

Newsletter 149 March 2007

Description

Dear Friends,

Stormy and humid weather during February brought some relief to our area. Rainfall was extremely variable, almost filling Depot Dam yet not putting a drop into Cyanide Dam which is totally dry for the second time January 2001. So erratic were the falls that 33mm fell where I live and 300 metres down the road 75mm fell. Depot Dam area must have been in the path of that big drop while the Valley 2 plantings received 33mm.

We welcomed two visitors from Latrobe University to our March meeting and they cheerfully joined us in dispatching countless small and medium sized Cootamundra Wattles. The Ironbark Track site and Tank Track yielded roughly equal numbers of Coots, plus a few Sweet Briars, Hawthorn, Privet and Cotoneaster which were restricted to the Tank Track site. After the weed removal we enjoyed our morning tea bun and a chat with Mistletoe birds calling and feeding in the flowering Box Mistletoe overhead. Much to the photographer's dismay they were not co-operative subjects.

Refreshed by morning tea we set out to replace some old nest boxes and inspect some of the ones erected 6 months ago. The new boxes were showing signs of use with leaf nests and chewed entrances but no animals in residence. The aged boxes were full of dried material, native wasp nests and leaf material which had turned to dust. Hopefully as autumn closes in we will find inhabitants in some boxes. Thanks to the ladder and box carriers, the tool man and the climbers the job was completed with no hitches.

Parks Victoria has provided us with a set of high visibility vests for use on work days. The slogan on the back is "Healthy Parks, Healthy People. VOLUNTEER working with Parks Victoria". They are super light, excellent to wear and much appreciated..

Lunch and conversation in a shady spot at Depot was welcome. There was plenty of bird activity among the honeyeater group, with Fuscous, Brown-headed and Black-chinned calling. An Olive-backed Oriole, more Mistletoe birds and a Rufous Whistler were among others noted. A small party of stationary (if they ever are!) Lorikeets was heard on Riley's Road, possibly feeding in the Mistletoe flowers.

After a brief meeting we inspected the revegetation enclosures and gloated over the water which had rejuvenated Depot Dam. Some of us then went for a walk through the park up the gully which had fed the dam in the big rain. The base of the gully looked as if it had been swept clean such was the force of the water. The gully edges were packed high with leaves and small logs as were the roadside gutters. The wallabies and kangaroos have pruned all the shrubs, in particular the Showy Parrot-pea *Dillwynia phyllicoides*. The Grevilleas, *G. alpina*, and Diggers' Speedwell remain untouched and are obviously unpalatable. The Cherry Ballarts, *Exocarpus cupressiformis*, are loaded with tiny flower buds and fresh green leaves of Rock Fern are emerging.

In the revegetation outer enclosure the rain has awakened the first flush of Capeweed and Jennifer generously volunteered to spray it. After the next good rain (it will come) we will scatter some native grass seed in an effort to improve the ground cover.

The main activity for the next meeting will be decided closer to the day when we see what the weather does over the next week or so. The programme states mulching at Depot but that will depend upon the

availability of materials. Nest box checking will be part of the activity if mulching is not undertaken. Please note the change of date for the next meeting. We decided to bring it forward one week to the 31st of March to avoid Easter Saturday.

Around the Park:

Valley 1 and 2 dams are extremely low, Ryan's Dam is also low. The dams at Greenhill, Depot and Bartley's Block were in the rain band and have been replenished. Some plants such as the hardy Green Rock Fern have responded to the rain and there are a few fungi to be found. Birds remain in low numbers within the park and best spots are around the edges where there is plenty of Box Mistletoe in flower.

Small flocks of Needltails (Swifts) were recorded over the park in February while Mark recorded Spine-tailed Swifts in Beechworth. it always pays to aware of what's overhead particularly if the weather is a bit stormy and humid.

Rutherglen Conservation Reserve:

Roughly 50% of the planting has survived the summer. It looked as if the last rains missed that area as the dam is bone dry. There were only a few species recorded for the bird survey, the most surprising one being an immature Golden Whistler. A check of the nest boxes found evidence of chewing on one box which was encouraging. We will erect another 4 boxes in the next few weeks.

Rainfall

February Rainfall recorded at the post office weather station was 42mm over 9 days making the total for the year 61.2mm over 16 days.

However the falls were very patchy. When the post office recorded 21mm on the 17th just 1km west there was a massive fall of 75mm.

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