

Newsletter 115 February 2004

Description

Dear Friends,

A good gathering of members met at the Chiltern Post Office at 3 p.m. and then headed off to the Depot Road site to do some weeding. The sun was blazing hot when we arrived and the site was rather dry and dusty however a collection of various tenacious weeds were soon dispatched. The next stop was Bartley's Block where we intended to survey how much Caper Spurge awaited us. All thoughts of weeding soon passed as Little Lorikeets wheeled overhead making the most of the prolific mistletoe flowers. Many other birds were about including Turquoise Parrots, Red-rumped Parrots, Jacky Winter, Olive-backed Oriole, Weebills and various honeyeaters. A walk around the block confirmed that there is quite a lot of Caper Spurge ready to be removed at our next meeting in March.

Cyanide Dam was pleasantly cool and many birds were about as we waited for dusk and the arrival of Natasha and the bat traps. The birds included Sacred Kingfishers, a White-faced Heron, White-throated Needle-tails, Brown Treecreepers, a Collared Sparrow-hawk, honeyeaters (Black-chinned, Fuscous, Yellow-tufted), Olive-backed Oriole, a Rufous Whistler, Crested Shrike-tit, Willie Wagtail, Restless Flycatcher and Eastern Yellow Robin. Natasha Schedvin arrived and explained what traps we were about to set up and how bats would be handled should we be fortunate enough to catch some. The water on the dam was as smooth as glass and fishing line was set up just above the surface of the water in the hope of snaring bats as they drank by skimming the water. We waited patiently in the moonlight but this method of catching bats was not successful this time. Two harp traps had also been set up at likely spots but these were also empty. Everyone was fascinated by Natasha's explanation of how the traps worked and an enthusiastic team helped to put them up and disassemble them later.

A very pleasant evening was spent at an enchanting location even though the bats were elsewhere.

Thank you Neville for this report.

Around the Park:

The green tinge is gradually fading as the weather continues dry.

The seedling pines have been removed from the Pine Rd-Edgar's Track area of the park by the summer work crew.

An area of Prickly Pear in the western section of the new park is being controlled by the Cochineal Insect. As part of the control programme insects are collected from active areas and spread into new areas. This programme has been underway for many years with positive results.

The huge Olive trees on Pooley's Track and near the reference area have been chain-sawed and

pasted. Darren will be pleased as he tagged them, now he will miss them on his walks! If you are walking in the park look out for these pests and if possible mark any you spot so that they can be dealt with.

It is heartening to see the seedling White Cypress Pines in the Pilot section of the park doing well. Some summer rain would see them well on their way. Many trees have been struck by lightning in recent weeks resulting in two small fires.

In January a Little Button-quail with young was seen in the Pilot section of the park. This is an unusual record for the area and only the second I have had in 30 years. They may be more plentiful but their small size, camouflage and speed may cause them to be overlooked. An interesting reptile record for Chiltern was that of an Olive Legless Lizard, *Delma inornata*. Several were found dead near Wenkes Crossing. The best specimen has been preserved and records sent to the Atlas of Victorian Wildlife along with the quail sighting.

Over the last two months many visitors, from interstate and overseas, have come seeking Turquoise Parrots, Regent Honeyeaters,

Nightjars and the more common (to us) birds. Most have left satisfied with their lists.

Rainfall: The December rainfall was 181.4mm on 9 days, bringing the yearly total to 863.6mm over 108 days.

January brought just 26.6mm of rain on 5 days. Most of the thunderstorms missed Chiltern this time. Here's hoping for a good year.

Britain's Oldest Bird?

"Britain's oldest known bird is still flying high after 8 million kilometres and 52 years," reports London's "Times Newspaper". The bird, a small black and white Manx Shearwater, was first seen ringed in May 1957, when it was 6 years old. It was trapped again in 1961, 1978, and 2002 after which ornithologists did not expect to see it again. But early in 2003 it reappeared off the coast of North Wales. The British Trust for Ornithology reckons that the bird has flown at least 800,000 kilometres when migrating to and from S America. Adding its regular feeding flights of 1,000 kms, scientists conclude that it has flown more than 8 million kms. Graham Appleton of the Bardsey Bird Observatory in North Wales says the bird was given its fourth ring; again something of a record. The others had all worn out! I wonder who gave it the first ring?

NEXT MEETING SATURDAY MARCH 6TH

Meet at Chiltern Post Office at 9.00am.

Weeding Caper Spurge plus any other ferals at Bartley's Block. Good birding assured during the work time!

BYO morning tea, lunch etc. Afternoon walk. Organiser: Betty Carrasco ph 0260 431 604

Lunch at Chiltern Valley No 1 Dam, afternoon visit to Valley No 2 .

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