

Newsletter 150 April 2007

Description

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the 150th newsletter! I hope you have all enjoyed a safe Easter break. The weather has been delightful for the holiday and now it can rain , rain and rain!

Tony has the new website up and running though it is not quite finished. Check it out and send me your comments to pass on.

Last meeting was held on a glorious day. An old nest box was removed from Depot Road, the nearby new one inspected and two new boxes were erected along Tuan Track. These new boxes have been erected where a dead Tuan was picked up in March. Inspection of the area revealed a severe lack of hollows, either in trees or stumps. It will be interesting to see if any animals are attracted to the new boxes.

Everyone walked along the track to the box sites and back to the car park and it was a nice change from driving. The morning tea bun was more than welcome. The nasty weed Fierce Thornapple, *Datura ferox*, has reared its ugly head again so we spent time removing seedlings, some 200 in all and thankfully all under 40cms. This infestation had arisen from one plant which escaped notice and seeded two years ago. Although the plant and visible seed was removed there were survivors.

Summer rain triggers the germination so we need to be alert for new plants. Another nasty weed, Red-Ink Weed has also responded to the rain and many seedlings were removed. This plant can grow to 2 metres. At fruiting it bears juicy black berries which contain red staining juice and 6-8 hard seeds. We need to ensure it never gets to that stage as birds will spread the seed rapidly.

On the bright side our plantings are looking spectacular. Several plants of the rare Woolly Ragwort, *Senecio garlandii*, have been added to the completed enclosure and other small native plants will be added as they become available. We are looking forward to completing the mulching of the second enclosure and adding more wattles and peas.

Next stop was Bartley's block to inspect a group of nest boxes. The Tuan box had no occupant but a fresh scat was found on the lid. The next box was unchewed and empty but the surprise was in the next box. We could see that the entrance was nicely chewed which was encouraging. Darren had the honour of opening the box and he was excited to see 4 or 5 gliders curled up together on their leaf nest, with all heads buried. Everyone had the opportunity to enjoy the animals which were oblivious to the attention.

This event was special for us as although many of the new boxes have been chewed and contain nests it was the first time we had found occupants. It was 2pm and time for a very late lunch.

At coming meetings we will endeavour to check a group of boxes after lunch in order to cover all boxes in the year. Following lunch a few of us walked in the Wallace Gully mining precinct to find and admire the puddling circles and water races which are listed as among the best in Victoria. We stood there trying to imagine the hardships faced by the miners and their families in that era.

Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot Survey is on the 19th and 20th of May. There is a group coming from

Around the Park:

Echidnas are on the move and two have become road casualties. There are many large groups of White-winged Choughs about much to the consternation of the Magpies. Many fruitless attacks on the Choughs have been witnessed but the Magpies are greatly outnumbered and lose the battles. Dusky Woodswallows are still present in small numbers, Grey Fantails have turned up again, Orioles are making their grating un-oriole-like calls, a few Red Wattle-birds have arrived along with the odd juvenile Crimson Rosellas. There is an absence of bud on the eucalypts and the Red Stringybarks are looking decidedly stressed.

On the ground scattered lily leaves have appeared through the crunchy, dry litter. A good fall of rain is so badly needed to waken the plants underground. Processionary Caterpillars are on the march! If you see defoliated Golden Wattles you will know the culprits. Working silently at night they emerge from their tent-like web shelter to feed. Their shelters can be found at the base of the wattles. A shelter will contain lots of droppings and irritating hairs so it is unwise to touch it. The flower buds of the wattles seem to remain untouched.

PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN:

The draft plan for the new park has been released for public comment – Please make an effort to read it and consider the recommendations. Submission close on May 28th but it would be wise to have yours in prior to that date. It's your park so please have your say if you have concerns about any part of the plan.

Rutherglen Conservation Reserve: Nest box checking on Wednesday 11th April revealed all 6 boxes active. Two with 4 and 3 gliders in them, one with a cosy sheep wool nest, 2 with barks bits and scats on the lid and in the boxes (perhaps Tuan) and one with bees! After this excitement we erected another four boxes. Bluebells and Glycine were in flower despite the dry conditions. Also seen was a mob of 30+ Kangaroos, many of which were young. Birds were scarce, best being a party of White-backed Swallows.

Rainfall: March 54.4mm over 10 days Yearly total: 115.6 over 26 days.

NEXT MEETING SUNDAY MAY 6TH MEET AT CHILTERN POST OFFICE AT 9.00 AM
BYO lunch, gloves (a bucket and shovel in case we mulch), binoculars and chair.

Depending upon resources we will either mulch at Depot or plant trees at Valley No 2. After lunch we will inspect a group of nest boxes Contact: Eileen 03 57 261 484 Please bring along any newspapers you have saved and we will store them till required.

Category

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