

Newsletter 050 February 1998

Description

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Dear Friends

Welcome to the New Year. I hope it will be rewarding for you all. Despite the dry conditions our January campout at Cyanide Dam was full of interest. Early arrivals found a pair of Willie Wagtails feeding three half grown nestlings and taking turns to shelter them from the hot sun. The harsh conditions claimed a Fuscous H/e and an adult Dusky Wood swallow. The latter was found under an overhang of the dam bank seemingly resting but in fact quite dead. The bird list totalled 38 species and included Turquoise Parrots, Owlet Nightjar, White-throated Nightjar, Leaden Flycatcher, Diamond Firetail and a very bold White-necked Heron which patrolled the waterline and had the audacity to challenge a Grey Kangaroo which disturbed its Yabbying routine. Many Black Wallabies came to drink and were closely watched through Neville's telescope.

Bats were the target for this weekend and on Natasha's arrival it was all hands to work setting up the harp traps and trip lines before we could enjoy our tea in the cool of the evening.

The trip line yielded only one Little Forest Bat which was captured as it swam to the water's edge. The Harp traps around the dam produced two more victims. The traps around the second dam snared a couple of larger bats so we had three species to process. Each bat is carefully inspected for sex, age and breeding status before being measured and weighed. As Natasha performed and recorded each stage she explained the process and answered questions. By backlighting the wings she was able to show how the bones in the young bats had not completely grown together or ossified.

Due to health concerns bats must be handled with fine leather gloves to protect the handler from bites. Although the teeth of the bats we caught were quite small they were still capable of piercing the skin.

The bats were released after being recorded. By this time it was midnight and most people were ready for rest.

The dawn chorus came far too soon for most of us and at 6.30am we were going around the traps. The traps at Cyanide Dam were loaded with captives. Once the traps were cleared the task of dismantling the traps began. By this time most of us were familiar with the requirements and the job was quickly accomplished. We wondered what the catch at the other dam would be like since it seemed a good location. A surprise was in store for the score was nil! Traps down and back to camp for breakfast, Or so we thought. Bats come first and when their vital statistics were recorded then we were free to have breakfast.

A total of 38 bats was trapped, 5 species recorded and one other heard. They were:

Little Forest Bat, *Vespadelus vulturnus*; Gould's Wattled Bat, *Chalinolobus gouldii*; Chocolate Wattled Bat, *Chalinolobus morio*; Southern Freetail Bat, *Mormopterus planiceps*; Lesser Long-eared Bat, *Nyctophilus geoffroyi*; Gould's Long-eared Bat, *Nyctophilus gouldi*. Heard only was the White-striped Freetail Bat, *Tadarida australis*.

Like many other animals in the park bats require hollows for roosts. This underlines the importance of conserving the remaining hollowing bearing trees and the value of the nest logs and boxes which are located throughout the park.

Friends and visitors appreciated the time and knowledge given by Natasha and extend their thanks. As I write this I know she is sweating it out in the field in 35 degree heat working on ? Yes, Bats!

Next Meeting Sunday March 1st at Chiltern Valley No.2 Dam

Tea Meeting: Time: 2.30pm

Activity will be to clear the debris from the little walking track around the edge of the dam.

After tea we will spotlight around the dam and gravel heaps.

Bring secateurs, rake, pruning saw and gloves and insect repellent.

MEETING DATES FOR 1998

This year it has been decided that the activity for each meeting will be advertised in the newsletter.

March Sunday 1st	April Saturday 4th	May Sunday 3rd
June Saturday 6th AGM	July Sunday 5th	August Saturday 1st
September Sunday 6th	October Saturday 3rd	November Sunday 1st
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February saw us gather again at Cyanide Dam on a hot Saturday afternoon. The dam has changed considerably since last month. The small pool is now a puddle and the larger pool is shrinking by the day. Since it is the only water left in the southern block it is attracting plenty of birds and mammals. It is perhaps the only place where Little Lorikeets are being regularly recorded. We enjoyed a spell of bird watching before heading off to Chiltern Valley No.1 and Barambogie Dam to remove some exotic plants.

We had excellent views of a young Dollar Bird using a the favoured perch of a dead limb {which makes using the telescope a breeze} Its beak was slaty grey and it obligingly opened it to reveal a deep cream mouth. A greater challenge was to focus on the immature White-throated Gerygone flitting about in the Silver Wattle beside the picnic table. This is an unusual record for the park. Big tick to sharp-eyed Neville!

As we stood tracking a Latham's Snipe at Barambogie we were aware of the approaching dark clouds and what appeared to be smoke rising into the north western sky and being driven by a strong wind. We packed up and headed for Valley 1 and as we reached the picnic spot we realised that the "smoke" was in fact dust! By this time it was much cooler and we decided that tea at Cyanide would be more pleasant. Tea on the table, sudden deluge, tea in cars, people very wet, storm cleared, meeting began, thunder and storm returned, evening spotlight abandoned! I wonder why?

From the meeting:

1. The format of the new park leaflet was discussed. Those present felt it was drab, had several errors, too much empty space, lacked information about the special values of the park and was generally poorly laid out. It certainly wouldn't inspire prospective visitors. Action: talk to John.
2. Promotional session at Wodonga Plaza. This was proposed by Neville and accepted by the group. Various ideas are being pursued and will be presented at the next meeting. The Regent Honeyeater audio-visual display will form the core of the promotion.
3. The April meeting task will be to remove a large area of Cootamundra Wattles from an area adjacent to private land.
4. The Box-Ironbark report was discussed. A copy is available for use by members. Please make every effort to read it and make a submission to the Commission. If you need assistance please contact me or Charlie Sherwin on 039 6508 296.
5. Visit to the National Park by Democrat spokesperson for the environmnet, Senator Lynn Allison. As part of a tour of the Box-Ironbark country Lynn expressed a wish to visit Chiltern Park and hear the issues relating to it. It was my pleasant duty to spend two and a half hours touring the special sites

with Lynn. We all know the issues so I will not repeat them.

6. Accounts were passed for payment. It was decided to order more t/shirts to sell at the promotion day.

Space is scarce this month, sorry for small print.. See you all in March.

Eileen.

Category

1. Newsletters

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