

Newsletter 073 April 2000

Description

Dear Friends

The arrival of Eastern Spinebills and Golden Whistlers heralded the seasonal change in the bird world. It would have been easy to recline in our chairs and bird watch on a perfect autumn morning but the wretched Caper Spurge had responded so well to the unseasonal rain that this could not be! Fortunately its great response to the rain meant it had poor grip on the soil and was easy to pull. Some of us tackled the Sweet Briar on the road edge, chipped some thistles and gathered the litter from that well known mcfood chain. Gary was anxious to check the mine hole for Genista and the few seedlings he found pleased him. A nasty find amongst the house ruins was a small patch of Bathurst Burr, luckily with the fruits still green. This is a weed rarely seen around Chiltern. If you've acquired the flora book it's one you can add to the Bartley's Block list.

On the homestead site the Persimmon Trees were loaded with orange fruit, a few Pink Ladies were in flower and there were flowers on the Lime tree. A few bulbs which had strayed from the boundary of the homestead site were rounded up with Barry's shovel. The water level in the dams is good so if you are looking for a spot to bird watch it could be rewarding.

Lunch at Greenhill Dam was a pleasant affair. There are no Eucalypts in flower yet so birds were scarce at the dam. The ever present Yellow-tufted and Fuscous Honeyeaters squabbled at the water's edge, Rufous Whistlers and Peaceful Doves were calling. An Antechinus was seen high up in a dead tree searching for a meal. Of interest were some small brownish skinks coming to drink from water drops which were held in some fallen Red Box leaves. Barry identified them as from the Morethia group. They grow to about 60mm in length from snout to tail tip.

An inspection of the Autumn burn site along Brick Kiln Track took up the afternoon. An astounding germination of peas, mostly Dillwynia phyllicoides, should ensure a colourful display in a couple of seasons. Parson's Bands, Eriochilus cucullatus, Red-tipped Greenhood, Pterostylis parviflora and Midge-orchids, Genoplesium sp were quite common. The Autumn Greenhood Pterostylis revoluta, which Justina found the day before had become a tasty morsel for some forager.

The Daphne Heath, which prior to the fire had been rather ragged with age, was sprouting profusely from rootstock as was Guinea Flower. The Blue Finger-flower, Cheiranthra cyanea is another plant which has responded very well to the burn.

We found little mounds of soil, which when scratched away revealed emerging fungi. Orb Web Spiders were plentiful again and we also came across the huge web of a Garden Spider. The light brown hairy abdomen with its two prominent humps make it easy to identify. Colour is not so reliable as this spider changes colour to suit its environment. There were many egg sacs of the Whip Spider suspended from low vegetation on a fine but strong thread about 20mm in length. The spider employs this method in order to avoid predation particularly from ants. Some processionary caterpillars were found in their silken shelter at the base of a Golden Wattle with lots of frass and shed skins enclosed in the web.

The area was rather quiet apart from a mystery bird producing a range of calls from honeyeaters to wood swallows with harsh calls in between. The culprits, when finally spotted, were a couple of Olive-backed Orioles.

Painted Honeyeater: A single bird was recorded drinking and bathing at Greenhill Dam at the end of March. This is the latest autumn record we have for this species.

Heritage Awards: The National Park holds a great deal of Chiltern's heritage and part of managing the park includes preserving and interpreting this heritage. Indigo Shire Heritage Advisory Committee recently inspected the historic sites of the shire.

Our ranger, John McDonald, was awarded a Certificate of Commendation in appreciation of his contribution to the historic environment of the shire through the interpretive signage at the historic sites. Well done John.

Restoration of Barnawartha Road site: I expect this site to be ready for planting in the third week of April. If anyone can offer an hour or so to help it would be much appreciated.

Peter Ross, goodbye: Peter is off to the Alice Springs region as a volunteer ranger. Between his studies, occasional work and volunteer work Peter has helped out at working bees. We are sorry to lose you Peter and thank you for your contribution to the group. Enjoy your new surroundings and good luck from us all.

From the Ranger's desk: Fuel reduction burns have been completed along Whistler and Brick Kiln Tracks. Five ecological burns have been completed for this year.

Reprieve for N.S.Wales Box-Ironbark Woodlands: Charcoal for a proposed silicon plant will not be sourced from the Pilliga and Goonoo Forests. The Carr government is to be commended upon this decision.

NEXT MEETING SATURDAY MAY 6 MEET AT THE POST OFFICE AT 9.00AM OR GO DIRECT TO MAGENTA MINE Task will be surfacing a new section of the walking track at the mine. Bring shovel, rake, gloves, lunch, energy and a friend. Lunch at the mine at 12 noon. Afternoon walk. Contact 03 57 261 484

Category

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