



Newsletter 166 September 2008

Description

The September newsletter includes a description of the annual general meeting and an update on the spring wildflowers and the state of the park.

Dear Friends

On a pleasant spring afternoon we spent time birdwatching in the park with our guest Dr Matt Cameron. Checking out the released regents was first on the list. There was a great deal of anxiety for a while as no birds could be heard or found until there was a distant giveaway call which led to a group being located. It was a warm afternoon and the birds, obviously well fed and contented, were perched quietly preening and occasionally gleaning. I suppose it was siesta time. The sad part of the visit was finding that the wild birds had lost their young which were approximately 9-10 days old. Possible causes were predation by kookaburras (there was one in the area), antechinus or tuans. The adults were feeding in nearby trees and hopefully may build again if the resource holds out.

Next stop was a pleasant walk around Bartley's Block which was relatively quiet compared with its usual offerings.



Red-capped Robins, Western Gerygone, Silvereyes, Mistletoebird and Grey Fantails were seen. Unfortunately we were unable to produce a Turquoise Parrot or two for Matt whose interest lies with parrots.

The Golden and Hedge wattles were in full flower. The lower of the two dams was empty and the upper

one quite low. Hopefully rain will arrive to top them up.

This year we moved the AGM to September which gave us more daylight and milder weather to enjoy the afternoon activities. Just after five o'clock we moved off to the Senior Citizens' rooms for a cuppa and chat before our evening meal. The usual delicious food was served with dessert being especially delicious. Thanks to all members who provided food and to Regina of the Mulberry Tree for providing special dishes.

After a brief AGM and election of office bearers we settled down for an evening with Cockatoos. Matt presented a most interesting and also disturbing account of the Glossy Black Cockatoos in central New South Wales as well as others of the species as a result of his research for his PhD. Glossy Blacks are special birds with specialist feeding habits and a future hanging in the balance. Environmental factors pose serious threats to their survival. Drought and fire along with land clearing are reducing both their food source and nesting hollows. Matt presented some horrifying examples of large nest trees with their hollows on fire. An entire woodland block, part of his study site and the size of the Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park was destroyed by fire following a lightning strike. Variable rainfall along with increasingly hot summers are an added threat. All together a grim situation. Neville thanked Matt for enlightening us to the plight of these and other species of Cockatoo.

Around the Park

Things do not look promising for a spring wildflower display. Waxlips, (Glossodia) and Donkey Orchids, (Diuris) are flowering but are very small. Little Snake Orchids (Diuris lanceolata) are plentiful in some areas but also stunted. Chocolate Lilies would benefit from 25mm or so of rain however the predicted rain for the weekend of the 13/14th did not materialise so they may struggle if the warm weather continues. Varnish and Hedge Wattles are currently brightening the park but the peas will also suffer from lack of rain. The Valley Dams are holding up well and all the park dams except Cyanide (Honeyeater Picnic area dam) contain water. Cyanide Dam is slowly becoming a Red Gum forest which is very sad to see. Rubbish continues to be a problem, particularly garden rubbish containing invasive plants such as cacti and other succulents. Parks staff have sprayed the Paterson's Curse at Bartleys and the Capeweed at our Tuan Campsite enclosure.

Rutherglen Nature Conservation Reserve:

On Monday 22nd with threatening skies, thunder and light showers we checked the boxes. All but one nest box contained nests but only three had animals at home. Two Sugar Gliders were curled up on the old woolly Tuan nest and a Squirrel Glider eyed us off in another box.



The Tuan nursery nest was in good shape and there was movement under the mass of wool suggesting either young or an adult was the occupant. Beneath the box there was a large piece of sheep wool with skin attached along with the leg of a rabbit. It must have taken a lot of effort to get the sheep skin to the box area. It will be interesting to see if it is still under the box at the next inspection. The question we asked of ourselves was "Where have all the animals that were there at the last inspection gone." Have the dry conditions taken a toll?

Sewage Ponds

I made a request to North-east Water for access to the Barnawartha and Chiltern Sewage Ponds. Access has been granted and in return the flora and fauna data collected will be passed to NERWA for their bio-diversity program. With the wetlands under stress these ponds are providing vital habitat for waterbirds. The Barnawartha Ponds area supports good stands of Grey Box and mature Ironbark, the latter being used by Regent Honeyeaters this year.

Rainfall for August 48.6 mm over 13 days. Yearly total: 402.4 mm over 67 days.

Paul, our Postmaster, has provided the rainfall figures for many years. He and Caroline have sold their business and we welcome Emma and Matthew to the town. They have kindly offered to continue this service.

NEXT MEETING SUNDAY OCTOBER 5TH MEET AT CHILTERN P.O AT 9AM

We will be targeting the nest boxes both for modification and monitoring. Afternoon ramble taking in whatever the park has to offer. BYO Lunch, camera, gloves, chair, hat and sunscreen and energy of course!

Did you know? That in England the latest popular pet is our dear little Sugar Glider! How little do they know of the needs of these delightful animals.

Burning of Box-Ironbark forest Given the extremely dry conditions, predicted hot summers and erratic rainfall should burning of these forests be reconsidered? What do you think of the state of the park.??

Category

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Author

eileen

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