

THE FIELD NATURALIST

NEWSLETTER NO. 147: WINTER 2023

ALBURY-WODONGA FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB INC.

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



Large Egret, Lake King (P Spencer)



Unknown spider, on *Daviesia genistifolia*, Chiltern Mt Pilot NP (P Seeley)



Royal Spoonbill, Corowa (D Andrews)

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OUTINGS

THE KURRAJONGS (Mt Lawson SP)

24th June '23

This outing was originally planned as Georges Creek/ Granya, to hopefully see the wonderful range of mushrooms often found in the Magazine Track area. However a prior 'reccie' found access & parking unsuitable for the large group, so we tried our luck – sight unseen – at the Kurrajongs. The Mt Lawson Park is large (approx. 13 ha) and located about 70 km east of Albury/Wodonga, between The Murray Valley Hwy and the Murray River. 'The Kurrajongs' is in the dry northern section of the park and contains steep sections and large areas of Kurrajong (*Brachychiton populneus*) and Black Cypress-pine (*Callitris endlicheri*). It was dry underfoot, with good vehicle access and toilet facilities. After a grey, threatening start we were rewarded with a still, sunny winters day with any hint of rain holding off. It was quiet for birds but a highlight was the good viewing of a Golden Whistler. A range of small mushrooms was seen along the initial section of Flaggy Creek Gorge walking track and around the general campsite.



Neil explained the flora, fire history and geology of the area, the colluvial soil process and different vegetation types. Mt Lawson was last burnt by a wildfire in 1985. The magnificent, old spreading Kurrajong trees were the only trees remaining here. Variation in their leaf shape was noted as well as the characteristic seed pods with the large boat-shaped pods and irritating hairs around the seeds. [Especially when tipped inside the back of your clothes by equally irritating classmates...] Other flora noted here on the well-drained granite soil were: Blakely's Red Gum (*Eucalyptus blakeyi*), Long-leaved Box (*E goniocalyx*), Red Stringybark (*E macrorhyncha*) and Yellow Bottlebrush (*Callistemon pallida* – which is also found at Mt Buffalo).



View of north-western slope, granite and Black Cypress



Bag Moth nests in Kurrajong
(D Andrews)

Personal highlights were the Dark Vegetable Caterpillar fungus (*Drechmeria gunnii*) – previously *Cordyceps gunnii* - & Cannonball fungus (*Sphaerobolus stellatus*) neither of which I had ever seen in the flesh before. The cannonball ('egg' or peridiole, with spores) is forcibly ejected by sudden inversion of the 'nest' membrane lining (see Dick's photo, page 6).

Homeward, some of us stopped at the ridge area on Georges Creek Road where the bird list was expanded a little with viewings of Restless Flycatchers, a Jacky Winter, a White-plumed Honeyeater, Welcome Swallows, Eastern Rosellas, a Willy Wagtail &, I'm told, a pair of 'Kamikaze'-inclined Black-fronted Dotterels en-route.

I enjoyed this new (for me) spot, as well as the panoramic drive and hope to get back to complete some future walks. Thank you Neil for your guidance and information.

Also, this discovery at Magazine Track was fun: a Leafy Liverwort, *Lophocolea semiteres*. On the colourless stalks rising from the leaf-like plant base are open & unopened spore capsules. Dark capsules contain mature spores which are typically dispersed when they split along four lines of weakness and open to the air.



Leafy Liverwort



Open spore capsule

Bird List, Kurrajongs (P Seeley)

24 June 2023

Australian Raven	Grey Shrike-thrush	Rosella, Crimson
Golden Whistler	Kookaburra	White-eared Honeyeater
Grey Fantail	Magpie	White-throated Tree-creeper
Grey	Robin, Yellow	Wedge-tailed Eagle
Total = 12		

I have collated a selection of fungi (and possible identifications) from all our winter outings, including my 'reccie' to Magazine Track & Tallangatta area.

Type	Possible ID	Site*	Photo
Basidiomycetes			
Gilled Fungi	Green Skinhead (<i>Cortinarius austrovenetus</i>)	K	 (Dick Andrews)
	<i>Cortinarius sinapicolor</i> (a distinctive feature is the very viscid, sticky cap)	K	
	Splendid Red Skinhead (<i>Dermocybe splendida</i>) (the gills are paprika-red & quite stunning)	MT	
	Yellow Navel (<i>Lichenomphalia chromacea</i>). [A common lichenised fungus (basidiolichen) – the fruiting body is mushroom-like & the thallus is a greenish, granular layer of fungal hyphae on the soil around the base]	K	

Type	Possible ID	Site*	Photo
Woody Pore Fungi	Scarlet Bracket (<i>Trametes coccinea</i>)	MT CMPNP	
	Unidentified 'bracket'	K	
Leather Fungi	<i>Stereum sp (illudens?)</i> Upper view, top photo; underside, lower photo	MT	 
	<i>Byssomerulius corium</i> Upper view, top photo; underside, lower photo	MT	 

Type	Possible ID	Site*	Photo
Coral Fungi	<i>Ramaria sp</i>	MT	
Puff Balls	<i>Scleroderma sp. (cepa?)</i>	K	
Stalked Puff Balls	A Prettymouth (<i>Calostoma sp</i>) past its peak?	T	
Birds Nest Fungi	Cannonball fungus (<i>Sphaerobolus stellatus</i>)	K	 <p data-bbox="1018 1608 1182 1637">(Dick Andrews)</p>
Spine/ Toothed Fungi	Hedgehog Fungus (<i>Hydnum repandum</i>)	W	

Type	Possible ID	Site*	Photo
Jelly fungi	Yellow Brain (<i>Tremella mesenterica</i>)	K	 (Dick Andrews)
Ascomycetes			
Cup fungi	Orange Peel Fungus (<i>Aleuria aurantia</i>)	K	 (Dick Andrews)
	Unidentified (<i>Peziza</i> sp?)	K	 (Phillip Seeley)
	Jelly Babies (<i>Leotia lubrica</i>)	W	
Vegetable fungi	Dark Vegetable Caterpillar fungus (<i>Drechmeria gunnii</i>)	K	 (Phillip Seeley)

* K = The Kurrajongs; MT = Magazine Track; Woomargama = W; T = Tallangatta Lookout; CMPNP = Chiltern Mt Pilot NP

This was a combined outing with BirdLife, attended by 6 Field Nats and co-hosted by Bernie and Jan. Four sites – Draper's Rd, off Boye's Rd, along Ellen McDonald Dve, and corner of Chappel / Whyte's Rd – were viewed with a final tally of 57 birds, including male and female Hooded Robins and Scarlet Robins.

[Bernie's detailed bird list with numbers and locations has been circulated].

WOOMARGAMA – Pub Lunch

22nd July '23

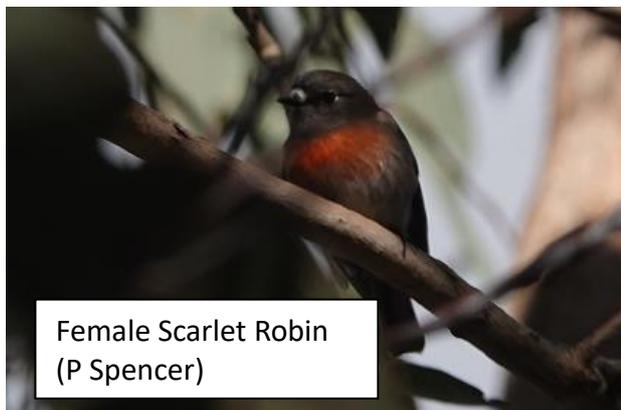
Our winter social outing was as well attended as always and a great opportunity to catch up with partners. After making our way through quite thick fog from Albury, the skies cleared in perfect time for the Woomargama turn-off & remained bright and pleasant for the day. Our first short walk was to the very accessible and recently opened Yambla View 'Wambariga' Lookout. The impressive panorama from the observation deck faces west and takes in from Table Top to The Rock. Fungi and about 8 birds presented themselves for the determined. After morning tea we crossed Hanel's Road to pick up the Hume and Hovell Walking Track, & meandered through dry sclerophyll forest towards the Samuel Bollard Campsite.



Tabletop from Wambariga lookout (P Seeley)

Some species noted (incomplete, sorry - hard to look for fungi AND keep up!):

Birds: Female Scarlet Robin, Gang Gangs (heard), White-throated Treecreeper, Yellow Thornbill, and the common - Crimson Rosella, Sulphur Crested Cockatoo, Kookaburra and Pied Kurrawong.



Female Scarlet Robin
(P Spencer)

Flora: Black Cypress Pine (*Callitris endlicheri*); Broad-leaved Peppermints (*Eucalyptus dives*); Stringybarks (*E. macrorhyncha*); Blakely's Red Gum (*Eucalyptus blakelyi*); Long-leafed Box (*E. gonicalyx*). Mountain Flat Pea (*Platylobium montanum subsp montanum*), Spiny-headed Mat-rush (*Lomandra longifolia*), *Dianella sp.*; Small Gnat Orchid - unopened bud only (*Cyrtostylis reniformis*)?

Fungi: Wood Hedgehog (*Hydnum repandum*); Jelly Baby (*Leotia lubrica*)



Black Cypress-pine – complete with its specific orange algae [*Trentepohlia sp*]

Lunch at the pub was very pleasant and despite their being busy, we were happily looked after. Of special interest was the memorabilia brought by Bernie and Phillip: the club is 52 years old! The foundation meeting was 9 Aug 1971 with a 25th anniversary dinner in 1996. And so many recurring names from then - Dick & Anne, Glenda & Bernie, Neil, Robbie and Phillip. Remarkable – thank you all for your ongoing commitment. [How young & fresh you all looked 😊.] Again, thank you Neil and Clare for the planning of the day.

Gail Steed



The famous Mars bar is back up for grabs...does anyone have any idea what these dark, cup-shaped structures/organisms are? They were found by Phillip on the edge of a hole in a living tree, with moss around the base.

**COROWA / RUTHERGLEN –
Sewage Ponds & Lake King**

13th August 2023

Again, fog lifted to a lovely still, Spring-like winter day. The general pond surrounds have been tidied and access to the 2 front ponds is easy. As usual, a wide variety of water birds were seen with good viewings, especially enabled by Tony's 'scope'. The total bird count here was 52.

Most duck types were sighted except Freckled and Blue-billed. The Spotless Crake previously seen in 2019, wasn't sighted this time, again possibly due to the higher water levels. The now resident Magpie Geese are just as eye-catching as always, and numerous. The back lagoon had few birds and extensive weed growth up the bank.



'Happy bedfellows' (D Andrews)



Masked Lapwing, showing 'spurs' (P Spencer)

After lunch we went south to look at the redevelopment of the Lake King precinct – a joint project of Indigo Shire, DEWLP (now DEECA) and Federal Government, with assistance from The Rutherglen Reserve Committee of Management and Rutherglen Landcare.

The newly remodeled wetland area was designed to hold 20ML at capacity, with varying depths – approximately 300mm to 1.5m. It was revegetated about 3 years ago with the help of Rutherglen Landcare and many community groups. A significant number of plants have survived well with the subsequent good seasons, although weed management remains an ongoing issue, especially feral olives. Some plants are re-establishing well eg the Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda australis*) and Sedge (*Carex appressa*). Landcare signage has been updated and where necessary Arts Rutherglen installations have been relocated to complement the redesign.



Gold Dust Wattle

Some other plants near the walking path included:

Melaleuca decussata; Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnatha*);
A. saligna; Gold Dust Wattle (*A. acinacea*); Varnish Wattle
 (*A. verniciflua*); Weeping Myall (*A. pendula*);
Bursaria sp; *Eutaxia microphylla*; Alpine Grevillea (*Grevillea alpina*);
 Austral Indigo (*Indigophora australis*); and Hop Goodenia
 (*Goodenia ovata*).



Yellow form of *Grevillia alpina*



Eutaxia microphylla

Drinking water for Rutherglen was originally transported from Lake Moodemere & was an ongoing issue – expensive & of poor quality. (The town was reported as requiring 100 x 60 gallon barrels/day at 2s per barrel, with 22 deaths in the summer of 1865 attributed to poor water.) The Lake King dam was originally built in 1876 as the town water supply of 15 million gallons but I think that too was abandoned due to its poor quality. Use continued recreationally eg rowing & fishing (before the Carp took over?). However a breach of the dam wall was identified in 2011 and the subsequent investigation initiated the redesign. I believe it was restocked by Victorian Fisheries Authority and I have seen a picture showing a good sized Trout caught recently (mind you I wouldn't know the difference between Trout and Yellow Belly!)

Unsurprisingly it is currently full, with a resident Large Egret and there have been recent reports of Freckled Duck sightings. I saw a large group (10+) of Little Black Cormorants about a week ago. This outing identified 17 species, with the very elegant and photogenic Great Egret a highlight.

It is a popular & accessible family precinct, well-maintained by the Indigo Shire with improving natural value.

Gail Steed

CHILTERN MT PILOT NP –

26th August 2023

On a glorious day, led by Neil Blair, 18 members had a wonderfully informative ramble through parts of the park. The distribution of overstorey vegetation in the Park is complex and appears to be mainly influenced by soil type and disturbances since European settlement. The area where we began at the western end of Rileys Road is dominated by an overstorey of Mugga Ironbark, Red Box, White Box and Red Stringybark. Neil explained that two Ironbark species are found in the Inland Slopes of Victoria and New South Wales, i.e. the lower rainfall 'box' country, with hills and scattered ranges, and skeletal soils: Mugga (or Red) Ironbark, *Eucalyptus sideroxylon*, is found north of Benalla and the Warby Ranges, extending up through New South Wales and ACT, whereas the very similar Red Ironbark, *Eucalyptus tricarpa*, is found southwest of Benalla, across to Bendigo, St. Arnaud and Grampians goldfields areas, south to Anglesea and a narrow coastal strip straddling the New South Wales-Victorian border.

The main difference in these Ironbarks is that the inflorescence is 7-flowered in *E. sideroxylon* and 3-flowered in *tricarpa*.

Today we were looking particularly at species in flower. In the Riley's Road end of the Park, gloriously, the bush was awash with shining golden-flowered plants: Golden wattles, *Acacia pycnantha*; Varnish wattles, *Acacia verniciflua*; and the more yellow-orange Small-leaf Parrot-pea, *Dillwynia phyllicoides*, currently being the most floriferous.

The use of the term ‘eggs and bacon’ is a very general term for pea flowers whereas in this Park these are split into the Parrot-peas (*Dillwynia spp.*), Bush-peas (*Pultenaea spp.*) and Bitter-peas (*Daviesia spp.*).



Small-leaf Parrot-Pea (P Spencer)



Broome Bitter-pea (P Seeley)

The Chiltern section of the Park is 400 million years old with soils derived from Ordovician sandstone, whereas the Mt Pilot section is derived from Devonian granite. There is a small area of metamorphic rock along the Ordovician sediment and Devonian igneous rock boundary which has resulted in the Skeleton Hill range. Indigo Creek follows the fault that separates the Ordovician sedimentary rocks from the metamorphic rocks. Neil explained that silica, under pressure, rose up through the sandstone to form quartz reefs. During this process the quartz liquified and whilst liquid it attracted gold. Hence the history of gold mining in Chiltern.

At the Rileys Rd/Greenhill Rd intersection area we were standing on alluvium. The nearby drainage line contains River Red Gum, *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, which has evolved taking advantage of damper or even occasionally flooded soils whereas the drier tops of the hills throughout the Park contain Blakely’s Red Gum, *Eucalyptus blakelyi*.

We stopped throughout the Park to compare other points of interest and differences between species, two of these being Spreading Wattle, *Acacia genistifolia*, and Juniper Wattle, *A. ulicifolia*. Both these have very prickly, needle-like phyllodes and pale yellow, globular flower heads. (South of the Great Dividing Range Spreading Wattle has bright golden flower heads.) But the phyllodes of Spreading Wattle are much longer than those of Juniper Wattle, with one raised central vein per face, whilst Juniper Wattle phyllodes are broader at the base than the tip, with tiny stipules always present.



Spreading Wattle (P Spencer)



Juniper Wattle (P Spencer)

We also looked at Varnish Wattle, *Acacia verniciflua*. This is a very variable shrub with green, often shiny and sticky foliage. Generally the phyllodes have 2 main veins, rarely one-veined, dotted with minute glands between the veins. The young branchlets have thick bands of dark resin between pale yellowish ribs (that are often only slightly raised). There are a few forms within the north-east with differing habits and leaf shapes.



Varnish Wattle



Gold Dust caterpillar? (P Spencer)



Ploughshare Wattle (P Spencer)

Over lunch, because of a question regarding different types of *Acacia* foliage, Neil gave an overview of the development over millions of years of Australian vegetation through the periods of dry, then cool temperate, then ice-age, followed by warming wet periods, volcanic action and uplifting and another ice age finishing around 12000 years ago. In more recent history, as Australia drifts northwards, it has been drying, leading to the evolving of a great diversity of flora. As our eastern rainforests have shrunk they have been replaced by the more dry tolerant eucalypts and wattles.

All wattles start with 'feathery' or bipinnate leaves. These are the true leaves. But as wattles evolved some species changed (or adapted) their leaves to phyllodes to better cope with their environment. Phyllodes are modified petioles or leaf stems, which are leaf-like in appearance and function. In some plants, these become flattened and widened, while the leaf itself becomes reduced or vanishes altogether. Thus the phyllode comes to serve the purpose of the leaf. Australia is the only continent where wattles developed phyllodes, so that is the unique separator.



Golden Wattle showing phyllode development



Bitter Cryptandera



Blunt Greenhood
(P Spencer)



Dwarf Greenhood

Plants observed in flower in Rileys Road (off Chiltern-Howlong Rd)	
White Box	<i>Eucalyptus albens</i>
Broom Bitter-pea	<i>Daviesia genistifolia</i>
Mountain Grevillea	<i>Grevillea alpina</i>
Dusky Fingers	<i>Caladenia fuscata</i>
Urn Heath	<i>Melichrus urceolata</i>
Erect Guinea-flower	<i>Hibbertia riparia</i>
Dwarf Greenhood	<i>Pterostylis nana</i>
Golden Wattle	<i>Acacia pycnantha</i>
Leopard Orchid	<i>Diurus pardina</i>
Creamy Candles (in bud)	<i>Stackhousia monogyna</i>
Common Hovea	<i>Hovea heterophylla</i>
Gold-dust Wattle	<i>Acacia acinacea</i>
Purple Coral Pea	<i>Hardenbergia violacea</i>
Yam Daisy/Murnong	<i>Microseris walteri</i>
Juniper Wattle	<i>Acacia ulicifolia</i>
Small-leaf Parrot-pea	<i>Dillwynia phyllicoides</i>
Varnish Wattle	<i>Acacia verniciflua</i>
Plants observed in flower near junction Rileys Road & Greenhill Rd, south of Slaughterhouse Rd	
Bitter Cryptandra	<i>Cryptandra amara</i>
Yellow Star	<i>Parudia (ex Hypoxis) vaginata</i> var. <i>vaginata</i>
Thick-fruit Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus pachycarpus</i>
Common Early Nancy	<i>Wurmbea dioica</i> subsp. <i>dioica</i>
Hairy Geebung	<i>Persoonia rigida</i>
Pale Sundew	<i>Drosera hookeri</i>
Greenhill Rd/Depot Rd	
Spreading Wattle	<i>Acacia genistifolia</i>
Varnish Wattle	<i>Acacia verniciflua</i>
Common Wedge-pea	<i>Gompholobium huegelii</i>
Austral Indigo	<i>Indigofera australia</i>
Broom Bitter-pea	<i>Daviesia genistifolia</i>
Plants observed near Honeyeater Picnic Area	
Tall Sundew	<i>Drosera auriculata</i>
Blunt Greenhood	<i>Pterostylis curta</i>
Tower Hill Rd	
Ploughshare Wattle	<i>Acacia gunnii</i>
Eastern Blue Fairy	<i>Cyanicula caerulea</i>

Birds observed and/or heard

Brown Treecreeper	Black-chinned Honeyeater
Rufous Whistler	Weebill
Superb Blue Wren	Speckled Warbler
Grey Shrike-thrush	Dusky Woodswallow
Fuscous Honeyeater	White-winged Chough

Grey Fantail	Spotted Pardalote
Little Thornbill	Brown-headed Honeyeater
White-throated Treecreeper	Wedge-tail Eagle
Willy Wagtail	Australian Raven
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Yellow Robin
Olive-backed Oriole	Noisy Friarbird
Striated Pardalote	Eastern Spinebill
Little Friarbird	White-plumed Honeyeater
Kookaburra	Magpie
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Crested Pigeon
Mistletoe Bird	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
And very sadly, 5x Common Myna on the edge of Chiltern township	

Glenda Datson

Upcoming Spring Outings –

~ **10th September** – Killawarra, (Complete)

~ **23rd September** – Chiltern Mt Pilot National Park. Bring refreshments & lunch. Contact Neil

~ **8th October** – Castle Creek. Bring refreshments & lunch. Contact Bernie

~ **28th October** – Warby Ranges. Bring refreshments & lunch. Contact Phillip

~ **12^h November** – Stanley & surrounds. Bring refreshments & lunches for weekend. Contact Phillip

~ **24th – 26th November** – Mt Buffalo. Bring food to share for Friday communal BBQ & lunch. Contact Neil

Please confirm details via Ecoportal & contact the leader if you have any questions, need a lift and 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.]