

Newsletter 217 May 2013

Description

Dear Friends,

Sadly there has been no significant rain, just one or two millimetre drops to tease the senses. Even the dreaded Capeweed is suffering! So it was on a glorious May day that we enjoyed out work at Tuan campsite. The boundaries of the three enclosures were sprayed, and dead materials raked up. Emerging thistles and Inkweed were treated to the shovel by a determined Elke. All of us contributed to covering some bare areas with litter and logs to prevent the hoped for rain from washing the remaining litter into the dam.

After that exertion we were ready for morning tea in the sun. Ranger Brian joined us for our meeting and answered many questions put to him by members.

The nest box checking for May took us to Bartley's Block where to our delight we found all boxes with occupants. One box, which on previous checking contained bees, was housing a glider and a great quantity of honeycomb so we guessed the glider was well fed! No sign of the bees obviously.

There has been much discussion about how to deter bees from taking over a box. Placing a piece of carpet under the lid has been tried and does not work. Speaking to Nigel who works with the Lurg project I found they were trialling ice cream container lids fixed to the underside of the lids. It may be worth a trial on a selection of our boxes.

After lunch at Bartley's we checked another eight boxes with very different results, only two were inhabited.

Two boxes contained quite unusual and beautifully constructed nests which, on first glance appeared to be Tuan nests. On closer inspection there were no droppings or feathers among the materials. Mystery indeed



That section of the park was stony, very dry and largely stringybark country which may have had a bearing on the results. A check on the two nearby Genista sites gave us hope that we are at last on top of the weedy pea as not a plant was found. All up we had a very productive and pleasant day, thanks to all the helpers.

Quite a few Praying Mantis egg cases, (called oothecae) were seen both on the ground and attached to shrubs. Most of the ones on the ground had been predated by chewing.



Bird news

The good news came from Michael Ramsey who spotted a young male Hooded Robin near Frogs Hollow and later in the week John spotted one on Mt Pleasant Road near the farmland. These sightings are most encouraging given that the birds have been absent from their usual haunts for two seasons.

A Sea Eagle has been frequenting Valley No 2 Dam and surprisingly one was also seen at Frogs Hollow.

Scarlet and Red-capped Robins

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bring winter cheer, Golden Whistlers and Crested Shrike-tits are showing off their brilliant colours. On the edges of the park the aggressive White-plumed Honeyeaters are hunting other species. While searching for Regent Honeyeaters a mob of them was seen relentlessly attacking a Golden Whistler. There are a few Gang Gangs around the park, Olive-backed Orioles are common as are Noisy and Little Friarbirds.



Projects under consideration: Plans are underway to produce a series of postcards featuring local birds.

Another project under consideration is for an interpretive plaque for Bartley's Block. This block, as well as being a great bird watching spot, has an interesting and significant history. More on these projects later.

Regent Honeyeater Release

We are still seeking volunteers for ongoing tracking. If you are able to assist with this project please contact Glen Johnson glen.johnson@dse.vic.gov.au

The weather for tracking has been idyllic, apart from the dust! Several birds are leading us far and wide but thankfully there is a stable group at Teal Track near the treatment ponds. Sadly two birds have been found dead and partially eaten, culprit unknown but phascogale predation is a likely cause.

Untransmitted birds are being sighted but so far no wild birds have been encountered. Perhaps the most exciting news was the sighting and photographing of a 2010 release bird that is now aged four. Well done to Dean for getting proof in the form of a photo!

The weather is forecast to turn to wintry conditions so both birds and tracking personnel will be tested!



Rainfall

April 10.1 mm over 5 days. Year to date: 119.6mm over 7 days. So VERY dry!

NEXT MEETING

SUNDAY JUNE 2ND 2013

Meet at Chiltern Post Office at 9.00am Byo lunch, binocs, chair, gloves. The weather will determine which tasks we will undertake but the plan is to work at Valley No 2. Nest box checking will be part of our afternoon walk. Looking for Regent Honeyeater arrivals will also be part of the day's activity. Contact in the field: Eileen 0407 486 480

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