on.

CHANGE OF DATE FOR DECEMBER MEETING : The December meeting has been changed to NOVEMBER 30TH as Natasha is unavailable on the original date. Please note this on your programme.

Category

1. Newsletters

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