

Newsletter 253 August 2016

## Description

# Friends of Chiltern Mt Pilot NP Newsletter 253 August 2016

Dear Friends,

After a frosty morning the day was sunny, calm and perfect for our August park activities. Bartley's block was the first stop and here we dealt with the emerging Caper Spurge. Very easy to pull out but devilishly hard to see amongst the grasses. The count was over 250 plants removed. Some Bridal Creeper, lily and Horehound was sprayed.

The nest boxes on Stringybark Track were inspected and then we visited the *Cryptandra amara* site. This lovely shrub is a favourite food for wallabies and kangaroos. Over the last few years the population has been reduced to stunted plants with very little flower. Last year three plants were given sturdy protection and they responded with masses of delicate white bell-shaped flowers. Since this is the only known stand in the park a large exclusion plot is planned to protect part of the site.

Morning tea was enjoyed in the sun before we inspected another eight nest boxes. Of the ten boxes inspected seven were homes to gliders and that was very rewarding. It took some time to get around the last boxes as a few eyes were scouring the ground for fungi and orchids. Lunch at the Indigo Goldfields Cemetery at 1.30pm was both welcome and overdue.

During our nest box wander, John's sharp eye picked up a vegetable caterpillar fungi, *Cordyceps hawkesii*. These are very interesting fungi. I found the following summary in "Victorian Mushrooms and Toadstools" by well known naturalist Jim Willis, who at the time was on the staff of the National Herbarium of Victoria. It was written in 1963. "The life history of *Cordyceps* is fascinating indeed. It is believed that spores are swallowed or adhere to the soft moist bodies of insect larvae, germinate and pierce the outer skin by a slender tube. Once inside the body of its victim, the initial fungus thread branches out repeatedly until the insect's whole body is ramified with fungal hyphae. The tissues are destroyed and the host soon dies as it burrows into the earth. Once the fungus has extracted the food the *Cordyceps* develops the fruiting body". We now know that the process Jim described is exactly what takes place.



In this specimen the mummified body of a large caterpillar was clearly evident.



Orchids in flower at present include, two species of Helmet Orchids, *Corybas incurvus*



and *C diemenicus*,



Pterostylis nana, nutans and curta. Maroonhoods, P pedunculata and the Gnat Orchid, and Cyrtostylis reniformis.



Now is the time to be out and about to enjoy the bounty the good rains have given us. Cyanide Dam is now full thanks to the constant rain. The last big falls fell on saturated ground and the heavy run-off caused the overflow to run once more.

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## Annual General Meeting Saturday September 3rd.

Our guest for the afternoon and evening presentation is Mr Rudie Kuitert. Rudie specialised in fish taxonomy, with an interest in orchids as a hobby. As a taxonomist this interest became something of a more serious nature, which led to him to look at orchid pollinators and this became a full time occupation. Insects were Rudie's first interest before he came to Australia. Rudie has published two field guides, "A Quick Guide to Victoria's Orchids" and "Victoria's Small Caladenias". Both guides have exquisite photos. Rudie is a regular visitor to this area to further his work. The program for the day is to meet at the Chiltern Post Office at 11.30 am for the field trip. Gather at the Senior Citizens Hall from 5pm onwards. Dinner will be at 6.00pm to be followed by a brief AGM and the guest speaker.

Members are asked to bring along a meal to share. Please RSVP by August 30th and it would be helpful if members could also indicate what food they may bring. This will help to organise any extra catering required.

## Bird Dropping Spider photo from Richard Andrews



This is a female spider, *Celaenia excavata*. This spider hunts by night using moth attracting pheromones. Several groups of spiders use this strategy to avoid being eaten by day-active predators like birds and wasps. In addition they have bodies that look like unappetising bird droppings. A great strategy as nothing likes to eat bird poo! One of the best known Bird-dropping Spiders is *Celaenia excavata*. Other names for this spider are the Death's Head Spider, as its markings can also resemble the shape of a skull, and the Orchard Spider, because it is often seen on fruit trees where moths, one of its main food sources, may be abundant. The Bird-dropping Spider also uses mimicry of a quite different sort to capture its prey, which consists almost exclusively of male moths. At night the Bird-dropping Spider hangs from the foliage on a short silk thread, its forelegs outstretched. While doing

this it releases a chemical scent (pheromone) that mimics the airborne sex pheromone released by female moths to attract their mates. The unsuspecting male moths are attracted by the spider's deceiving pheromone and eventually fly close enough to the spider to be grabbed by its strong front legs. Another interesting feature of this spider is its egg sac. Bird-dropping Spiders can produce up to 13 egg cases. They are dark brown with black markings and, when suspended in the web, look like a bunch of dark grapes. The female keeps watch over them. Web pic. Thank you Richard for sharing this photo.

## Weed Report

A new infestation of olives has been reported by Eileen and Brian near the Pooleys/White Box Rd junction. Most are now dealt with but that area may repay another expedition. Briars on Grasslands will need checking. A big effort has been put into clearing Mt Ochertyre Reserve (towards Howlong) of olives, peppercorns and blackberries. There still remains more to be done. This is a great bushland reserve so if you can offer some assistance it would be appreciated. Rutherglen Nature Reserve also has about twelve large briars to be exterminated.

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Mick and Tony are doing a great job on the weeds, thank you boys! NB Everyone keep your eyes open for Cootamundra Wattles and notify us of any sightings. **Stop press:** Mick and slave have planted forty hedge wattles on Grasslands to try to stem the erosion around the dams. Further planting will take place in the coming weeks so if you are able to help give Mick a call on: 0429 017 229. Grasslands is a great place to work.

## Unexpected bee sightings in July from native bee enthusiast Karen Retra

Having noted in the previous newsletter I wouldn't expect to see native bees in July I was delighted, and slightly miffed, to spot several species during the month! With the sun out and the temperature a little warmer than it had been, I spied two species of native bee on the 7th of July, followed by an additional species on the 11th, and a further three species over the weekend of the 16th and 17th. So much for no native bees in July!

Dr Ken Walker at Museum Victoria kindly identified them on the Bowerbird.org.au website. He too noted there are few records of July sightings for native bees, especially this far south. Plus, one of the bees (*Lasioglossum Chilalictus adustum*) made for a new, southern-most record for the species. This bee was only first described in 1995, by Dr Walker! It was a tiny bee, just a few millimetres long, and foraging on *Thryptomene* – a plant that is typically very popular with many types of flies. See collage of six bees. IDs at the end of the article.

August marks the start of a new season for native bees. You'll start to see them as the temperatures rise, the daylight hours lengthen and spring wildflowers begin to bloom.

Around Chiltern Mt Pilot, your best bets for sighting native bees this month will be on early flowers like Purple Coral-pea, *Hovea* and Twining Glycine. In my garden the first spring bees

(*Trichocolletes*) appeared on the *Hardenbergia* on the 2nd of August – a week earlier than last year. In the Park last Sunday, we saw one of these bees darting between *Hovea* flowers near the Indigo goldfields cemetery.

These spring bees look similar to honey bees. They are black with gold bands on their abdomen, and gold hairs on their thorax. Honey bees tend to have less pronounced bands and vary in color and pattern more.

If you watch bees on some of the purple pea flowers, you'll be able to notice the difference in flight pattern between these two bee types. The spring bees dart around a lot and have quick flights between flowers when feeding. They push the flower open as they land on it, and generally curl their abdomen below themselves as they feed. Honey bees will tend to drift more sedately between the flowers and only occasionally curl their body while feeding. Both these types of bees have a fairly loud buzz. You will also hear the pitch and length of the spring bees' buzz change when a male bee tells another male to buzz off and when attempting to mate with a female.

Also keep an eye out on the wattles for bees. This week honey bees and hoverflies were all over the acacias at Bartley's block. As the weather warms, you can expect to see some native bees join them on these flowers. As they are smaller than honey bees, you need to look closely. They can be entirely hidden within the golden flowers much of the time. Thank you Karen for this report and the superb photographs.



Top left to bottom right they are:  
Lasioglossum Chilalictus lanarium  
Lasioglossum Chilalictus adustum  
Homalictus Homalictus sphecoides  
Lasioglossum Parasphecodes hiltacum  
Hylaeus Euprosopis honestus  
Lasioglossum Parasphecodes hilactum

## Rainfall

Rainfall for July : 127.1 mm    Year to date: 539.00

## Next Monthly Meeting Saturday September 3

### This is our Annual General Meeting

We will meet at the Post Office at 11.30am for an afternoon in the park, with Rudie Kuitert. Rudie is an orchid specialist and he is working on insects that pollinate orchids. A magnifying glass would be good to bring if you have one. Lunch, binoculars, chair, repellent, sunscreen would all be useful. Please see the AGM item in newsletter text above for more details. Contact 0407 486 480.

## Membership Renewals Are Due For 2016-17

Friends have achieved a great deal during the past year. Surveys for plants, birds and monitoring, maintaining and surveying mammal boxes, tree planting, weed control and provision of interpretive signage and park furniture are just some of our contributions. Your support for our activities is valued and your membership renewal is vital to our cause. Membership expires on June 30th 2016. Please ensure your contact details are current.

## **Method 1 Fill out this online form and mail the membership fee or pay electronically**

[Click here to achieve this](#)

## **Method 2 Print and Complete and mail this application**

### **Friends Of Chiltern Park Inc Membership Form for 2016 - 2017**

Name Telephone

Email

Address

Postcode

Please print and complete and mail this application to

P.O. Box 60 CHILTERN 3683

To assist, please mark the envelope Membership.

Please find enclosed my membership of **\$15 for 2016-2017** The fee covers the whole family and includes 11 newsletters.

FRIENDS OF CHILTERN Mt PILOT NATIONAL PARK inc MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

P.O. Box 60 CHILTERN 3683

If you wish to pay electronically the details are:

Acc Name: Friends of Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park

Bank: WAW Credit Union Co-operative Ltd (Cuscal Limited)

BSB number: 803070

Acc number: 81167

Please add your surname to the transaction.

Please advise Neville ([neville@nrbartlett.com.au](mailto:neville@nrbartlett.com.au)) when you have made the payment so that we can keep track of payments.

## **Friends Facebook Group now has 233 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!](#)

**Category**

1. Newsletters

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eileen

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