

Newsletter 294 May 2020

Description

Friends of Chiltern Mt Pilot NP Newsletter #294 May 2020

Dear Friends,

Now that the lockdown associated with coronavirus/COVID-19 is being eased, it is now permissible to visit the Park in small groups. It is great to go out into the Park once again and check how much has changed over the last few months. One striking aspect is the amount of water in the dams and along the roadsides. This year is turning out to be a lot wetter than the last few years. Even Cyanide Dam has water in it again, but more is needed to fill it up.

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Cyanide Dam on 16th May 2020 (the water is there – two pools). Photo: Neville Bartlett

The Bag Shelter Moth – *Ochrogaster lunifer* – Eileen Collins

This is time of the year when these long processions of very hairy caterpillars are encountered.

They keep contact with each other via their tactile hairs as they move to find a place to pupate.

The eggs are laid in spring and the tiny larvae feed on Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*) often defoliating it. They go through eight “moults” and mature in autumn when they make soil cavities in which to pupate.

In late spring the moths emerge and lay their eggs on the bark at the base of acacias.

The young larvae begin the process again sheltering as they grow in a silken nest.

The young larvae are eaten by Pallid Cuckoos. Brave birds!

Note: If you travel the Hume Freeway in our area you may notice their big bag shelters in the *Acacia pendulas* [Weeping Myall] which are in the median strips. Further north the tree shelters are more prevalent. In the Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park they are mostly at the base of Golden Wattle.

Thanks to Peter Marriot for the adult moth photos.



Bag Shelter Moth (*Ochrogaster lunifer*) adult form – photos: Peter Marriot



Bag Shelter Moth (*Ochrogaster lunifer*) caterpillars – photo: Mick Webster



Wheel Cactus – Mick Webster

In March four of us visited the area of Wheel Cactus infestation off Old Coach Rd we had pinned cochineal beetles to (nurtured by Ranger Hannah over last winter in Beechworth) and found there had

been very good movement into their new homes after only 5 weeks. This is very pleasing, hopefully we can harvest some of this infested material and start to spread it into the areas we are finding the cactus in. The delineation of the Wheel Cactus area is an ongoing process – please let us know if you find any (check it's not Prickly Pear first!).





The pieces attached in March have withered and the cochineal have spread onto the cactus – Photos: Mick Webster

Ghost Fungus* – *Omphalotus nidiformis* – Eileen Collins

These green luminous night time treasures are present in May and June and at other times when conditions are favourable. Their daytime colour varies from white through to shades of brown and occasionally purple.



How the appearance changes (left: day time and right: night time using long exposure) – Photos: Neville Bartlett



Clusters can be found on a wide range of native species including eucalypts, banksias and acacias. Exotics such as pinus sp. as well as stumps and rotting logs can also be hosts.

They cause White Heart Rot in living trees.

* Listed as poisonous, causing vomiting. They may be confused with the edible Oyster Mushroom *Pleurotus* sp.

Ranger's Report – Brian Pritchard

Changes to COVID 19 guidelines now allow outdoor recreational activities in our parks such as walking, bird watching and hiking. Physical distancing is required to help keep people safe.

Parks Victoria is required to keep facilities clean, safe and open but visitors are expected to have a high degree of self-sufficiency and not be dependent on facilities such as clean toilets.

Re-opening of sites is occurring with only day visitor use allowed at this stage. Camping will still not be allowed.

Whilst some staff are working from home, our field operations have been continuing with our grading program progressing well in suitable weather conditions. Planned burning near Chiltern as well as upgrades to visitor facilities at Woolshed Falls have been completed as has the replacement of a number of damaged signs throughout the park. Pest Plant & Animal Control programs are also continuing.

Parks Victoria and Conservation Regulator are undertaking a statewide operation targeting the illegal removal of commercial quantities of firewood due the negative impacts it has on the health of our forests, wildlife habitat and the sustainability of firewood resources for the community. Authorised officers will patrol forests, parks and reserves, as well as use cameras to detect illegal activity.

Rangers have detected a number of illegal firewood collectors in the park and offenders will be issued with infringement notices.

And the real good news is the sighting of two Regent Honeyeaters in the park. Hopefully with the new guidelines will present more opportunities for further sightings.

Rainfall For April: 167 mm. Total for 2020 year-to-date: 350 mm. In 2019 we had 90 mm up to the end of April.

NEXT MEETING – CANCELLED

Due to the coronavirus/COVID-19 outbreak, Park Victoria's latest advice is that all gatherings / community group activities are to be postponed until further notice. See the Ranger's Report above about what is allowed at the moment.

Membership It's Time to Renew

Memberships expired on June 30th 2019. 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.

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