

Newsletter 137 February 2006

Description

Dear Friends

Welcome to 2006. Usually January is pretty quiet but not this year. Several wetlands near Rutherglen filled quickly after the deluge of rain in late November. It didn't take long for the waterbirds to discover it either. It is over 5 seasons since the wetlands have been full and all the regulars returned to celebrate. Whiskered Terns, Black-winged Stilts, Baillon's and Spotted Crakes, Banded Landrail, Black-fronted and Red-kneed Dotterels, Blue-billed ducks, Wood and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and to top it off some Painted Snipe plus all the local species. On a nearby wetland there were Magpie Geese, many swans and an estimated 5000 waterfowl. Three of us witnessed the lift off from this wetland as the sky turned black and the noise was deafening. Many species were breeding, especially the Australasian and Hoary-headed Grebe, there were young White-faced and White-necked Herons and Great Egrets too. By the first week in February as the waters receded the terns departed and stilt numbers declined.

Not only were the birds in great numbers but the birdwatchers too and in turn the regular travelers of that road were curious to know what everyone was looking at! Even the Mayor of Indigo Shire asked questions!

In the park the searing heat of plus 40 degree days dried the ground flora off quickly, only the everlastings are testimony to the wonderful season that passed. Now the eucalypts are looking fresh and some like Red Box and White Box are budding up well. Some Stringybark is in flower but does not seem to be attracting birds, however the Grey Box bud is starting to open and attract Little Friar-birds. Bud on the Ironbark is heavy in some areas and non-existent in others. We look forward, with hope, to the return of the Regent Honeyeaters.

A Black Honeyeater was spotted in early January probably attracted by the two species of Mistletoe in flower. Five Painted Button-quail have been killed on the road outside the park, suggesting that the dry conditions have forced them into adjoining paddocks. Mark has seen parties of Turquoise Parrots through the Mt Pilot section but they have been hard to find in Chiltern.

Our February meeting was held in pleasant conditions. Nest boxes were erected on All Nations Road, Tower Hill Road and Grevillea track replacing the long serving aged ones.

Morning tea, with a "sticky bun" as a reward, was at Honeyeater Picnic area very welcome. As the birds were very quiet in the park it was decided to lunch at Valley No 1 Dam which was a good decision and we enjoyed the cooling breeze off the water.

White-breasted Woodswallows hawked insects over the water, Latham's Snipe, Moorhens, White-faced Heron, Cormorants and an unidentified raptor filled our lunchtime. Valley No 2 was the next stop where we found the Night-herons, Great-crested Grebe, Pelicans, Pink-eared Ducks and Black-fronted Dotterels. The dead trees on the far side of the dam were festooned with little cormorants in their usual

nesting spot.

John has suggested that some understorey should be planted at Valley 2 and this has been programmed for mid-year.

The May meeting will focus on improvements at Depot and later in the afternoon we will go on a frog search guided by Aaron Organ from Ecology Australia. Target species will be Bibron's Toadlet which is in decline in many of its habitats. We know two sites for this frog in Chiltern Park and this day hopefully will locate some more.

When the autumn break arrives mid-month working bees on the Rutherglen Conservation block will resume with the erection of nest boxes and planting of understorey.

Rainfall: January 12.6mm over 7 days which fell in brief thunderstorms. 2005 Rainfall total: 864.6mm

Please find your 2006 programme attached. Hope to see you on some of the meeting days.

NEXT MEETING SATURDAY MARCH 4TH MEET AT CHILTERN POST OFFICE 9.00AM. We will be putting up nest boxes. BYO lunch, chair, binocs, sunscreen, hat etc. Contact: Neville 0260 208 632. After lunch we will do wetland surveys on Chiltern Valley No 1 and 2 Dams and Barambogie Dam Contact: Phillip 0260 215 313

Category

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