

Newsletter 303 March 2021

Description

Friends of Chiltern Mt Pilot NP Newsletter #303 March 2021

Dear Friends,

The March field day took place on a pleasant sunny day and attracted an attendance of about 20 people as well as three rangers. Everyone was in high spirits anticipating a morning at the Rutherglen Natural Features Reserve.

After a brief introduction of the new rangers (Laura Collins and Scott Cunningham), and a short summary of the history of the reserve from head ranger Brian Pritchard, we proceeded to check the 14 mammal nest boxes while looking out for weeds along the way. It did not take long for olives to be found and dispatched.

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No quarter was given to this olive! – photo: Neville Bartlett

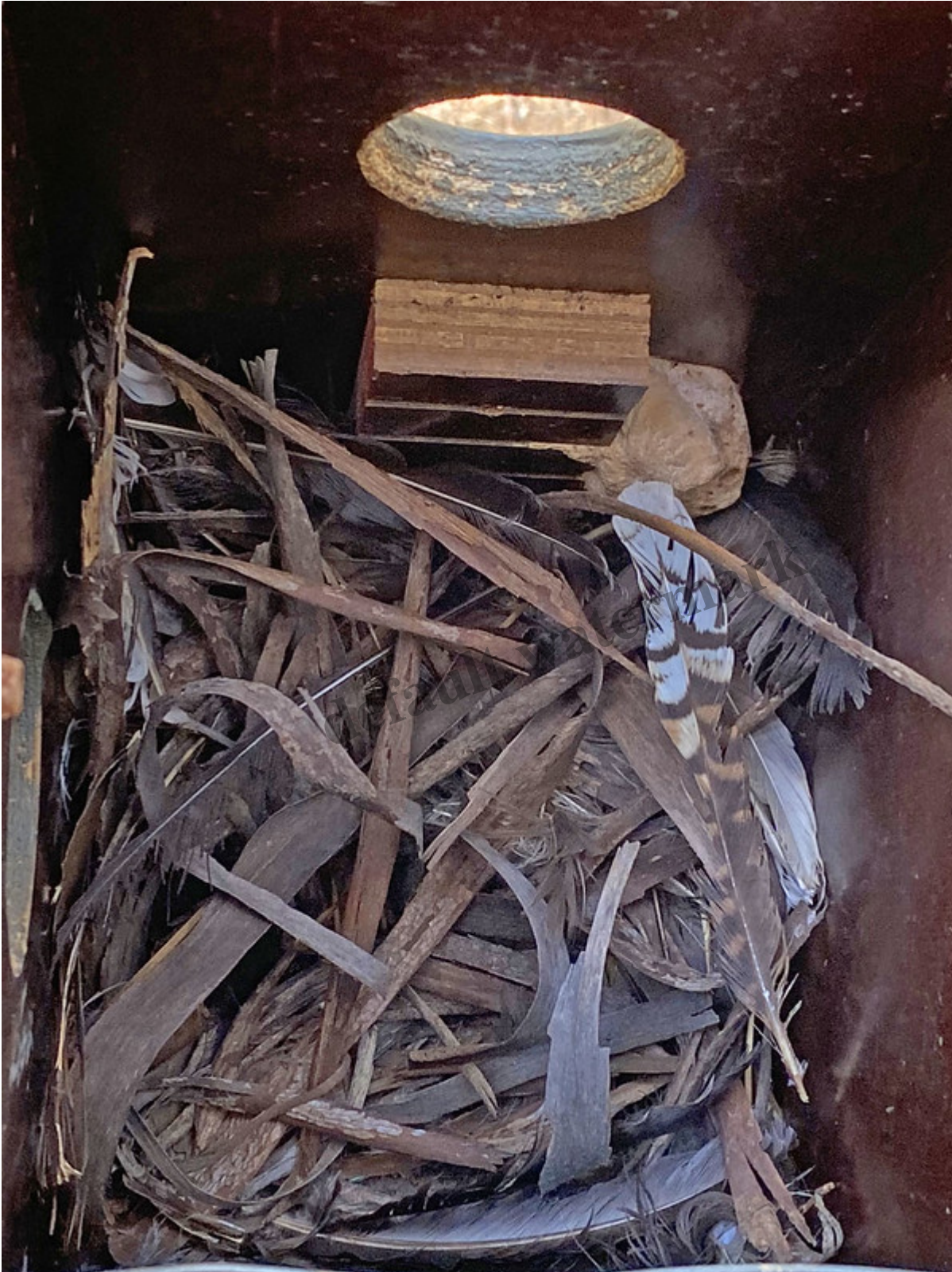
Olive seedlings are quite common in this reserve and many were removed. No doubt there are many more as it is difficult to spot them until they are quite close.

The mammal nest boxes were inspected using a borrowed pole camera that had three monitors that could be carried by members of the group. This aspect of the camera was greatly appreciated given the size of the group. The images captured on the monitors were of poor quality.

Overall, two of the boxes contained glider nests (one with a glider) and several of the other boxes contained Tuan nests. The photos below were taken using a mobile phone.

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A collection of typical Tuan nests showing the diversity of materials and arrangement with a Tuan visible in the last image (lower right) – photos: Neville Bartlett

The interest in using a pole camera relates to gathering information about mammal occupancy with

minimal disruption to the animals. A set-up that enables everyone present to see what is inside the box without scaling a ladder, or even approaching close to the tree, offers many advantages.

In the days following the field day, testing was carried out on a second pole camera that promised higher quality images that are shared via wi-fi to smart phones. More details will appear in next month's newsletter.

Kurrajong Bag Moth – *Dichocrocis clytusalis* – Eileen Collins

The caterpillars of this species live together in a bag which they create by rolling the leaves together and binding them with silken thread. The caterpillars emerge at night to feed on the soft new growth of the host tree. All that is left of the leaves is a skeleton of veins.

As they grow, they shed their skins until they reach approximately two centimetres in length.

At this stage they pupate, forming a golden chrysalis in which metamorphosis takes place.

In our specimens, this took only a few days resulting in a beautiful golden moth with black markings.

This particular bag moth chose a tree in a private garden to infest, so on discovery, it was hastily removed to the garbage collection due the next day! A quick call was made to ranger Brian, and yes, he was busy removing them from the trees on his property. He managed to rescue a few chrysalises one of which hatched quickly so enabling the series to be completed.

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Note: Another species of Bag Shelter Moth which is quite common in the park is *Ochrogaster lunifer* the larvae of which are the Processionary Caterpillars. These may be encountered crossing the tracks in autumn in search of a new food source. Their shelters can be seen at the base of Golden Wattles, *Acacia pycnantha*.

This species pupates in the soil.

Around the Park

The autumn orchids have started to appear in a very dry park.



Autumn Greenhood (*Pterostylis revoluta*) – photo Leshya Perkins



Dark Midge-orchid (*Corunastylis rufa*) – photo Leshya Perkins

A colony of about 200 Grey-headed Flying Foxes (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) has taken up residence in Chiltern township. They are spread over several trees between the playground and Lake Anderson.



Grey-headed Flying Fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) – photo: Mick Webster

There are a lot of Noisy Friarbirds (*Philemon corniculatus*) in the park now and this is a sign of extensive eucalypt flowering. Please keep an eye out for blossom and Regent Honeyeaters (*Anthochaera phrygia*). Early April is the traditional time for Regents to appear in the park. Extensive flowering will increase the likelihood that there will be some Regents about but finding them will be a challenge.

Ranger's Report

It was good to catch up with the group at Rutherglen after so much time and to introduce our new staff. Planned burning is a focus over autumn to meet Government expectations.

There are three burns within the park that have been prepared and will commence when conditions are favourable. Burns are at Barambogie and Davitt's Swamp in the Pilot Section and Wallace's Gully near Chiltern.

Illegal firewood collection has started to increase, and Ranger's will focus on managing the impacts as well as the continuing litter problem.

A preliminary engineer inspection of the walkway at Yeddonba has been completed but it may still be some time until the faults are rectified. Fox and pig control programs are continuing in the park.

Rainfall February 2021: 80 mm. Total for year-to-date 2021: 193 mm. In 2020 we had 53 mm up to the end of February. The average annual rainfall for Chiltern is 689 mm.

NEXT MEETING – SUNDAY 11th APRIL 2021

NOTE: The date has been changed from Easter Sunday (4th April).

Details of the activity for the day will be announced on the Wednesday beforehand (7th April 2021).

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

Contact for the day: Neville – 0412 399 239.

Dates for 2021

Sunday 11th April (changed due to Easter),

Saturday 1st May

Sunday 6th June

Saturday 3rd July

Sunday 1st August

Saturday 4th September

Sunday 3rd October

Saturday 6th November

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.

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Category

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