

Newsletter 129 May 2005

Description

Dear Friends,

The warm dry days and light frosty mornings continue and rain seems no closer. Conditions for fauna in the park are harsh. The eucalypt blossoms are attracting few birds and one may assume there are actually fewer birds and/or the blossom is not yielding nectar. The latter appeared to be the case as we walked the park looking for birds and finding the occasional tree with blossom and a few honeyeaters and small parties of Little Lorikeets. Noisy Friar-birds and Wattlebirds were scarce. We looked for lerp but found very little.

Spiders, usually plentiful at this time of the year, were noticeably scarce. Another tell tale sign of depleted numbers of birds was the small number of birds at Greenhill Dam, even on this quite warm afternoon very few came to drink. One very warm afternoon in late April in a forty minute watch not one bird came to water.

An industrious group turned up for the May gathering and tackled the ferals in the Cemetery Bushland Reserve. Following the big eradication of pines and Cootamundra Wattles a few years ago we expected to find numerous new plants. However we were pleasantly surprised, just 40 small wattles and 23 small pines were dealt with. Another pleasant surprise was the lack of modern rubbish so we gathered up a lot of old rusty cans and wire and stuffed quite a lot down fox and rabbit holes and shoveled dirt over the top. The Freesias were emerging but as it was beginning to shower it was decided not to spray them.

Next stop was our Depot revegetation site where we cleaned around the plantings and replaced a dead tree with a new Buloke. There is a lot of natural regeneration taking place near the first plantings, Varnish Wattles, Silver Wattle, Golden Wattle and even a nice Grevillea. Several large plants of Ink Weed were de-seeded and removed. Last week John MacDonald and I removed some 20 plants of Fierce Thornapple, *Datura ferox*. Last year there was only one plant and all the green unopened seed heads were removed so it seems there was more seed waiting to germinate. A close watch will weed to be kept on this horrible weed which came from whence we know not.

As we were about to leave a Boobook Owl was disturbed from a dense wattle and was immediately mobbed by the honeyeaters. It perched low in a big ironbark and gave us great views. It was a young bird with dark eyes and a light crown.

The next stop was Pipeline Track above Magenta Mine and several members went ahead to tackle the young Cootamundra Wattles which had taken advantage of the summer rain. Neville, Phillip and John dealt with 98 plants and the large ones requiring a saw were felled by the rest of us. Lunch at Magenta was very welcome.

The afternoon was spent walking the Langs/Klotz and Greenhill Road loop searching in vain for the two Regent Honeyeaters which were seen two weeks previously. No Swift Parrots were found and it was assumed they had moved on. A report of some 40 Swift Parrots feeding on lerp in the Red Gums came in from Albury area.

Around the Park:

Floating on Cyanide Dam were countless bodies of Common Brown butterflies, *Heteronympha merope*, along with black and white bodies of the day flying Magpie Moths, *Nyctemera amica*. The food plants of the butterfly include native and introduced grasses while the Magpie Moth, also known as the Senecio Moth requires *Senecio* sp and *Cineraria* sp.

The delicately flowered but prickly foliaged Spreading Wattle, *A. genistifolia*, is beginning to flower along Battery Hill Road.

Friends of the Warbys:

The weedy vegetation in Kaluna Park in Wangaratta has been the target of the Urban Landcare Group for some years. Helen Curtis and her working band have been rewarded by the appearance of a species of *Senecio*, *S. longicollaris*.

Formerly included in the *S. tenuiflorus* group it has just been given its own name. This find has extended the range of this species which has a preference for a damp habitat. There are only 10 records for Victoria. Well done!

A Himalayan Secret:

Naturalists from Los Angeles flushed out what may be the world's rarest bird, the Rusty-throated Wren-babbler. Confirmed by video and photographs it was found in the Mishmi Hills of north-eastern India.

Water in a dry country:

From Environment Victoria News: An analysis of water used in Victoria by industry in 2000-01 produced these figures in billion litres: Agriculture; Dairy Farming 1685; Grape Growers 230; Vegetables 131; Fruit 209; Rice; 26.

Urban use: Mains water supply 737; Manufacturing; 248. Source: Water Account Australia 200-01 ABS

The article goes on to say that only 8% of the milk produced in Victoria finds its way into our fridges. About 70% is exported to Asia and Africa as powdered milk or to the Middle east and Europe as cheese. Just think how much expansion in the viticulture industry has taken place since 2001!

Rainfall: April: 7.8mm over 4 days. Yearly total: 251.0mm over 24 days. Very dry over the past three months and a good autumn break while the soil is still warm would be a bonus but we are running out of time!

Stop press for email versions: Twelve Swift Parrots in the bush opposite Bartleys Block.

9.00am at Chiltern Post Office. Ironbark Track Block listing birds and flora and removing any stray Cootamundra Wattles. Hopefully by then it will have rained. Contact: John Hawker 03 57 281 642

Category

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