



Newsletter 158 December 2007

Description

Dear Friends

With the company of thousands of Aussie Bush Flies we celebrated a year's activities with Christmas Tea at Honeyeater Picnic area.

No amount of repellent had any effect on the hordes. Despite the unwelcome guests once the food was removed the evening was pleasant. While everyone was chatting, some very loud grunting was heard and a large Koala was spotted climbing up the Red Gums. It was certainly on a mission and ended up swaying at the top of a rather slender Red Gum while reaching out with its free arm to gather the new leaves. I guess Koalas know best but we thought its perch was precarious

The dry bed of the dam is full of gum seedlings, rushes, grasses, bluebells and emergent species such as sneezeweed. John found a few plants which could not be immediately identified but appeared to be of the Brooklime family. After consulting Flora Of Victoria I decided it was *Gratiola pumilo* a Brooklime without a common name. As there were no records of this plant for this area a specimen was sent to the herbarium for ID. The species was confirmed and so we add yet another plant to our Chiltern list.

It would seem the dam will remain dry until the autumn break unless we get a deluge over its catchment. We missed the friendly Brown Treecreepers around the picnic table but there were Blue Wrens and White-browed Babblers in the carpark. A very vocal pair of yellow Robins proved hard to find until they moved. Other birds heard and seen included Rufous Whistler, Sacred Kingfisher, Oriole, Black-faced and White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Fuscous and Yellow-tufted Honeyeater and Grey Shrike-thrush.



The tree-top camera was demonstrated last month and will be a great help in nest box monitoring. Our boxes will need some modification to make camera access easier. Phillip has that in hand and new boxes made by Parks staff will also be modified.

Around the park

The nesting Gerygones on Koala Track lost both nests probably as a result of the strong winds and rain that went through the area. The flycatchers nest survived and hopefully by now they should be feeding young. The Blue Pincushions have all gone to seed and the green tinge on the grasses has reverted to a summer brown!

Chiltern Valley Dams are still good bird watching spots. The extensive reed beds in No 1 are hiding Warblers, Grassbirds and crakes and are well worth some quiet watching time. The recent rains have ensured the little seedlings in the Tuan Campsite enclosures will survive. I can see the need for culling some species in a year or so as wattle seedlings are abundant. The wallaby grasses which were sown some months ago have been grazed. The last rain brought up some seedlings of the nasty *Datura ferox*, Fierce Thorn Apple. Two extremely robust plants were removed from enclosure one and some 30 seedlings were pulled from the bare ground surrounding the enclosure. Rainfall: November 40.6 mm over 8 days. Yearly total: 507.9 mm over 99 days. Half of the normal rainfall! We thank Paul at the post office for providing us with the official rainfall figures for Chiltern.

Programme for 2008

This will be sent out in January. If you have suggestions for activities please email them to me as soon as possible.

NEXT MEETING SUNDAY FEBRUARY 3RD. 9.00am at Chiltern Post Office. Contact; 03 57 261 484.

The activity will depend upon the weather.

I wish all members and readers a peaceful, safe and happy festive season. May the new year be rewarding and healthy for you all. Thankyou for your input and friendship throughout the year. Eileen

FRIENDS OF CHILTERN NATIONAL PARK inc

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