

THE FIELD NATURALIST

NEWSLETTER NO. 120: March, 2015

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



Juvenile Darter – Kremur St
Peter Spencer



White-throated Treecreeper – Kremur St
Peter Spencer

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Field Naturalists' Club
Inc.

Contributions to this
newsletter are
welcome and should
be emailed as above,
or posted to the
Editor, PO Box 251,
Albury, 2640.

PRESIDENT' REPORT

- The AGM was held on the 20th February, with 16 attendees and 6 apologists. In addition the new committee met on the 28th February. The Office Bearers for 2015 are as noted on previous page. All are as per 2014, with the welcome addition of Glenda Datson.
- The Treasurer reported a Current Balance of \$1985.64 and pointed out that this is a diminishing amount as our current expenditure exceeds income and needs more financial members to redress the imbalance. Subscriptions remain unchanged for 2015 and are now due. It would be highly appreciated if all members could renew their subscriptions this month.
- We would like to increase our membership and any prospective members are very welcome to come to one or two outings before deciding to be a member.
- Last year's review of public information about the club has resulted in information being available electronically on Ecoportal and Friends of Chiltern/Mt Pilot NP websites; brochures are available at Albury and Wodonga Tourist Information Centres and the Border Mail prints our outings.
- This year's Calendar of Outings will follow 2014 with bi-monthly outings and additional weekday outings in Spring. In addition it is hoped that we may have a couple of night meetings with a guest speaker and, if appropriate, an outing to follow this.
- As a number of our outings are to wetlands, we are looking into the club purchasing an appropriate telescope. The quality of the telescope is dependent on the money available, hence our request for early renewal and encouragement of new members.
- The procedure in the event of cancellation of an outing due to inclement weather has been discussed. There will be no outings on days of Total Fire Ban. On other occasions the Leader, in consultation with the Executive, will try to make as early a call as practical and members will be informed by e-mail and SMS. If in doubt ring the Leader.
- As can be seen we are trialling some changes to the Newsletter. The Calendar of Outings will be sent separately and will no longer be reconstructed in the Newsletter. The program and newsletter will also be available on the Friends of Chiltern Mt Pilot NP website, under the 'News' menu. The Newsletter will now be printed bi-monthly with full reports of the previous four outings, a report from the President keeping members informed of committee matters and other articles that members would like to see. Please give us your thoughts and suggestions.

Neil Blair

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**Note: Electronic Payments -**

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

**BSB:** 803 070

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**Account Name:** ALB WOD FIELD NATURALISTS INC

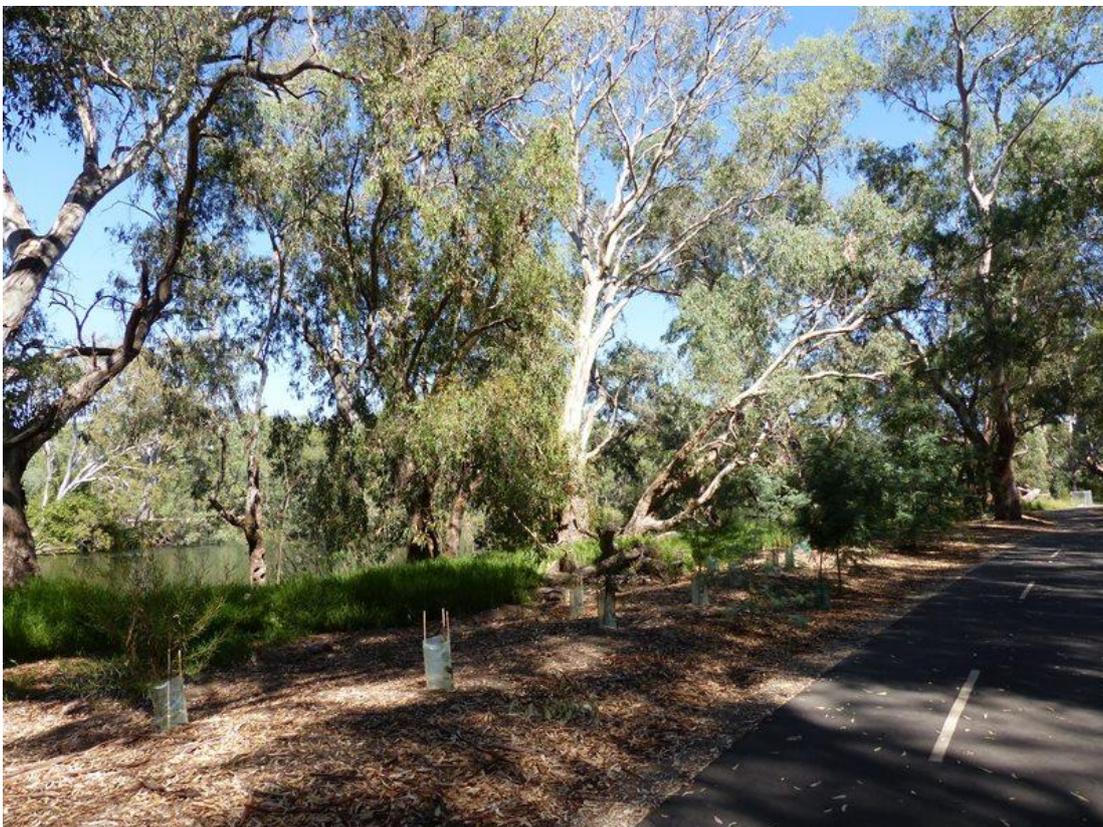
*(Please note, the account name should be written in its abbreviated form as shown, and don't forget to include **your** name)*

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Wagirra Yindyamarra (Walk on the ground respectfully).

On a warm, overcast day 15 of us met for a morning meander along the Murray River and adjacent Albury City settling ponds. Heading west from the car park, pleasant vistas south across the river to a floodplain dotted with River Red Gums gained our interest.



The vegetation cover is a remnant of former Floodplain Riparian Woodland which consisted mostly of River Red Gum (*E. camaldulensis*), Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata*), River Bottlebrush (*Callistemon seiberi*), Tree Violet (*Hymenanthera dentata*), Common Reeds (*Phragmites australis*), various Rush (*Juncus spp.*) and Sedge species (*Cyperaceae*).

Due to significant alteration by clearing, grazing, regulation of the Murray River for irrigation purposes and large-scale quarry operations on the Lincoln Causeway and nearby there remains very little of the former cover of riparian woodland species, particularly the shrub and ground layer which has largely been replaced by Kikuyu grass and Paspalum. Scattered mature, hollow bearing River Red Gums, with some regeneration occurring along the edges of billabongs as well as closed quarry sites and the river are more or less all that remain today, along with the extensive weed species. The range of ages of the River Red Gums, the germination of which has been assisted by large periodic flood events, provides a high environmental value. The hollows of the larger trees provide a resource for bats, possums, gliders, owls and other hollow-dependant wildlife. However because of a general lack of indigenous understorey the ecological quality of the area overall is poor.

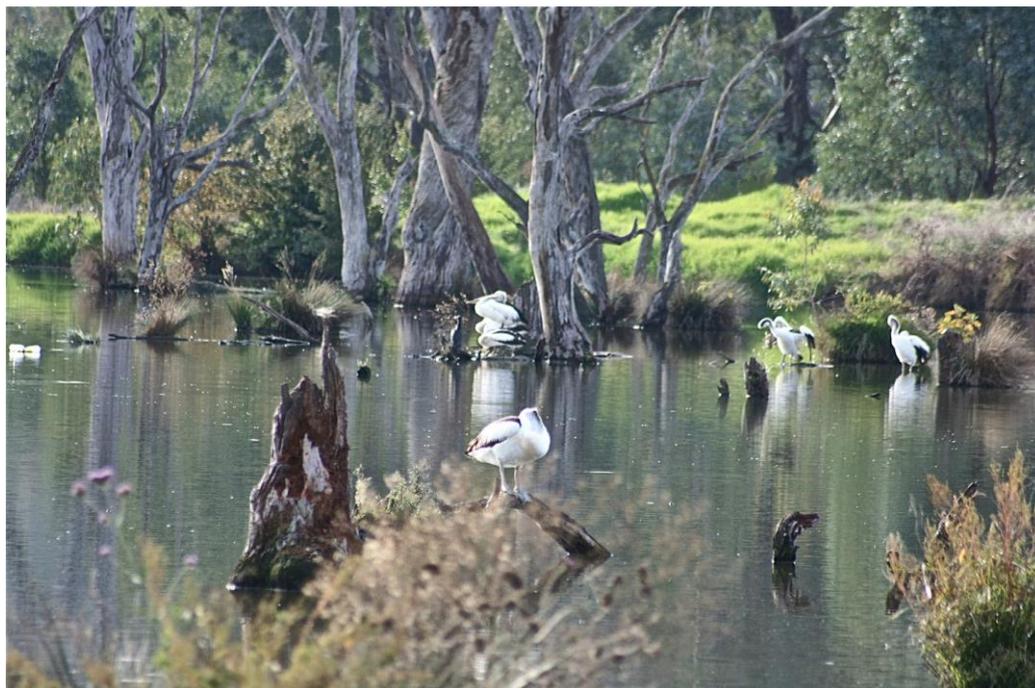
Albury City's Aboriginal Employment & Training Program has undertaken some recent revegetation works along the newly-constructed Wagirra track to replenish the missing middle layer shrub species and, in time, these will enhance the site's quality.



We paused to look at the indigenous sculptures along the way, all of which depict links between the wildlife, river and landscape.



The views across the wetlands (settling ponds) to a variety of birds utilising the dead trees for resting and surveillance were entrancing and peaceful, making for a most enjoyable outing.



Birds observed for the morning were:

Species	
Cockatoo, Sulphur-crested	Parrot, Red-rumped
Chough, White-winged	Pelican, Australian
Coot, Eurasian	Rainbow Bee-eater
Cormorant, Great (Black)	Reed-Warbler, Australian
Cormorant, Little Pied	Rosella, Crimson And Yellow form of Crimson
Cuckoo-shrike, Black-faced	Shrike-thrush, Grey
Darter, Australasian	Spinebill, Eastern
Dove, Rock (Feral Pigeon)	Swallow, Welcome
Duck, Pacific Black	Swamphen, Purple
Fantail, Grey	Teal, Grey
Flycatcher, Restless	Thornbill, Striated
Galah	Treecreeper, White-throated
Grassbird, Little	Wagtail, Willie
Grebe, Hoary-headed	Woodswallow, White-breasted
Honeyeater, White-plumed	Wren, Suburb Blue
Ibis, Straw-necked	Egret, Great
Ibis, White	Butterfly, Tailed Emperor
Kingfisher, Sacred	
Magpie-lark	
Moorhen, Dusky	

Glenda Datson

Photos – Neil Blair & Stephanie Jakovac

FALLS CREEK

Annual Alpine Excursion; January 20th – 23rd, 2015

Four members, Dick, Anne, Stephanie and myself, went on this year's excursion. We again stayed at Viking Lodge, which we had to ourselves, and it proved to be a welcome luxury at the end of each day's activities. Despite threatening weather forecasts and overnight rain, all walks were in pleasant weather conditions. The daily excursions, designed to explore a number of ecological habitats from montane to sub alpine and alpine environments were:

- Full Day walk along Heathy Spur track with an extension to Edmonson's Hut and back along Watchbed Creek.
- Half-Day Walks to Fainter Falls; Wallace's Hut and along the aqueduct to Langford Gap; Mt Cope; Howman's Gap Fire Trail.
- Half-Day slow drive with frequent stops along Howmans's Gap/Mt McKay road.

These walks provided a great variety of spectacular views across the lakes and plateau as well as the surrounding Alps, 2 well-preserved Cattleman's Huts and a wonderful variety of alpine habitats. By the end of our outings we had identified more than 100 plant species that were flowering or fruiting. This was pleasing as this year we were a week or two later than previous trips.



Rocky Valley Dam from Heathy Spur



Dead snow gums following the bushfires



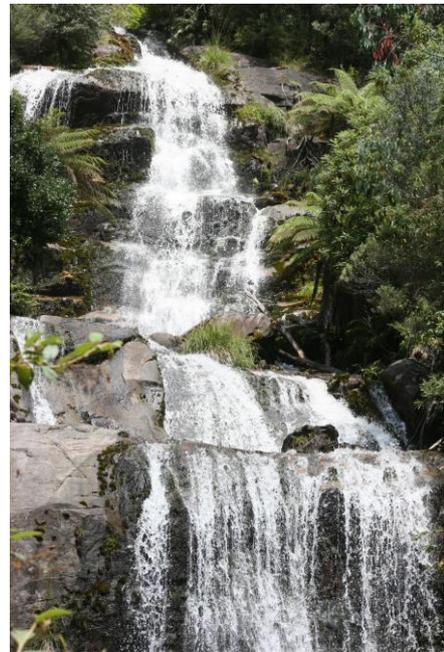
Wallace's Hut



Edmonson's Hut



Alpine Plateau



Fainter Falls

On top of the pleasure of re-seeing alpine flora familiar to us we also discovered a number of “firsts”. Less happily we noted the spread of Lupins along the Howman’s Gap/Mt McKay road.

Some of the botanical highlights were:

- Alpine Leek-orchid – much less common than the Mauve Leek-orchid but found in the same grassy plains.
- Alpine Sundew – found near still water, around the fens and bogs.
- Bogong Eyebright - also found on grassy plains.
- Lupins – roadside weed in montane and sub-alpine areas and getting up to alpine areas.
- Native Raspberry (Small-leaf Bramble) – in fruit along Fainter Falls walk (montane) providing a tasty second morning tea.
- Silky Daisy – visually spectacular, found in and next to running streams, often in a cascade setting.
- Sky Lily – isolated specimen found under a shrub in heathy habitat. Uncommon.
- Star-fish Fungus – complete with fly. Lucky to find such a “fresh” specimen.



Alpine Leek -orchid - *Prasophyllum tadgellianum*



Alpine Sundew - *Drosera arcturi*



Bogong Eyebright - *Euphrasia eichleri*



Lupin sp. - *Lupinus polyphyllus*



Native Raspberry - *Rubus parvifolius*



Star-fish Fungus - *Aseroe rubra*



Sky Lily - *Herpolirion novae-zelandiae*



Silky Daisy - *Celmisia sericophylla*

All of the above, together with great food, drink and company, made for a most enjoyable and memorable excursion.

Neil Blair

STAR-FISH FUNGUS (ANENOME STINKHORN) – *Aseroe rubra*

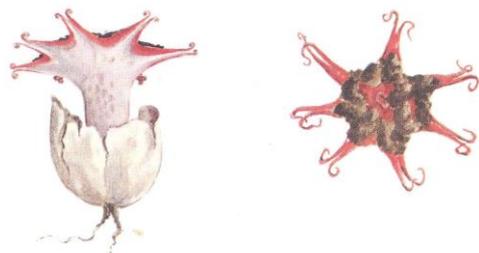
This stunning, aptly-named mushroom is a 'stinkhorn'; so described because its spores are contained in a gooey, brownish slime with a 'rotting meat' smell. Insects, especially flies, (see Neil's photo, p8) are drawn to the foetid smell and spread the spores.

It was the first Australian native fungus to be formally described (by French botanist, J. Labillardière in 1800, Tas.)

It fruits all year and is a Fungimap target species, with hundreds of recorded sightings in mainly Victoria and coastal NSW, but has been located in SA & south-east QLD.

The Fungimap guide description:

"(Found) In high altitude grasslands and woodlands, and elsewhere in rich soils. Bright red arms on a hollow stem burst from an egg. Each arm splits into two at the tip. The slimy spore mass is concentrated on the disc at the top of the stem...."



It is described as "fairly common" in Australia and has been identified in Pacific islands, New Zealand and Sth Africa. It appears to have travelled to other parts of the world in garden or soil products eg Kew Gardens, California and Nth America.

The attached illustration is reproduced from *Toadstools and Mushrooms and Other Larger Fungi of South Australia*, JB Cleland (1937) - Plate X.

Gail Steed

FLAME ROBIN – *Petroica phoenicia*

The Flame Robin moves each Summer to the higher country of the Great Dividing Range, where it breeds. It is a very common and beautiful sighting on our Alpine outings with its tendency to perch on open branches or rocks and also human made structures



These pictures were taken by Stephanie at Cresta on Mt Buffalo. We came back to the car after a walk to find this "Narcissus" seemingly in love.....



....there being no evidence of him wanting to fight the "intruder" as is often the case.



Such was his addiction to the image in the mirror and window, he stayed while we attended the car and it seemed that when it became apparent we were leaving, it was then that he left his droppings.

As we drove off he stayed on the road watching us leave.

I don't know if there are any swear words in Robin birdsong but his body language suggested there may be!!!!

Watch out for him in Winter; he generally comes visiting here at that time.



Neil Blair

Upcoming Outings

~ 14th March ~

“**Hawksview**” is a grazing property on a Murray River billabong downstream of the dam wall. River waterbirds live and breed at this location; birds of prey are frequently seen overhead and a number of woodland birds can be found in the paddock and riverine flora, especially old River Red Gums and a variety of underlying shrubs.

~ 22nd March ~

Corowa Sewage Ponds is an excellent place for viewing pond birdlife with a great variety of ducks and waterbirds. Often seen are nesting Black Swans and Magpie Geese and good sightings of the Little Grassbird and a Crake were had on recent outings there.

~ 15th April ~

Baranduda Range. Join us for an evening outing to look for the Greater Gliders and other nocturnal creatures of the forest. An outing with a difference, should be good fun.

~ 26th April ~

Pheasant Creek Flora Reserve, Shelley. An exploration of the flora and fauna in the higher montane country. The Reserve has a number of habitats including a dam, run off areas and drier hilly forest. Expect to see many species not seen around Albury-Wodonga in a lovely high country setting.

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

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And don’t forget the ‘Ecoportal’ – our and other club activities are all available at this site. Veronica maintains the group’s contact and activity details here.

<http://www.ecoportal.net.au/>

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Thanks to this issue’s contributors. Articles or suggestions for future newsletters are very welcome.

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See you soon at one of the upcoming activities [Ed]