



Newsletter 167 October 2008

Description

The October newsletter includes a report on Friends activities at the last meeting, an international group from Sunbird Tours and an update of spring conditions in the park.

Dear Friends

For a variety of reasons we had a small group for the October meeting. I suspect daylight saving had a little to do with it. Nevertheless we had a productive day checking and modifying two groups of boxes on Wallace Gully and Mt Pleasant Roads. No boxes were occupied by the target species but three housed large Huntsman Spiders and one a wasp nest. The almost total absence of understorey on these two sites plus the very dry conditions appear to have rendered the area inhospitable for gliders. Morning tea was at Bartley's Block among the birds. A stroll around the homestead area produced Painted Honeyeater, Red-capped Robin, Sacred Kingfisher, Horsefield's Bronze Cuckoo, Western Gerygone and the big prize of a Black-eared Cuckoo which Neville photographed successfully. The cuckoo was surrounded by Red-capped Robins so hopefully they can outwit it and breed



successfully

The top Dam at Bartley's is still holding water and may reward patient birdwatchers.

The Caper Spurge is fruiting so some time was spent removing the large seeding plants plus a few stray plants of Paterson's Curse. After lunch we went in search of wildflowers along Bartley and Tuan Tracks. The peas were beginning to flower, some of the large flowered Wedge-pea managed to bloom despite the kangaroo and wallaby pruning. The Grevillea alpina sported many shades of red-orange flowers with Hoary Sunray and Golden Everlasting helping to colour the scene. Chocolate

Lilies are flowering sparsely and withering quickly due to the dry warm conditions. There are large mixed flocks of Woodswallows in many areas of the park and they are particularly low around evening as they come down to roost offering good views. Donchi Hill produced a flock of Bee-eaters near the picnic area. To date no Dollarbirds have been seen nor heard. They usually arrive around October 10-14th and both valley dams and Lappin's Dam are regular spots to find them. Turquoise Parrots, usually easily found around Bartley's block, appear to be scarce this spring so all sightings are a bonus.

Reptile find:



Always curious to see what's under bits of old tin in the park I was pleasantly surprised to find a Wood Gecko, *Diplodactylus vittatus* curled up in a little sandy depression. This species is not common in the park.

Around the Park

A glance at the rainfall figure of 27.1mm for September gives an indication of just how hard conditions have been for the wildflowers and the park in general. October has begun with a fall of 6 mm which may benefit the Chocolate Lily flowering. A section of Lancashire Gap Road east of Ballarat Road is quite good for wildflowers but orchids are absent.

All dams except Cyanide have water in them and are worth a visit if you are a birdwatcher.

The Regent Honeyeater numbers have dropped off. We are still monitoring 2-3 times a week so please report any banded birds spotted.

Visitors

The Regent Honeyeaters continue to draw visitors to Chiltern. An international group from Sunbird Tours visited in late September and enjoyed finding their target birds: Regents, Turquoise Parrot, Speckled Warbler and Painted Honeyeater as well as many other migrant species which were just arriving. A non-bird highlight was a sighting of a very obliging Koala and it caused birds to be placed on hold for quite some time while cameras clicked away.

Rainfall for August: 27.1mm over 5 days. Total for year to date: 429.5mm over 72 days.

NEXT MEETING SATURDAY NOVEMBER 1ST MEET AT CHILTERN P.O AT 9AM

We will continue 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!

FLYING PET : THE HEIGHT OF FASHION

From the International Express, an English publication.

This bizarre squirrel-like creature that can glide 12 feet across a room is the latest "must-have" pet.

Called Sugar Gliders, they are native to Australia but have now started to turn up in British pet shops priced at 150 pounds each. Breeder Sian Bailey, of Southampton, said "They are very cute but they do require a lot of care and attention, far more than a cat or dog. I have already seen one that has ended up in a rescue centre, which is very worrying."

Sugar Gliders, a small type of possum, get their name from their sweet tooth and ability to glide up to 200ft in the wild from tree to tree. Mothers carry their babies in a pouch and new owners are advised to do the same.

If you would like to comment to the paper the email is: intexreaders@hotmail.com

120 words maximum is requested. A barrage of letters would be good. Can you find the time?
Eileen

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1. Newsletters

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