

Newsletter 267 November 2017

Description

Friends of Chiltern Mt Pilot NP Newsletter 267 November 2017

Dear Friends

Spring weather at last! This meeting's activity saw thirteen of us have yet another Spurge Purge followed by a visit to the Agave pit. While Jan and Mick sprayed other weeds the rest of us systematically combed the spurge area. We have given up counting but thousands of seedlings were eliminated before they could reach seeding stage. It is not hard work, just tedious but when done to the sounds of the birds and conversation it was soon time for morning tea.

At the Agave pit there was a change of tactics. Since these wretched plants resisted the herbicide it was decided to obtain heavy black plastic and envelope the big plants in it to 'stew' them. The small plants were collected and disposed of. Mick and Tony managed this job.



Just as we thought we had the better of weeds June found a new weed, a nasty infestation of *Watsonia* not far from the Agave Pit. It will be sprayed as soon as possible and again in spring as new plants appear. The site will require monitoring for quite some time.



How it spreads! Watsonia reproduces mainly by producing new corms (a corm is an underground swollen stem that forms at the base of the plant) and by dropping the bulbils from the flower spike. Each bulbil then grows into a new plant. Plants die back to the corm and reshoot each winter.

The hill at Grasslands was the perfect spot for lunch. The Blakely's Gums were in full flower so the bees were happy. Birds were scarce, an immature Pallid Cuckoo, White-plumed Honeyeaters and few Red Wattlebirds were noted.



Around the park: While the orchids were not at their best this season the pea species excelled in mass colour. The lovely Speedwell and everlastings will provide colour from now on.



The birdwatchers have been treated to an influx of tiny Scarlet Honeyeaters. The Regent Honeyeater season is about to end as the birds move to their summer haunts. The challenge to all bird watchers is to find and report them elsewhere in summer, remembering that Yellow Yellow was photographed in the off season in Inverloch last year. Enjoy Neville's photo of the first fledgling



On October 27th while doing the three monthly bird count at the Rutherglen Natural Features Reserve Jennifer and Eileen spotted nest building Weebills. The birds had a half built nest. Neville was alerted and took this photo thirteen days later. They are industrious little birds and we hope they will raise chicks.



Another interesting moth record

Jan photographed this unusual looking moth in October. Moth expert Peter Marriot provided this identification:??This would be *Thema holoxesta* (family Oecophoridae, subfamily Oecophorinae). It does look similar in flight to the Lymantriidae but the head is different. The really brushy base of the palpi are common to all *Thema* in the Oecophorinae. Not too often seen so it was a good record.??



The image has now been added to the Butterfly House website gallery :
<http://lepidoptera.butterflyhouse.com.au/oeco/holoxesta.html>

Wading in the Wetlands

A visit to Barambogie Dam by Neil and Eileen provided some interesting plants that favour the shallow muddy margins. We found what we thought was a new plant species only to discover it was in fact a Floating Liverwort, *Ricciocarpus natans*.

Other mud loving plants of the margins were Austral Mudwort, *Limosella* species,



and Waterwort, *Elatine gratioloides*. There are twenty species of Waterwort recorded in Australia this is the only endemic species



Tuan Campsite

During the month shrubs were planted in the camping ground. Parks have cut the grass in the entire block and this has rounded off the work there. Visiting campers have expressed their appreciation for the facility.

Valley No 2 Picnic Area

Friends have purchased new screening for the hide area. This has been erected, the walking track has been mowed and the grass cut in the little plantation. Jan has sprayed thistles and other weeds. Thanks to Mick and Tony for erecting the screening.

Website Bird List

The list has been updated to include newly sighted and photographed species. In the coming weeks the bird gallery will be updated to include these species and upgrade some images. Contributions are welcome.

Park Connect

Eileen and Neville recently attended a training session on ParkConnect, a system produced by Parks Victoria to manage volunteer activity.

Currently we keep paper records of who attends, what was done and how many hours were spent on Friends' activities.

Some of this information gets used to report how many hours that volunteers are contributing.

We will now be able to use the ParkConnect web-site to announce and track our activities within the park and stop having to keep paper records of activities.

The system is sufficiently flexible that we have a variety of ways of keeping track of activities and only affects people who come to our monthly gatherings or carry out work in between meetings.

Over the next couple of months we will explain what is happening and encourage people to register as volunteers on the ParkConnect -site.

The new system will make our extensive work within the park and the Rutherglen Natural Features Reserve much more visible within Parks Victoria.

Thankyou Neville.

From the Ranger's Office

Work has commenced on preparing for summer with works underway to slash and mowing of grass to reduce fire risk, clearing trees from tracks and upgrading of tracks in the Mt Pilot Section of the park. An increase in rubbish dumping has required the removal of a wide range of items including a car, hundreds of fire extinguishers, TVs, dog kennels and household rubbish.

Contractors will soon commence work to follow up spraying St John's Wort at Grasslands block and Rutherglen NCR. Funds have been secured and planning is underway to complete upgrades and resealing of carpark at Woolshed falls.

Ranger John McDonald is on long service leave until the end of the year.

Brian Pritchard.

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1. Newsletters

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Author

eileen

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