



Newsletter 030 April 1996

Description

FRIENDS OF CHILTERN PARK
Convenor E.Collins 057 261 484
Newsletter No. 30 April 1996

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Dear Friends,

At last! National Park status for a Box and Ironbark forest. On behalf of Friends of Chiltern Park a big thank you to everyone who contributed to the cause. I'm sure everyone endorses Minister Birrell's remark, "This area has been crying out for protection for ages" (Herald Sun 16:3:96). This area, however, needs to be recognised in the name given to the park. Chiltern must be included in the name. We will be lobbying locally to achieve a name change. If members wish to Support the effort please write to the Minister and send a copy to the Victorian Place Names Committee. The addresses are printed at the end of the newsletter.

Our April meeting was successful and eventful. After enjoying lunch at Donkey Hill among flowering Ironbarks, noisy honeyeaters, White-throated Needle-tails (Swifts if you prefer it), Wood swallows and Turquoise Parrots, we rearranged our activities.

At Wallace's Gully, an area steeped in goldfields history, we spent time cleaning up. The children enjoyed dodging the spider webs stretched between the trees. Some webs contained large Orb Web spiders with their victims wrapped in silk and suspended in the web, others held the tiny, colourful Jewel Spider, (Spined Spider).

The Genista patch on the Howlong Road was our next target. The forest of seedlings which followed last year's eradication of the large plants had been sprayed by DCNR staff. Good rain in February brought another crop of seedlings. Good hands in April eradicated them as we pondered on the seed life of this wretched plant.

Due to the unforeseen circumstances we were unable to continue with the rest of our programme and the monthly meeting did not take place.

Around the Park

1. Fuel reduction burns are taking place.
 2. Efforts are being made to trap a feral cat which is enjoying parrots and Friar Birds at a couple of watering holes.
 3. Orchids are appearing. Parson's Bands, *Eriochilus cucullatus*, Tiny Greenhoods, *Pterostylis parviflora*, Sharp Midge Orchid, *Genoplesium despectans* were all found in March. The Tiny Greenhoods are worthy of close examination. Most of the plants seen have had a reddish brown hood, however, some flowers are green. If anyone should find a green flowered plant please mark the site and contact me.
 4. Deane's Wattle and Spreading Wattle (*Ac. genistifolia*) are in flower. Spreading Wattle has a restricted distribution and can be found in the Magenta and Brick Kiln Road areas. Golden Wattle is in heavy bud promising a good show for late winter. Ironbark and Grey Box is flowering well in patches and attracting flocks of Noisy Friar-birds.
 5. The winter migrants are already here. King Parrots were seen in March by sharp-eyed Jessie. Crimson Rosellas, Pied Currawongs (silent at the moment), Golden Whistlers, Yellow-faced and White-naped Honeyeaters have all been recorded.
 6. The summer migrants remaining include some Wood swallows, an occasional Oriole and Rufous Whistler.
 7. Regent Honeyeaters were around in March but the April survey failed to record them. Odd birds have been sighted. There are no reports of Regents in other areas. Where are they?
 8. Swift Parrots: The first survey will be conducted on the weekend of the 27-28th April. Please report any sightings of these birds to Chris Tzaros, DCNR, Box 401, Bendigo 3550. Phone: 054 446666.
- Chiltern Park will be surveyed. If you would like to help please contact 057 261 484.
9. Memberships for Friends of Chiltern fall due at the end of June. We look forward to your continued support either as a working member or a supporting member.

NEXT MEETING SUNDAY MAY 5TH AT 9.00AM

Meet at corner of Donkey Hill Road and Rutherglen Road

Activity; Covering the revegetation area at Depot Rd.

Followed by a walk in Wallace Gully. Bring morning tea, lunch, gloves and energy.

Lunch at Donkey Hill picnic area at 2.00.

The Ant Nest

You've probably all heard of fairies at the bottom of the garden! Well I've got ants. They're black and shiny, about 1.5cms in length, and incredibly industrious. Each time I inspect their nest entrance I discover something about my garden environment and marvel at their strength and tenacity. Red seeds from the Asparagus plants which are 15 metres from the nest have been carried to decorate the nest entrance. I have seen them carrying green caterpillars from the Cabbage plants, struggling over the rough ground, sometimes dragging sometimes carrying their victim until they reach the safety of the nest. Getting the load down the entrance requires a lot of ant skill! Sometimes the load is dropped down, perhaps accidentally, sometimes another ant gives assistance.

Decoration around the entrance includes Sparrow droppings, small stones, lengths of grass, pieces of stick up to 6 centimetres long, remains of victims which are carried up from below. Beetles, crickets, grasshoppers, millipedes, caterpillars and bees appear to be on the menu.

The most interesting items at the nest entrance were two egg capsules of a Brown Snake. Obviously there is a reptile lurking in my garden so I must take care. I am not able to say that the snake eggs were

food items but it wouldn't surprise me.

The funniest thing I have seen while ant watching was a very mobile moth. It was raised from the ground and moving along as though on wheels. To my surprise there was an ant underneath it, completely covered by its huge load! I wondered how this prize would be taken down the hole. I soon found out, they simply fell down it.

I marvel at the tenacity of my ants as they carry cricket bodies unaided, work co-operatively to carry dried grass and bits of stick and clean their nest of unwanted remains.

Ant watching is fun. I inspect my nest each time I visit the vegie patch and often the visit takes a long time! Perhaps you've got an ant nest too. Why not have a look at the bottom of your garden?

E.C

BIRDS AND TREE HOLLOWES IN NORTHERN VICTORIA

The Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union (RAOU) has commenced a 12-month study

of the use of hollow-bearing trees by birds in northern Victoria. This study will concentrate on Box-Ironbark habitat on private land and will complement tree and wildlife surveys undertaken by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) in forests on public land. There are potentially few suitable hollows for roosting and nesting birds in Box-Ironbark forests, so the conservation of suitable trees is essential for the long term survival of many birds. The information gathered will assist in identifying trees and forest patches that should be conserved. There will be two survey periods, February-July (non-breeding period) and August-December 1996 (breeding period). Volunteer observers and sympathetic land owners are urgently sought for the project. For more information, please contact George Appleby at the RAOU National Office (415 Riversdale Road, East Hawthorn 3123, telephone 03 9882 2622, fax 03 9882 2677).



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