

## Newsletter 213 December 2012

### Description

Dear Friends

The year 2012 was a productive year for our Friends' group. On a perfect late afternoon in December we celebrated in style at Valley No 2 hide site with a wide variety of delicious food and great company. The dam was calm and beautiful in the setting sun with an absence of mosquitoes and flies. What more could one ask for. There was plenty of birdlife both on the water, in the reeds and in the bush. Pelicans were herding fish, cormorants and darters were perched on logs, Reed Warblers and Little Grassbirds called in the reeds, Restless Flycatchers, Rufous Whistlers, Grey Fantail and White-plumed Honeyeaters were in the picnic area. Perhaps the highlight was watching a pair of Dusky Woodswallows feed very small young in a very fragile looking stick nest.



After tea we inspected the two nest boxes and were delighted to find three Sugar Gliders in one box. These boxes were erected a year ago and this was the first occupancy record for this site.

## Friends of Chiltern Bird Guide

The guides have finally arrived and the production is excellent! The design and format matches that of the Woodland Birds and Flora pamphlets. Many people contributed to this production and our thanks go to all contributors and in particular to Neville Bartlett who put endless hours into the organisation and to Martin O'Brien, DSE, Melbourne, who painstakingly checked every detail. Since we were unable to get the guides in time for our December meeting we will have a formal launch at our February meeting.



### Calendar Sales

### Bird Guide

The print run was 150. There is 1 left to be sold. Thank you to everyone who supported this project which has helped to fund our projects for this year.

### Nest box project

All of the 130 boxes have been checked at least once this year. Ten new boxes have been erected, some to replace the original 25 year-old boxes and others placed in new habitats. Thirty-three boxes were in use at the time of inspection. Bees have been a problem in several boxes and one box on the last survey was found to have nests.

Thanks to Richard Quin's dedication to this project. The occupancy records are sent to Bruce Quin, DSE, Melbourne, for recording in the state database.

### Bartley's Block

Two new gates have been purchased for this block with the aim of upgrading the venue. In the coming year we will endeavour, funds and funding permitting, to have two interpretive signs created. One for the natural values and one illustrating the history of the site. Bartley's block is very popular with bird watchers and naturalists and has a special place in Chiltern's history. We are extremely fortunate to have it as part of the park.

### Chiltern Valley No 1 Dam

[www.friendsofchiltern.org.au](http://www.friendsofchiltern.org.au)

The birdlife here has been fantastic over the past month. In the Cumbungi beds at the southern end of the dam and Baillan's Crakes have been obliging. At least eight Night Herons, many of them young, emerge from the Cumbungi just before dusk and perch around the dam. Black-tailed Native Hens wander along the margins along with Black-fronted and Red-kneed Dotterels. Red Warblers let you know they are there and occasionally show themselves. Ducks include a pair of Pink-ears with a family of five in tow. Cormorants, Coots, Darters, Royal and Yellow-billed Spoonbills, Pelicans and Ibis all add to the variety.



A Dusky Woodswallow commandeered a Mudlark nest and is busy feeding young, Antechinus scuttle over the grassy area and Wagtails and Wrens gather insects from drying mud.







While watching the birds and the movements of a black snake in the grass Phillip noticed a huge orange and black noisy wasp flying low over the grass. We watched as it descended onto a huge spider and proceeded to drag it three metres through the vegetation. At intervals it would leave its prey and buzz around towards a log, obviously getting its bearings. Dr Ken Walker from the Museum of Victoria had this to say about the event ... This is the Pompilidae Spider Hunting Wasp, *Cryptocheilus bicolor*, which hunts huntsman spiders. You are right that it digs a hole in the ground and flies around to gather visible markings of where its hole is. Then it finds a huntsman spider, stings and paralyses it. The wasp then drags the spider and buries it in the hole in the ground and lays an egg on top of the spider.

The wasp egg hatches and burrows into the paralyzed spider and begins to eat it. The larva know which parts to eat first so as not to kill the spider or else its food would rot before it had eaten all of the spider. Very clever but a horrible death for the spider.





## Goanna and prey

Tony Bates, a member from Eldorado, fortunately takes his camera on his walks. Imagine his surprise when confronted by a huge goanna with a small rabbit in its jaws. He could not find any reference to the this beautifully patterned animal in any book so he sent it to me to see if I knew. It was an uncommon form *Varanus varius* known as Bell's Monitor and can be easily recognised by the broad black and cream bands across its body as distinct from the speckling of the more common form.





## Website

Tony Marsh has created our new website so please have a look at it and send any comments to [nulgerong@westnet.com.au](mailto:nulgerong@westnet.com.au) Feedback is welcome as are ideas for inclusion on the site. The banner headline was created by Neville Bartlett and the logo was created by Robyn Lambert.

## Rainfall

November 30.2 mm over 2 days. Year to date: 817.9 mm over 68 days. Very dry November!

**NEXT MEETING: SUNDAY FEBRUARY 3rd 2013**

[Full details here](#)

Meet at Chiltern Post Office at 9.00am from where we will move to Honeyeater Picnic area. There will be a launch of the Bird Guides at morning tea time. Byo lunch, binocs. Activity to be decided. Contact in the field : Eileen 0407 486 480 or 57 261 484

**WISHING EVERYONE A HAPPY FESTIVE SEASON AND A SAFE, PEACEFUL AND REWARDING NEW YEAR**

**Category**

1. Newsletters

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