

Newsletter 061 March 1999

Description

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Dear Friends

Autumn is upon us bringing thundery showers and some destructive winds. A good fall of rain would see us planting trees in April. Every meeting seems to bring something different. For March we had two meetings, an act I hope not to repeat. Three of us waiting in vain on Saturday for the crew felt something was amiss. True enough, right time and place just the wrong day. All turned out well with the Freeway display being installed, Broom removed from Lancashire Gap Road, Cactus removed from near Frogs Hollow, ferals cut and pasted, a section of roadside at Frogs Hollow cleaned of rubbish {our contribution to Clean Up Australia Day} and the raking of the freeway walk track. Perhaps the hardest task was getting to the walk track following the storm of the previous night. It's amazing what a couple of sharp jack saws, willing hands and brute force can accomplish. Three large Ironbarks, heavy with blossom, and numerous large branches were cleared from Perimeter Track to enable us to reach the walk track. The raking task was a breeze after that! A well-earned lunch was shared at Barnawartha Depot Dam to the accompaniment of a vocal Western Gerygone, Mistletoe Birds, a Weebill and some Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes.

Along the track much Mistletoe was the victim of the storm perhaps this is nature's thinning process. Two species of Mistletoe were flowering, Box Mistletoe, *Amyema miquelii* with its orange-red pendant flowers and Fleshy Mistletoe, *Amyema miraculosum* with its upright scarlet flowers. The latter is parasitic on the Box Mistletoe and is usually located close to the haustoria of its host and has bright green leaves.

A walk along Anderson's Fire Trail produced lots of Little Friar Birds, Bee-eaters and a flock of striking White-browed Wood swallows.

Regent Honeyeater News.

The Lavington birds have dispersed. Five birds from the flock, one adult and four juveniles, were colour banded. The challenge now is to find them at Chiltern. All birdwatchers please look for colour bands, record them carefully and report them as soon as possible.

Around the Park

* The Apostle Birds are still present along Fisher's Road. They are ranging over a kilometre of roadside, sharing it with the Grey-crowned Babblers, White-winged Choughs and Common Bronzewing.

* While watching the Apostle Birds in February I disturbed a flock of ~50 Common Bronzewing

pigeons. It was quite an experience to see them rise out of the roadside vegetation and dissolve into the Kangaroo Grass in the adjacent paddock.

- * Grey Box is in good flower along Ryans Road and Ironbarks are best in the Barnawartha block.

- * On the wetlands: a Wood Sandpiper has been spotted at Valley 1 and 2 Dams.

- * Snipe are plentiful on the muddy areas. Best times to look for them are evenings and early morning.

A group of 9 Pink-eared ducks can be seen on the sewage ponds.

- * It's a good year for Red-kneed Dotterels. There are up to 9 around Valley No.1. Both adult and juveniles are present.

Spiders

Autumn is a great time for spider spotting. You cannot fail to notice the magnificent wheel webs of the Golden Orb Spiders. Take time to examine the web and its contents. The web acts as a full time home, a snare and a waste disposal site. Of course the large female, with her silver body and very long banded legs has centre stage. Above her you will find the remains of her victims trussed up in silk.

If you look closely you will find some tiny red-brown males around the perimeter of the web waiting their chance to mate with the female. The tiny Quicksilver spider can also be found in the web. These spiders do not build snares instead they feed on small prey in the Orb-weaver's web and in return they keep the web clean of clutter and disease.

Orb Weavers, despite their size, are completely harmless to humans. If you wish to explore the world of spiders the book "A Silken Web, A Natural History of Australian Spiders" by Bert Simon-Brunet is a great reference.

VNPA CAMP IN MARYBOROUGH BOX-IRONBARK FORESTS APRIL 24/25

For details contact Charlie Sherwin on 039 6508 296

NEXT MEETING SATURDAY APRIL 3rd AT 9.00AM

MEET AT CHILTERN POST OFFICE 9.00 AM

Bring trowel, gloves, lunch energy and a friend. Activity to be decided.

Vale Jean Galbraith, Botanist, Author, Teacher and Friend

Jean passed away on the 2nd of January in the 93rd year of her life. Those fortunate enough to have had crossed Jean's path came away the richer for the meeting. The rambling garden around her home "Dunedin" in Tyers was her passion and contains many native plants both common and rare. It is a haven for birds and a delight for the visitor. Her contribution to botany is marked by her wildflower books and the award in 1973 of the Australian Natural History Medallion. Jean's home at Tyers is open for inspection on Friday, Saturday and Sunday of each week. There is a tearoom and craft room, the garden and a memorabilia room are open for inspection.

Congratulations to Peter Menkhorst

Peter received the Australian Natural History Medallion for 1998 and joins people like Jean Galbraith, Jim Willis and Helen Aston who have made outstanding contributions in the field of Natural History.

Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers

A group of girls from the trust worked in the Chiltern area recently. One project they undertook was the felling of all the Cootamundra Wattles on a bush reserve on the Rutherglen Road. Thanks to Jim Blackney for arranging the project. The residue will be burnt in Autumn and any seedling growth pulled by hand.

Regent Honeyeater Survey Dates Killawarra Forest

Please keep these dates handy and if you are able to assist contact:

David Geering on 1800 621 056

April 24/25

May 22/23*

June 12/14

July 10/11

August 7/8*

* National Survey days.

VNPA Camp Maryborough Box-Ironbark Forests April 24/25

Expert guides to help you see hidden wildlife as well as plants.

Details: Charlie Sherwin 03 96508296

Category

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