

Newsletter 128 April 2005

Description

Dear Friends,

This Indian Summer continues, smoke hangs around but despite it the days are enjoyable. Control burns have been conducted on Arnie's Block off Depot Road and on All Nations block between All Nations Road and Lancashire Gap Road. Along All Nations Road there are fine examples of the fire fungus, *Polyporus mylittae*. The large fruiting bodies of this species appear after fire. Its large underground food reserves which resemble gluggy rice are sometimes brought to the surface by ploughing. Known as Blackfellow's Bread there is evidence that they were used for food by Aborigines. (Source: Australian Fungi; B Fuhrer.)

There are orchids to be seen in autumn but you may have to look very carefully. Tiny Midge Orchids, *Genoplesium* sp aff *rufum* are actually quite plentiful in the rough sparsely vegetated Ironbark country. In the same country are the delicate pink Parson's Bands, *Eriochilus cucullatus*. These amazingly delicate orchids somehow manage to push their way through the hard soil to delight orchid lovers. There are quite a few of the more robust Red-tipped Greenhood, *Pterostylis parviflora*. These small flowered greenhoods will be present over the winter months and should anyone find one with plain green flowers we would like to hear about it please. Insects generally seem very scarce despite the summer rains. The lovely Orb Web Spiders seem to be in lower numbers this year perhaps reflecting the scarcity of insects.

The April gathering was accompanied by some unseasonably warm weather after quite a while without rain. Consequently we went about checking nest boxes on the North side of the park in rather dusty conditions. The nest boxes had been installed in the park in March 1986 primarily to encourage Turquoise Parrots but mammals have been the main occupants over the years. At our first stop we found an old battered box with a young Brush-tailed Possum that was very patient for quite some time but eventually retreated further up the tree. Other boxes contained leaves and bark as well as showing clear signs of occupancy at some time during the past. One box was located in a section of the park that has recently been burnt to reduce fuel and this box was located sufficiently high enough that it did not suffer at all from the fire. Generally, the boxes are showing their age and would benefit from being replaced with newer ones specifically designed for the use of mammals.

Lunch at Greenhill Dam provided a strong list of bird species and it was particularly pleasing to watch the striated and spotted pardalotes busily feeding in clear view. Fuscous, Yellow-tufted, Black-chinned, Brown-headed and White Plumed honeyeaters were all present and provided us with excellent views as these birds nervously drank at the dam. No Regent Honeyeaters were to be found and this probably due to the lack of eucalypt blossom at the moment. Thank you Neville for this report. Anyone interested in helping to renew/repair the boxes could contact either Neville or Eileen.

Landcare meeting:

The guest speaker at the AGM of Landcare will be Ray Thomas from Benalla. Ray has been involved in a massive re-vegetation project in the Lurg district for 10 years. The resultant transformation in the landscape is amazing. Ray will present a slide show and talk about this incredible project on Monday May 2nd at the Senior Citizens' Hall in Chiltern at 7.30pm

Supper will be provided. All welcome.

Rainfall:March: 16.0mm over 5 days. Yearly total: 243.2mm over 20 days. Very dry over the past two months and a good autumn break while the soil is still warm would be a bonus.

Vale Kelvin Quin.

Friends extend their deepest sympathy to Bruce, Darren and Joan on the loss of their father and husband. Kel battled illness bravely, supported by a loving family. He will be remembered by Friends for his part in constructing the nest boxes for Bruce's Turquoise Parrot study. These boxes are the ones Friends monitored this month. Friends share this loss and we hope to see Bruce, Joan and Darren in the park later this year.

NEXT MEETING SUNDAY MAY 1ST

9.00am at Chiltern Post Office. Survey the Cemetery Bushland Reserve for young pines and weeds and spray any emerging Freesias. Depot enclosure, weed around trees and spray around the guards. Erect extra guards on natural regeneration if the ground is soft enough.

Lunch is scheduled for Magenta Mine. BYO gloves, binoculars, lunch, chair.

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