

Newsletter 248 March 2016

Description

Friends of Chiltern Mt Pilot NP Newsletter 248 March 2016

Dear Friends,

Despite the unpleasantly hot weather eight Friends turned out for a short day in the park. We split into two groups with one group tackling weeds and the other the nest boxes. Eight boxes were inspected and all contained leaf nests with one housing a lone Squirrel Glider. Weeds dealt with were privet and pine trees.

The forest floor is crisp and very dry. John spotted an Antechinus searching for food. Ironbark is flowering in patches along Lancashire Gap Road and elsewhere in the park with lots of fallen flowers evident.

Birds for the day included Yellow-tufted and Black-chinned Honeyeaters, Brown Treecreepers, a noisy flock of Gang Gangs at Honeyeater Picnic area, Rufous Whistler, Mistletoebird and Crested Shrike-tit.

After an early lunch and as the temperature climbed towards 40 degrees we decided it was time to call it a day.

Beetle Find

Jan turned up a beautiful Jewel Beetle in January. We were unable to find a name for it so requested help from the museum. Amazingly there was no record of this species in the museum collection so Jan's mission was to collect one. It took a while to find another specimen and it is on its way to the museum for positive ID. Meanwhile after some searching we have given it the name *Diphucrania leucosticta*. It will be interesting to if the museum staff confirm this.

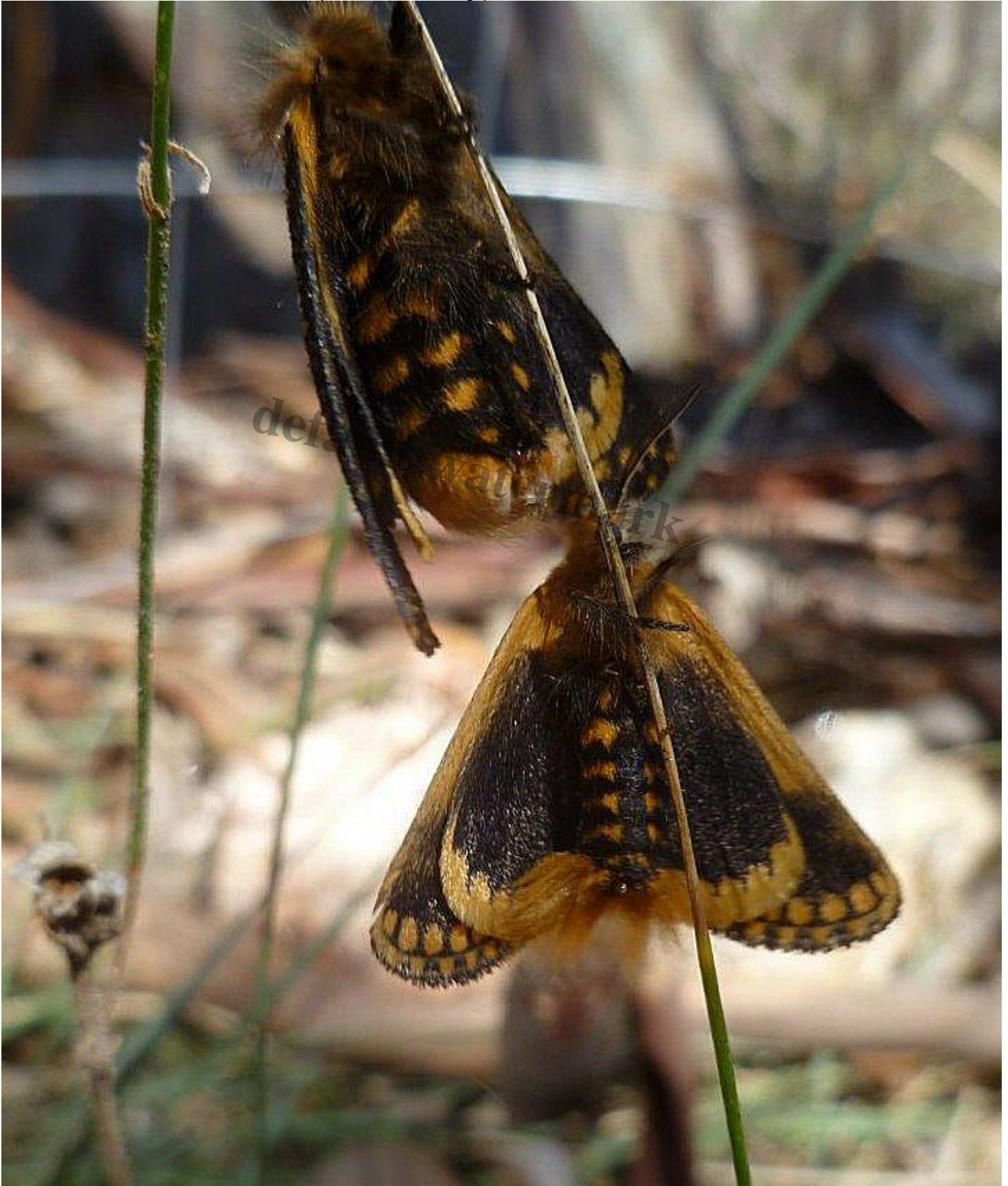


Tiger Moths and Processionary Caterpillars



I came across these beautifully decorated moths attached to a stem of Lomandra.

Closer examination revealed they were a mating pair.



Hairy Processionary Caterpillars



Since my camera was in the car Glen Johnson's camera skills were called upon and these lovely images were captured. This species is *Epicoma constrictis*. Their eggs hatch into the hairy processionary caterpillars which are often seen crossing bush tracks, head to tail, in long lines.



At night they shelter in a tent-like web often spun at the base of a wattle tree which may also have been their food plant. It is common to see Golden Wattles stripped of their leaves in spring and the young larvae are the culprits.

The orange colouring of the moth is saying "eat me at your peril I am distasteful". Nature is pretty smart.

Weed Report

Due to the hot weather only a few hours of weeding were undertaken mid-month, mainly rounding up stray briars on Grasslands block, and a few Bathurst Burr seedlings. The latter will be an ongoing project. Other areas we should look at before winter are Chiltern Valley 2 for briars and peppercorns, Teal Track, for olives, Old Cemetery Road and Browns Track, Depot dam and Magenta wet area for inkweed. The area of olive infestation in the Coyles/Pooleys Track area will hopefully have been eradicated post the fire.

Rutherglen Natural Features Reserve: Three of us spent a few hours at the block weeding around the new plantation at the northern end. The plants were given a good watering and the persistent peppercorn regrowth was sprayed. The tree limb that fell over the enclosure fence was removed and a nest box which was on the damaged tree was relocated to a safer spot. This particular box has had Squirrel and Sugar glider occupants and since we had it down we cleaned it out. A tuan had also been in residence as evidenced by the feathers, faeces, bits of plastic and large feathers. It will be interesting to see who the next occupant will be.

It is getting harder to get satisfaction from pulling out young olives. Only twelve were found while walking the block.

The plantations at the southern end have done really well and should cope with this hot spell without too much stress.



From the Ranger's Office

Fire recovery

Nearly all new containment lines have been closed and rehabilitated. Most roads and tracks have been treated for hazardous trees and will be progressively reopened. Removal of hazardous trees along boundary fences is almost complete Fox Control program in and near fire area has commenced and baits will be in place for a few months.

Regeneration is starting to occur with coppice and epicormic growth strong and considerable germination from seed. Fire affected areas contain many hazards and Parks Victoria recommend that it is best for people to avoid entering them.

Maintenance

Most walking tracks in the park have been cleared and repaired.

Gas Pipeline

Works are progressing rapidly. Clearing and grading are complete. Trenching and laying of the pipe is underway with over a kilometre of new pipe laid. Works are scheduled to be completed by around the end of March. Brian Pritchard provided this report

What an encounter! From member Jan Heywood

Further to Jim's sightings of a flock of Brown Falcons, Jan Heywood has reported sightings of groups at Gapstead. Perhaps these flockings are more common and just underreported.

Comments from HANZAB: Brown Falcon

â?? generally solitary or loosely gregarious

â?? irruptions may be regulated by dry periods; often leave areas during droughts

â?? irruptions difficult to detect because common in most areas

â?? may arrive or increase in areas with plagues of mice, locusts or crickets

For more information on Brown Falcons [click here](#)

Rainfall

For February 2016 27.2 mm over 1 day. Year to date : 101.5 mm over 6 days

Next Monthly Meeting Sunday April 3rd

Meet at the Chiltern Post Office at 9.0am Activity to be advised closer to the day.

Phone contact in the field: 0407 486 480

Friends Facebook Group now has 197 members

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/556332777763388/>

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!](#)

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Category

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Author

eileen