

Newsletter 102 November 2002

Description

Dear Friends

No rain but good news nevertheless with the announcement of the new Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park and the addition of Killawarra to the Warby State Park. Thanks to everyone who wrote letters, signed cards, lobbied or helped in any other way. This precious landscape and habitat will now be protected for future generations to enjoy and hopefully to care for.

Despite the dry conditions our walk with Neville Walsh was both pleasant and productive. We were joined by the Vic-Group of birdwatchers, many of whom were also very interested in plants. Two sites in the Mt Pilot section of the park were chosen, one a dry pea dominated area and the other a south facing cool gully area.

Most of the plants on the Elligate's Road site were very stressed although the Handsome Flat-pea, *Platylobium formosum* seemed to have made the most of the conditions and was setting plenty of seed. Fresh flowers of the late flowering Tiger Orchid, *Diuris sulphurea* added some colour and Speedwell, Rice Flower, the last of the Greencomb Spider Orchids along with some bearded Orchids were noted.

Somebody's keen eyes spotted a wasp which was attracted to the last of the Beard Orchid flowers. Neville explained that the reason for this attraction was that the orchid produced a pheromone which matched the scent of the female wasp. In its quest to mate the male wasp, attracted to the orchid flower to "mate" performs the pollination instead! This was one very busy wasp! The wasp in question belongs to the Flower Wasp family, *Tiphiidae* and was a species of *Hemithynnus*. The Field Guide to Insects of Australia by Zborowski and Storey pictures the female of the species on page 189. Many of this wasp species parasitise the larvae of burrowing beetles.

Our second site was Old Coach Road alongside a gully. The southern slope of the gully was carpeted with ferns and the native grass *Microlaena stipoides*, Weeping Grass. The overstorey contained the rare *Eucalyptus cadens*, Warby Swamp Gum an attractive smaller eucalypt with a leaning habit and fine silvery new growth. Although called Warby Swamp Gum it is quite well represented in the Mt Pilot section of the park. This part of the park also features some fine tall, white barked Brittle Gums, *E. mannifera*.

Many small plants were found among the grass, including Centaury, Austral Bugle, *Convolvulus*, Sweet Hound's-tongue and the weedy grass Sweet Vernal, **Anthoxantum aristum*, which Neville mentioned as being an under-reported grass.

The most striking plant on this site was the lovely Tall Daisy, *Brachysome diversifolia*. This plant is perennial.

Musky *Caladenias* were plentiful and scented, the flowers were very variable in colour tones, some had

greenish and others deep maroon petals. No wonder they are an amateur's nightmare! At least they all smelled the same.

A pleasant and informative day for which we thank our guest, Neville Walsh, who patiently pointed out the features of many plants.

Around the Park:

Sadly there is vandalism again. Signs at Riley's Road have been damaged and all the star pickets have been stolen from the Depot Dam re-veg site. Someone's need was greater than the plants' need for protection from the roos.

The Vic Group of birdwatchers had a great weekend and compiled a bird list of 80+ species. Some highlights were Painted Honeyeaters, which were plentiful, Satin Flycatchers, White-throated Nightjar, a wandering Barking Owl, White-breasted Woodswallows.

The water levels in the park dams are gradually shrinking. I cannot remember, in 33 years, seeing Cyanide Dam reduced to a single pool as it is now. How sweet would be the rain.

Prior to the last meeting a group of Friends attacked the ferals in the NERWA water reserve on Tank Track. Cootamundra, Briar and Apple was removed. There is still a lot to do to prevent seeding entering the park. Thanks to all who gave extra time.

Regents at Thurgoona: If you live in or are visiting the Thurgoona area keep an eye out for these elusive birds. There have been several reports in recent weeks but it has been difficult to pin their movements down. If you see them please report them.

NEXT MEETING SUNDAY DECEMBER 8TH 2PM AT THE POST OFFICE

Our guest will be Fleur Stelling. Fleur will speak about the development of the seed bank, collecting and storage methods. This will be followed by some collecting activity. Everyone is welcome. Please bring along paper, pencil, secateurs, paper bags or envelopes.

Tea at Cyanide Dam at 6-6.30pm followed by a spotlight walk with Barry Traill. Contact: Eileen 57 261 484

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Author

eileen