

## THE FIELD NATURALIST

NEWSLETTER NO. 146: AUTUMN 2023

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

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Gail Steed  
ggadsteed@aapt.net.au

### **OTHER COMMITTEE:**

Bernard Datson  
Jan Palmer/Jenny  
Bleakley  
Phillip Seely  
Veronica Robertson

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



Tailed Emperor-*Polyura sempronius*,  
Wonga Wetlands (P Seely)



Unidentified Birds' nest Fungus,  
Mt Pilot (D Andrews)



White-browed Babbler,  
Winton Wetlands (J Palmer)



Superb Fairy Wren 'brother & sister',  
Granya/Cotton Tree Park (P Spencer)

### **Autumn Issue, 2023:**

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**OUTINGS**

**KREMUR ST LAGOONS**

**25<sup>th</sup> February '23**

On a warm, still summer evening about 10 of us had a gentle ramble. We were rewarded with a pleasant catch-up after the break, some 'eco-therapy' and the reliably good viewings of water birds. Two highlights were the Ibis families nesting and the large group of Nankeen Night Herons

Bird List, Kremur St

25 Feb 2023

Australian Raven	Little Friarbird	Little Black Cormorant
Black Duck	Little Pied Cormorant	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike (on nest)	Magpie Lark	Superb Fairy-wren
Black Swan	Nankeen Night Heron	White-faced Heron
Coot	Purple Swamphen	White Ibis (on nest)
Great Egret	Reed Warbler	White-plumed Honeyeater
Grey Teal	Rosella, Yellow (ssp)	
<b>Total = 20</b>		

Phillip Seely



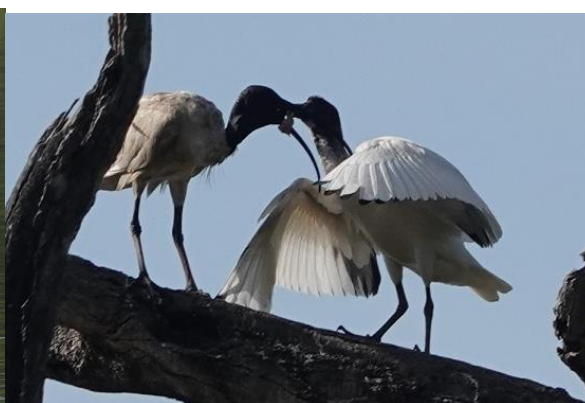
Pacific Black Duck (P Spencer)



Dusky Moorhen (immature) (P Spencer)



Australian White Ibis  
On nest, with Dusky Moorhen onlooker (P Seeley)



Feeding young (P Spencer)





Nankeen Night Heron - juvenile (P Spencer)

## WONGA WETLANDS

12<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Nineteen members and visitors enjoyed a rewarding day of birdwatching and nature gazing at Wonga Wetlands.

A total of 52 bird species were recorded by the group. Several bird species were observed on nests including a Yellow-billed Spoonbill, and a Great Crested Grebe. A juvenile Nankeen Night Heron was again observed - in Lagoon One. Royal Spoonbill and Yellow-billed Spoonbill were observed on Lagoon Four as well as large numbers of Black Swans, including a cygnet. Rainbow Bee-eaters and Dollar Birds were observed in the surrounding woodland.

Members took turns to mark off the birds observed on a prepared bird list, and numbers of birds within species were also recorded. So we all gained some experience in the formal process. The list was then submitted via the BirdLife portal.

It was a great team event!

Thank you to everyone for your contribution to this informative and educational outing.

## Helen Corrigan

[...and thanks too, for special cultural extras from Helen and Bernie – poetry and yarns en route!]



Great Crested Grebe at nest



Royal Spoonbill  
(D Andrews)



Yellow Spoonbill at nest



White-faced Heron (P Seely)



Australian Shelduck, immature (P Seely)

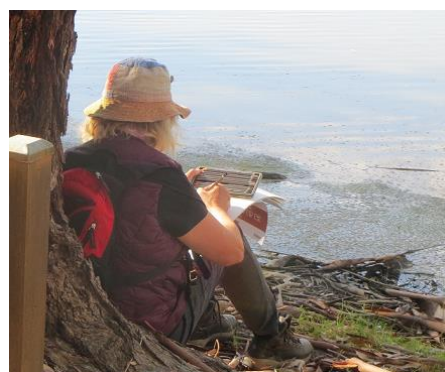
Bird list, Wonga Wetlands

12 March 2023

Australasian Grebe	Great Crested Grebe (nesting)	Royal Spoonbill
Australian Raven	Great Egret	Sacred Kingfisher
Azure Kingfisher	Intermediate Egret	Shelduck (Mountain)
Blackbird	Kookaburra	Rosella, Yellow (ssp)
Black Duck	Little Black Cormorant	Striated Pardalote
Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike	Little Friarbird	Starling
	Little Pied Cormorant	
Black Swan	Magpie	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
*Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	Magpie Lark	Superb Fairy-wren
Coot	Maned (Wood) Duck	Swamphen
Crested Pigeon	Masked Lapwing	Welcome Swallow
Darter	Nankeen Night Heron	Whistling Kite (nesting)
Dollarbird	Noisy Friarbird	White-browed Scrubwren
*Double-barred Finch	Pied Currawong	*White-eared Honeyeater
Dusky Moorhen	Rainbow Bee-eaters	White-faced Heron
Galah	Rainbow Lorikeet	White-necked Heron
Great Cormorant	Red-browed Finch	White-plumed Honeyeater
Great Egret	Red Wattlebird	White-throated Tree-creeper
Grey Fantail	Reed Warbler	White Ibis
Grey Shrike-thrush	Rosella, Crimson	Willie Wagtail
Grey Teal	Rosella, Eastern	Yellow-billed Spoonbill (nesting)
Great Cormorant	Great Crested Grebe (nesting)	Yellow Robin
<b>Total = 63</b>		

**Bernard Datson** (\*seen outside survey, so not included; refer to list as distributed electronically by Helen]

[The wetlands also provided observation opportunities other than birds. Unsurprisingly, many insects such as spiders, wasps, stick insects, beetles and even an evasive butterfly were captured on film for identification by Dick and Phillip (see cover page).....as well as the gentle wetland vista captured with pencil by Stephanie.]





PS Does anyone recall the footbridges to Lagoon 1, back in July 2012? – “fish friendly” crossings indeed!



## GRANYA / COTTONTREE PARK

25<sup>th</sup> March 2023

9 members participated in this enjoyable autumn outing on a cloudy day with no rain and pleasant mid 20's temperature. Two sites were visited – Cottontree Creek to Granya Falls and Mt Granya summit (870m).

Birds were present at all times and a good bird list was recorded. The highlight for many of us was a number of sightings of the Red-browed Treecreeper.

At Cottontree Creek the Manna Gums (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) and at Mt Granya summit the Candlebarks (*E. rubida*) and Broad-leaved Peppermints (*E. dives*) were stand-outs, with a sprinkling of Blue Gums (*E. globulus* subsp. *bicostata*) at both sites. At Mt Granya the Stringybarks (*E. macrorhyncha*) were in flower and the buzzing of the bees could be heard high above.

The understory was rich and varied. Red-stem wattle (*Acacia rubida*) was showing its juvenile leaves and the transition stages to phyllodes; the juvenile leaves of Long-leaved Box (*E. goniocalyx*) and Apple Box were noted and compared. A large stand of Dusty Miller (*Spyridium parviflorum*) was lovely at Cottontree and Pale Vanilla Lillies still had occasional flowers at Mt Granya.



Dung Roundhead  
(D Andrews, ID N Blair)

Unfortunately fresh fungi were scarce with a Dung Round Head (*Stropharia sp.*) being one of the few noted.

A number of wombat scratchings, burrows and scats were noted along with some rabbit scats but no mammals were seen.

A few unidentified skinks were all the reptiles noted. The Leaf-curling spider was common at Cottontree and 2 butterflies (Common Brown and Common Blue-grass) were observed.



Leaf-curling Orb-weaver Spiders - Zygellinae (*Phonognatha graeffei*)

...inside (top is sealed) & venturing out (D Andrews)

...in full view (N Blair)

At Mt Granya the Heliotrope moth and its host plant, Common Heliotrope – *Heliotropium europeum*, were found along with Plantain Moth, *Scopula rubraria* and some other fast flying unidentified moths.



Heliotrope

The moth, & the plant (D Andrews)



Plantain Moth – (D Andrews)

Neil Blair





Superb Fairy Wrens -Juvenile pair



Golden Whistler - female  
(P Spencer)



Red-browed Tree-creeper

Bird list, Mt. Granya

25 March 2023

Bee-eater Rainbow	few	Gerygone Western	2	Pigeon Crested	3	Starling common	3
Blackbird Common	2	Gerygone White-throated	5	Raven Australian	4	Swallow Welcome	5
Bowerbird Satin	1	Honeyeater Yellow-faced	10	Robin Eastern Yellow	5	Thornbill Brown	3
Cockatoo Sulphur-crested	5	Kite Whistling	2	Robin Scarlet	1	Treecreeper Red-browed	3
Cuckoo Shrike Black-faced	5	Kookaburra Laughing	2	Rosella Crimson	4	Treecreeper White - throated	5
Currawong Pied	2	Magpie Australian	2	Rosella Eastern	2	Wagtail Willie	2
Fairy-wren Superb	10	Magpie-lark	3	Scrubwren white-browed	3	Warbler Australian Reed	1
Fantail Grey	5	Pardalote Spotted	5	Shrike-thrush Grey	5	Wattlebird Red	1
Finch Red-browed	5	Pardalote Striated	3	Shrike-Tit Crested	2	Weebill	3
Galah	5	Parrot Australian King	1	Spinebill Eastern	1	Whistler Australian Golden	2
						<b>TOTAL = 40</b>	

Bernard Datson

## CHILTERN MT. PILOT NP

22<sup>nd</sup> April 2023

On a beautiful autumn day with sun, a gentle breeze and mild temperatures, members and guests participated in this outing to the box-ironbark forest.

The morning was spent predominantly looking for the autumn orchids. It has been a good season and the three sought after species were found in good numbers, these being Parson's Bands – *Eriochilus cucullatus*, Large Autumn Greenhoods – *Pterostylis ampliata*, Inland Red-tip Greenhoods – *Pterostylis rubescens*.



Parson's Bands showing its colour range of mauve to white, & its 'happy puppet face' (P Spencer)



Large Autumn Greenhoods  
(P Seely)



Red-tipped Greenhoods – stem & aerial view showing rosette  
(P Spencer)



Lunch and the afternoon was spent predominantly bird-watching. Although no trees were noted to be in flower at Honeyeater Picnic area, the birds, though not numerous, were interesting with a Gang Gang sighted on arrival and a female Golden Whistler soon after. Both male and female Scarlet Honeyeaters were well seen among the Red Wattlebirds, Fuscous and Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters. Later at Gliders Track where the Ironbarks were just beginning to flower there were many honeyeaters and a Noisy Friarbird was spotted. Alas no Regents nor Swift Parrots were seen.

The air was full of the hum of the European Honey Bees and the Common Brown Butterflies were indeed common. Mosquitoes began to make their presence felt later in the afternoon. Frog calls were heard around the dam but no mammals nor reptiles were noted on the day.

A few fungal genera noted by Gail were: *Agaricus*, *Hygrocybe*, *Mycena*, *Russula* and the bright, common Scarlet Bracket, *Trametes coccinia*

It was another very enjoyable AWFN day.



Scarlet Honeyeater, male (P Spencer)

## Neil Blair

Birdlist, Chiltern Mt Pilot NP

22 June 2023

Butcher Bird Grey	Magpie	Honeyeater Scarlet
Fantail Grey	Raven Australian	Honeyeater White-plumed
Friarbird Noisy	Wattlebird Red	Honeyeater Yellow-tufted
Cockatoo Gang Gang	Honeyeater Black-chinned	Whistler Golden (F)
Grebe Australasian	Honeyeater Fuscous	Willy Wagtail
Grey Shrike-thrush		
		<b>Total = 16</b>

Phillip Seely & Neil Blair

## LOCKHARTS GAP / MITTA MITTA

27 May 2023

Despite a very 'atmospheric' and cold late-autumn day, about a dozen of us rugged up for this outing. Our horizontal progress along the northern road at Lockhart's Gap was minimal. Birds were very quiet and a few small fungi mostly got all our attention. After lunch at Mitta, we again progressed slowly along the Pioneer Mine Walk. All threatening rain held off and fungi, despite being less varied than at previous visits, were interesting and kept Dick and I amused while we tried to employ our newly-acquired skills from Alison



Pouliot's recent workshop. An incomplete list follows – mind you, just personally, the more I read the less I'm sure of. And something I am learning to take better notice of is the surrounding tree canopy – many native trees, as well as introduced species, have mycorrhizal associations with fungi.



The Fern Gully Loop, Pioneer Mine Walk (P Seely)

We saw gilled fungi, club fungi, hard-skinned puffballs, woody pore fungi & leathery shelf fungi: *Agaricus austrovinaceus*, *Amanita*, *Ascocoryne sacoides*?, *Armillaria*, *Clavaria*, *Colltricia*, *Cortinarius*, *Crepidotus*, *Drechmeriae gunnii*, *Gymnopilus junonius*, *Hygrocybe*, *Laccaria*, *Lactarius* (possibly eucalypti?), *Macrolepiota clelandii*, *Mycena* spp, *Russula*, *Schizophyllum commune*, *Scleroderma*,

I don't recall seeing any birdsnest fungi, coral fungi, stinkhorns, fleshy pored fungi, spine fungi, inkcaps, cup fungi or jelly fungi.



Spectacular Rustgill, *Gymnopilus junonius* (P Spencer)





*Agaricus austrovinaceus*, cap & gills (G Steed)



*Cortinarius archeri*?, showing the  
veil remnants on the stem, cap  
surface & margin  
Pioneer Mine Walk



*Coltricia* sp - possibly *cinnamomea*? although  
much darker. In moss at Lockharts Gap (P Seely)



Moss-covered Punk (R Andrews)



*Drechmeria gunnii* – (Cordyceps), near dam wall (R Andrews)



Oh, and yes – there were some birds! 😊



King Parrot, male (P Spencer)



White-browed Scrubwren (P Spencer)

Bernie, in conjunction with Phillip, provided the following bird notes & numbers.

“Very little at Lockart’s Gap but we did encounter: White -throated (3) and Red-browed (2) Treecreepers, Grey Shrike Thrush (5), White-browed Scrub Wren (6), Superb Fairy Wren (8), Grey Fantail (6), Eastern Yellow Robin (4), Whipbird (1) (silent), Crimson Rosella (3), Golden Whistler (1), Grey Currawong (4), Australasian Raven (2), Satin Bowerbird (1), Brown Thornbill (4)”.

## WINTON WETLANDS

11 June 2023

Winton Wetland Outing 19 members attending. The wetlands were at their winter best, all shades of silver and grey water and sky merging. A difficult light for birdwatching but that didn’t stop us having a very satisfying and enjoyable day, with 59 species identified, as per Bernie’s list. I have not listed all species at individual sites, but have just picked out a few of interest. [Bernie’s list has been circulated so is not included]

The Duck Pond was our first stop. On our Friday scouting trip, we had seen about 200+ Pink Eared Ducks and a large family of resident White browed Babblers, busily lining a nest with seed heads from nearby Phragmites (Common Reed). On Sunday only 2 Pink Eared were seen (thank you Peter for this late inclusion), and Babblers heard but not seen. We did see a variety of other wetland and woodland birds. The highlight being Black fronted Dotterels. On a prior trip we had seen Zebra Finches in a Lightwood tree on the dam wall.

Morning tea was at the old jetty which provided a very good panorama over the wetland. Highlight here was a very vocal, active, and not shy Grey Butcherbird. Also, a flock of Red-rumped Parrots, grazing along the foreshore. The tussocks and rushes here are ideal habitat for Quail. You can see small scrapes where they have been resting or sunbaking. Unfortunately, we didn’t manage to see any. No luck either for Diamond Firetails which had been seen along the walking track towards the Hub.



Grey Butcherbird (Jan Palmer)



Red-rumped Parrot (Jan Palmer)

Then onto Mt.Meg Conservation Reserve, where Gail had fungi in her sights, and we were after a Red-capped Robin (found, thank you Bernie). Gail identified a few fungi - *Clitocybe clitocyboides*, *Macrolepiota clelandii*,

Hygrocybe sp, Mycena sp, Ramaria sp (Coral fungus) and Scleroderma (puff ball). Nothing much of interest was seen on the vegetation side; spring obviously best for wildflowers and orchids.

Next stop Boggy Bridge Road. Always worth a look at the Bridge site. It provides a good view on both sides for raptors, both perched and in flight. A Whistling Kite (finally identified) with stick excited much debate. On the ground, no Golden Headed Cisticolas this time, but a variety of wetland birds including Black-tailed Native Hens and unexpectedly, White-fronted Chats.



The Field Nats taking over Boggy Bridge Road...

After lunch at Green Hill, we were hoping to find *Antechinus* amongst the fallen timber. Although, I must say, seeing a large fox on our scouting trip had dented our hopes. A couple of researchers were set up with microphones and cameras at a hollow log: we were hoping that Mr. Fox hadn't spoilt their fun. So, no *Antechinus*, but the hill walk provided yet more good views of a huge number of Whistling Kites circling and a variety of woodland birds.

If time had permitted, we would have carried on to what was to be our last site on the Winton North Road towards Humphries Hill, where previously we had seen over a dozen Flame Robins.

I have included information of birds previously seen at these sites, in case anyone wants to do some follow-ups.

**Jenny Bleakley**

### **Mycorrhizal Fungi & Native Orchids**

Dick and I attended a recent Fungus ID and survey workshop, sponsored by Wooragee Landcare and Friends of Chiltern Mt Pilot National Park. Alison Pouliot\* - an ecologist & photographer with a passion for fungi – hosted it and brought to life the truly amazing importance of fungi.

Just one profoundly important contribution to the biosphere is their symbiotic role with plants, described as 'mycorrhizal' (fungus-root). Fungal hyphae interact with plant roots providing nutrients in easily available form. In return plants provide sugar and carbon produced by photosynthesis. The specificity and full extent of this relationship is still being unraveled [sorry 😊], & may even include 'signals' between plants. The interaction of trees and fungi in Australian ecosystems is now considered important in all aspects of plant growth and diversity in the native landscape.

Interestingly, orchids - both terrestrial and epiphytic - rely on mycorrhizal fungi for seed germination. Australia is home to more than 1,800 species of orchid - the majority being ground-dwelling in the temperate south of the country. Victoria has over 400 species of unique native orchids with habitats varying from alpine, semi-arid, swamps, native grasslands, heath lands, and eucalypt forests. Most emerge from an underground tuber in late autumn, flower in late winter/early spring and set seed before the summer, when they retreat back to their tuber.

Despite being one of the largest families in the world (over 28,000 species), it is arguably one of the most endangered. In Australia, as well as being reliant on particular mycorrhizal fungi in order to germinate, some



(eg Spider Orchids) may rely on varying fungi for their entire life cycle, and many are pollinated by only one species of insect.

Hence conservation of endangered native orchids in the wild is complex & multifaceted, with variable survival and sustainability rates. Chiltern Mt Pilot N.P. is involved with the Orchid Conservation Program at the Royal Botanic Gardens, in which seedlings from Cranbourne have been reintroduced. The Program undertakes research on all aspects of orchid ecology, including pollination, mycorrhizal associations, propagation, demographics and reintroduction science.

- ABC Science <https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2022-08-03/trees-and-fungi-how-they-communicate/101276836>
- Alison Pouliot <https://alisonpouliot.com/>
- Gardening Australia <https://www.abc.net.au/gardening/how-to/2020-series-31-episode-34/12856208>
- Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria <https://www.rbg.vic.gov.au>

\*For more information see her website & latest book, *Underground Lovers: Encounters with Fungi*

**Gail**

### **Upcoming Winter Outings –**

~ **24<sup>th</sup> June** – Kurrajongs, Mt Lawson SP. *Complete*

~ **1<sup>st</sup> July** – Baranduda. Bring refreshments & lunch. Contact Bernie

~ **13<sup>th</sup> July** – Bird ID & Calls. Baranduda Community Centre. Contact Bernie

~ **22<sup>nd</sup> July** – Woomargama, Walk & Pub Lunch. Contact Neil

~ **13<sup>th</sup> August** – Corowa. Bring refreshments & lunch. Contact Phillip

~ **26<sup>th</sup> August** – Chiltern Mt Pilot NP. Bring refreshments & lunch. Contact Neil

*Please confirm details via Ecoportal & contact the leader if you have any questions, need a lift or wish to confirm attendance (useful if weather could lead to cancellation!).*

*[Also, this newsletter & club program are very kindly made available via Friends of Chiltern website under the 'News' tab. THANKS TONY!!]*