

Newsletter 114 December 2003

Description

Dear Friends

Afternoon showers caused us to run for shelter as we searched for olives on Donchi Hill Road but what followed in the evening sent us packing! It was pleasant wandering around the box woodland section of Donchi Hill looking for olives to attack. A total of 15 trees were removed, some growing vigorously and a few struggling but all with well established root systems. To counter the rain we placed bark over the pasted stumps so the work should be effective.

An interesting find was a nice patch of the Yellowish Bluebell, *Wahlenbergia luteola*, previously know only from the Mt Pleasant block and in habitat similar to the lower Donchi Hill site. This dainty bluebell, which is more common on the plains, is easily recognised by the yellowish sheen on the underside of the petals. The Basalt Daisies had shed their seeds and hopefully the patch will increase in size. Drifts of Blue Pincushions, *Brunonia australis*, Golden Everlastings, Finger Flowers, *Cheiranthra cyanea* dried stems of the previously abundant Chocolate Lilies and the ever present Blowfly Grass, *Briza maxima* completed the picture.

The Sweet Bursaria, *Bursaria spinosa*, was covered in flower. This is a wonderful shrub for attracting butterflies, wasps and spiders and an asset to any native garden.

An interesting plant flowering well this season is the lovely bright blue Tall Lobelia, *Lobelia gibbosa*. Bearing 6-8 flowers on a tall upright stem it is uncommon in the park. A stand of about 20 plants was found on Tuan Track, close to its junction with Depot Road . After the eruption of the weedy Lobelia in spring this was a pleasing find.

A brief stop was made at the Peake's Track ecological burn site to look at the last of the flowers on the Leek Orchids, *Prasophyllum* sp aff *validum*, at least until it receives a name of its own. This beautiful Leek Orchid flowered exceptionally well this year when over 500 plants were counted.

Birds recorded included Restless Flycatcher, Jacky Winter, White-winged Triller, Choughs, Brown Treecreeper, and Eastern Rosella.

By five o'clock we were ready for tea and headed off to Cyanide Dam. Tea was just about completed when the weather began to close in. Secretary Neville did a sterling job getting the meeting completed under a large umbrella then the storm struck! Thunder and lightning, wind and rain was enough to make us call it a day. The drive home was scary, with debris from trees, torrential rain, and lightning ripping open the skies and we were all glad to be out of the park.

Let's hope we have better luck when we try bat trapping in February. Many thanks to Natasha who did come down to Chiltern in the hope that the weather would clear.

Around the Park:

Chiltern Valley Dams are full and providing good birding. Some of our Depot plantings have been lost apparently to spray drift so we will replace them as soon as possible, the rest are growing well.

Rainfall: Total for November was 160 mm falling on 8 days. Yearly total is 682.2 mm falling on 99 days. No wonder Chiltern achieved the record of being the wettest place in Victoria in November!

Programme for 2004: The committee will meet on January 19th to draw up the new programme. If you have something you would like to have included please contact one of the committee. The new programme will be sent out with the February newsletter.

On behalf of Convenor Betty and the committee I wish everyone a Joyous, safe, Festive Season and a rewarding New Year.

Eileen

NEXT MEETING SUNDAY FEBRUARY 1ST

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.

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