

## Newsletter 109 July 2003

### Description

#### Dear Friends

A cold showery day failed to deter a hardy and interested group from turning out and our guest, Dr Phil Suter, provided us with a most interesting and enlightening afternoon. We welcome Betty Carrasco, as our new convenor and she gives us this report:

Dr Phil Suter, from the School of Environmental Management and Ecology, Latrobe University, was both our guide for the afternoon excursion to Depot and Lappins Dams and the speaker at the AGM.

At Depot Dam we were given a demonstration on “how to” study freshwater ecology. Phil laid out and prepared the equipment, much of which could be found in our homes eg, plastic containers, ice cube trays and sieves. A scooper could easily be constructed and most would own a pair of gumboots. He donned the boot/overall combination and went in search of aquatic invertebrates. We gathered round and were enchanted and fascinated by the life that was present in what appeared to be just a big muddy puddle. The pipette was used to separate species of animals and transfer them to individual sections of the ice cube tray. We were then able, with the aid of a magnifying glass, to see the detail of a variety of species, eg bloodworms, midge larvae, water boatmen, dragonfly nymphs, mosquito larvae etc. The rain started to fall but did not dampen the enthusiasm of our guide and we went off to Lappins Dam. Phil gave an overview of the life cycle of some of the aquatic invertebrates eg, hatch, grow, shed and replace outer shell, grow some more and shed and replace outer shell until they are ready for reproduction. Then reproduce and die. All this must be done in some very degraded systems, in drought and flood whilst they run the gauntlet of predators one step over them in the food system.

After the AGM Phil gave a presentation on Mayflies. Mayflies spend most of their lives in freshwater, feeding on small plants and animals in organic debris. There appears to be a species of mayfly for every possible aquatic environmental niche from fast flowing to stagnant pool and from mountain creek to major river. They only leave the water to mate and each species will have its own particular location to place the eggs. The adult is simply a breeding device with head, wings and reproductive organs. Each female lays thousands of eggs over the surface of the water. These then again become the basis of the aquatic food chain as they move through the many nymph stages to adulthood. The adult form has been copied in the familiar fisherman's lure. Phil concluded the talk by reflecting on his personal gains from a lifelong commitment to the study of Mayflies. He had not only contributed to the body of knowledge, but also had the joy of working with a creature of beauty as is the adult Mayfly.

Barry Traill reflected on Eileen's contribution to the creation of the Chiltern National Park. It was a matter of constant vigilance, the courage to speak out on a sound knowledge base and a memory for detail, especially when it came to the pronouncements and activities of the then Kennett government. A very big thank you to you, Eileen, from all the Friends and especially from all the creatures great and small who inhabit the park.

Rainfall:The June rainfall of 65mm fell on 16 days. Total for year : 206mm over 36 days. Much more required!

## Around the Park:

The best birding spot at present is around Magenta Mine. The rain followed by the frosty days has spurred the Ironbarks into productive blossom which has attracted large numbers of honeyeaters including good flocks of White-naped Honeyeaters. It is amusing to watch Red Wattle-birds hunting them from tree top to tree top, rarely do we see Wattle-birds frustrated! Brown-headed, Black-chinned, Fuscous and Yellow-tufted are also in good numbers.

Susie had the good fortune to come across a Chestnut-rumped Hylacola on Whistler Track. Many birdwatchers have come in search of this elusive little bird. Small numbers of Swift Parrots can still be found in the Cyanide Dam block.

John Hawker reported 4 Scaly-breasted Lorikeets feeding in Beechworth township.

Shire news: Indigo Shire is to undertake a street tree planting program. Quote from Border Mail 18 July " It is interesting to note that a number of sub-tropical and semi-arid species such as OLIVES and Kurrajongs do well in Rutherglen". " Our aim is to...extend the opportunity for a broader complement of new exotic tree species as signature trees in those towns"

I am sure all will agree that Olives are the last trees we need in our area since they are target weeds in the park.

## Additions to Victoria's Protected Area System:

A 35 ha site of Plains Grassy Woodland on Research Rd Rutherglen which contains Grey and Yellow Box, fine stands of Kangaroo Grass, two plants of state significance and habitat of the Grey-crowned Babblers is a valuable addition. This site is to be known as Rutherglen Nature Reserve. The second site is a 12ha block adjacent to Lake Moodemere. It contains stands of Buloke and Buloke Mistletoe and chenopod shrubland. Jim Blackney, Trust for Nature, will be well pleased with these additions as he put much effort into getting the blocks assessed. Thanks Jim.

**Newsletter:** This will be the final newsletter for unfinancial members.

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Office-bearers for 2003-4 : Convenor: Betty Carrasco. Secretary: Neville Bartlett. Treasurer: Peter Gotham

Committee: John Hawker, Eileen Collins. Newsletter: E. Collins.

My thanks to everyone who contributed to the magnificent meal enjoyed at the AGM and to the success of the day. Eileen

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NEXT MEETING SUNDAY AUGUST 3rd, 9.00am AT CHILTERN POST OFFICE

National survey day for Swift Parrots and Regent Honeyeaters. Lunch at Depot Dam where we will replace a few stakes for existing trees. Organiser Neville Bartlett Ph: 0260 208 632

BYO Lunch, binoculars and a friend.

**Category**

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