



Newsletter 194 April 2011

Description

Dear Friends,

Another balmy autumn day greeted us for our April meeting. The plan to spray the thistles around the hide area was scrapped in favour of some physical work as members produced mattocks and hoes to eradicate the growth. Most of the thistles were fresh and without seed so we were able to pile it and let it rot. Nightshade is having a field day everywhere and the park has not escaped. These were pulled and loaded on to Jennifer's ute and transported to a pile of materials that Parks had piled for burning.



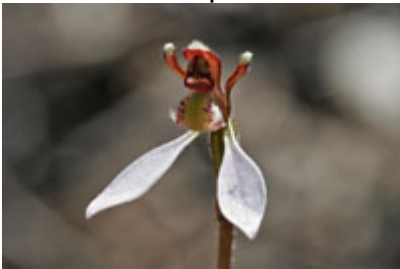
The emerging annual grasses were sprayed. The shrubs have grown well but unfortunately have been badly chewed by hares and rabbits. We will arrange some tall wire guards to protect those most attractive to the pests. There were numerous active burrows adjacent to the hide area which will need to be treated. After all the physical work, which was completed quite quickly by the 12 strong crew, the customary morning tea and bun was enjoyed before we moved off to Bartley's Block to see if we could locate the lone Regent Honeyeater which was reported some weeks ago. Failed on this one!

After lunch we visited the Howlong Road Genista site and on hands and knees removed hundreds of small seedlings. This plant has not been allowed to flower here for some fifteen years so that gives one an idea of the long term viability of the seed. Fortunately this site is an isolated occurrence and therefore easy to monitor. A few yellow Burr-daisies were at the site, *Calotis lappulacea* and this

species has since been confirmed by Neville Walshe, Melbourne Herbarium

Later the group broke up into orchid searchers and bird watchers, the latter visiting all the Regent Honeyeater sites in the northern block. Despite the good flowering of Grey Box and scattered Ironbark the dominant sound was that of the bees busily collecting pollen. Small honeyeaters were extremely scarce. However all was not dull, the migrants are back! Golden Whistlers and Eastern Spinebills were in good voice and some Yellow-faced Honeyeaters were seen on Donchi Hill where there was a smattering of Ironbark flower. Fantailed Cuckoos are plentiful but quiet.

The Autumn Greenhoods are still quite fresh with many still in bud. Another greenhood doing well this season is the tiny flowered Red-tip Greenhood which we have known as *Pterostylis parviflora* and has now been renamed *Specularantha parviflora* (D.L. Jones). Dainty pink Parson' Bands *Eriochilus cucullatus* are plentiful.



Rutherglen Conservation Reserve

Three of us had an exciting visit to the reserve. Of 14 boxes three were occupied by Tuans and three by gliders. Not to be denied three were also taken over by bees.





All other boxes had signs of occupancy. A close encounter with a large basking Brown Snake brought us back to earth.



We encountered quite a congregation of Grey Fantails but did not see or hear the Babblers. The olives on the block have had a great growing season and parks will be targeting them shortly.

On the same day we checked our Feathertail Glider boxes erected last September only to find a Tuan occupying one, a few others showing signs of use with a couple empty.

To end the day we erected another eight boxes in the southern section of the park to replace aged boxes and to supplement single box sites. Our nest box total is 130 eight of which have still to be placed.

Regent Honeyeater search On April 17th there will be an extra search . The flowering is beginning so we are full of hope. CONTACT: Glen Johnson on 0260 437 924

Vale Friends member Frances Gladstone

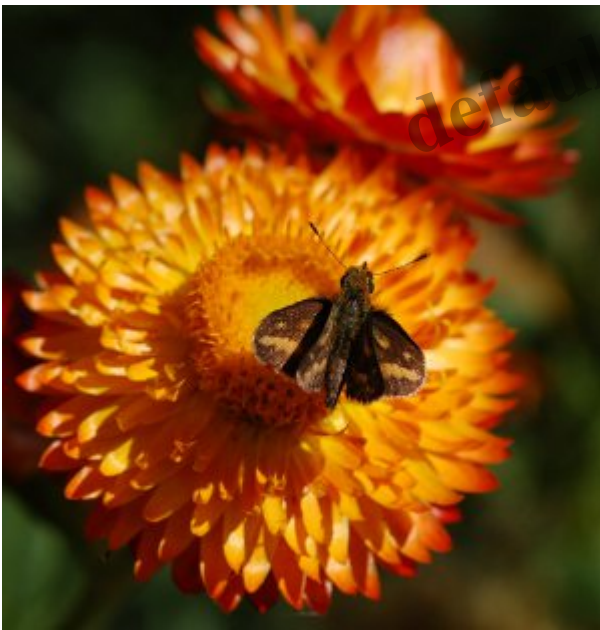
Fran, as we all knew her, was a wonderful observer of the cycles of nature. She lived her whole life in Beechworth and had an intimate knowledge of the area. Fran made a great contribution to the orchid flora of the area. Fran was always willing to share her knowledge so that it would be handed down to future generations. A gentle and loving lady at rest, she was buried in the Stanley Cemetery.

Friends of Skeleton Hill extend their thanks to those who contributed to the fund to challenge the quarry. The target of \$13,000 was reached. Now we await the fate of the hill.

Rainfall March: 51.3 mm over 7 days. Yearly total to date: 403.4 mm over 25 days.

NEXT MEETING SATURDAY MAY 7th 2011

Meet at Chiltern Post Office at 9.00am BYO lunch, binoculars, chair, secateurs, gloves, mattock, hoe. Further work at Tuan campsite, removal of cactus on Howlong Rd followed by nest box inspections using the camera. Contact 0357 261 484 or 0407 486 480 (in the field only if lost or late)



Category

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