



Newsletter 169 December 2008

Description

The December 2008 newsletter reports on the Christmas tea meeting at Chiltern Valley No 1 dam, the history of Bartley's block in the park, bird surveys recently completed and the monthly around the park update.<p>

Dear Friends

Chiltern Valley No 1 Dam was the perfect setting for our December Christmas tea meeting. A cool westerly breeze over the water kept the flies away and not a mossie was heard or felt, however we found ourselves looking for warm clothing as the evening wore on. The evening was enriched by the presence of a good selection of waterbirds. Of particular interest were two Little Pied Cormorants sporting very rusty coloured necks. None of the books mention this coloring so one bright spark amongst us said they had been in rust-stained water! Latham's Snipe were spotted feeding at the reed bed edge, native hens paraded along the mudflats, dotterels were busy along the edges and a lone bee-eater called as it passed over. A White-breasted Woodswallow was spotted taking grasses to a nest in an old dead tree, the same tree that was used last year.



Two White-faced Herons made numerous sweeps over the dam, seemingly chasing each other. However when one landed it was seen to be very much smaller than the other bird and had not a trace of a white face. We assumed we were watching some sort of "training" flight which was repeated at intervals.

Perhaps the most beautiful sight was that of the Great Egret standing motionless up to its knees in the water with its glorious plumes dipping into the water and covering its body like a feathery shawl. Made

a good sight in the scope.

Shared goodies were delicious, conversation and the birds made a perfect evening. What more could one ask for?

Millipedes and granite rocks:

On an outing with biologist Ian Davidson there was discussion about the Portuguese Millipede invasion in the granite country. Ian told us that the wretched things come out at night and feed on the lichens on the granite rocks, leaving them looking quite pink. Since lichens grow very slowly this damage is significant

Bartley's Block

In 1989 the Conservation Trust secured this block at auction. At that time it was just a grazing paddock with native grasses. Over the past nineteen years we have watched it slowly regenerate with Golden, Hedge and Silver Wattles and scattered eucalypts. This cover had provided valuable habitat for smaller birds and this was very noticeable this year as the dry conditions continued to degrade the natural forest understorey.



The purchase of this block and its subsequent addition to the park has given much pleasure to a continuous stream of birdwatchers and photographers, particularly since the park became a national park.

In 1989 the purchase was most unpopular with the then shire councillors seeking development and housing for rate raising. However, looking back, the benefit the town is now getting from birdwatchers from Victoria, interstate and worldwide is many fold. Bartley's Block is known far and wide for its wealth of birdlife. The purchase was a winner for conservation.

Surveys:

Several of us undertook the first survey of the Chiltern sewage ponds in early November. The survey results were lodged with North-east Water and the DSE Atlas of Victorian Wildlife.

Pink-eared Ducks, Hardheads, Hoary-headed Grebe and Masked Lapwings were plentiful. Notable absentees were the dotterels. There is a lack of vegetation around the edges of the ponds as it has been sprayed to reduce mosquito numbers.

Around the Park:

I think we will (jokingly) re-name Cyanide Dam "Forest Dam" as it has been dry since October 2007 and has now become a Red Gum Forest. If it is not inundated very soon the change may well be permanent. The lack of water has brought about a notable decrease in the number of birds being recorded there.

A visit to the Valley Dams will reveal how much change has taken place along the dam margins. Rushes and reeds have transformed the edges and provided great habitat for wildlife. The Brolgas are still at Valley 2 but it appears their breeding was not successful.

All other dam levels are dropping, particularly Ryan's Rd and Mt Pleasant Rd dams.

Tis the season for gift giving and the park is no exception. A huge and unsightly load of household items was dumped on Bartley's Track in November. These mindless acts use up staff time to remove them. See picture on the website.



\2009 Calendars<\ Thankyou to all who purchased one. These have all been sold.

Rainfall for November>: 75.3 mm over 12 days. Total for year to date: 507.1 mm over 87 days. Still well below average.

Wishing all members and readers the compliments of the season. May your holidays be safe and the New Year be healthy and rewarding. Thankyou to everyone who contributed to Friends this year either in the field or through moral and financial support. It is very much appreciated. Eileen

NEXT MEETING

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 1ST 2009 MEET AT CHILTERN P.O AT 3.00pm

This will be a tea meeting . BYO tea, chair, binocs, repellent and friends. We will tidy up the new tree sites, rake the ash piles flat and remove any burnt metal and bricks ready for removal. At dusk we'll have a spotlight trip around the woodland section.

The 2009 programme will be sent out with the February newsletter and lodged on the website.

Category

1. Newsletters

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Author

eileen

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