

Newsletter 277 October 2018

Description

Friends of Chiltern Mt Pilot NP Newsletter 277 October 2018

Dear Friends,

There was plenty to do at Bartley's Block on a pleasant morning of the first day of daylight saving. We were a small group of ten but what was achieved was excellent. Turquoise Parrot boxes were checked and given a coat of camouflage paint and also had their lids removed to provide more space for the growing young birds to receive food at the entrance. The diggers removed stray jonquil bulbs and masses of wild garlic, weeds were sprayed and on hands and knees hundreds of Vinca seedlings were easily pulled out. The hand pulling was necessary due to the germination of sedges, buttercups and Golden Everlastings which spraying would have damaged.

After all that we settled down for a welcome morning tea, meeting and chat. We welcomed our new rangers, Luke and Hannah who arrived just in time to finish off the last of the customary bun. There were ten big bags of weeds from the morning's work which were removed by the rangers for disposal.

Bagged weeds Oct 2018

Our next stop was Grasslands to inspect the big plantings and have lunch. Reports of mass losses of plants were concerning but as we looked over sections of the plantings we found that some species, like Bursaria and Bitter-pea were doing very well. Other species had died off from the tops but had new shoots at their bases, so a decent rain would help their survival. The White Cypress Pines were watered as we consider them a special species for the block. The *Swainsona recta* survival rate was good and many are in flower.

In February we will inspect the plantings and remove stakes and guards from plants that have not survived the summer.

Interesting sightings: A Red-brown Huntsman spider, *Delena cancerides*, was found under some timber. It was inactive so photography was a little easier. The black-tipped legs and flattened body and the eyes set in two rows of four are features of the *Delena* family. They are also known as Social Huntsman as they frequently colonise. They are nocturnal hunters.

Social Huntsman Spider - *Delena cancerides* (Sparassidae) (4)

Another quite different Huntsman species is the Badge Huntsman, *Neosparassus* sp. The members of this species can be quite colourful with banded leg markings and on the underside they sport a colourful 'badge'. Unlike other Huntsman species which have a flattened abdomen, that of the Badge

Spider is domed. They are ground dwellers and hunt at night.

[Badge huntsman ventral view EC](#) [Badge Huntsman EC](#)

Butterflies are welcoming the warmer weather and Jan has been busy with her camera. Two special species were seen, one in a weedy depression at Grasslands, a Yellow Ochre *Trapezites lutea*



and the other, the Bronze Ant- blue, *Acrodipsas brisbanensis* in the dry and seemingly inhospitable habitat on Depot Road in the park. Both species are listed as uncommon and very local.



Simon reported sighting **Superb Parrots** flying eastwards north of Fisherâ??s Road. They have also been reported from Cornishtown.



Dan Pendavingh visited the spot and reported seeing a huge flock of forty-six at the same site. Another strange report from Cornishtown was of a very vocal flock of about twenty Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos. They were only present for a day.

The summer migrants are appearing, mixed flocks of Woodswallows have been sighted along with a few Rainbow Birds. Painted Honeyeaters are in good voice at Bartley's Block.



There is still some water in the southern dam and it has proved to be a popular spot to see birds. Rufous Whistlers have replaced the wintering Golden Whistlers and Rufous Songlarks are announcing their presence with their raspy calls. A Black Honeyeater was spotted at Lappins Dam. A nice female Scarlet Robin found a juicy meal and was caught on Brian's camera.



Rutherglen Reserve: The Swainsonas have been watered to help them through the dry spring. Of the thirty planted this year five have failed to survive. Most of the others are beginning to flower. Follow up watering will be needed if rain does not fall.

Grasslands Plantings: These have had a tough time with the extended dry period and some losses have occurred. Some were watered on Friends day. Tony and Mick will water again, targetting the Cypress Pines.

Turquoise Parrot news: They are being regularly seen at Honeyeater Picnic area feeding in the greener areas and also at Bartley's Block. The lids are being progressively removed from the boxes. The ripening seed heads of Capeweed are a favourite food.



Photo by C Tzaros

President's report: Our October gathering involved some very successful weeding at Bartley's Block that Eileen has reported on above and then we moved to the Grasslands Block to see how our August tree planting was faring. We had very low expectations as it has been very dry this year, however we were surprised by how many shrubs were surviving reasonably well. Let us hope that we get enough rain to keep some of the plants alive through summer.

The 2019 Friends calendar is being put together so that it is ready by mid-November and we have had some excellent contributions from members, rangers and others. Please remember to take a camera with you when you go into the Park because you never know what interesting things you will find. You do not need fancy equipment – just have some way of taking a photograph. We welcome contributions. *Neville*

Weed report : A few weeds were attacked this month. A large Cootamundra Wattle off Little Pilot Road, a large fig tree near Wardens Rd plus a few other small Cootamundras in the Chiltern section. Some of our rarer plants have been given a drink in the very dry conditions. *Acacia aspera* on Chinese Track, the *Banksia marginata* on Wardens and Settlers Road and the *Swainsona rectas* at Grasslands block. The Swainsonas have been flowering very well, they seem to like the very open hot dry hillsides.

A special event : Martin O'Brien's retirement, after twenty-three years with the Scientific Advisory Committee, was marked with a farewell luncheon in his honour. As a mark of appreciation for his dedication Martin was accorded the honour of having a plant named after him, *Nitella martinii* sp. Nov. Species of *Nitella* are submerged plants that grow in a variety of wetland and estuarine habitats. Martin is a member of our Friends group and he and his wife Kaye are frequent visitors to the park. Through his work Martin has been very supportive of Friends, offering advice and help with our flora and fauna work. We wish him a long and happy retirement, though I suspect he will find it hard to really retire. Thank you from all of us. Eileen

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Ranger's report: Over the past month we have again seen some changes at the Beechworth Work Centre with the appointment of Hannah Clemen into a new Ranger role.

Hannah will now team up with Luke Habeck meaning Beechworth will have a two Rangers again and we both look forward to meeting everyone and getting out and making some positive changes in the

Category

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