

Newsletter 214 February 2013

Description

Dear Friends,

Welcome to 2013. What a welcome the weather has provided!

Fire, flood, extreme temperatures and a very dry January.

During January Parks staff erected the new gates at Bartley's Block and Chiltern Valley No 2 Dam. The long grass at Tuan enclosure area was slashed. Quick action by Gordon in the Mt Pilot fire tower and the local brigades helped avert a blaze entering the National Park near the Yeddonba Aboriginal site.

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The 45+ degrees days have taken their toll on the vegetation. In particular the Small-leaved Parrot-pea, *Dillwynia phyllicoides*, has been well thinned out. The stands are now a mosaic of green and brown. The everlastings have shed their seed, the Golden Wattles and eucalypts have put on new growth, the ground litter is dry and crunchy, just waiting to soak up any rain on offer. Despite the heat small birds still made the effort to breed. Finding a White-throated Gerygone breeding in January in the extreme heat was quite a surprise.

The Valley Dams have provided good birding through January but their levels are dropping rapidly. There is a large group of Pelicans frequenting both dams which suggests there is carp for tucker. There has been a great decline in the weed Paterson's Curse this year so the control efforts are working. A natural pest of the Curse is the Heliotrope Moth



The launch of the Bird Guide was finally accomplished at our February meeting. Neville spoke of the background to the guide and thanked everyone who contributed to the publication in any way. Morning tea was enjoyed at the hide picnic spot.



Prior to the launch we wandered down onto the dry flats among the reeds, something we have not been able to do for a few years. At the western end of the dam the eucalypt saplings have died after being submerged for so long; despite the receding water level the bird list was good.



Native Hens, Black-fronted and Red-kneed Dotterels fed along the shoreline, a few ducks and grebe were on the open water. White-faced and White-necked Herons along with four Royal and six Yellow-billed Spoonbills were also recorded.



Bush birds around the picnic spot included Woodswallows, Crested Shrike-tit, Restless Flycatcher, Yellow Robin, Diamond Firetails and White-plumed and Fuscous Honeyeaters. All up a good list which was submitted to the Victorian database. A large skin of a Brown Snake reminded us to tread carefully! The next part of the day involved some nest box checking on Donchi Hill. After cleaning up the rubbish left by thoughtless visitors we were rewarded with gliders in a nest box. There was discussion about whether the animals would find the boxes too hot in summer but this was not evident. Lunch at Lappin's Dam, with a cool breeze from the west refuelled us for the next set of boxes. Later in the day we found a female Tuan suckling two young in one of our newer boxes. This was exciting and a first for our records. Interestingly this box did not contain a bulky nursery nest but a simple layer of leaves, bark and a few feathers. This suggests that the animal had moved from her nursery nest. Tuans are known to use a series of hollows to deter predators. After all their nests are very smelly as they defecate in them, so may easily attract predators.

By this time our group was reduced to five so we had a long afternoon tea and chat before closing the

day. During that rest time woodswallows came over the canopy in small noisy flocks, probably in readiness for roosting.



The website has undergone considerable change during January. Your feedback and or contributions would be welcome.

Rainfall

January: 3.8 mm over 1 day. Year to date: 865.9 mm over ? days.

NEXT MEETING: SATURDAY MARCH 2nd 2013

Meet at Chiltern Post Office at 9.00am Tuan enclosure maintenance. Useful tools would be rakes, secateurs, loppers, small saw. Hopefully it will have rained by then! Byo lunch, binocs, chair. Nest box checking as part of our afternoon walk. Contact in the field: Eileen 0407 486 480 or 0357 261

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

The path of knowledge is long, thank God it is also enjoyable. Neil Blair“On gettting plants and bugs identified”

Category

1. Newsletters

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