

Newsletter 117 April 2004

Description

Dear Friends,

The long dry autumn continues and our work day was rather tiring but we made up for it with a long lunch at Greenhill Dam which provided us with a just reward in the form of our first Regent Honeyeater for the season.

Nine of us tackled the Sweet Briar on the mullock heaps at Valley No 2 Dam. A one hundred metre section was covered using the cut and paste procedure and the briar did its fair share of cutting skin! Having had good early summer rain the wretched stuff was covered in healthy red rose hips which had to be removed and bagged. The resulting pile weighed 4 kilograms! A few young peppercorn trees were removed and others cut back to clear the walking track. There is good crop of young thistles coming on and spraying seems the best method of control.

The water level in the dam is about 60% which is good for this time of the year. Waterbirds were few and included swans, Wood Duck, Pelicans, Great Cormorant and White-face Heron. A pair of Whistling Kites circled overhead uttering their shrill calls and later we were to find their nest with one large young perched on the edge. The nest was in a tall dead tree so the young bird had no protection from the sun. The calls of Pied Butcher-birds and Red-rumped Parrots kept us company as we worked and the White-browed Babbler family was not far away.

Several old small birds' nests were found in the briar bushes showing that they do have some use. Small understorey shrubs are absent from this environment.

The few Ironbarks around Greenhill Dam are flowering well. A walk along Greenhill Road showed that while many were flowering. just as many were still in bud so the flowering period will last longer. Scattered Stringybarks were in bud and the White Box looks very promising indeed. Hopefully some good autumn rain will ensure they produce good nectar flow. Very few birds came in to drink but we listed Gang Gangs, Noisy and Little Friar-birds, Yellow Robins, White-throated treecreepers, Grey Fantails, Willie Wagtail, Restless Flycatcher, Brown-headed and Black-chinned Honeyeaters, Weebills with their pretty warbling calls, Eastern and Yellow Rosellas, some in tatty plumage and some immaculate, Turquoise Parrots calling and the ever present and never still Superb Fairy-wrens. We enjoyed a very pleasant afternoon and to avoid the dust we departed at intervals!

Around the Park:

Huge golden webs of the Orb Spiders and the equally strong webs of the tiny Jewel Spiders are suspended amongst the understorey, ready to catch the unsuspecting human as well as the insect life. Scarlet Robins are about again and Fantail Cuckoos are feeding on caterpillars in the understorey. Ironbark is beginning to flower. Bee sites are occupied so it augers well for a good season hopefully for Regent Honeyeaters and Swift Parrots.

The long unburnt Dillwynia Block off Mt Pleasant Road is about to be burnt as part of the fire strategy for the Chiltern section of the park. We will be looking at the response of the *Acacia deanei* ssp *deanei* and *Dodonea cuneata* to the burn. It is hoped that the patch of *Daviesia genistifolia*, Broom Bitter-pea, will regenerate following the fire as the drought along with browsing has eliminated all the known plants at this site.

On the downside, thieves have removed the star pickets and wire mesh from around the planted *A. deanei* on the Mt Pleasant Road site. The wallabies have eaten this season's growth.

Rainfall: Not enough. Just 3.2mm fell over two days during March making the total for the year so far 27mm over 9 days.

Vale Martin Dickens.

Martin lost his life in a high country road accident last month. He was a founding member of the original Friends Group. Our condolences are extended to his family and friends.

Congratulations to Warby Friends member Peter Curtis who has achieved his PHD for his research into *Xanthorrhoea australis* in the Warby Ranges, studying the fire, seed and growth ecology and the control of Cinnamon Fungus over a period of eleven years.

Friends of the Warby's Dayis May 8th. Contact: Helen Curtis 0357 218 937 for details

Monarch Butterflies, endangered by chainsaws!

On January 13th, 2002 a storm swept through the mountains of New Mexico where Monarch Butterflies winter in pine and fir trees. Temperatures dropped, and the combination of wet and cold caused the death of an estimated 500 million butterflies, which lay in piles up to one metre deep beneath the trees. In one terrible day, 70 to 80 percent of all the Monarchs that return to the Eastern United States in spring were dead says the international edition of the Miami Herald. But now, another threat is looming. In spite of the Mexican government's creation of the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve, the butterfly habitat is being eroded by illegal logging. Some 44 percent of the reserve has already been affected. Although these hardy creatures survive a 4,000 kilometre migration, only time will tell if they are able to survive the gradual loss of their wintering grounds.

NEXT MEETING SATURDAY MAY 1ST

Meet at Chiltern Post office at 9.00 am. Nest log/box surveying. Lunch at Greenhill Dam. BYO lunch, gloves, compass if you have one and energy. You will see a lot of the park on this day. Organiser: Neville Bartlett 0260 208 632

Category

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Author
eileen

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