

Newsletter 139 April 2006

Description

Dear Friends

The long, lazy autumn days have ended with the ending of daylight saving. Wouldn't it be nice to have some refreshing rain to accompany it? The park is looking very dry now but the flowering eucalypts make up for the dryness on the ground. The sound of friar-birds, wattle-birds and bees pervades the air and the lack of wind magnifies the sound. The grey box sections of the park, along Curtain's and Mt Pleasant Roads are alive with the lovely calls of the White-breasted Woodswallows. It is no exaggeration to say they are present in many hundreds no doubt fattening up on the nectar and pollen bounty provided by the Grey Box to prepare them for their journey north in the next month or so. Bee-eaters remain scarce, being seen only in groups of 2-4. Processionary Caterpillars are about now, following one another head to tail in lines sometimes 2 metres long. Look for their silken web shelters usually placed at the base of a Golden Wattle they resemble little tents about 30 cms tall. Take care not to touch as the hairs of these caterpillars are irritating. Golden Wattle is their food plant and you may notice plants with their leaves stripped. The Ironbarks are beginning to flower and my local apiarist friend Simon tells me a shower of rain and some cold nights will help the nectar flow. Speaking of Simon, he has kindly offered his services to remove a hive of bees from one of our nest boxes. This is a task we do not have the skills to undertake. Fortunately the nest boxes have been relatively bee-free. Sean Dooley reported an immature Painted Honeyeater on his Howlong Road block in late March. If they were around Chiltern to breed we missed them, perhaps this one was going north after growing up elsewhere. They did nest on Bright Golf Course this year where they were spotted by Barry Traill so perhaps Chiltern is on the northward route. On April 4th I was lucky enough to have two Painted Honeyeaters in my garden so perhaps they are on their return journey.

Notes from Neville

Autumnal weather is here at last. Sunday was a very pleasant mild day with a good gathering of people to install 8 mammal boxes in the park. These boxes are primarily intended to replace the existing boxes that are nearing the end of their useful days but we are also placing a few extras in the neighbourhood of some of the replacements. The process of placing the boxes is becoming very streamlined and it did not take long to get them up.

A brief stop at Mt Pleasant Dam was thoroughly enjoyed with many birds about. These included some very good views of Olive-backed Orioles and an immature Mistletoe bird. Lunch at Cyanide Dam was most pleasant with some of the regular birds making an appearance. An Eastern Yellow Robin, Superb Fairy-wrens and many honeyeaters made us think that the birds were enjoying the change of season. Next stop was Greenhill Dam and this proved to be interesting with some White-throated Needletails wheeling overhead before they moved on. An extensive list of 51 species was observed during the day and this included some very good views of birds that would usually be much more shy. Thank you Neville.

Thanks to Gary and Lisa who compiled the bird list for the day. For the diehards who stayed at Greenhill Dam the reward was the sighting of three Swift Parrots, so make the list total 52!

New Website

We need a name for our new site. Tony Marsh is developing the site and has asked for suggestions for a domain name. All contributions gratefully received. The name needs to be short and more appealing than the one at the top of this page! Please contribute your ideas.

Newspapers required

We will require newspapers for mulching at the Depot Block in late autumn so please save yours.

Weeds and more Weeds

We think we have a problem with Genista (soft broom) but down on the Yarra they have an enormous problem with Oboe Reed, Arundo donax, a giant poisonous reed growing to 8 metres tall! It smothers native vegetation driving out frogs, fish and birds. It has become Melbourne Water's No 1 priority with a 3 year \$65,00 eradication program in place. And how did it get there you may well ask. No prizes for getting the answer right! Yes, it's a plant sold in nurseries! The reed has devastated waterways across the USA but has only recently gained a foothold in Australia. Brought to Australia as an ornamental plant it reached the Yarra via the stormwater drains. We have Ian to thank for this newspaper cutting.

From Friends-net, VNPA: Melbourne Walking Club's circular advises that doctors say a bystander can recognise a stroke by asking these simple questions: ask the individual to smile, to raise both arms, and to speak a simple sentence. If there is any trouble with any of these tasks call the emergency number 000 or 112.

Rainfall for March: 19.6 mm over 3 days 2006 Rainfall total for the year: 40.8 mm over 13 days.

Annual General Meeting

The meeting has been moved to Saturday September 2nd in order to accommodate the speaker. Andrew Silcocks from Birds Australia will speak on coastal and inland waders . Details closer to the date.

Friends of the Warbys : May 13th Walk to Mt Glenrowan Contact : Catriona 0357 221 213

NEXT MEETING SATURDAY MAY 6TH MEET AT CHILTERN POST OFFICE **1PM**

From 1pm we will work at Depot. 3pm Frogs with Aaron Organ from Ecology Partners Pty Ltd specifically seeking Bibron's Toadlet, Pseudophryne bibronii, a rare species which has just been added to the threatened species list. Tea and an evening session with more frogs! BYO Tea and chair.

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Category

1. Newsletters

Date Created

2012/06/22

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