

Newsletter 126 February 2005

Description

Dear Friends,

Following an extraordinary fall of rain and a very cold snap we were treated to a delightfully fresh cool day for our first meeting for 2005. The rain probably affected the numbers of waterbirds for our scheduled wetlands survey but there was a surprise in store for us at the lunchtime spot at Chiltern Valley No 1 Dam.

Phillip reported seeing White-Throated Needletails as he was leaving the freeway coming into town so our plans were altered to count them, approximately 20, and enjoy their flight. At Barambogie Dam we had to walk through surface water to reach our viewing spot so the dam was well and truly overflowing. Australasian Grebe, a single Latham's Snipe, Purple Swamphen with two young, Coots, Grey Teal and Black Ducks were recorded. Across the road on a dam were Black Swans, 3 Great Egrets, Little Pied and Little Black Cormorants and a Whistling Kite flying over. Next stop was Chiltern Valley No 2 Dam which we surveyed from the eastern end. Black-tailed Native Hens, a pair of Whistling Kites attending a nest, appearing to be arranging sticks, 4 Pink-eared Ducks, immaculate Red-kneed Dotterels, White-faced Herons, a single Pelican and many ducks. It was good to note the flourishing understorey planted by Friends about 7 years ago.

The pangs of hunger sent us off to our lunch spot at Chiltern Valley No 2 Dam. Things seemed very quiet over the dam but after an hour or so we had quite a good list including Royal Spoonbills, Chestnut Teal, a female Musk Duck which frustrated the photographer, lovely close views of an elegant Great Egret foraging in the drain channel. Suddenly a great brown shape flew over the water showing a great white rump. First thoughts were Swamp Harrier, knowing they frequent the spot but Mark, quick off the mark (pardon the pun) said he thought it was an immature White-Bellied Sea Eagle. He was spot on! As it turned out he had been seeing them often over the past few months while he was studying on Flinders Island. It perched on a dead branch over the dam and we had great views via the telescope. We decided after looking at the guides that its very brown plumage marked it as quite a young bird. So, after all that we had another new record for the Chiltern bird list.

A surprise sighting of 3 Brolgas, 2 adults and an immature bird, at Valley 2 in December added yet another special bird to the list. It is thought they could have been the birds which bred near Rutherglen.

After lunch we made a trip to Honeyeater Picnic spot to look at the level of the dam following the rainfall. Yes, it was full to overflowing, making quite a waterfall down the gully. A rather sad finding was a koala, dead and wedged in an old fallen log. We contemplated how it may have met this unhappy end. Obviously it was drowned, but how it managed to get wedged in the log on the ground was a mystery. Its body, although very wet, was not damaged and its eye was still bright which made us think it had not been dead for long. A pair of Australasian Grebes graced the water, a few Brown Treecreepers, Fairy Wrens, Turquoise Parrots, Willie Wagtails and Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters completed a most rewarding day.

2004 December Superb Parrot Count Report:

On Sunday 5th December 2004 the annual Superb Parrot count took place near Nathalia. This count has been running for about ten years and aims to gather information about whether numbers of these birds are declining or decreasing and also assess the the impact of tree planting over the last decade. The Superb Parrot, *Polytelis swainsonii*, is a beautiful bright green parrot with distinctively long tail. These birds are regarded as an endangered species and the group around Barmah Forest is at the southern end of their range. In early December the birds have finished breeding in the forest and emerge into surrounding areas. This is a great time to count them as the begging of the young birds gives their position away. Under normal circumstances the adults can sit quietly in a tree and it takes an astute observer to detect them. A group of people from as far afield as Melbourne gather and divide up into groups with an assigned area to comb. Observations are made of total numbers, their gender, the number of juveniles and whether they are flying, resting or feeding. The total count exceeded 400 a few years ago but the dry seasons have resulted in counts of about 200 in recent times.

The sheer delight of seeing these fantastic birds keeps me going back each year! Thank you Neville for this report

Plant re-introduction:

Successful plantings of *Senecio garlandii* have been undertaken in the Chiltern and Mt Pilot sections of the National Park. The plants were grown from seed collected from the existing small population.

Friends of the Warbys.

Activity days for February to July are: Feb. 12th; March 12th; April 9th; May 14th; June 11th. Contact person: Catriona on 03 5722 1213. Everyone is welcome.

Helen and Peter Curtis were winners of the Wangaratta Citizens of the Year award for 2004. Helen and Peter are the driving forces behind the restoration of Kaluna Park. This has involved weekly working bees. A great commitment finally rewarded. Congratulations to members Helen and Peter.

Rainfall: December: 89.9mm over 10 days. Rainfall total for 2004 588mm January: 49.8mm over 6 days

>Parks Advisory Council Group:

Both John Hawker and Eileen are members of this group. If you have issues you would like to have put forward please email them to me on the above address.

NEXT MEETING SUNDAY MARCH 6TH 2005 MEET AT THE CHILTERN POST OFFICE AT 9.00AM Privet Pull and clean-up of a section of Lancashire Gap Rd as a contribution to Clean-up

Australia Day

Bring gloves, secateurs, lunch and binoculars! Organiser: Eileen 03 57 261 484

Category

1. Newsletters

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