

Newsletter 060 February 1999

Description

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Welcome to 1999 I hope it will be a rewarding year for you all. I shall begin with â??January Jottingsâ?•. January is normally a quiet month but it produced a few unexpected treasures on the ground and in the trees. Finding eleven Apostle Birds, with a nest and dependent young was amazing. The following day a visitor spotted a â??tall pink flower spikeâ?• which turned out to be not one, but 53, Pink Hyacinth Orchids. Closer inspection revealed that there were two species present, *Dipodium roseum* and *Dipodium punctatum*. The orchid was last seen in 1969 in the northern block. It has not appeared since. The discovery of this patch with its two species adds yet another plant to the flora list.

Gavan Oâ??Meara and friends turned up a Regent Honeyeater at Greenhill Dam. Further sightings of this bird confirmed it was a banded bird. Several visitors were delighted to see it. Depot Dam on January 9 a pair of Brown Goshawks with two noisy young was the highlight of a very hot day. Near Beechworth a bat was seen flying in the middle of a very hot day. It flew from a hollow spout in a wide circle, returned to the spout and disappeared into it. Could it have been feeling the heat? Natasha may be able to answer this. The same day, early in the morning, our attention was drawn to huge numbers of Cicadas clustered along the upper branches of a *Eucalyptus bridgesiana*. Their wings glistened as they were backlit by the low sun and as well as singing deafeningly, they were expelling fluid at a great rate. So great was the volume of fluid that the large eucalypt leaves on the ground were like little bowls full of water. Young Hooded Robins with their parents and young Turquoise Parrots were other treasures. *Persoonia rigida*, a summer flowering shrub, was sporting quite large yellow flowers possibly helped along by the good early summer rains.

The January meeting at Chiltern Valley No.2 Dam was pleasant despite the hot day. Working in the shade of the mine tailing heaps a small band of workers cut and painted the Briar Roses noting, as they worked, the dead stumps of previously painted plants. The track was cleared of debris and overhanging branches and a well earned rest was taken on the bank of the dam. Dotterels, White-breasted Woodswallows, an immature Rufous Night Heron and a lone Wood Sandpiper were the highlights. Tea was enjoyed at Cyanide Dam. Bird life was scarce, but at dusk we heard the White-throated Nightjar calling on the ridge and later caught several birds in the spotlight as they skimmed across the dam.

The February meeting found us first at Bartleyâ??s block removing Spurge which had dared to form seed heads. We noted that the gully had been well turned over by fossickers leaving many large holes. The Genista sites were inspected and are under control.

On to Magenta where John gave us the job of covering bare areas with dead vegetation. After an hour and a half, well satisfied with our efforts we retired to Greenhill Dam for tea and some bird watching. Despite the hot day bird numbers were low. The lone Regent was seen disappearing over our heads as we enjoyed tea. They are very sneaky at this time of the year. It was decided to have our evening spotlight walk at Valley No.2 Nightjars hawk over the dam, Frogmouths frequent the mine heaps and a

family of Rufous Hight Herons is in residence. A wild storm swept in from the west bringing dust, flying branchlets and bark so we beat a hasty retreat and left the weather to the birds.

Wetland plant added to the park list â?? Ludwigia peploides, Water Clover is quite plentiful at No.2 Dam. Its dark green glossy leaves and bright yellow, 5 petalled flower make it quite a striking plant. The fruit is an elongated, cylindrical capsule up to 3 cm in length. There are four species of Ludwigia in Australia two introduced and two native. This one is native. Thanks to Ian Lunt for identification of this plant.

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1. Newsletters

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