

Newsletter 072 March 2000

Description

Dear Friends

A diligent band of workers completed the Bushland Reserve clean-up on the Cemetery Rd block. There was no need to go spotlighting either for our reward for the afternoon was a display of gliding by no less than three Squirrel Gliders. Apparently they were disturbed from their daytime resting place under some Ironbark bark by the clattering of tin rubbish being stacked near their tree. We were unable to find any hollow close by so assumed they were sheltering under bark which had separated from the trunk of a dead tree. The next visit to this reserve will be in spring to attack weeds. There are numerous bulbs around the edges which front the cemetery and these will require spraying as they emerge.

Earlier in the day some members spent time in the park. Of note was a brightly patterned young tree goanna roughly 60 centimetres long. Around the edge of one of the dams on Bartley's Block we found a lovely patch of *Goodenia mcbarronii* in flower. The delicate yellow flowers on this little plant are held on stems about 10 centimetres long. It is listed as vulnerable, both nationally and for Victoria.

Although the park is in its dry period there is still plenty to see. Golden wattles have formed flower buds ready to brighten winter days. Bee-eaters and Wood swallows are gathering in readiness for their journey north. Box Mistletoe, *Amyema miquelli* and Fleshy Mistletoe, *Amyema mirabilis* are flowering, the latter being a parasite of the Box Mistletoe. Young Black Wallabies, *Wallabia bicolor*, are plentiful indicating a good breeding season.

The pre-summer fuel reduction burn along Whistler Track has resulted in good regeneration of Silver Wattle. Along Brick Kiln Track there is an excellent germination of pea species. The grass cover has been reduced opening up spaces for orchids and lilies. It will be interesting to see what spring brings to this area.

March should see the return of the Regent Honeyeaters, so all interested persons should be on the lookout for banded birds. As yet there is no sign of eucalypt flowering to attract them but they have turned up in previous years before the flowering.

Chiltern Valley No. 2 Dam was the very pleasant venue for tea. An unusual find was a Rufous Fantail flitting around in the Peppercorn Trees. From time to time they are recorded in Chiltern on their northward journey. The last two records were after stormy weather at Frogs Hollow, where a bird stayed for 10 days and near Bartley's Block where a single bird stayed for a week. One wonders whether these apparent strays actually make it to their winter habitat. A Dollar Bird, White-browed Babbler and Superb Fairy Wren were recorded in the grassy area. A large group of Pelicans, Sacred Ibis, a lone Royal Spoonbill, several Black-fronted Plovers and a party of Wood Ducks were around the dam and two Whistling Kites were perched in the dead trees. Huge Carp were the downside of the evening. Our target birds White-throated Nightjar and Rufous Night Heron eluded us. Spotlighting around the mine heaps turned up some monstrous Golden Orb Web spiders, with huge shiny grey

abdomens and long legs banded in colours of orange and yellow. Another species with a hairy body in tones of brown, from the genus Eriophora or Garden Spiders was also seen. According to Bert Simon-Brunet, in "The Silken Web" there are over 100 species of Garden Spiders in Australia and they construct the perfect wheel web. Some are beautifully coloured in soft tones to blend with their surroundings. The males of both these spiders measure a mere 15-20 mm whereas the abdomen alone on a female can be over 30mm long. Neither species, despite their size, is poisonous to humans.

Woodland birds:

Are they becoming scarce? Several visitors have remarked about the difficulty finding species such as the Hooded Robin, Speckled Warbler and Red-capped Robin. If you are birding in and around the park it would be a good idea to record when and where you see these species. Especially note whether they are regularly absent from known spots. For example, Hooded Robins are regularly seen along the boundary fence near Lappins Dam. It would be easy for them to slip away like the Crested Bellbird.

White-throated Needle-tails have been recorded frequently during the recent spate of humid, unsettled weather. My attention was drawn to them when they were so low that I could feel the draught from their wing beats as they hawked the low flying insects.

Flora Booklet: This is now complete and for sale at \$5.00 per copy. It contains notes on the park, an up to date plant list with some notes on special plants, and a Park map.

Swift Parrot Survey Dates: May 20/21 August 5/6. Send sightings to: Simon Kennedy, P.O. Box 3100 Bendigo 3554

NEXT MEETING SUNDAY APRIL 2 9.00 AM

Meet at Chiltern Post Office, in Main Street. Activity will be SURFACING A WALKING TRACK AT MAGENTA MINE. Lunch will be at Greenhill Dam at 12.00 noon where we will be looking out for the returning Regent Honeyeaters. BYO food, gloves, shovel, rake, energy and a friend. Contact: 03 57 261 484

Category

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