

Newsletter 130 June 2005

Description

Dear Friends,

Greeted by yet another unseasonal warm sunny day what else could we do but enjoy it? One request put to the committee for inclusion in the 2005 programme was that we visit a part of the park rarely visited. So June's activity was centred on the Ironbark Track block, in particular the south facing section which abuts Lancashire Gap Road. Cars were parked on the ridge line and we walked through the block in search of Cootamundra Wattles and anything else alien. Two very large Cootamundras and a number of smaller ones met their Waterloo, some gorse and broom was removed from the roadside and several large bags were filled with rubbish with 80% of it coming off the roadside. A few patches of Bridal Creeper along the roadside were marked for spraying.

Walking through the block we were surprised at the good ground cover of grasses, moss and shrubs, a few lilies and some greenhood rosettes were seen, lots of Hovea was in bud and a small stand of Deane's Wattle was found. The little gullies are known to support an array of orchids but apart from a small patch of pterostylis rosettes no other leaves were found. Wattles were well represented with Golden, Varnish, Hedge, Silver, Spreading Wattle, Lightwood and Deane's Wattle all present. On the lower part of the block there is an impressive stand of Black Cypress Pine, Callitris endlicheri, a plant uncommon in the Chiltern section of the park. Ironbark, Stringybark and Red Box were the dominant eucalypts with an occasional White Cypress Pine amongst them. This is a block in very nice condition, weed free and well vegetated and a visit in spring would be interesting.

Not many birds were seen but there was quality! Great views of Swift Parrots were enjoyed by all. Both Black-faced and White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes were seen and on the fenceline a splendid male Flame Robin with a breast living up to its name. The red robins have been very scarce so far this year.

After a drive along Ironbark Track we had lunch at Honeyeater Picnic area and enjoyed the usual entertainment provided by our feathered friends. Spotted and Striated Pardalotes, Weebills, Yellow Robin, Wrens, Grey Thrush, the resident honeyeaters, a pair of Australian Grebes on the dam and the cheeky Brown Treecreepers.

After lunch and a brief meeting we headed off to the Donchi Hill block to see what we could find. Turquoise Parrots, more Weebills, Hooded Robins, a wonderful little party of eight Diamond Firetails feeding in the short grass in the paddock, Dusky Woodswallows overhead, a few Jacky Winters and the usual Fuscous and Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters. While standing on Peake's Track we counted 40+ Kangaroos bounding through undergrowth. Lappin's Dam was the afternoon tea spot and the target species was the Swift Parrot. The dam was alive with activity with birds coming to dip and drink. I think every Fuscous Honeyeater in the area was present! Immature Crimson Rosellas arrived in a little group and walked sedately to the open water's edge while the drinking honeyeaters preferred the relative shelter of the reeds. Little Friar-birds were dipping and Noisy friar-birds were heard calling nearby. The calls of the Swift Parrots could be heard around the dam but none came to drink and the

chill of the evening as the sun dropped low was the signal for the day to end.

Around the Park:

That elusive Regent Honeyeater was spotted again on Greenhill Road on June 2nd but searches by the bird group on Sunday and by me on Monday were unsuccessful. Hopefully rain will induce it to call and give its presence away.

Rainfall: May: 6.6mm over 3 days. Yearly total: 257.6mm over 27 days.

New species nearly kebab:

An odd looking rodent spotted in a Laos food market where it was about to be turned into a kebab has not only been revealed as a new species, but also the first member of a new family of mammals to be identified in more than 30 years. The creature, officially called the stone-dwelling puzzle-mouse was discovered by a member of the New York Wildlife Conservation Society, who spotted the animal as it was about to be grilled! It looks like a cross between a large dark rat and a squirrel. What makes the rock rat special is that it is the first member of a whole new family of mammals now called laonastidae!

Thanks to Ian for this snippet from the paper.

Weeding out bush pests:

Sustainable Gardens Australia has initiated a campaign to remove pest plants from sale. SGA's hit list includes agapanthus, gazanias, seaside daisies, English ivy, coast wattle, sweet pittosporum and we would add bridal creeper!

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