

Newsletter 241 July 2015

Description

Friends of Chiltern Mt Pilot NP Newsletter 241 July 2015

Dear Friends,

The possibility of a bleak day did not deter fourteen keen members from descending upon Bartley's Block for a "Purge the Spurge" session. The Caper Spurge had a resurgence thanks to the autumn rains and had spread into the woodland in the north of the block. This must have been the easiest morning's weeding we have undertaken for some time. The ground was soft and the thousands of plants came out with little effort. Catching them before they set seed meant that the plants could remain on the ground to rot. A more challenging weed is the Vinca, or Periwinkle. It has spread and more than trebled in area over the past few months. Hand removal is not an option so a spraying option is being investigated.



Morning tea, bun, chat and a brief meeting was followed by a wander over the block and the checking of the nest boxes adjacent to the block. It was noticeably chillier as we entered the forest. Squirrel Gliders were cosy in one box and a family of Sugar Gliders in another. The first of the Yam Daisies in flower was spotted along with some Buttercups. Urn heath was in flower and a few small Golden Wattles were out. Over the next month the wattles on Bartley's Block will put on a great show of colour.



Birds around the open area included Scarlet Robins, Black-chinned and Brown-headed Honeyeaters, Weebill and noisy White-browed Babblers.



The three dams have only a small amount of water in them.
Lunch was enjoyed atop the Howlong Road grassy woodland block with its wonderful views and it was a truly magnificent reward for the morning's efforts. However Mick had some serious work planned

for the afternoon as he marshalled the troops to attack the infestation of Sweet Briar. This is another challenge to match the olive purge and if today's effort is anything to go by will be successful in the long term. Some Bathurst Burr and Paddy Melons were also bagged.



Volunteer hours from June 4th to July 4th 101 hours. A really great effort from you all.

The Mossy Rock Ecosystem



It has been a steep learning curve identifying the mosses and lichens found in the park. With the help and patience of Dr Graeme Ambrose Neil and I are gradually making progress. The small rock featured this month has been known for a few years. It is pretty dull looking in summer but the winter rains bring its inhabitants to life. Graeme has provided the following description of the plants it is hosting:

The mossy mounds are Grey Cushion-moss (*Grimmia pulvinata*), which you also find on old stone and brick walls. The capsules are held down in the foliage at the moment on a swan-neck shaped stalk (seta), but this will eventually straighten out and hold the capsules erect when they are ready to release spores.

The hair-points also have another interesting function. When dry, they stand erect and increase the surface roughness of the cushion. This creates drag, which slows air currents. Slower currents can't hold as much dust, so this settles and becomes soil under the cushion. Slower air currents also strip away less moisture from the cushion. The cushion-like growth habit is especially good for hostile environments that become dry and very hot in the sun. The erect leafy stems are packed tight and so can trap and hold a lot of moisture. They also trap dust, which contains nutrients. The side stems are shorter, so the cushion edges sit flush with the rock. On the upper cushion, especially, you can see the slender white hair-tips of the leaves. The cells in these have a large central cavity that absorbs water and passes it on to the rest of the leaf. I've also noticed that dew-drops form on the

hair-tips after a cold night, so they are actually harvesting water that is then absorbed. This is an amazing little plant!

The two foliose (leafy) lichens are both classified as *Xanthoparmelia* species these days. They typically form leafy plaques over rocks, and are thus known as Rockshield Lichens. The olive green/brown one used to be in the genus *Neofuscelia* (Camouflage Lichens), but DNA studies have shown that these are just a group of olive species (now considered a sub-genus) within the enormous *Xanthoparmelia* genus. (Camouflage and Rockshield Lichens are often seen on older bitumen roads, at least on the sides, where they are not worn away by tyres.) On the left are mostly crustose lichens, with the spots being fruiting bodies.

That's a good little ecosystem you have going there!

Thank you Graeme for sharing your knowledge and passion for these often overlooked gems of nature. If you have mossy rocks in your garden you may like to see how many species they are hosting.

Jan's Fungi Forays

Many fungi grow on dead wood and Jan found these attractive species in June. The lovely little fan-shaped ones are a *Crepidotus* species which are attached to the wood by a very short stem.



The tiny blue discs are a *Chlorociboria* sp and are found on dead wood which is lying on the ground



A simil



tually stains its host a blue-green

colour

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Around the Park

Golden Wattle and purple Hardenbergia will be the most prominent blossoms for the month of July. Greenhoods, fungi, mosses and lichens will provide interest at ground level. It is a good time of the year to walk the two tracks, White Box Walk and Tuan Track Walk. Each walk takes in different habitats.

Roads have been graded recently so care should be taken while driving on very wet days.

Rutherglen Natural Features Reserve

The parks crew have put the posts in in readiness for the completion of the fencing project. The two entrances to the reserve have been upgraded and the Peppercorn piles have been burnt. Everything is now ready for the tidying up of the area around the old mine relics. We will have a working bee there on Wednesday July 15th. If you are interested in coming please let me know.

Weed report

A trial spray of a patch of Vinca (Blue Periwinkle) at Bartley's Block has been undertaken. Several large clumps of Bridal Creeper have been tagged and sprayed. Cootamundra Wattles are now in flower and are easily targeted. Please report any you see or if they are small just pull them out.

95% of the olives in the Reference Area-Coyles Track area have been re-visited and some re-treated. The rest will be looked as soon as possible. A few more visits will be needed to make sure there are no little ones springing up, or big ones fruiting. Mick and his conscripts have done a sterling job on the olive infestation.

Another plant, Acacia triptera, Spur-wing Wattle, has just been earmarked for removal from the park. They were planted back in the 1960s by the then Forests Commission. The reasoning behind the planting was to establish plants beyond their limited range in the Warbys. The original four plants are on Skeleton Hill and in recent years seedlings have appeared in the gully leading down to Lancashire Gap Road.

Contributions to the newsletter are always welcome. If you have good photos of anything in nature feel free to share them with fellow readers. If you are not able to identify your subject we will try to help. If you wish to contribute a photo please send it in high resolution to : nulgerong@westnet.com.au

Regent Honeyeater Release Program

To assist with monitoring please email Liz on: elizabeth.wemyss@delwp.vic.gov.au

The monitoring period has been extended until mid-September as fifteen more birds have been fitted with transmitters. Any time you can volunteer for tracking would be appreciated.

Next Monthly Meeting Sunday August 2nd 2015

Meet at 9.00 am at the post office. BYO all your needs, lunch, binoculars, gloves, tools you are comfortable using and a chair. We will be working at Bartleys Block and the Howlong Road Grassland block.

Contact in the field 0407 486 480

Friends Facebook Group now has 149 members from the site

We are a group of people interested in Chiltern Mt Pilot National Park in North-Eastern Victoria. People can find much more information on the Park, activities of the Friends and membership details at <http://friendsofchiltern.org.au/>

Why not become a Member, not just a Facebook member? [only \\$15 a year!](#)

Rainfall

Rainfall for June: 67 mm over 3 days. Year to date : 370.8mm

FRIENDS OF CHILTERN Mt PILOT NATIONAL PARK inc MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership expires as at June 30th 2015 the cost is \$15 for 2015-16 The fee covers the whole family and includes 11 newsletters.

For full details on how to join or renew your membership follow the link below

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Category

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