

Newsletter 125 December 2004

Description

Dear Friends,

Summer has struck! Despite the 37 degree heat seven of us dealt the thistles and mullein at the State Battery site at Frogs Hollow a severe blow. None of the thistles or mullein plants had set seed, however many thistles are left to do just that! Other weeds pulled included nightshade, prunus seedlings, and blackberry. The grass was tall and drying off providing an ideal environment for snakes so vigilance was required.

We noted garden rubbish dumped in two places near the Battery site. Dumping is becoming an increasing problem in the park.

Bartleys Block was chosen for some R&R. The birds as usual were a delight. The baby Jacky Winters in their streaky juvenile plumage chased moths, we had stunning views of male Turquoise Parrots reaching up to get the seed heads of the grasses, Painted Honeyeaters calling intermittently and Rufous Whistlers joining the chorus. One very pretty call was the trill of the Rufous Songlark which was perched on a low eucalypt branch and no doubt there would have been a nest in the grass nearby. The Painted Honeyeaters' nest failed for some reason, perhaps predation or the cold snap affecting the tiny young. However they have built a new nest and are incubating so let's hope they get through the heat. The Yackandandah Road pair fledged one young and they too have rebuilt close to their first nest.

En route to Honeyeater Picnic spot we stopped to look at a nice colony of Large Duck Orchids, *Caleana major*. These well camouflaged little gems appear to have a liking for Stringybarks. Driving along Greenhill Road the *Senecio* sp display was stunning, the tall white fluffy seed heads mixed with golden everlastings made a stunning display shining in the sunlight. Obviously the rainfall over winter and early spring provided good growing conditions. At Ballarat Road we made a stop to water the *Senecio garlandii* plants only to find that one site had its guard burrowed under and the plant missing, probably the eaten by wallaby or a rabbit.

Tea was welcome at 5.30 and we were joined by Tracy and from the CSU Environetwork Group who presented Friends with a cheque for \$300 which represented the money raised from ticket sales for Travelling Birds. It is hoped that the money will go towards some interpretive signage for Bartley's Block when the park management plan is in place.

The evening was pleasantly cooler and having time to fill in before dusk we decided to search for the elusive Tiny Duck Orchid, *Caleana minor*. After scouring the dry stringybark gullies our tally of this little gem of the bush was 12 plants, so, well satisfied we returned to the dam to do some spotlighting. Frogs were in great voice, a "fracas of frogs" was the suggested collective for them. Interestingly there were no mosquitoes to spoil the evening, most unusual for this spot. Apart from the frogs all was silent and after a couple of sweeps the spotlight, although fully charged, decided its life was over! Using the big torch we saw plenty of flying insects so it was no surprise to see large and small bats over the

water and along the road. Not a mammal to be found so at 9.30pm we were homeward bound after a very varied and rewarding day.

Rainfall: November 87.8mm over 13 days. Yearly total: 498.2mm over 95 days.

Superb Parrot Survey Day near Nathalia:

Sunday December 5th. Meet at 7.30am on the Murray Valley Highway at Nine Mile Bend, 23kms west of Strathmerton. Vic-roads Map 22 E8 Contact: Gary Deayton 0358 622 919

Committee: Will meet in late January to draw up the programme for 2005 which will be sent out in February .

If anyone has suggestions for activities please send them to secretary Neville for consideration.

Parks Advisory Council Group:

Both John Hawker and Eileen are members of this group. If you have issues you would like to have put forward please email them to me on the above address. The next group meeting is on December 16th

THE ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT

The latest calculation of global ecological footprints estimates the average for all people on earth is 1.8 hectares—in comparison the average Australian has a footprint of 7.7 hectares. Some facts: It takes 4 litres of water to produce a bottle of beer; 500 litres to produce 1 orange and a staggering 41,500 litres to produce a kilo of beef!

When purchasing we are asked to think about the things we are buying. Eat less meat, buy Australian made, borrow or rent little used items, buy clothes to last, buy recycled and recyclable, avoid excess packaging and there are many more ideas.

Source: *ACF Habitat Australia*. It makes rather depressing reading. Australia's water use is the third highest in the world after USA and Canada with the average household using 300,000 litres a year. All that in one of the driest continents on earth.

NEXT MEETING SATURDAY FEBRUARY 5TH 2005 MEET AT THE CHILTERN POST OFFICE AT 9.00AM We will visit the three outlier dams, Barambogie, Chiltern Valley Nos 1 and 2 and will conduct waterbird surveys among other things. BYO lunch, gloves, binocs, chair and energy.

Organiser: Eileen 03 57 261 484

SEASONS GREETINGS TO ALL. LET THE HOLIDAY PERIOD BE HAPPY AND SAFE AND THE NEW YEAR PEACEFUL. MANY THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO HAS CONTRIBUTED TO FRIENDS THIS YEAR. EILEEN

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