

Newsletter 302 Feb 2021

Description

Friends of Chiltern Mt Pilot NP Newsletter #302 February 2021

Dear Friends,

The February field day included a gathering at the Grasslands Block to check on the plantings that took place in August 2018 and during 2020. These plantings are doing well, and we took the opportunity to check two of the mammal nest boxes and remove weeds such as [Bathurst Burr \(*Xanthium spinosum*\)](#) and [Sweet Briar \(*Rosa rubiginosa*\)](#).

The day also provided us with a chance to discuss suitable activities for the year with an eye on the possible influence of COVID-19 restrictions. During much of 2020, we featured multiple activities at our field days so that numbers were kept within the prescribed limits for outdoor gatherings. This gave people a chance to choose an activity that suited their interests and abilities. The discussion generated many suggestions of possible activities and these will be developed into a list of possibilities ready to go as appropriate. The suggestions included bird walks, wildflower walks, wildflower photography sessions, guest presenters on topics that broaden our knowledge of flora and fauna. Regular activities such as monitoring mammal nest boxes and weeding will still feature but be complemented by sessions in between the monthly field days.



Weeding at Grasslands Block – photo: Neville Bartlett



A view of the 2018 Grasslands planting – photo: Neville Bartlett

Later in the morning, Mick Webster led a group to the Mt Pilot section of the park to check out progress with the Wheel Cactus control and a walk to Clear Creek Falls.



Wheel Cactus showing the infestation of cochineal beetles – photos: Mick Webster



Clear Creek Falls – photo: Mick Webster



Hercules Robber Fly – *Neoaratus hercules* – Eileen Collins

Sometimes when one is just standing still amazing creatures appear.

This Robber Fly announced its presence with a loud buzzing and obligingly landed on a plant in front of me.

Neil captured this photo showing the intricate vein pattern in the wings which has enabled it to be identified to species level.

At a length of about 3 cms, the name “Hercules” suits it perfectly.

It may look ferocious, but its interest lies in catching passing flying insect prey.

Prey is captured in flight and stabbed with its rostrum.

It proceeds to suck the juices from the body and then discard the skeleton.

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Hercules Robber Fly (*Neoaratus hercules*) – photo: Neil Blair

Gang gang cockatoos are regular visitors to this area at this time of year, voraciously feeding on hawthorn berries, either ripe or unripe. They are one of the more “human friendly” cockatoos, who certainly don’t mind showing off their hairstyle. This photo is of a male, taken at Rowdy Flat at the end

of January.



Gang-gang Cockatoo (*Callocephalon fimbriatum*) – photo: Jan Palmer

Around the Park

There has been much bird activity this season and the images featured here were taken by Brian Pritchard while he was in lockdown at home late in 2020.





Male Mistletoebird (*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*) and its nest – photos: Brian Pritchard



Weebill (*Smicrornis brevirostris*) in its nest – photo: Brian Pritchard

Ranger's Report

Our two new rangers have commenced work it is planned to meet with Friends at the next meeting on 6 March.

Scott Cunningham is an experienced ranger who has transferred from Yarrawonga into an ongoing position. Scott has previously worked for Parks Victoria in various roles at Wangaratta, Mt Buffalo and Wilsons Promontory.

Laura Collins has been seconded into Hannah Clemen's position until November whilst Hannah works on the horse project at Barmah National Park. Laura has been working as a project fire fighter in Beechworth and has a background in outdoor education.

We are looking forward to what they bring to the team, our parks and support for the Friends Group. Luke is still with the team and Brian continues albeit working from home due to COVID situation.

In the park, contractors have commenced fox control program near Barambogie with baiting to continue over coming months and we are still responding to a lot of trees falling across roads. Preparations are well underway for planned burns to be undertaken near Barambogie and at Davitt's Swamp in the Mt Pilot section of the park. It is expected planned burning will commence soon given the favourable weather conditions. Yeddonba remains closed as we are experiencing some difficulties in sourcing contractors to undertake works.

Rainfall December 2020: 41 mm. Total for 2020: 778 mm. In 2019 we had 448 mm up to the end of December. The average annual rainfall for Chiltern is 689 mm.

NEXT MEETING – SATURDAY 6th MARCH 2021

The activities for the day are expected to include meeting with our new rangers, a demonstration of a pole camera for inspecting mammal nest boxes and a walk in the park.

Details will be announced on the Wednesday beforehand (3rd March 2021).

Meet at the Chiltern Post Office at 09:00am.

Contact for the day: Neville – 0412 399 239.

Dates for 2021

Saturday 6th March, Sunday 4th April (Easter Sunday), Saturday 1st May, Sunday 6th June, Saturday 3rd July, Sunday 1st August, Saturday 4th September, Sunday 3rd October, Saturday 6th November, and Sunday 5th December 2021.

Rule of Thumb: For even months, the field day is held on the first Sunday of the month and for odd months, it is held on the first Saturday of the month.

Category

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