

## Newsletter 148 February 2007

### Description

### Dear Friends

Welcome to 2007. Summer is halfway through as I write and there is little prospect of relief by way of some summer rain. I trust you are all providing water in your gardens for the birds especially during these 36-41 degree days.

In the drought of the 1980s a little party of sparrows ate every leaf off my huge Old Man Saltbush. They are attacking the new saltbushes at this moment.

Yes, it was hot for our first Friends meeting, by 2.30pm it was 39 degrees. Undeterred a willing crew erected another six nest boxes. Two of these were in a site where an old box was replaced and an extra one added in October last year. To our delight box 19, the replaced box, was nicely chewed around the entrance and contained a substantial green leaf nest. Box 19A close by had no signs of chewing but on inspection contained a fresh leaf nest. Buoyed by these findings we selected another site for a group of four boxes and they were up and marked in quick time. Then it was time for morning tea and bun! Yes, there's always a bun for there's one amongst us who cannot do without it!

After a brief meeting and chat a couple of members retired from the heat and the rest of us decided to look at another group of boxes. All the news was good from this site with every box showing signs of use and the new boxes sporting chewed entrances. Everyone had an opportunity to do a box inspection and carrying the ladder was shared. All up it was a positive start to 2007.

### Tree Plantings

At Chiltern Valley No 2 Dam the trees are surviving remarkably well despite the heat. Parks and Friends have managed the watering. June, Peter and I put the Friends water tank to good use. The day after friends we watered the trees and cut and pasted all the regrowth on the Peppercorns. The growth was quite soft so the task took only half an hour. No doubt it will need to be repeated in the coming months. The Depot planting is amazing. In such a harsh open situation the Red Box, Ironbark, Lightwood and Bull Oak plants are making good growth. Watering is just once a fortnight. If they make it through this summer surely they will have long lives.

### Around the Park

No dams are dry yet. Depot, Cyanide and Bartley's are very low. Lappin's Dam is holding up very well and attracting most wildlife. The park understorey is suffering badly. The summer rains of 2005 encouraged good growth and promised a return to good times but this drought has changed all that. Birds are really scarce, especially the spring/summer migrants which normally breed here. Let's hope they found an elsewhere to breed.

The two valley dams are dangerously low, especially Valley No 1. Pelicans are fishing the shallows and hopefully reducing the carp numbers. Black-fronted and Red-kneed Dotterels are feasting along the

shrinking margins, Wood Ducks are plentiful with a few Grey Teal, Black Ducks and Yellow-billed Spoonbills making up the list. Dollar-bird, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Little Friar-bird, Yellow Robin and Noisy Miners (many!) can be found in the grassland section. The Whistling Kites raised two young this year and it was interesting to see that the Diamond Firetails had built their nests in the base of the kite nest and successfully produced young.

A Koala was spotted on Koala Track in late January. Track obviously well named.

Moving on: Member Margaret Brownlie is leaving the district. We will miss Margaret as she was a regular helper and keen birdo. We wish her well in her new surroundings and thank her for her contribution to the group.

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#### Rainfall

November: 19.2mm over 7 days. 10.4mm of it fell on January 21 and it was like Christmas!

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**NEXT MEETING MARCH 4TH MEETING AT CHILTERN POST OFFICE AT 9.00 AM**

Weeds on Tank Track, Bartley's Block and Ironbark Track. Lunch: Depot Dam

Contact: Eileen 03 57 261 484

Although the task of weeds sounds boring it is amazing what we find and talk about as we work together. At the Tank Track and Ironbark Track sites we will be removing small Cootamundra Wattles which is follow-up work from the major clearing several years ago. If the weather is reasonable and helpers are available, after lunch we may inspect a couple of groups of nest boxes which we installed last year.

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