



**Superb Parrot, Hopfield – J Shepherd**



**Hooded Robin (female), Pine Rd  
- P Spencer**



**Lasioglossum bee, with pollinia  
attached, on a Blue Caladenia, Chiltern  
(bee identified by Karen Retra) –  
R Andrews**



**Donkey Orchid, Nail Can Hill – R. Tremont**

**Winter 'Lockdown' Issue, 2020:**

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

Eleven members enjoyed an outing to primarily look at fungi, adjacent to and in the Radiata Pine (*Pinus radiata*) forest along Pine Road, adjoining the Chiltern Mt Pilot NP.

A variety of fungi were found in the morphological groupings – Gilled, Coral, Puffballs, Polypores & Jellies.

1. Gilled fungi



*Macrolepiota clelandii* – P Spencer



*Clitocybe clitocyboides* – P Seely



*Cortinarius abnormis*?? – S Jakovac



*Schizophyllum commune* - S Jakovac



*Russula* sp – P Seely



Secondary fungal growth of a Zygomycete involved in decomposing an unidentified, aging mushroom (possibly *Macrolepiota* sp) – P Seely

**2. Coral fungi:**



*Ramaria gracilis* – S Jakovac

Interesting, uncommon green-staining *Ramaria* sp\*

\* becoming common in Merri Creek area, near Melbourne – photo provided by R Andrews.

[Note: The Merri Creek Management Committee have a creative website, great for kids and well worth a look <https://www.mcmc.org.au/information-publications/digital-resources>

You can do digital jigsaws, watch webinars & even do a frog quiz!]

**3. Puffballs and allies:**



*Geastrum triplex* ejecting spores – P Spencer



*Lycoperdon* sp. – G Steed

**4. Woody or Leathery Pore Fungi:**



*Podocscypha petalodes* - S Jakovac



*Stereum illudens* (underside) – G Steed

**5. Jellies:**



*Calocera sp.* – G Steed

Whilst looking for fungi in a Red Box (*Eucalyptus polyanthemos*) woodland a number of Large Autumn Greenhoods (*Pterostylis sp. aff. revoluta*) were found and the leaves of Spider-orchids (*Caladenia sp.*) and Gnat-orchids (*Cyrtostylis reniformis*) were noted. Flowering Erect Guinea-flower (*Hibbertia riparia*) and some persistent Sticky Everlastings (*Xerochrysum viscosum*) added a touch of yellow to the ground cover.



Large Autumn Greenhoods – D Bird

A number of woodland birds were seen (see list below – Bernie Datson) with the highlight being a male and female Hooded Robin with a fledgling (see cover photo – Peter Spencer). We understand it has been a long while since Hooded Robins have been seen in Chiltern with a further sighting recently reported in a different area of the Park. [Andersons Track Chilton, Tuesday 26th May 2020]

It was another lovely outing, especially following the COVID-19 lockdown and the midweek timing along with the ‘off the track’ site made distancing easier as we didn’t come across any other people.

**Stephanie Jakovac**

<b>Pine Rd, Birdlist – Bernie Datson</b>	
Brown Thornbill	
Eastern Yellow Robin	
Flame Robin	
Grey Shrike-thrush	
Hooded Robin (Male, Female and a juvenile)	
Jacky Winter	
Laughing Kookaburra	
Magpie-lark	
Striated Thornbill	
White-plumed Honeyeater	
<b>Total = 10</b>	

12 members of the AWFNC participated in an afternoon outing to the Chiltern section of the Chiltern Mt Pilot NP on what was a lovely, sunny and windless day.



We first went to a high point on Donchi Hill which is an Ironbark (*Eucalyptus sideroxylon*) forest with an understorey of Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*) and low shrubs including Mountain Grevillea (*Grevillea alpina*), Daphne Heath (*Brachyloma daphnoides*), Erect Guinea-flower (*Hibbertia riparia*) and Urn Heath (*Melichrus urceolata*). Ground cover included Sticky Everlastings (*Xerochrysum viscosum*), Sundews (*Drosera hookeri*), fruiting autumn orchids (Inland Red-tip Greenhood (*Pterostylis rubescens*); Inland Dark Midge-orchid (*Corunastylis clivicola*) and lots of Chocolate Lily leaves (*Arthropodium strictum*). Unfortunately the flowering Ironbark trees, with many honeyeaters seen 4 days earlier, had ceased and the birds had flown. A Wedge-tailed eagle did a low pass overhead.

Inland Red-tip Greenhood – P Seely

[Fungi genera noted were – Amanita, Collybia, Cortinarius, Macrolepiota, Mycena, Omphalina, Pholiota?, Pycnopus and Volvapluteus]

Later, following a report of Flame Robins, Jacky Winter and Black-chinned Honeyeaters we visited a low section of Donchi Hill adjacent to farm paddocks. The bush there was dominated by Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*) with Acacia understorey and Einadia saltbush ground cover. The Flame Robins were still present but the other 2 species had flown on. A Black Swamp Wallaby was disturbed.



Flame Robin – P Seely



A wood-decaying bracket fungus – *Pycnopus coccineus* – common, but none-the-less stunning in the late winter sun.

On the way home we visited Greenhill Dam and its surrounds. It was late afternoon and getting cold and apart from 2 groups of Choughs the birds had largely gone to roost.

Although notable findings were sparse, spirits were high being out in the bush on such a lovely winter day renewing contact with members after the COVID-19 restrictions

Neil Blair

## MEMBER OBSERVATIONS

### THE LOCAL B'S

A few weeks ago Colleen and I did a tour of Brocklesby, Burrumbuttock and Balldale. In the grounds of the Burrumbuttock Lutheran Church there were a pair of Lapwings (*Vanellus miles*) on eggs. So, we went back a week later and all 4 eggs had hatched and the chicks just disappeared into the undergrowth at my approach, but I did get a few photos. On the trip we also came across a couple of argumentative Apostle Birds (*Struthidea cinerea*).



Masked Lapwing eggs



Masked Lapwing with chicks  
[how well-named they are!]



Apostle Bird

We also went for a walk at Bowna reserve and saw a female Magpie Lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*) on her nest and a pair of Eastern Rosellas (*Platycercus eximius*): the juvenile showing a greenish patch on the back of its head.



Magpie Lark



Eastern Rosella (juvenile)

**Peter Spencer**

## GARDEN VISITORS

As captured by Phillip.



Eastern Spinebill



Blue-faced Honeyeater on Brazilian Plume Flower



New Holland Honeyeater on *Grevillea sp*

## AUTUMN AND WINTER BIRDWATCHING HIGHLIGHTS

Fortunately the COVID-19 restrictions did not wipe out all our birding activities, so we thought on a cheerful note we should mention a few notable things happening in the bird world.

As well as Jenny and I atlassing our range of local sites, the winter surveys for the Birds on Farms Project went ahead in conjunction with our local Birdlife officer Ben Humphries. We had taken 7 farms into the project and we had 6 weeks to atlas a total of 27 (2ha) sites for the regulation 20 minutes. Neville Bartlett assisted until the Border closure and after that John Saw helped and we were grateful for this. We try to choose 4 sites per farm with different habitats and Birdlife issued a habitat assessment form to be filled in at each site, no pressure! The farmers helped with these and Jan Willinck completed his surveys for which we were also very grateful. The main feature of this form is the identification of the spatial density and the layering in the vegetation, farming practices, and any fire history. The layering includes 4 categories from the tree canopy down to mid-storey (2-8m), shrubs and groundcovers. Native and exotic species are identified.

The bird surveys are repeated 4 times per annum on the different seasons. This is a very important project and we are lucky to have Ben and the survey efforts in this southern area of NSW.

Now to some of our sightings. A trip out to Buraja Station in early March with Neville, just before the shutdown, produced some surprises with Zebra Finches feeding on the edge of a sorghum centre pivot (circular irrigation crop site). This farm also has a pair of nesting Wedge-tailed Eagles. Not far away at Oakleigh Property at Hopefield, the farmer photographed a pair of dancing Brolgas after the first significant rains. Visiting this farm in early March we had just got out of our cars when Neville heard Superb Parrots in the Eucalypts giving us a great photo opportunity (see cover photo – John Shepherd).

The rains have initiated some widespread and continuing Eucalypt flowering so we have been seeing some interesting Honeyeaters coming in for a feast. Sites that we could reach on this side of the Murray include Red Light Hill Reserve, Galateah property and Lake Hume Dam. At Red Light Hill we saw White-naped, Black Chinned and Fuscous Honeyeaters as well as Little Lorikeets. At Galateah in early July, Jan and I found Fuscous and White-plumed Honeyeaters feeding in *E. sideroxylons* (Ironbarks) and lower down the slope White-naped and Black-chinned Honeyeaters feeding in some Grey Boxes (*E. microcarpa*). Clearly at that time there was a separation of species, possibly relating to nectar flows (Neil suggested this) or is it that they just don't get on altogether.

Then to cap it all, we heard that 2 Regent Honeyeaters had turned up at the Dam wall so we rushed over just before the police blockade. There sure enough was a 2017 Chiltern-released male and a wild female in a large flowering *E. maculata* (Spotted Gum).



Other atlassing observations seem to point to a depletion in Robin numbers this winter - both Scarlets and Flames - perhaps due to the dreadful fires up in the Alps. But to finish on a bright note, the Western Gerygones (Warblers) have stayed all winter, their delightful song ringing out across our woodlands. Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoos seem to have arrived early this season and maybe climate change is progressing.

**John and Jenny Shepherd**

## NEST BOX MONITORING AT CHILTERN-MT PILOT NP

I was lucky enough to attend the last Friends of Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park (FOCMP) meeting before lockdown v2 (02/08/20) & saw the monitoring of about a dozen nest boxes in the northern part of the park (thank you Neville & Richard). I had seen Tuans before (caught in Elliot traps) as part of a monitoring program about 12 years ago at Puckapunyal. There, in the early morning, we weighed, measured & marked them before release. My last view was their bushy tail rapidly disappearing into nearby hollow logs.



*Truly, it's there if you look hard enough...*  
Puckapunyal March, 2008 – G Steed

But I had never seen their nests... quite memorable. Often untidy and smelly, with bark, feathers and droppings in one corner. Check the FOCMP website for Neville's photos & article in the August newsletter.

<http://friendsofchiltern.org.au/index.php/news/newsletters/453-newsletter-297-aug-2020>



En-route we saw some old boxes no longer in use and Neville spoke of different designs and their use at the Park.

As part of an ongoing programme, FOCMP have been monitoring & reporting nest box results since they were installed in 1986! They currently maintain over 100 boxes.

This old box sighted on the day, precedes the FOCMP programme and was targeting Squirrel Gliders when installed by Dr Barry Traill (a Brown Treecreeper may have been in residence this year).

A 2018 state-wide survey estimated at least 10,000 nest boxes in use across Victoria\*. General nest box design varies with target species (e.g. birds, mammals or bats), nest characteristics, possible pests, monitoring options and available funds of course. Also, consideration must be given to appropriate location as well as protection from heat, rain & predation. Earlier nest boxes in Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park were later retrofitted with an inspection flap on the side for monitoring with a pole camera, but this is no longer in use. The current boxes are of marine plywood with metal sheet covering the lid to protect the timber from weathering. (The early versions had an aluminium sheet covering the lid and even when the box had disintegrated, the lid remained in exceptional condition). They are installed using a backing board and attached with an expanding hose-covered wire to protect the tree.

At the Park the initial aim was to find out what mammals were present in which areas. Tuans, Squirrel and Sugar (Kreffts) Gliders have all been recorded but despite targeted boxes, no Feathertail Gliders.

\* Macak, P.V. (2020) Nest boxes for wildlife in Victoria: an overview of nest box distribution and use. The Victorian Naturalist 137(1): 4-14

**Gail Steed (with information provided by Eileen Collins & Neville Bartlett)**

## **TERRITORIAL BEHAVIOUR**

Following a discussion about my resident Superb Fairy Wrens, Phillip found & shared an interesting article by Dr Stephen Davies (CSIRO, WA) in Australia's Wildlife Heritage series (Paul Hamlyn). I have summarised it below.

Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the name 'territory' was coined for an area actively defended by some animals, as distinct from its home range. Territorial behaviour is common in many (although not all) animal species, particularly birds and mammals. It is mainly directed at others of the same species and generally relates to the ability to survive and raise young.

The size and shape of a territory can vary according to its purpose, season, the amount and quality of resources it contains, or the geography. The size is usually a compromise of resource needs, defence costs, predation pressure and reproductive needs. That of a Wedge-tailed Eagle may extend over several hectares but be little as a square metre for nesting Sooty Terns; it may be transient, such as a carcass, or seasonal and exhibited only whilst breeding, or permanent as with Kookaburras, Blue Wrens and Magpies. An unusually high number of Australian birds hold territory in groups. It is thought this strategy is best suited to coping with the extreme variability in reliable food resources.

Davies noted that territorial behaviour probably occurs in most birds (and, according to Wikipedia, can be classified into at least 6 types). Territory is advertised in various ways – scent marking, visual cues, vocalisations or a combination. Birds generally mark and defend their territories by vocal displays and may employ some form of ritualised aggression or 'fist-shaking' before coming to actual blows with an intruder.

But back to the Blue Wrens....

David Bird and I both have the pleasure of a breeding Superb Fairy Wren family at home. My resident pair, like some other bird species, 'argue' with their reflection - in the mirrors of my car, the windows of my car, the windows of visitor's cars, as well as any north-facing windows...anything reflective they can find really.

I now cover the car (not hugely inconvenient at the moment since I can't go anywhere) but enjoy frequent close views from my kitchen of what seem to be a pair, backing each other up frequently and with the female's forays as frequent as the male's.

(And I have a good excuse not to wash the windows!)

## **Gail Steed**

### **NAIL CAN HILL**

This Crown Reserve just west of Albury city has re-emerged as a haven for NSW members in the current restrictions.

#### **1. Local Inspiration**

As a newcomer to Albury, I've been interested to see how the seasons work in southern NSW and have been quietly watching (in splendid isolation!). Also, not having had an Australian spring, and the subtle magic of our wildflowers, for about 3 years I've been looking forward to what I've heard are wonderful flowers especially in the Chiltern - Mt Pilot area.

Through the winter I've been surprised and greatly supported by how green the hinterland has become, even if mostly just superficial annual grasses and weedy forbs. But great to see most bare soil of summer covered and protected.

Above all though, the presence of a sparse scattering of lovely flowers on Nail Can Hill has kept me inspired through the time of short hours of daylight and little sun. Throughout most of winter there've been the Alpine Grevillea, Urn Heath, Guinea Flowers, a few Dillwynia flowers and a carpet of Sundews.



Urn Heath flowers



Guinea flowers



Dillwynia flowers



Hardenbergia flowers

Hardenbergias have been flowering for most of July and in the first week of August I've seen lots of Hoveas, some Rice Flowers, yellow lilies of the Golden Weathergrass and so many buds of things yet to reveal themselves, as well as tufts of leaves suggesting there will be carpets of Chocolate Lilies!!!!

And although it's still August (what I'd consider deep winter on the Northern Tablelands), wonder of wonders, the Donkey [or Leopard] Orchids (see cover photo – Ruth Tremont) and Early Nancies are appearing. It looks as if I've survived a southern winter and its novel challenges - thanks to those snippets of heaven on earth.

### **Ruth Tremont**

[And Ruth's observations have been echoed by Neil...]

## **2. COVID-19 and its restrictions.**

Although I had years ago spent a lot of time in Nail Can Hill, in recent years I have been busy in outer regions and had almost forgotten it was there.

Now being restricted to local areas on the NSW side I have re-discovered Nail Can Hill and what a delight it is.

In the first two weeks in August it was beautiful with flowering shrubs and herbs and even a flowering Red Stringybark (*Eucalyptus macrorhyncha*).

The flowering shrubs included Mountain Grevillea (*Grevillea alpina*), Woolly Grevillea (*G. lanigera*), Guinea-flowers (*Hibbertia obtusifolia* and *riparia*), Urn Heath (*Melichrus urceolatus*), Daphne Heath (*Brachyloma daphnoides*), Purple Coral-pea (*Hardenbergia violacea*), Common Hovea (*Hovea heterophylla*), Mountain Flat-pea (*Platylobium montanum*).

The flowering herbs included Early Nancy (*Wurmbea dioica*), Yellow Stars (*Pauridia vaginata*), Pale Sundews (*Drosera hookeri*) and lots of Leopard Orchids (*Diuris pardina*).



Mountain Grevillea – R Tremont



Early Nancy (Chiltern) – G Steed

All this in the first half of August. If the rain continues into Spring the floral displays are looking to be spectacular – a welcome sight in these darker days.

### Neil Blair

[And to finish, a tribute by past member, May Pagenstecher. I 'guesstimate' this was written at least 20 years ago.)

### 3. Spring Delights 2 by May Pagenstecher

Nail Can Hill in the Spring is a glorious sight  
With its mantle of green grass and shrubbery bright,  
Lilies mauve and yellow, orchids blue, milkmaids white,  
Lying like snowflakes, airy and light;  
All in a carpet of beauty unite  
To fill all who see it with deepest delight.

While overhead on the light morning breeze  
Drifts a warm scent of honey from blossoming trees;  
Some tiny thornbills flutter among  
The swaying branches of a stringybark gum,  
Snapping up insects too small for our sight  
From trembling leaves at a very great height.

A pair of Grey Fantails flying gaily around  
Have a nest in a sapling not far from the ground,  
Made of fine fibres bound with cobwebs of lace,  
Shaped like a wineglass without any base,  
A parent bringing food flies overhead  
To feed its small chicks in their dainty warm bed;  
Three wee necks stretch high, bills agape in each head,  
As they jostle each other in their haste to be fed.

A bold Rufous Whistler pair also live here  
Their melodious whistling so joyous to hear;  
In a dead thorny bush they have built a nest  
Secure from cats, or from some other pest  
Which would tear down their home and put them to flight,  
They brood in safely, while watching from eyes, dark and bright.

A sweet sleeping warbling can now be heard,  
Which is the song of a small greyish bird;  
The male Western Warbler, warbling clear  
While busily his hen builds a nest very near;  
Of fibres and cobwebs, never seeming to rest,  
While fetching materials to fashion the nest;  
A hooded side entrance she adds to the dome  
With spider egg sacs adorning the home.

The delight of bird lovers, one and all,  
Are the Double-Bar Finches with their plaintive call;  
They're increased in numbers, and it gave us a thrill  
When we found that they had nested on Nail Can Hill!  
They have tiny white faces bordered with black,  
Black white spotted wings and a little brown back;  
Their nest is of grass stems, round like a ball,  
Up to six birds will roost in one, though it's quite small.  
In their thorny bush haven, snug, watertight,  
They may sleep there in safety for many a night.

These are a few of the pleasures that you  
May enjoy if you visit Nail Can Hill too;  
Mar not the beauty. Leave no rubbish behind,  
But help to take care of the treasures you find;  
Ensure future generations enjoy Nail Can where  
New delights and discoveries may wait for them there.