

# **THE FIELD NATURALIST**

NEWSLETTER NO. 135: SUMMER, 2018/19

ALBURY-WODONGA FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB INC.  
Reg. No. A0023416K



## SUMMER IN THE ALPS



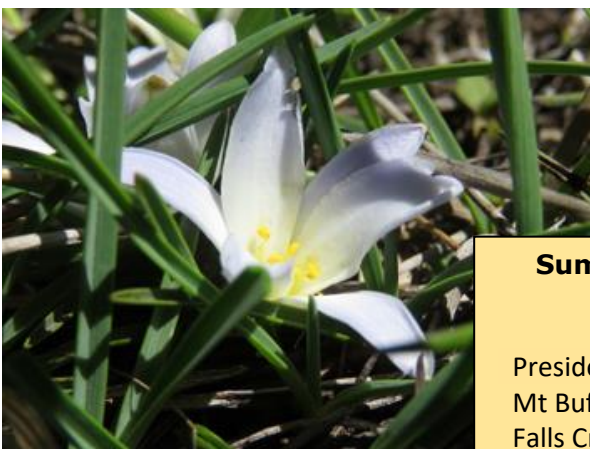
White-cheeked Honeyeater (P Seely)



Flame Robin (R Andrews)



Unidentified (but artistic) Skink (P Seely)



Sky Lily (R Andrews)

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Contributions to this  
newsletter are  
welcome and should  
be emailed as above.

~~~~~  
Summer is also AGM and membership renewal time, Please see details below for subscription payment. An outing schedule for the coming 6 months is available upon request or via Friends of Chiltern website (Thank you Tony & FOC ☺)

**Direct Transfer details for electronic subscription payments -**

Payments to the club can be made via Internet banking using details below.

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**Presidents Report for 2018**

This year we had 17 day outings including our mid-year luncheon at Milawa, two 'Member's Afternoons' in winter, a weekend Christmas camp at Mt Buffalo and our January Summer camp at Falls Creek. Only one meeting was cancelled, Henty Swamp, due to the drought.

Places visited in and around Albury/Wodonga were Kremur St., Wonga Wetlands, Thurgoona, Tabletop, and in the region were Corowa, Urana, Yackandandah, Chiltern/Mt Pilot, Granya, Sandy Creek, Milawa/Carboor, Georges Creek, Warby Ranges, Woomargama, Galore Hill, Mt Big Ben and Mt Stanley.

2018 was a year of growth for the club with financial membership growing from 24 to 31 and average attendance at outings from 11 to 12. Importantly the club is also growing in its knowledge and appreciation of the natural world. Its expertise in birds and flora is being added to with an increasing awareness of, and interest in, entomology and bush restoration.

I would like, this year, to thank all members for creating the lovely friendly and supportive environment which has nurtured the above growth.

Our program for the coming year will again be focused on getting out and about, which is what we all enjoy.

**Neil Blair**

**MT BUFFALO STATE PARK**

**7-9<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

About a dozen of the group began our short summer alpine migration and after a very convivial Christmas gathering (with the usual amazing fare), were joined on Saturday at Dingo Dell by 3 more day trippers. From there we moved down to the sub-alpine plateau and wandered along the grassy plains & woodlands of the Long Plain Walk towards Mt Dunn. It was a fine, warm day, and the early summer wildflowers were a delight, and plentiful despite the dry period. An abundance of insects seemed to busily accompany us (\*See page 8 for Jan's notes describing insect activity on the alpine excursions).

After lunch at Grossman's Mill picnic area, we opted for the shaded Lake Catani Lakeside Walk, with some of the group venturing further along the Underground River Track towards the Haunted Gorge. There were a variety of habitats, insects and even (non-poisonous) reptiles to investigate. Later, an easy meal of take-away pizza (gourmet of course!) back at the caravan park completed a full, satisfying and varied day.



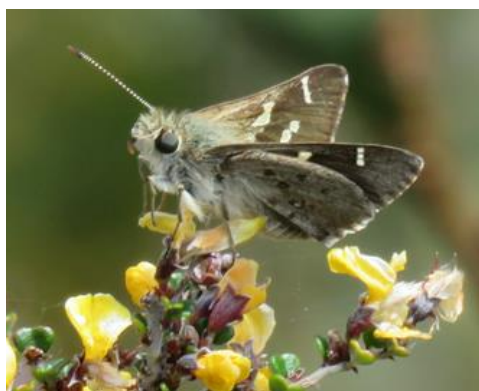
Alpine Mint Bush (*Prostanthera cuneata*)  
(Photo – G Steed)



Round-leaf Mint Bush (*P rotundifolia*)  
(Photo – P Seely)



Golden Bandwing  
(*Cryptobothrus chrysophorus*)  
(Photo – G Steed)



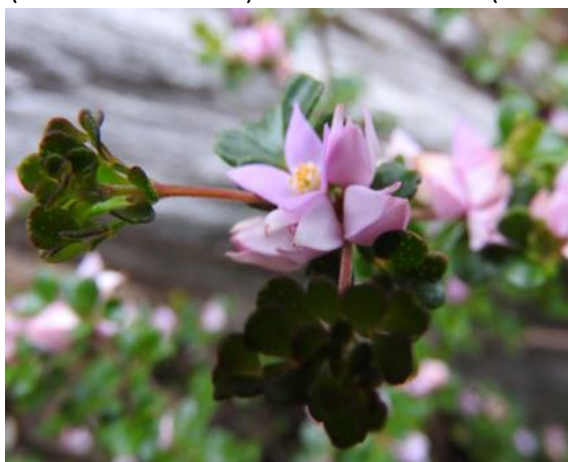
Two-spotted Grass Skipper (*Pasma tasmanica*)  
(Identified by Kelvyn Dunn who has not seen it on Buffalo)  
(Photo – R Andrews)



Unidentified beetle  
(Photo – G Steed)



Mountain Needlewood (*Hakea lissosperma*)  
(Drawing – S Jakovac)



Alpine Boronia (*Boronia algida*)  
(Photo – P Seely)



Velvet gall of Chalcidoidea wasp larva  
(Photo – P Seely)



Pale Vanilla Lily (*Arthropodium milleflorum*)  
(Photo – G Steed)

Day 2 began mild but drizzly when we set out from the Chalet along the Gorge Heritage Walk to enjoy its heady views, distinctive granite habitat and European history of the park. After lunch (which was taken with 'proper' coffee & without thieving birds) a clever car shuffle was arranged. Neil then led us along the Monolith Track to waiting cars and cover, just as the rain arrived....in time to accompany us down the mountain.

John and Jenny also kept a tally of the birds sighted; see list and specialist observations page 5)



View back to Chalet across the Gorge from along the Heritage Walk



Buffalo Mint Bush  
*P. monticola*



Thyme Guinea-flower  
*Hibbertia serpyllifolia*



Tufted Blue Lily (cream here!)  
*Stypantra caespitosa*



Ivy Goodenia (*G. hederacea*) (Photo – R Andrews)



Unidentified Puffball



The Monolith

As always, Mt Buffalo never disappoints. I am hugely grateful to be able to so easily access its diversity, awesome views, and range of well-maintained walking tracks: and also to Neil – his knowledge helps bring this marvellous place to life for us.

Apart from those photographed, an incomplete list of other plants I saw includes:

Buffalo Sallow Wattle, Mountain Hickory Wattle, Gunn's Baeckea (or Alpine Baeckea), Rosy Baeckea, Bitter Cress, Snow Daisy, Spoon Daisy, Alpine Caladenia, Common Billy-button, Nodding Chocolate Lily, Sundew, Snow Gum, Gunn's Heath, Buffalo Grevillea, Royal Grevillea, Kunzea, Alpine Rusty Pods, Box Micranthium, Elderberry Panax, Forest Phebalium, Alpine Pimelea, Alpine Podolobium, Granite Buttercup, Grass Trigger Plant, Starwort, Tufted Lily, Pink Bells, Alpine Pepper.

**Gail Steed**

**Mt Buffalo Birdlist** (in the Birdlife sequence for atlasing) – **J & J Shepherd:**

Pacific Black Duck, Nankeen Kestrel, Eurasian Coot, Gang-gang Cockatoo, Crimson Rosella, Brush Cuckoo, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Laughing Kookaburra, White-throated Treecreeper, Spotted Pardalote, Striated pardalote, White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Thornbill, Red Wattlebird, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater, Crescent Honeyeater, Flame Robin, Eastern Yellow Robin, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Fantail, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Grey Currawong, Little Raven, Mistletoebird.

**Total = 27 species**

Of especial note were the following:

- Listed bird species: Gang-gang Cockatoo and Flame Robin (both classified as Vulnerable)
- Nankeen Kestrel and Laughing Kookaburras were using holes in Eucalypts for nesting ie. breeding.
- The Brush Cuckoo is a rare species that comes south to breed in to SE Australia.
- The walk out to Viewpoint Lookout though tall forest contained many Red Wattlebirds. There were also many Fan-tailed Cuckoos calling and they would likely be breeding and laying eggs in the Wattlebird nests!



Group at Cope Hut

Nine members participated in the 4 day camp and 4 others joined on day visits. Day 2 was wet and restricted us to 2 shorter walks but all other days were sunny and pleasant.

**Day 1** – we drove straight to Falls Creek and walked to Roper’s Lookout in the morning and along the Heathy Spur track in the afternoon before checking in to Viking Lodge.

**Day 2** – walk along the aqueduct behind the village where there were many athletes training in the morning and a walk around the Pretty Valley campground and adjacent wet plateau in the afternoon with a drive back in a typical alpine downpour.

**Day 3** – a morning visit to Ruined Castle and an afternoon walk from Cope Hut to Wallace’s Hut.

**Day 4** – a walk to Mt. Cope in the morning and a visit to Fainter Falls in the afternoon on the drive home.



Falls Creek View (Painting – S Jakovac)

Once again it was a delight to be in the Bogong High Plains in the alpine and sub-alpine habitats. The colour was again a feature but perhaps not as profuse due to the drier seasons.

Orange-Yellow was the dominant colour with the Billy Buttons (*Crespaedia* sp.), Groundsels (*Senecio* sp.), Golden Everlastings (*Xerochrysum* sp.), Buttercups (*Ranunculus* sp.), Peas (*Podolobium* sp.), Podolepis (*Podolepis* sp.), Yam Daisies (*Microseris* sp.) and Goodenias (*Goodenia* sp.) all contributing.

White was contributed to by the shrub Everlastings (*Ozothamnus* sp.), Daisies (*Brachyscome* sp.), Heath (*Epacris* sp.), Fleabanes (*Pappochroma* sp.), Speedwell (*Veronica* sp.) and Mint Bush (*Prostanthera* sp.).



Billy Button plus Pintails, plus..... (Photo – D Andrews)



Green Scarab Beetles (Photo – D Andrews)



Veined Sun Orchid (*Thelymitra cyanea*)



Royal Grevillea (*Grevillea victoriae*)

(Photos R Andrews)

Purple was found on shrub daises (*Olearia sp.*), daises (*Brachyscome sp.*) and mauve in the Trigger Plants (*Stylidium sp.*). The Bluebells (*Wahlenbergia sp.*) and the fruits of the Dianella (*Dianella sp.*) added blue and the Royal Grevillea (*Grevillea sp.*) added splashes of Red.

Among the less obvious or less common, Sky Lilies (*Herpolirion novaezelandiae*), White Purslane (*Montia australasia*), and Cudweed (*Argyrotegium mackayi*) were noted and a lovely group of Cinnamon Bells (*Gastrodia sesamoides*) were found. The Lomatia (*Lomatia fraseri*) was flowering at Fainter Falls.

## Neil Blair

### Alpine Insects

\*As can be seen, Insect life abounded at Mt Buffalo and Falls Creek. Butterflies observed included Australian Painted Ladies (*Vanessa kershawi*), Orange Alpine Xenicas (*Oreixenica corrae*), Spotted Alpine Xenicas (*O. orichora*), the striking Macleay's Swallowtail (*Graphium macleayanum*), the only Swallowtail which breeds in Victoria (on the Alpine Pepper, *Tasmannia xerophila*) and Common Grass-blues (*Zizinia otus labradus*) A constant companion to the group was the industrious black and white Willow-herb Day-moth (*Phalaenoides tristifica*). A colourful male Alpine Tiger Moth (*Phaos aglaophora*) was observed at the horse-yards.



The female Tiger Moth is by contrast, a brown hairy blob with tiny wings. She is unable to fly.

Orangey - striped *Chrysolarentia sp.* moths were abundant on flowers, as were the Green Scarab Beetles (*Diucephala sp.*) The latter were present in especially large numbers on a Victorian Christmas bush (*Prostanthera lasianthos*). Katydid's were not abundant since it was early in the season.

Jan Heywood

Alpine Tiger Moth (Photo - R Andrews)



John and Jenny again led the bird searches and provided the following report and list

Falls Creek Birdlist (in the Birdlife sequence for atlassing) – **J & J Shepherd:**

Australia Shelduck, Pacific Black Duck, Hardhead, Great Cormorant, Black-shouldered Kite, Little Eagle, Nankeen Kestrel, Crimson Rosella, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote, White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Thornbill, Striated Thornbill, Red Wattlebird, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-plumed Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater, Crescent Honeyeater, Flame Robin, Eastern Yellow Robin, Olive Whistler, Golden Whistler, Rufous Whistler, Grey Fantail, Grey Currawong, Pied Currawong, Australian Magpie, Little Raven, Australasian Pipit, Brown Songlark, Silvereye, Fork-tailed Swift.

**Total = 33 species**

Highlights:

- Olive Whistlers were only found on the Roper's Lookout Track, and one was so close I was able to record it on my Apple i-phone.
- The only vulnerable bird was the Little Eagle, seen at Pretty Valley Dam. 4
- Crescent Honeyeaters were seen at the Nordic Bowl. The five honeyeater species were feeding on flowering Snow Gums (*E. pauciflora*). We were surprised at this range of honeyeaters.
- At the summit of Mount Cope, much to our amazement, there were 8 Fork-tailed Swifts flying around on the thermals. These usually appear ahead of storm fronts, but were probably passing across the Alps.

**John & Jenny Shepherd**

**WEST ALBURY WETLANDS (KREMUR ST)**

**10 Feb 2019**

It was a delightful morning and 9 of us meandered about amongst all manner of activity, ages, transport & pets. Despite all the traffic, birds were the order of the day and it was a perfect, still day for finding them. The list mounted to 45 (see Bernie & Phillip's list below) and the birds seemed happily oblivious and as intent on enjoying the morning as we were.



Red-browed Finch (Photo – P Seely)



Superb Fairy Wren (Photo – P. Spencer)



White-throated Treecreeper (Photo – P Seely)

Many, like the Dollar Bird and Great Egret in breeding plumage, even allowed the photographers full, unperturbed view. The Egret's two-colour beak & the dark line from to beak to eye could be clearly seen.



Dollar Bird (Photo – P Seely)



Great Egret (Photo - R Andrews)

Another highlight, spotted by Anne, was the Water Rat which startled the sun-baking turtles & rapidly scooted around & around, & up & down the submerged log, eventually evicting the turtles.

Bernie made an interesting observation that very few of the water birds were actually on the water.

It is a lovely family activity spot and nice to see so many out & about enjoying the river, the wetlands and just being outdoors in general.

A really pleasant outing to start to the AWFN year.



Sacred Kingfisher, with breakfast (Photo – P Spencer)



And finally, alerted by the hungry cries of the young birds, Bernie discovered a new highlight - the Sacred Kingfisher nest in tree hollow beside the path.

**Gail Steed**

Breakfast Time (Photo – R. Andrews)

**WONGA WETLANDS**

**23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2019**

It started out as a beautifully cool crisp morning. There was an abundance of birds on the first area that we came to. Pelicans were parading and fishing in their usual majestic way with quite a few of the normally solitary Egrets among the large range of ducks and other water birds. The most eagle-eyed among us were suddenly watching some Dotterels dashing around along the water’s edge while a raptor flew overhead. We lingered for quite a while as there was so much to see and enjoy.



Pelicans



Black –fronted Dotterel

(Photos – P Spencer)

Fairy Wrens were busy feeding in the grassy areas while there were a number of Rosellas and Parrots flying through the trees as well as some Rainbow Bee-eaters. They were quite hard to see among the foliage but a Kingfisher obligingly sat on a branch for quite a few minutes. Apart from a Bottle brush with pale pink flowers, there was very little in bloom: it was definitely a day for the birds. We emerged from the wooded area to another large expanse of water with a number of water birds scattered over it, a Dusky Woodswallow sitting high up in a dead tree and another group of Dotterels zipping about along the water’s edge.

However, our attention was taken by a large number of Rainbow Bee-eaters who were sitting in a dead tree and flying out in large circles and then returning to the tree for a moment before flying out again. There must have been lots of insects on the wing and, with no foliage to obscure our sight, their colours flashing in the sunshine was a joy to behold.



Rainbow Bee-eater (Photo P Spencer)

By the time we got back to the carpark, it was hot and the shady table area was very welcome. The bird count reached 50 and we all agreed that it had been a most enjoyable morning.

**Clare Russell**

[The Wagirra Trail extension around the perimeter of the wetlands along the river will be an interesting development at Wonga Wetlands - Ed]



Egrets & Ibis (Photo – P Seely)



Injune Bottlebrush (Photo – R Andrews)



Striated Pardalote (Photo – P Seely)



Grey Teal (Photo – R Andrews)



Yellow Spoonbill (Photo – R Andrews)

Combined West Albury wetlands Birdlist:

	Kremur St, am, 10/02/19 (B Datson)	Wonga Wetlands, am, 23/02/18 (P Seeley)
Australasian Darter		*
Australian Raven	*	*
Azure Kingfisher	*	*
Black Duck		*
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	*	
Black-faced Dotterel		* (with young)
Black-winged Stilt		*
Brown Thornbill	*	
Brown Treecreeper		*
Coot	*	
Crested Shrike-tit	*	*
Crimson Rosella	*	
Dollarbird	*	
Dusky Moorhen	*	*
Dusky Woodswallow		*
Eastern Rosella		*
Freckled Duck		*
Fuscous Honeyeater	*	
Galah	*	*
Great Egret	*	*
Grey Fantail	*	*
Grey Shrike-thrush	*	*
Grey Teal	*	*
Intermediate Egret		*
Kookaburra	*	
Little Black Cormorant	*	
Little Corella	*	
Little Egret		*
Little Friarbird	*	
Little Pied Cormorant	*	
Magpie	*	*
Magpie Lark	*	
Masked Lapwing		*
Pelican	*	*

Pied Cormorant	*	
Pied Currawong		*
Purple Swamp Hen	*	*
Rainbow Bee-eater	*	*
Red-browed Finch	*	*
Red-rumped Parrot	*	*
Reed Warbler	*	*
Royal Spoonbill		*
Sacred Kingfisher	*	*
Shoveler		*
Spotted Pardalote	*	*
Straw-necked Ibis	*	
Striated Pardalote	*	*
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	*	*
Superb Fairy-wren	*	*
Swamp Harrier		*
Welcome Swallow	*	
Whistling Kite	*	*
White-breasted Woodswallow	*	*
White-browed Scrubwren	*	*
White-faced Heron	*	* (with young)
White-necked Heron		*
White-plumed Honeyeater	*	*
White Ibis	*	*
White-throated Tree-creeper	*	*
Willy Wagtail		*
Wood Duck	*	*
Yellow Rosella	*	*
Yellow Spoonbill		*
<b>Total =</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>50</b>

### Upcoming Outings – Autumn 2019

~ **10<sup>th</sup> March** – Kiewa River; 9 am Acacia Carpark Wodonga; contact John Shepherd.

~ **23<sup>rd</sup> March** – Wangaratta; 9 am Acacia Carpark Wodonga; contact Neil Blair.

~ **6<sup>th</sup> April** – Everton (joint outing with Birdlife); 9 am Acacia Carpark Wodonga; contact Jan Heywood or Neil Blair

~ **27<sup>th</sup> April** – Eldorado; Acacia Carpark Wodonga; contact Phillip Seely

~ **5<sup>th</sup> May** – Benambra NP (joint outing with Birdlife); 9 am SS&A Carpark Albury; contact John Shepherd.

~ **25<sup>th</sup> May** – Mitta Mitta; 9 am Acacia Carpark Wodonga; contact Richard Andrews.

*Please confirm outing details in Saturday's Border Mail and contact the outing leader in the week prior if you need a lift.*

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