

Newsletter 285 July 2019

Description

Friends of Chiltern Mt Pilot NP Newsletter 28 July 2019

Dear Friends,

July Field Day

Our July field day took place at the Grasslands Block. We started at the top of the block and inspected the plantings of Mountain Swainson-pea (*Swainsona recta*) where we observed some encouraging growth in one of the areas that was planted some time back and then we moved further down the block and planted about 65 Hedge Wattles (*Acacia paradoxa*) in gullies and water courses so that further erosion would be discouraged. Mick and Tony had already prepared the holes, so planting was very straight forward. Water was available in the dams nearby.

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Hedge Wattles being planted near eroded areas – photos: Neville Bartlett

With that task completed, it was back down to the lower area that was planted in August 2018. More tree guards were removed because the plants are outgrowing the guards.



There are still quite a few tree guards left in place – photo: Neville Bartlett

The remaining guards will be removed in the coming months as the trees and shrubs become more mature.

Fungi fun, unless you're a caterpillar! – Karen Retra

Perhaps you know the natural history tale that links these three images:







The photos, by Karen Retra, are of a large pink moth, a small club-shaped fungus and a moth pupal case.

Their connection? The fungus is a Cordyceps* that parasitises caterpillars, including of this moth. Yup, how cool is that!? Eileen has shared this fascinating story in previous Friends' newsletters (see [here](#) and [here](#)). I've enjoyed watching this story play out again this season.

I was reminded of this intriguing relationship at a workshop with Dr Alison Pouliot, a fungi expert, hosted by Wooragee Landcare in May. Alison is a regular visitor to our region each autumn, running interactive workshops on fungi and photography. She brings an incredible array of specimens to each workshop including some of my favourites, the Vegetable Caterpillars (Cordyceps).

How can a fungus 'catch' a caterpillar? The Cordyceps spores are tiny and it's thought the caterpillar ingests them while moving through the leaf litter. The spores germinate inside the caterpillar and, [as Alison explains](#), "The resulting mycelium feeds on the caterpillar and completely fills its body cavity,

effectively consuming it from inside out, killing it in the process and transforming it into a mummy.” Having extracted what it needs from the caterpillar, the fungus waits for the right conditions to put up a reproductive structure (stroma, sometimes referred to as the ‘fruiting body’) above ground from which it releases its spores. And so the cycle begins again.

While you can see just the stroma of the fungus above the ground in my photo, below Alison’s specimens show how their long white fungal tissue the extends into the soil and entirely around the mummified caterpillar.



Photo: Cordyceps display by Alison Pouliot

Coincidentally, on a field trip during Alison’s workshops, we came across the stunning pink *Oxycanus* moth pictured earlier. It was on a rotting log, beneath Acacias in private bushland just beyond the National Park boundary at Wooragee. I think it’s *Oxycanus dirempta* (using *Moths of Victoria* and supported on [iNaturalist](#)).

Spotting the moths is a matter of timing as they are short-lived as adults. They often emerge en masse after rain in autumn. Females typically lay eggs on and near wattle trees. The caterpillars dig burrows in the ground, apparently lining them with silk. At night they come out to feed on leaves and leaf litter.

They pupate in their burrow and, like other moths in this family (Hepialidae), as the adults emerge they often leave their empty pupal case half sticking out of the burrow, or on the ground nearby. I'm sure you've seen some. They are frequently seen under Eucalypts and Acacias in autumn or early winter.

Fungi season continues (especially with recent rain) so keep an eye out – there are many fascinating species for those with a keen eye and the right timing!

* Note: I think this one may be *Cordyceps gunnii* which is now known as *Drechmeria gunnii*.

Editor's Note: Karen will be giving a presentation at our AGM on 7th September and we look forward to learning more about bees, wasps and flies.

Water Creatures – Springtails – Neville Bartlett

Recently, at home in Baranduda, we observed a cluster of tiny black objects that looked like tea leaves floating on one of our water dishes. On further inspection we could see that these black specks were moving and liked to gather together in clusters. The camera was brought out and some images captured.



The Regent Honeyeater coffee mug on the left gives an indication of scale (80 mm from side to side) and on the right are the Springtails with some colourful mites in amongst them – photos: Neville Bartlett

These images were uploaded onto the Facebook page for the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria and within minutes the creatures were identified as Springtails (*Collembola* sp.). Another respondent supplied a link (

https://www.melbournewater.com.au/media/117/download?fbclid=IwAR2txF_ORpyt0yiVSvdUc1niq2U2L7uEoubfzEM

) to an excellent guide on Waterbug Identification that has been produced by Melbourne Water. The following is the description provided:

Springtails are unusual animals that were previously thought to be a kind of insect, but have now been classified in their own group. They have six legs, no wings and are typically tiny – less than a couple of millimetres. However, despite their small size they are remarkable jumpers. Using their ‘springtail’, a forked appendage usually held under their abdomen, they can launch themselves up to 30cm into the air. Springtails are found on the surface of still waters like ponds, pools and lakes where they eat the microorganisms that feed on decomposing organic matter. They are able to stay on the surface of water bodies due to having waterproof skin.

President’s Report

Each year we prepare an action plan that covers all of the group’s activities for the year. This is part of our obligations for Parks Victoria and it prompts us to think of what we would like to do for the coming year. Over the last year or so we have attracted a lot of support for our planting days so we are now working on making sure that we include this activity in our plans. Potential sites are being discussed.

Eileen Collins will be presented with her Order of Australia Medal (OAM) at Government House in Melbourne on the 17th September 2019. We are planning to have a local celebration of this award in October – more details will be announced closer to the time.

Around the Park

Cyanide Dam is still empty despite the heavy rains early in May. Consequently, the Honeyeater Picnic Area has much less birdlife than usual. We hope that some substantial rain in the near future will remedy this situation. |Fortunately, other water storages in the Park have fared much better.

Regent Honeyeaters continue to be elusive with the recent sightings being much further to the North in New South Wales and Southern Queensland.

The second Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot survey for 2019 will take place on Saturday 3rd August and start at 08:30am at the Honeyeater Picnic Area. Please contact Glen Johnson (Glen.Johnson@delwp.vic.gov.au or 0418 501 936) if you are planning to attend.

Rainfall For June: 45mm. Year to date: 237mm (versus the average year to date of 319mm).

NEXT MEETING – SUNDAY AUGUST 4th 2019

We will be checking some mammal nest boxes and turquoise parrot boxes.

Meet at the Post Office at 9.00am. Field contact: Neville on 0412 399 239

Membership It’s Time to Renew

Memberships expired on June 30th. Thank you to all who have taken out membership this year. We hope you will continue your support. 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 brochures, 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 of each year.

Please ensure your contact details are current.

Please find enclosed my membership of \$15 for 2019-20. The fee covers the whole family and includes 11 newsletters.

Name:.....

Telephone:.....

Email:..... Receipt required: Yes / No

Address:..... Postcode:

If you wish to use electronic payment 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 Tony (anthonymurnane9@gmail.com) or Neville (neville@nrbartlett.com.au) when you have made the payment to help us keep track of payments.

Category

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