

Newsletter 113 November 2003

Description

Dear Friends,

Weeding at Bartley's Block, believe it or not, was a delight on November 1st. Our small group was entertained by a variety of bird song, the rattling call of excited Rufous Songlarks, constant calling of the tiny Mistletoe Bird, Wrens, Rufous Whistlers, Weebills, Eastern Rosellas, the chattering of the Babblers and best of all the delightful tinkling calls of the Turquoise Parrots which were enjoying the ripening seeds of the capeweed. Across the road Noisy and Little Friar-birds had found a scrap of blossom to feed in and of course the ever present raucous call of Red Wattle-bird could not be missed.

So weeding, with all the musical distractions, was quite easy. There were thousands of Caper Spurge plants looking healthy and ready to produce seed and I am sure thousands were disposed of. They were hidden among that awful weed Cleavers which has proliferated as a result of the wet spring and many more were extracted from their protective cover of the native Tall Sedge, *Carex appressa*. Gloves were essential, both for pulling the Spurge the milky exudant of which can be very irritating to the skin, and for protection against the sharp leaf edges of the Sedge.

Morning tea was very welcome and as we sat watching the birds our attention was drawn to a "pretty purple swathe" in the distance. Was it, could it be, Patterson's Curse, a weed not encountered at Bartley's before? Investigation confirmed our fears so we set about removing some 1000 plants which were confined to an area of 10 by 15 metres, many of the plants were single stemmed and came out easily. Our pile at the end of the effort was satisfying and impressive. It made a good photo shot.

After lunch at Magenta, which was silent compared to the Bartley's serenade, we took a short walk before visiting Donchi Hill to enjoy the floral display with its all pervading aroma of sweetness. The Chocolate Lilies were still showy and together with the Daphne Heath provided the evening time scent of spring. Some Yams had already developed their seed heads, Tiger Orchids, *Diuris sulphurea* were just beginning to open and drifts of off-white Musky Caladenias, *Caladenia gracilis* were particularly noticeable on the ecological burn sites. A small patch of Basalt Daisies, *Brachyscome basaltica*, growing in an area of Grey Box country added a new plant for the Chiltern list. Around the daisy site were masses of tiny Hairy Styleworts, *Levenhookia dubia*, plants which are easily overlooked unless displaying their tiny pale pink 4 petalled flowers; lots of Tiny Pennywort, *Hydrocotyle hirta*, several species of Stonecrop, *Crassula*, and the ground hugging Ivy Goodenia with its bright yellow flowers. It was a very interesting plant community. A plant that is very showy this year and attracting the attention of bush visitors is the bright purple weed, **Linaria pelisseriana*, Common Linaria. In many of the burnt areas in the Mt Pilot section of the park it is rampant.

A walk around the park edge showed clearly the effect weeds have on the park flora with Rye Grass, Brome and vigorous Briza choking out the lilies. However some birds like areas adjacent to open country and one of these is the Hooded Robin and it was our good fortune to find a pair feeding a well-fledged streaky grey youngster. Another bird partial to the edges is the Jacky Winter and if the bird we

found sitting on the flimsiest of nests, built on the flimsiest of branches, in a dead sapling, manages to rear young it will be a marvel of nature. There was absolutely no cover for this sitting bird, the only thing going for it was that its colour matched the branch and the scanty nest fabric. But then who are we to judge? I will try to follow its progress.

Our wonderful day closed with a cuppa on top of Donchi Hill while overhead with their constant calls were Woodswallows and Bee-eaters. An absolutely perfect day.

Around the Park: Chiltern Valley Dams are full. Pink-eared Ducks, Shovelors, Teal, Black Duck, Pacific Herons, Egrets, large and intermediate, and White-faced Herons can be seen around No 2 Dam. Little Pied Cormorants are nesting in a living tree just off the bank edge. There are Swans with cygnets on both No.1 and No 2 dams.

Snipe are skulking along the wetlands of the Old Chiltern Road as are Purple Swamp-hens, Coots and Moorhens.

Rainfall: Total for October was 85mm falling on 12 days. Yearly total is 566.2mm falling on 91 days.

Wine Raffle: The lucky winner was Margaret Brownlie. Thanks to all who took part.

Platypus Information Evening:

Wangaratta Urban Landcare Group has arranged a Platypus Information Night with Dr Melody Serena, an expert on the platypus. Venue: Goulburn Ovens Wangaratta Campus, Docker St, Building A Room 28. Date: November 20th Time: 8pm.

Friends of the Warbys:

Annual General Meeting Monday November 10th in the private dining room of the Sydney Hotel, Wangaratta. Dinner at 6.30pm with the meeting to follow. Contact Catriona Ferguson 03 57 221213 All welcome.

NEXT MEETING SUNDAY NOVEMBER 30TH

Meet at Chiltern Post Office at 3pm. Tea at Cyanide Dam at 5.30-6.00pm

Bat trapping with Natasha Schedvin. See them caught, measured and weighed and learn about their habits and their needs. This will be an evening not to be missed.

BYO Tea, Chair, Torch and Repellant. Clothing which is mossie-proof would be an asset.

Last meeting for 2003. Contact: Eileen 03 57 261 484

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Author

eileen

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