

Newsletter 146 November 2006

Description

Dear Friends,

Surely this is a year which weatherwise we will not forget easily. A little relief arrived on November 2nd in the form of 11mm of precious rain and as I write this it is trying again! Let's hope November brings us a few good falls as it did last year.

There was a change of scene for the November gathering. As we assembled on Old Coach Road we watched Sacred Kingfishers gathering food and Peaceful Doves having a bath in a roadside puddle with the puddle, not the doves, being a rare sight.

Mark took us to the enclosures on Coach Road but we decided the vegetation was too thick to push through without a machete. We moved on to the Box-leaf Bitter-pea enclosure which was more accessible and found the plants doing very well. Prior to the fire there was only a single large plant so something positive has come about for this plant. By now it was time to attack our customary morning tea bun before moving on. It's amazing how precisely Neville cuts it up into the relevant number of pieces, seven in this case! Yum.

The area was very dry and rather uninteresting so we moved on to the end of Old Coach Road among the Brittle Gums, Eucalyptus manifera, and Stringybarks. Here the understorey was grassy, largely *Microlaena stipoides* which was still green and presenting a cooler, more interesting habitat. However not all was a pretty sight for even though it escaped the ravages of the fires a twister storm went through this lovely area last year and caused enormous damage to the big trees.

Picking our way through the debris we found species that didn't make it above the ground in Chiltern this year. Sun Orchids, *Thelymitra* sp, Milkmaids *Burchardia umbellata*, Bluebells, and an unidentified everlasting were some of the highlights.

The Milkmaid flowers were covered in tiny black and white banded moths less than a centimetre long. They were a species of *Macrobathra* from a large family of moths. According to Zborowski and Storey, Field Guide to the Insects of Australia, their larvae have a large range of feeding habits, from foliage and fungi to wood. They certainly made a striking show on the Milkmaids. Another lovely and lively moth was the Satin-green Forester, a striking iridescent creature just over a centimetre long. The larvae of this moth feed on the Guinea-flower plants and which were plentiful in the area.

However there were many birdwatchers among us and the birds were plentiful. A pair of Gang Gang Cockatoos had a nest in a hollow in one of the Brittle Gums and it provided interest during lunch.

The bird list totaled over 40 species for the day. Highlights at the second stop were, Painted Honeyeater, Diamond Firetail, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, Restless Flycatcher, Fan-tailed Cuckoo and White-eared Honeyeater. The Grey Mistletoe on the Silver Wattle was in heavy flower.

After lunch we back-tracked to Old Coach Road West to look for the Spotted Quail-thrush. This was an unproductive stop with not a bird sound to be heard so we proceeded to make tracks back to Chiltern along Oats Road only to be faced with a large tree across the track! Having travelled some 12kms we were reluctant to turn back. While surveying the scene ahead Phillip noticed the water-point sign and suggested we investigate. Surely enough there was a lovely secluded spring-fed dam and the impediment on the track was forgotten for the time being while we sat on the bank observing. A Leaden

Flycatcher perched very close until chased by a Yellow-tufted Honeyeater. Calls of the Red-capped Robin and White-throated Warbler were persistent. There were lots of honeyeaters, including Brown-headed and White-naped, a few Red Wattle-birds which were strangely silent and a Fan-tailed Cuckoo. A Swamp Wallaby came down to browse the vegetation quite unaware it was being watched. and as we left we noticed a large Koala on the fork of a Blakely's Gum barely a metre off the ground. OK now for the challenge. Phillip, never one to give in, decided we could remove enough of the tree to get past. Naturally we had no saw with us! (No work, no tools) Most of the tops we broke off and then tied the branches back with rope just far enough to get our vehicles past. It was a long and interesting day with the only 'work' being tree clearing. Around the park: The Depot plantings continue to thrive and birds are using the main plantation. Painted Honeyeaters are being heard all over the park, with Bartley's Block the best spot for sightings. Gang Gangs have been seen around Honeyeater Picnic area. All the dams are still holding some water so bird watching is still fruitful. Black Honeyeaters are about so keep your eyes and ears alert. These lovely little honeyeaters are attracted to Mistletoe and frequently turn up in Chiltern in the drier times. When a Regent Honeyeater can be found in Deniliquin who knows what may turn up anywhere so birdos keep alert! Programme for 2007: If you have suggestions please let us know. We will draft the programme at the December meeting. Are you interested in a trip to the Mallee, based at Ouyen on Cup Weekend 2007? We went there four years ago and had a very enjoyable three days. Rainfall: October : 1.6 mm over 2 days Yearly total to date: 249.6 mm over 63 days. Grim.

Please note the time change for the December meeting
NEXT MEETING SUNDAY DECEMBER 4TH MEET AT CHILTERN POST OFFICE 4PM
Christmas Tea and a walk. BYO Tea with a little to share, binocs, sunscreen, chair and a torch.
Come along, a review share the year's activities and help plan the 2007 programme. There is NO work to be done! Venue: Honeyeater Picnic area. Contact: Eileen 03 57 261 484

Category

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Author

eileen