



Newsletter 161 April 2008

Description

Dear Friends

There was a last minute change of plans for the March meeting as some gear was unavailable. However no time is wasted so on a pleasantly warm and calm morning we proceeded to check two clusters of nest boxes.

The Grevillea Track cluster all showed signs of use but no animals were present. After the customary morning tea celebration we moved to the Donchi Hill cluster hoping for better results. The animals had other ideas and all boxes were vacant but showing signs of recent use. Both clusters, apart from three boxes, were in predominately Grey Box country which had no flowering so perhaps lack of resource played a part in the absence of animals.

Thanks to all the ladder carriers and spotters, maybe the next inspections will be more rewarding.



Lunch was enjoyed at Lappin's Dam a spot we had not visited for some time.

Birds entertained us while we chatted. Striated Pardalote, Fuscous and Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters, Jacky Winter, Fairy Wrens, Red-rumped Parrots and an unexpected sighting of a Fan-tailed Cuckoo were among those recorded.

After lunch a group went for a walk and recorded Diamond Firetails, Hooded Robins, Little Cuckoo-

shrike and large Goanna basking in the sun on a dead limb of a very old tree.



While enjoying a final cuppa just after 4 o'clock Phillip and I were treated to the Bee-eaters gathering in the last of the sunlight, calling and hawking insects and perching on the dead branches as they prepared to roost. An enchanting ending to the day.

Around the park:

Ironbark is flowering very well in some areas and attracting hordes of Noisy Friarbirds and Red Wattlebirds. Smaller honeyeaters continue to be scarce. Just above Magenta Mine the Friarbird noise is deafening as they squabble and chase each other. They certainly don't seem hungry as they perch and preen in the morning sun. Lower down in the mine area is the domain of the Wattlebirds and a few Fuscous and Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters.

In past years, in these warm and dry conditions, sitting at Greenhill Dam rewarded one with a good list. Things have changed and despite the dry conditions when one would expect birds to be coming to water this is not the case. Just where are all our little birds? Will they return? Are there any to return?

While watching the antics of a Mistletoebird in a Cherry Ballart we saw it appear with a juicy orange fruit off the Cherry Ballart in its beak. It took a moment to work out just why this bird seemed to have a large orange gape!

At this time of the year there are only a few ripe fruits on the Cherry Ballart trees and the Mistletoebird managed to find them.

Still no records of Swift Parrots or Regent Honeyeaters.

March has been the month for day flying moths and tiny blue butterflies. The lovely day moth is the Heliotrope Moth, *Utetheisa pulchelloides*.



Its caterpillar, which is about 2 cms long is hairy and black with cream broken lines along its body. The food plants are Foget-me-not, Paterson's Curse and Common Heliotrope. The caterpillar pupates at the base of its food plant or in the soil. It seems one reason why they are so abundant is that they are not palatable to birds. The tiny blue butterflies are the Common Grass-blue *Zizina labradus*. The larvae

have a large range of food plants including young leaves and flower buds of both native and introduced plants.

The Australian Painted Lady, *Vanessa kershawi* and the lovely Yellow Admiral, *Vanessa itea* can also be seen, the latter I spotted feeding on nettles in my garden.

Magenta Mine

There is new signage on the sites at the mine. Next time you visit take a moment to view them.

Canberra Bird Observers visited the park over Easter and had an enjoyable time. Their bird list was extensive and very,very hard won!

Rainfall for March

36.6 mm over 5 days. Yearly total: 210.2mm over 14 days. It is very dry and warm.

WHY OUR BIRDS ARE SINGING LOUDER

From a UK paper.

Birds are having to sing louder in towns or risk having their love lives ruined by traffic noise. Scientists have discovered robins, great tits and nightingales have turned up the volume. Great Tits like to show off their lower vocal register in the breeding season to attract a mate. If they cannot be heard they fail to attract a mate.

But house Sparrows and Cuckoos are being driven out of cities because they cannot make themselves heard or hear the natural world's alarm calls warning of danger.

NEXT MEETING:SATURDAY MAY 3RD.

This day will be devoted to Regent Honeyeater searching.

If you plan to come please contact Eileen on the FRIDAY EVENING before the meeting for details. We will NOT meet at the Post Office.Eileen: 0357261484

Category

1. Newsletters

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