

Newsletter 147 December 2006

Description

Dear Friends,

Year 2006 seems to have flown. We celebrated our year at Honeyeater Picnic ground with a delightful Christmas Tea. The late afternoon walk was pleasant despite the dry conditions. Very few birds were seen around the dam which was surprising and a reflection of the harsh conditions. Swamp (minus the swamp!) Wallabies were plentiful and sleek, apart from one which appeared to be blind. The cheery treecreepers were notable absentees as were the Fairy-wrens and Yellow Robins. The 2007 programme was finalised before tea and will be attached to this newsletter. The next newsletter will be in February. Sean Dooley, author of *The Big Twitch* will be our guest speaker for the 2007 AGM. Don't miss this one! Following the success of this year's AGM we have invited the Murray-Goulburn Bird Observers' Group to join us for the day.

To everyone who has contributed to the group this year, through their membership and or their attendance a big thank you. Have a happy and safe Festive Season however you choose to celebrate.

Around the park:

The Valley 2 plantings are growing well and are appreciating the watering from the parks staff. However if the fires keep going Friends may need to organise relief watering. Almost all of the original 50 plants which were planted in the un-ripped ground have died and hopefully can be replaced next year in ripped ground. The combination of ripping and weed mat has proved successful with the second planting. The Depot plantings continue to thrive and the new ones are being watered. Painted Honeyeaters are still being heard and are most reliable at Bartley's Block along with White-throated and Western Gerygones and many young Striated Pardalotes. Red-capped, Yellow and Hooded Robin and Western Gerygone nests have been noted in recent weeks. At Chiltern Valley No2 Dam there is a flock of about 40 White-fronted Chats as well as the usual Red-kneed and Black-fronted Dotterels and a flotilla of Pelicans which are hopefully feeding on the carp. Black Honeyeaters are still about. At Valley No 1 White-browed Woodswallows are nesting and there are many young streaky Dusky Woodswallows. The big Yellow Box trees at Valley 1 are in full flower attracting Little Friar-birds, White-plumed Honeyeaters and a single female Black Honeyeater which was harassed by the White-plumes. That scarcest of beautiful birds the Bee-eater is around in very low numbers at both valley dams. The valley dams are very low and it would not be a surprise to see them dry in January if no rain falls. The dams within the park are holding up well. Cyanide is now divided in two, Greenhill, Lappins, Depot and Ryan's Dams are pretty good but at Bartley's the lower dam is dry and the upper one is reduced to an unpleasant looking pool. Despite the lack of water the birding round Bartley's is still rewarding. A recent sighting of a Gould's Goanna, *Varanus gouldii*, was exciting. A rarely seen ground-dwelling goanna, it shelters in burrows of its own or those of other animals, in hollow logs or ground litter. This goanna can grow to 1.6m in length but the one Phillip and I found was about 80 cm long and posed nicely for a photograph. On November 18th a lone Regent Honeyeater was spotted at the junction of the Yackandandah and Lancashire Gap Roads. Unfortunately news of sighting came a week later and a search for it was unsuccessful. Prompt

reporting of these sightings is vital so that follow-up can take place. Eleven birds were banded this year and they dispersed in August after having spent six months enjoying the eucalypt flowering. If you are lucky enough to spot one anywhere try to get a look at its legs in case it is banded. A freecall number for reporting is : 1800 621 056 or to Eileen on 0357 261 484.
<hr>Tasks for 2007: A list of tasks has been drawn up to enable us to quickly substitute activities if and when required. Weather conditions will obviously affect some of the planned activities so changes will be inevitable. Where possible they will be listed in the newsletter.
<hr>Rainfall: November: 34.2 mm over 6 days Yearly total to date: 283.8 mm over 69 days. Getting very serious.
<hr> </p><p>NEXT MEETING
FEBRUARY 3RD MEET AT CHILTERN POST OFFICE AT 9.00 AM
 </p><p>At present the plan is to erect some new nest boxes in the Slaughteryard Gap block, remove a few succulent weeds. Lunch at Greenhill Dam, hopefully with water in it. BYO gloves, hat, sunscreen, lunch, chair and energy. Contact: Neville 0260 208 632
<hr>FIRES 2006
To all those fighting fires we say thank you for your work and trust you remain safe.
To our members the Westmacotts at Whitfield our thoughts are with you at this difficult time.
Everyone would be grateful for a very wet Christmas.
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Category

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