

THE FIELD NATURALIST

NEWSLETTER NO. 144: AUTUMN 2022

ALBURY-WODONGA FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB INC.

Reg. No. A0023416K



PRESIDENT

Robert Robinson
(02) 60 242 904

VICE PRESIDENT

Peter Spencer
(02) 6043 3431

SECRETARY

Clare Russell
0419 124 724

TREASURER

David Coleman
0409 954 476

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Gail Steed
ggadsteed@aapt.net.au

OTHER COMMITTEE:

Helen Corrigan
Bernard Datson
Jan Palmer/Jenny Bleakley
Phillip Seely
John Shepherd
Veronica Robertson

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Juvenile Nankeen Night Heron (P Spencer)



Great Crested Grebe (R Andrews)



Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo (P Seely)

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Details for subscription payment (\$15).

The program for the first half of the year is now available via the Friends of Chiltern website.

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

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

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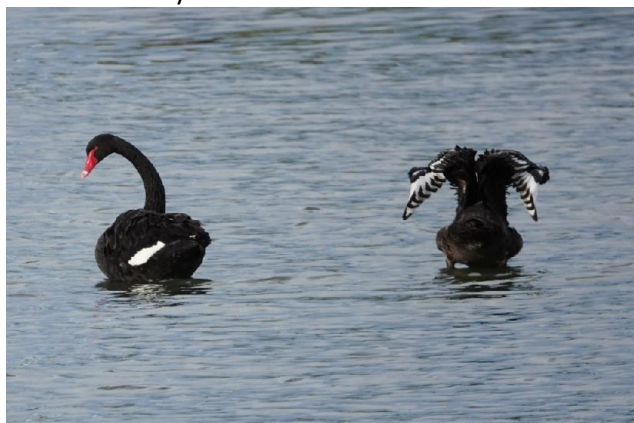
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OUTINGS

KREMUR ST.

26th February 2022

It was a pleasant evening (with no mosquitoes!) and, as always, the ponds didn't disappoint: there is always something to see, including sculptures. It was a relaxed saunter accompanied by Bernie's informative guidance. A particular highlight was the juvenile Night Heron which happily (or naively) stayed put for the cameras as we headed home at dusk. Other activities I noted were: a nesting Ibis feeding its young; carp splashing & wallowing (I think I heard a comment about "whale watching"...); and Rainbow Bee-eaters – a personal favourite. The bird list was good and compiled by Bernie. An excellent way to get together, out of the heat of the day.



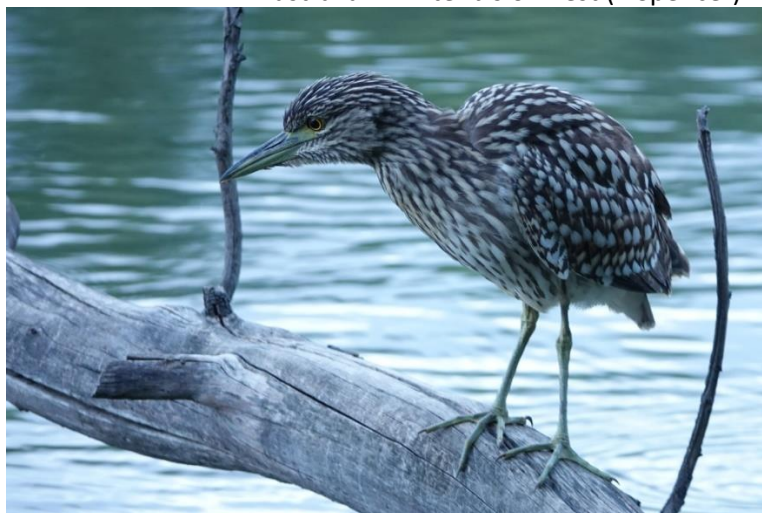
Black Swans (P Spencer)



Australian White Ibis on nest (P Spencer)



"Guguburras" – Peter Ingram, 2021
(R Andrews)



Nankeen Night-Heron (P Spencer)

| | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Australian Raven | Little Pied Cormorant | Superb Fairy-wren |
| Black Duck | Little Friarbird | Swamphen |
| Black Swan | Magpie | Tree Martin |
| Brown Treecreeper | Magpie Lark | Welcome Swallow |
| Coot | Masked Lapwing | Whistling Kite |
| Darter (F) | Nankeen Heron (J) | White-breasted Woodswallow |
| Dusky Moorhen | Rainbow Bee-eater | White-faced Heron |
| Galah | Reed Warbler | White Ibis |
| Grey Shrike-thrush | Sacred Kingfisher | White-plumed Honeyeater |
| Grey Teal | Starling | White-throated Tree-creeper |
| Kookaburra | Striated Pardalote | Wood Duck |
| Little Black Cormorant | Sulphur-crested Cockatoo | Yellow Spoonbill |
| | | |
| Total = 36 | | |

Bernard Datson

COROWA WETLANDS

13th March 2022

It was a mild, sunny autumn day with a good breeze to keep the insects at bay.

We began at Whitehead Street where, a couple of weeks earlier Veronica had alerted us to the abundant presence of Zebra, Double-barred, Red-browed and the introduced Gold finch. These had mostly moved on but a couple of stragglers remained.

Whitehead Street is a natural ephemeral wetland which was restored and revegetated in the early 2000's. It fills during rainfall and receives storm water drainage from the township. The deeper pond area was artificially created and can provide a refuge for some species in drier years. It is well-maintained, with easy walking tracks, resting places and a bird hide.



Common Water-plantain - *Alisma plantago* (G Steed) Plague Soldier Beetle - *Chauliognathus lugubris* (P Seely)

The Corowa Sewage Treatment ponds were bustling with birds, including the usual flocks of resident Magpie Geese and range of water birds. An unusual sighting was the Great Crested Grebe, not often seen here. Personally, it's always great to see something new but they were rather far away. There were also many Wandering Perchers (dragonflies) and Wandering Ringtails (damselflies), all moving way too fast! However, it was a pleasant, easy day with much to see and 51 bird species recorded.



4 Australasian Grebes - Breeding plumage & central Hoary-headed Grebe - Non -breeding plumage
(N Blair)



Great Crested Grebe
(P Seely)

Bird list, Corowa Wetlands (13/03/22)

A= Whitehead St Wetlands (22);

B= Corowa Sewage Ponds (51)

| | A | B | | A | B |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------------------------|---|---|
| Australasian Grebe | | * | Magpie | * | |
| Australian Shelduck | | * | Magpie Goose (15) | | * |
| Blackbird | | * | Magpie Lark | * | |
| Black Duck | * | * | Masked Lapwing | | * |
| Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike | * | | Musk Duck | | * |
| Black Swan | * | * | Pink-eared Duck | | * |
| Blue-billed Duck | | * | Plumed Whistling-Duck | | * |
| Coot | | * | Purple Swamp Hen | | * |
| Crested Pigeon | | * | Rainbow Bee-eater | | * |
| Darter | | * | Red Wattlebird | * | |
| Dusky Moorhen | | * | Shoveler | | * |
| Eastern Rosella | | * | Straw-necked Ibis | * | |
| Fairy Martin | * | | Starling | | * |
| Goldfinch | * | | Superb Fairy-wren | * | * |
| Great Crested Grebe | | * | Swamp Harrier (juv) | | * |
| Grey Shrike-thrush | | * | Tree Martin | * | |
| Grey Teal | | * | Welcome Swallow | * | * |
| Hoary-headed Grebe | | * | Western Gerygone | | * |
| House Sparrow | * | | Whistling Kite | | * |
| Indian Myna | * | | White-faced Heron | * | |
| Kookaburra | * | * | White Ibis | * | * |
| Little Black Cormorant | | * | White-plumed Honeyeater | * | * |
| Little Grassbird | | * | Willy Wagtail | | * |
| Little Pied Cormorant | * | | Wood Duck (with ducklings) | * | * |
| Little Raven | * | | Yellow Spoonbill | | * |
| | | | Zebra Finch | * | |
| Total = 51 | 22 | 32 | | | |

Phillip Seely

WIRRAMINNA, WALLA WALLA GUM SWAMP AND MORGAN'S LOOKOUT

26th March 2022

Established in Burrumbuttock in 1995, Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre is set on an old stock reserve and public watering place. Club members enjoyed a very informative tour of Wirraminna led by Professor David Watson Ecologist, CSU, and assisted by Doctor Maggie Watson, Biologist, CSU.

Highlights of the morning included:-

- a close up look at a critically endangered Southern Corroboree Frog in the Discovery Centre
- A Woodland Bird walk through the Wirraminna gardens, featuring locally rare native trees, shrubs, wildflowers and grasses, and passing by the big dam, full of water.
- A close look at the Seed Production Area
- A discussion about the threatened Squirrel Glider, which inhabits Wirraminna
- A close up look at a new Nest Box, of plastic with a wood liner, made using 3D printing.

Thank you to Professor David Watson and Doctor Maggie Watson for sharing their knowledge with us



Professor David Watson with group
(H Corrigan)



Southern Corroboree Frog - *Pseudophryne corroboree*
(P Spencer)

Highlights of the afternoon at Walla Walla Gum Swamp Reserve included:-

- climbing up onto the large earthen dam bank to see the dam full of water
- walking beside Petrie Creek, noting the variety of water plants in the creek as well as the native creepers and grasses near the creek
- A turtle seen sunning on a log in the creek, and a variety of woodland birds in the trees and understory vegetation.



Damselfly (P Seely)



Dragon Fly (P Spencer)



Yellow Thornbill (P Spencer)



Greenish Grass-dart (P Seely)

Helen Corrigan

[And thank you Helen for arranging the outing]

This outing was combined with local Birdlife members and was very well attended, but we certainly weren't the only users of this popular path. Despite all the public activity, birds were plentiful as we straggled along the creek from Mongans Lane to Ridgeway Reserve.



Meadow Argus - *Jenonia villida calybe* (P Spencer)



Dingy Swallow Tail (P Spencer)



Eastern Spinebill (P Spencer)



Skink (R Andrews)

En route to lunch at Jan and Jenny's, we hoped to sight some rehabilitated Barn Owls which had been released last year, but surprise, surprise, they may have heard us coming!



Barn Owls at release - September '21 (J Palmer)



Red-browed finch fledgling (P Spencer)

After lunch, we got the opportunity to walk around Jan and Jenny's stunning homestead block on their 830 ac site. The property, garden, site revegetation to link bush remnants, as well as plant corridors along the creek are inspiring. I hope the Birds on Farms Survey data will show a future increase in the species and numbers.

Bird list, Allen's Flat. (10/04/22)

A = Ridgeway Reserve (43);

B = Jan & Jenny's - end Gap Flat Rd (26)

| | A | B | | A | B |
|----------------------------|---|---|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Apostlebird | | * | Magpie Lark | * | * |
| Australasian Grebe | | * | Mistletoe Bird | * | |
| Australian Golden Whistler | * | | New Holland Honeyeater | * | * |
| Australian King Parrot | * | | Olive-backed Oriole | * | |
| Australian Raven | * | | Peaceful Dove | * | |
| Blackbird | * | | Red-browed Finch | * | * |
| Black Duck | * | * | Red Wattlebird | * | |
| Blue-faced Honeyeater | * | | Restless Flycatcher | | * |
| Brown Falcon | * | | Rufous Whistler | * | |
| Brown Thornbill | | * | Satin Bowerbird | * | * |
| Brown Treecreeper | * | | Silvereye | * | * |
| Crested Shrike-tit | * | | Spotted Pardalote | * | |
| Crested Pigeon | * | | Starling | * | * |
| Crimson Rosella | * | | Striated Pardalote | | * |
| Diamond Firetail | * | * | Sulphur-crested Cockatoo | * | |
| Dusky Woodswallow | * | | Superb Fairy-wren | * | * |
| Eastern Rosella | * | | Wedge-tailed Eagle | * | |
| Eastern Spinebill | | * | Welcome Swallow | * | * |
| Eastern Yellow Robin | * | * | Whipbird | * | |
| Fuscous Honeyeater | * | | White-plumed Honeyeater | * | * |
| Goldfinch | | * | White-naped Honeyeater | * | |
| Grey Fantail | * | | White-throated Tree-creeper | * | * |
| Grey Shrike-thrush | * | | Willy Wagtail | * | * |
| Jacky Winter | * | | Wood Duck | | * |
| Kookaburra | * | * | Yellow-faced Honeyeater | * | * |
| Little Pied Cormorant | | * | Yellow-tufted Honeyeater | * | |
| Magpie | * | * | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Total = 53 | | | | | |

SANDY CREEK & LOCKHART'S GAP

23rd April 2022

Interestingly, although not seen on our outing to this site last year, the Great Crested Grebe followed up its Corowa sighting with a reappearance here. Dick sent through the photos and also noted that "Mosquito Orchids were coming, some Fringed Helmet Orchids were showing up and about 12 different fungi species were seen". The moth identification was by Peter Marriot & came via Eileen Collins, with the Crane Fly on the Woolly Grevillea identified by Neil. Thank you all – wonderful work.



Anthella ocellata (Eyespot Anthelid Moth)



Crane Fly on Woolly Grevillea

BIRD CALL IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP

5th May 2022

What an excellent idea.... Bernie generously hosted a group at his and Glenda's to help us match a range of local bird images (male. Female & juvenile) with their voices.

[Perhaps if I attended one of these monthly, I might gradually learn something...??]

WINTON WETLANDS

28th May 2022

A foggy start became a cool but pleasant day.

The Winton (Mokoan) Swamp was flooded in 1971 to create Lake Mokoan and recommissioned as a series of over 30 ephemeral wetlands in 2010. It's draining was intended to allow previously stored water to be returned to the Murray-Darling and Snowy River systems. The site restoration has been managed by a committee whose primary focus is renewal: ecological and cultural regeneration, visitor experience and infrastructure.

According to their website, high water levels have made for a bumper recent bird count. A number of species recorded as new to particular parts of the wetlands included Grey-crowned Babblers, Pink-eared Ducks and (here it is again) - a Great Crested Grebe - not seen at Winton since 2017.

Bird list, Winton Wetlands (28/05/22)

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Australasian Grebe | | Magpie |
| Australian Raven | | Magpie Lark |
| Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike | | Masked Lapwing |
| Black Swan | | Moorhen |
| Blue-faced Honeyeater | | Noisy Miner |
| Brown Falcon | | Pied Butcher Bird |
| Brown Quail | | Pink-eared Duck |
| Coot | | Restless Flycatcher |
| Chestnut Teal | | Rufous Whistler (juv)? |
| Crested Pigeon | | Striated Pardalote (h) |
| Eastern Rosella | | Suphur-crested Cockatoo |
| Galah | | Superb Fairy-wren |
| Golden-headed Cisticola | | Wedgetail Eagle |
| Great Egret | | Weebill |
| Grey Fantail | | Welcome Swallow |
| Grey Shrike-thrush | | Whistling Kite |
| Great Egret | | White-faced Heron |
| Grey Teal | | White-browed Babbler |
| Intermediate Egret | | White-plumed Honeyeater |
| Kestral | | Willy Wagtail |
| King Parrot (male) | | Wood Duck |
| Little Corella | | Yellow Spoonbill |
| Little Pied Cormorant | | Yellow Thornbill |
| | | |
| Total = 46 | | |

Phillip Seely



Group at Winton watching Eastern Great Egret (P Spencer)

ARTICLES

SEANA Camp - Portland

25-28 March, 2022



Portland FNC arranged a very successful Autumn get-together for about 80 participants. They arranged a varied selection of guided tours and self-guided excursions and it was a great opportunity to see some familiar faces from years ago as well as meet some new field naturalists.

Tours on the menu included Cobboboonee NP (range of vegetation types & logging history), Mt Clay (orchids), Discovery Bay Ramsar site (wetland), Surrey River (estuarine), Budj Bim (indigenous World Heritage site), Piccaninie Ponds (birds) and Lawrence Rocks (boat trip).

Other self-guided options covered Mt Richmond and Cape Nelson, with the township offering Botanic Gardens, Fawthrop Lagoon and the Maritime Museum.

I visited Cobboboonee, Budj Bim, Cape Nelson and township (unfortunately my photographers weren't with me so you would be best to check the SEANA website for more detail & pictures!).

<https://seana.org.au/seana-autumn-2022-get-together-at-portland/>

The Budj Bim outing triggered my interest in eel migration and farming, of which I had heard but knew little.

Evening presentations:

Gavin Prentice (Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority) explained the process and criteria behind the Ramsar listing (in 2018) of the Glenelg Estuary/ Discovery Bay wetlands. The listing ensures that the values of all 3 management sites are monitored. An action plan is developed annually to help prioritise issues and studies and ensure the wetland's protection.

Dr. John Sherwood spoke about local coastal geology and hydrology over time, in a presentation entitled "Past, Present and Future Coasts". He explained the Bonney Upwelling and the diversity and significance of the Marine Park. It was fascinating to see the movement of the coast over millennia. He noted that 120 thousand years ago climate was similarly warm to now but sea levels are currently much higher. He finished with a cautionary note on how we can manage our retreating coast-line.

This was my first visit to Portland (an attractive, interesting & historic town in itself) & not everything on the itinerary could be done in a couple of days. A return trip is definitely planned. The *Drosera pygmae* seen at Mt Clay is high on my list – see picture as stolen from SEANA website.



Drosera pygmae

However as a comment, I found that the knowledge & perspective of the provided guides made the excursions more memorable. Personal & historical insights provided by both Bob (Cobboboonee NP) & Brayon (Budj Bim) completely enlivened both days.

Eel migration and Budj Bim:

In Victoria we have 2 species of anguillid eels; the Long-finned Eel (*Anguilla reinhardtii*) and Short-finned Eel (*A. australis*). Both eel species have a mysterious and amazing lifecycle. Adults spend decades in freshwater habitats (such as rivers and wetlands) feeding and growing before metamorphosing into silver eels. The silver eels migrate downstream, often during high river flows, and into the sea to spawn (the Coral Sea near New Caledonia). During these oceanic spawning migrations, adult eels travel several thousand kilometres to warm tropical waters. Tracking data showed the eels move vertically in the water column; mainly between depths of 700–900 m during the day and 100–300 m during the night. After spawning, the adults die and the newly hatched leaf shaped larvae (called leptocephali) commence a journey toward the coast, drifting on ocean currents and developing into glass eels before eventually entering rivers. The young eels, now known as elvers, migrate further upstream into freshwater, developing into yellow eels and eventually becoming adults. These adults will then return to the sea to spawn.*

[In Europe the elvers return from the Sargasso Sea specifically to where their parents migrated from. In the UK, the European Eel is now critically endangered and elver fishing is strictly controlled. Historically they were found in such numbers that locals would catch them in pillowcases and hold elver-eating competitions. Now there is even a black market and the 'tumps' (eel catching spots) are patrolled by the Environment Agency for poachers.]

Tyrendarra Indigenous Protected Area was declared part of the Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape in 2004 and is now in the Budj Bim World Heritage site called Tae Rak (previously Lake Condor). Here, eel traps have been used for many thousands of years to capture Short-finned Eels (Kooyang).

On this tour, guided by Brayon we learnt that for 6000 years, (before draining by white settlers), water from Killara (Darlots Creek) was diverted into eel races, weirs and traps. Since 2010, rejuvenation of the area has resulted in a very large shallow vegetated ephemeral wetland. Thus again it supports a huge population of birds (I don't think I have ever seen so many Black Swans in one place!), freshwater fauna and the complex eel harvesting aquasystem. We saw evidence of the holding ponds ('fridges'), channels, smoking trees (hollow Manna Gums) and stone huts used for seasonal accommodation. We were shown an example of the long trap woven from a local sedge (Poongurt), with an opening at the end where the eel would be caught with a 3-pronged spear as it exited. Eels were preserved by smoking and traded out of the region. He also had many entertaining family stories to bring it all to life.

All this explains why the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape was added to the World Heritage List in 2019.

On site, the Gunditjmara Traditional Owners (Gungitj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation) have established tours, a viewing platform and the Gilgar Gunditj Centre (not yet open this visit). Here we saw an eel aquarium, tasting kitchen and retail area ie one could choose an eel & have it prepared for lunch!

* Koster, W. et al (2021) First tracking of the oceanic spawning migrations of Australasian short-finned eels (*Anguilla australis*)



See, I really was there! (Lou Citroen)



Brayon (a guide of Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation) with woven eel trap & explaining trapping (G Steed)

MEMBER'S ACTIVITIES & PHOTOS

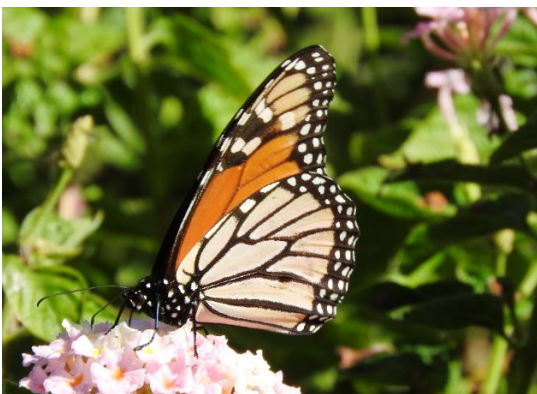
Insects of West Albury - P Seely



Butterfly eggs



Dainty Swallowtail - *Papilio anactus*.



Monarch Butterfly - *Danaus plexippus*



Praying Mantis Egg case,

Upcoming Outings – Winter 2022 (*Remainder to be confirmed & will be published separately*).

~ **12th June** – Wonga Wetlands; Complete.

~ **25th June** – Mt Granya; Cancelled.

~**14th July** – Beechworth 11 am; Pub Lunch (Hibernian Hotel) 1 pm. Contact Clare 0419 124 734

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

[The program for the remainder of the year will be circulated soon & also made available via Friends of Chiltern website.]