

**THE FIELD NATURALIST**

**NEWSLETTER NO. 149: SUMMER 2023/24**

**ALBURY-WODONGA FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB INC.**

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



Azure Kingfisher (P Spencer)



Sacred Kingfisher (P Spencer)

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**OUTINGS**

**WONGA WETLANDS**

**14<sup>th</sup> January '24**



Little Black Cormorants – pack out ‘on patrol’ (P Spencer), then male bird drying off (D Andrews)

Fourteen of us had a catch up and wander through the Wonga wetlands for a very pleasant morning's outing. A couple of highlights included the arrival of a very noisy family of Dollarbirds obligingly flashing their “dollars”, and the discovery of a rather cryptic Azure Kingfisher.



Dollarbirds (P Spencer)

[It was a perfect (coolish) time of the day for us to visit the wetlands.

I don't think I have ever seen so many Royal Spoonbills together.

Peter pointed out a pair of juveniles being fed – they were very insistent with one of them appearing to use its wings to repeatedly & impatiently tap the parent bird on the back].



Juvenile Royal Spoonbills being fed (P Spencer)

Also seen:



Water Primrose

*Ludwigia peploides*

(D Andrews)



Western Striped Cucumber Beetle

*Acalymma trivittatum*

(D Andrews)



Pond Skater

Hemiptera: Gerridae

(P Spencer)

The bird list for the morning:

Sacred Kingfisher, Superb Fairy-wren, Little Friarbird, Australian Raven, Magpie Lark, White-faced Heron, Little Black Cormorant, Royal Spoonbill, White-faced Heron, Dusky Moorhen, Whistling Kite, Black Duck, Little Pied Cormorant, Grey Fantail, Australian Reed Warbler, Grey Shrike Thrush, Little Grass Bird, Dollarbird, Galah, Grey Teal, Yellow Spoonbill, Purple Swamphen, Magpie, White-plumed Honeyeater, King Parrot, Yellow Rosella, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Azure Kingfisher, Coot, Darter, Masked Lapwing.

(Total = 31 – as always, a good count)

**Bernie Datson** (Leader, David Coleman)

## AGM

9<sup>th</sup> February '24

Unfortunately a cow on the run from the abattoir (I find it hard not to picture a Gary Larson cartoon here....) meant that I missed the 'business' side of the meeting.

So from me, thank you everyone for volunteering your time as office bearers - past & present – and all members for your company, knowledge, leadership, attendance and newsletter contributions.

I was fortunate enough however, to arrive in time for a remarkable & entertaining presentation by Hazel Cook. Hazel was a WIRES volunteer for nearly 20 years, with special expertise in raptors. Given she was also trained in large mammals, birds, koalas, reptiles, snake handling, echidnas, possums and gliders, I think her home was shelter to almost everything. Her photos as well as her deep knowledge and anecdotes were simultaneously heart-warming, informative and inspiring.

Personally, I was awe-struck by her unwavering commitment to every animal or bird's rehabilitation and release, regardless of the time spent in her care.

We welcomed new member Ross Mildenhall and wished him many happy and informative hours on our future outings. Two of last year's new members, Gill and Tony Robinson, were issued with their new badges and this was a timely reminder to some older members to keep theirs where they could find them!

While we marvelled at the beauty of some of the river-side Red Gums there was a very little in the way of native vegetation to take our interest and the birds were the main attractions. The sighting of two Red-bellied Black Snakes and quite a few Common Long-necked Turtles added to the afternoon's cautious pleasures.



[Until this turtle got tired of being hen-pecked, it appeared to provide a meal for an enterprising Swamp Hen. (P Spencer)]



Members had very good opportunities to 'sort out' the Cormorants and the Darters that were present in reasonable numbers - except for the Pied Cormorant, which was absent. The Darters in particular pleased us, as we were able to distinguish between male, female and juveniles/immatures.

[Darters are sometimes called "Snakebirds" and belong in a different family to the closely-related Cormorants]

But then Neil spotted a nest and we were able to add nestlings! (Photo – P Spencer)



As the afternoon progressed we had good viewings of both Azure and Sacred Kingfishers, Little Black and Great Cormorants and could hear the Rainbow Bee-eaters overhead. Over thirty species were seen or heard by most members and a full list is below.



Whistling Kite, with catch (P Spencer)



Swamp Hens (P Spencer)

At the end of the walk we had a pleasant sit and share evening meal together by the river's edge with perfect weather conditions. While I can't claim to have personally clearly seen it, to cap things off Neil and several others had a good views of a platypus in the fast flowing Murray not far from our dinner spot.

#### Bird list

Purple Swamp Hen, Dusky Moorhen, Coot, Black Duck, Wood Duck, Grey Teal, Little Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Great Cormorant, Darter, Sacred Kingfisher, Azure Kingfisher, Kookaburra, White Ibis, Magpie, Magpie Lark, Crested Pidgeon, Whistling Kite, Yellow-crested Cockatoo, Aust. Raven, Starling, Crimson Rosella, Eastern Rosella, Yellow form of Crimson Rosella, Grey Shrike-Thrush, Yellow Robin, Superb Fairy Wren, Brown Thornbill, Striated Pardalote, White-plumed Honeyeater, Red-browed Finch, Welcome Swallow, Galah, White-Browed Treecreeper, Willy Wagtail.

Total = 35

**Bernie Datson**

#### **MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS:**

#### **Mystery insect**



When Bernie put the call out to identify this hot day visitor to his shady verandah, there was no shortage of responses – thank you everyone.

Giant Black & White Fly  
*Formosia (Euamphibolia) speciosa* (Tachinidae)

**Mystery bird** – Captured at a distance by Peter Spencer at Wonga Wetlands – 14/02/24  
Any suggestions? (check out those feet!)



**Lake Wendourree, Ballarat 20/01/24**



Great Crested Grebe (P Spencer)

**Upcoming Outings –**

The 2024 schedule has been compiled to the end of August & can be obtained from the Secretary & is also provided via Ecoportal.

March outings to Winton and Thurgoona are complete – thank you Jan, Bernie & David – and will feature in the autumn newsletter.

~ **14<sup>th</sup> April** – Mt Beauty (9:30 at Mt Beauty Info Centre). Contact Jenny Bleakley.

~ **27<sup>th</sup> April** – Wonga Wetlands (9:00 at car park). Contact Bernie Datson.

~ **12<sup>th</sup> May** – Eldorado (9:30 opposite Eldorado toilet block). Contact Gail Steed

~ **25<sup>th</sup> May** – Bright (9:30 at Porepunkah bridge toilet block). Contact Jenny Bleakley.

*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).*