

Newsletter 105 March 2003

Description

Dear Friends

What a pleasant change! A day with a forecast maximum of only 20 degrees Celsius had seemed to be a long way off but it was here at last. No more bush fire smoke could be seen and everyone seemed to have a burst of energy and enthusiasm. Our task for the March Friends' day was to clean up the sides of Howlong Road as part of the Cleanup Australia Campaign (CAC). We started outside lot 9 and worked our way forward in small teams stretched out along the road. Bags provided by the CAC were filled with the usual objects such as cans, bottles and takeaway food packets. The showers that threatened eventually arrived but very locally. At one stage Peter was dampened by quite a heavy shower but others just a couple of kilometres down the road were completely dry. After filling the trailer we met for the monthly meeting and then some of us adjourned to Cyanide Dam for lunch. Of course the dam was completely dry but at least some of the regular birds were still to be seen. These included Brown Treecreepers, an Eastern Yellow Robin, Yellow-tufted and Fuscous Honeyeaters but it was especially pleasing to catch a glimpse of a Dollarbird and a Sacred Kingfisher. During the morning we were treated to much bird activity as we worked and this included Turquoise Parrots, Little Lorikeets and many honeyeaters. It seemed that the birds were just as invigorated by the weather change as we were. Once the tip was open for business we were able to dispose of our morning's collection and then head to Bartley's Block as some Black Honeyeaters and Pied Honeyeaters had been seen recently in that general area. There were many White-browed Woodswallows present and they were in excellent condition. It came as quite a shock to see two Black Honeyeaters just after watching the woodswallows because of the size difference (the Black Honeyeater is very small and just a little larger than a Mistletoebird). We did not find any Pied Honeyeaters but there were many of the more common species to be seen feeding on the plentiful mistletoe flowers. Bartley's Block is extremely dry and even the weeds have taken a solid beating. We all look forward to some soaking rains that will herald a more normal rainfall season and hopefully the return of Regent Honeyeaters. Thank you Neville for this report.

Around the park:

The rewards of Mistletoe are especially good for the drought stricken birds of the north. Both Black and Pied Honeyeaters have been recorded feeding in Mistletoe both in the park and in gardens close to the town. The Pied Honeyeater is a new bird for the Friends list. Barry added another one which we would prefer not to list, an Indian Miner!

Rainfall: February 11.4 mm which fell on 4 days. Total for year: 19.8 mm

New members:

Friends welcome four new members, Will and Fiona Barker-Reid, Mark Carey and Margaret Brownlie and trust they enjoy Friends days.

New book: “*Scorpion and Spiders Commonly Found In Victoria*” published by the Royal Society of Victoria is available from FNCV , Locked Bag 3 PO, Blackburn 3130. It costs \$23.50 including postage.

Features include 133 colour photographs, plus 48 black and white illustrations, descriptions of spiders and scorpions along with notes on biology, habitat and venoms. An excellent, concise guide and very good value.

From the meeting:

1. Friends approved a suggestion to apply for a PV Community Grant to provide a wetlands interpretation board for the Lake Anderson project.
2. Friends declined to make a donation towards the seed harvester for the North-east Seed Bank.
3. Indigo Shire: Susie and Christine have been liaising with the shire re post fire firewood collection from three high conservation roadsides. High conservation roadsides are protected from wood gathering under the shire roadside management plan guidelines.
4. The final meeting for the roadside management plan review is on March 12. Susie will deputise for Eileen who is unable to attend.
5. The AGM guests will be Rachel Elso an honours student from CSU. Rachel will take an afternoon park walk and her topic will be “Looking at Leaf Litter”. No doubt we will be surprised at what abounds in leaf litter. The evening guest speaker will be Phil Suter his topic, “The Backbones of Waterway, Aquatic Life” should prove informative. These interesting speakers are not to be missed, so pencil the date into your diaries.

Ever wondered how sleeping Swifts keep their position? Swifts not only sleep while flying but also manage to stay over their territory without being carried away by the wind. To find out how they do it, ornithologists Johan Backman and Thomas Alerstam of Sweden’s Lund University used radar to track the swifts` nocturnal movements. As reported in the German science magazine “Bild der Wissenschaft” the researchers observed a certain flight pattern that keeps swifts in position. The birds climb to high altitudes, up to 3,000 metres, and then fly diagonally into the wind, changing directions rhythmically every few minutes. This rhythmic pattern keeps them moving to and fro over their territory. At low wind speeds however, the swifts were observed to spend their sleeping time circling.

NEXT MEETING SUNDAY APRIL 6TH 9.00AM AT THE POST OFFICE

Hunting down Olives on the Mt Pleasant Road bock

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Category

1. Newsletters

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