



Newsletter 181 February 2010

Description

Dear Friends

Welcome to 2010 I hope it will be a rewarding year for you all and kinder to the environment than past years. The extremely hot weather was interrupted by some really good rain so our February meeting was held in cooler but humid conditions.

First up was a visit to Bartleyâ??s Block to modify and check the nest boxes. No animals were in residence. One box which from which bees had been removed twelve months ago was completely empty. Modification of that set of boxes is now complete. There was an epidemic of March Flies so the repellent was useful. Amongst the Golden Wattles there were some huge golden webs of the Golden Orb-weaving Spiders, *Nephila edulis*.



March Flies did not escape the sticky webs and we watched as the huge, silver-bodied female wrapped one in web.

Next stop was along Stringybark Track. The two boxes here were occupied on our last visit. This time there were just deep leafy nests so we were able to modify both boxes. Again there were lots of huge spider webs. Phillip spotted one without a spider in residence and he looked around for the owner. It was found hiding, perfectly camouflaged, in the crevice of a dead Golden Wattle. This was another orb weaver we had not seen before. It had a very distinctive rusty brown body with orange zig-zag marks. It could not be found in any of the spider books. It was photographed and sent off to the museum for identification. We thank Ken Walker for this very interesting reply :

â?? This is an Orb weaving spider in the Family Araneidae and belonging to the genus *Eriophora*. The common species is *E. biapicata* but I think the one in the picture is *E. pustulosa*. Spiders in the genus *Eriophora* eat their web every morning and rebuild it every night. They get a great pollen meal by doing this. They are also able to reuse 90% of the chemicals from the old web when rebuilding the new web at night. Amazing stuff.â?•

Recycling at its very best!

{mosimage}



By now it was after eleven and morning tea and bun called so we settled down in the shade at the Indigo Cemetery site for a rest. A Grey Butcherbird was calling nearby and a Little Friarbird was interacting vigorously with a White-plumed Honeyeater. The four Chandlerâ??s Track boxes were next on the list. Two were modified, one had a dead Sugar Glider in it and the fourth had a pair of hissing Sugar Gliders curled up in their leaf nest. This was quite surprising as the animals rarely move when inspected. Perhaps they were protesting about the heat! We will have to return to that box later in the year to modify it.

Our next box was on Teal Track near Ryanâ??s Dam so we lunched at the dam. The water level was very low and the vegetation around it very degraded. The Grey Box was in good bud but there were no birds about.

An old box on teal Track was replaced with a new one and a second box installed nearby. The adjacent sewage ponds provided some birding. Amongst a long line of ducks on the waterâ??s edge were a couple with bright orange legs. It was difficult to see the bodies but as they dropped into the water they were clearly couple of Blue-winged Shovelers hiding amongst a flock of Grey Teal. Australasian Grebe and a few Pacific Black Ducks were also present.

On the homeward run three of us decided to check the last two boxes for the day. It seems we have lost one of them for despite a wide search we failed to find it. The one we did find had a leafy nest in it.

Bird List

1. Grey Butcherbird
2. White-browed Babbler
3. Weebill
4. Restless Flycatcher
5. Bee-eater
6. Black-chinned Honeyeater
7. White-throated Treecreeper

Animals

1. Echidna
2. Swamp Wallaby
3. Goanna
4. Eastern Grey Kangaroos

Around the park

The dams are all very low. I think we could rename Cyanide Dam Red Gum Hollow!

Good News

The good news is that the Ironbarks and Grey Box are in great bud with some of the healthier Stringybarks putting on bud. This augurs well for a good winter flowering and the return of the honeyeaters. The only flowering plants noted were the two species of Mistletoe, Box Mistletoe, Amyema miquelii and Fleshy Mistletoe A. miraculosa, the latter growing on the Box Mistletoe.

We had several encounters with the large, fast flying, noisy Robber Fly. Our last sighting of this huge fly was about five years ago at the same time of the year.

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Both Valley Dams are holding up well and providing good birding including a pair of broglas spotted feeding in a nearby stubble paddock.

Annual General Meeting

The date for the AGM is September 4th. We have also booked the hall for August 28th as a reserve day in case the federal election happens to take place on the 4th. The AGM dinner will be catered for this year.

Rainfall

December 2009 ?? 25.5mm over 5 days. Total for 2009 524.7mm over 105 days.

January 2010 ?? 33 mm over 4 days. Since then another 30+mm in February.

NEXT MEETING SATURDAY MARCH 6TH.

Meet at Chiltern Post Office at 9am. Our aim is to get all the northern block nest boxes modified as soon as possible. BYO Lunch, chair, binoculars, gloves, energy.

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