

THE FIELD NATURALIST

NEWSLETTER NO. 153: SUMMER 2024/2025

ALBURY-WODONGA FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB INC.

Reg. No. A0023416K



PRESIDENT

Bernard Datson
0490 497 032

VICE PRESIDENT

David Coleman

SECRETARY

Gail Steed
0418 384 303

MINUTE SECRETARY

Helen Corrigan

TREASURER

Veronica Robertson
0413 308 940

OTHER COMMITTEE:

Jenny Bleakley
Phillip Seely
Peter Spencer

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

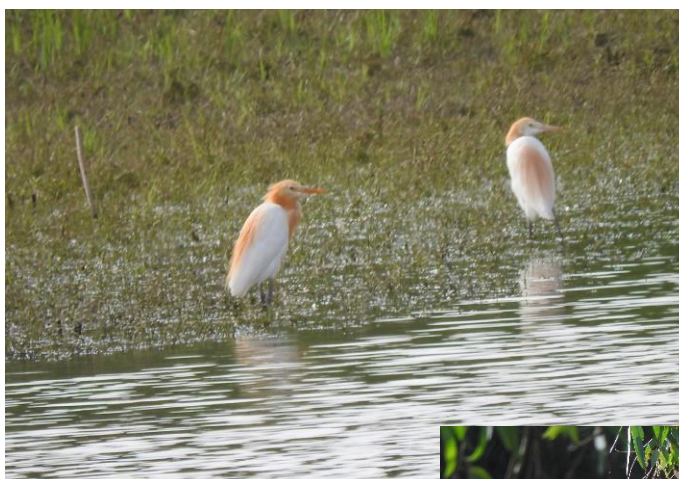
Glenda Datson
gdatson@bigpond.net.au

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

\$15.00

By direct transfer (see Page 2) or sent to the Treasurer, c/- Secretary, AWFNC, 19 Murphy St. Rutherglen, 3685

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

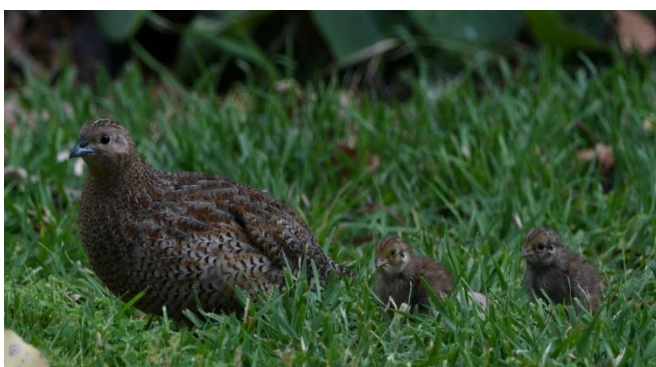


Cattle Egrets in breeding plumage, Wonga Wetlands.

Photos: Phillip Seely

Right - Eastern Great Egret.

Note greenish jowl (between eye and bill) during breeding season



A reminder of the highlight of our December outing to Yackandandah and Gap Flat Road. Numerous Brown Quail frequent the garden (and paddocks) of Jenny Bleakley and Jan Palmer. Here is a shot taken by Jan of part of one family group which popped out to greet us and wish us a Merry Christmas!

Summer Issue 2024-2025

President's Report	Page 2
Outing Reports:	
Wonga Wetlands	3
Corowa Wetlands	3
Chiltern Valley Dam No.1	4-5
Articles/Member Observations	6
Upcoming Outings	6
Summer 2024-25 Observations	7

~~~~~  
Details for subscription payment (\$15).

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

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

**BSB:** 803 070    **Account No.** 100002355 (*note - new account number*)

**Account Name:** ALB WOD FIELD NATURALISTS INC

*(The account name should be written in its abbreviated form as shown, and don't forget to include **your** name)*  
~~~~~

Presented at the AGM 7th February, 2025

President's Report:

Bernard Datson

We in the club are grateful that we have experienced no flooding or bush fires as have less fortunate folk. However, illnesses for some members, a property fire for two members, and paltry winter/spring rains that led to a disheartening lack of spring flowers have given us a less than favourable memorable year.

But as always, as a club we have been able to enjoy each other's company at the diverse venues we have explored. Again we have benefited from Dick Andrew's and Gail Steed's enthusiasm for identifying fungi, Neil Blair's thorough knowledge of the local native plants, and Peter Spencer's photographs of the fauna and flora we have seen. Phillip Seeley, as usual has helped us identifying the trickier birds.

There have been some uncommon sightings in our region. These included Japanese Snipe at Baranduda and easily seen Swift Parrots (in large numbers) at Chiltern Forest. Each year we seem to be identifying more insects and are becoming more familiar with the local butterflies. This year the Orchard and Dainty Swallowtails have been a delight.

At this year's AGM particular thanks are to be given to Clare Russell who is retiring from her position as secretary. Not only has she dutifully and competently carried out the tasks involved as secretary, she has very generously made her home available for our committee meetings, and catered for us!

Thanks are to be given to other committee members Veronica Robertson, Gill Robertson, Robbie Robertson, Neil Blair, David Coleman, Jenny Bleakley, Peter Spencer, Phillip Seely and Gail Steed for the time they have put into planning and preparing our outings.

A special thank you must go to Gail Steed for a splendid series of newsletters. It really is a pleasure to have records provided to remind us of the little treasures we encounter as Field Naturalists.

Our treasurer Veronica Robertson has quietly dealt with many behind the scenes tasks and has kept us together as a coherent and legally compliant incorporated club. Thank you, Veronica.

The newly formed committee will soon be meeting to plan the outings for the coming year. Members with suggestions concerning outings or any other matters should pass them onto any newly elected committee members.

Guest Speaker

Our thanks go to Peter Staley who spoke to the group about Our Native Garden nursery activities.

If you are needing to fill any spaces in your garden, a visit to Our Native Garden may be well worthwhile. Our Native Garden is a not-for-profit, volunteer run, native plant nursery. Locally indigenous plants and plants of the region are available as tube stock at very competitive prices. The nursery is situated alongside the Wodonga Council Waste Transfer Station Recovery Centre, 29 Kane Road. It is open from 10am to 12pm Friday and 11am to 1pm Saturday. Check out the 2025 species list at <https://ournativegarden.com.au/plantlist>.

SUMMER OUTINGS

Corowa Wetlands, 25 January 2025

Bernie Datson

We had a very pleasant trip starting at the Corowa Water Treatment Plant off Honour Avenue where we had magnificent views of male, female and juvenile Zebra Finches and could clearly hear their calls. The group has enjoyed the finches on a number of visits and judging by the number of nests they are permanent residents.






Left - Adult male Zebra Finch and, above, a juvenile

Photos: Peter Spencer

We moved on to the sewage ponds where a White-bellied Sea Eagle rose magnificently from a low tree giving us an excellent view.

In all 34 species were seen including the following highlights. Blue-billed Duck, Pink-eared Duck, Magpie Goose, Hardhead, Whistling Kite and Australasian Shoveler.

We had an enjoyable lunch in town near the river where we also did some planning for the imminent AGM.

		
Magpie Goose	White-breasted Woodswallows	Dollar Bird

Photos: Phillip Seely

Wonga Wetlands – 9 February 2025

Bernie Datson

The day began spectacularly with Peter getting a quick snap of what looked like a Crake! A careful search of the area revealed two Spotless Crakes, one a juvenile. We could have gone home with that on the list but the day provided us with excellent birding.

Forty species in all were spotted including Cattle Egrets, Black-fronted Dotterels, Hardheads, Australian Shovelers and White-faced and White-necked Herons.



Young Foxes spotted by Phillip Seely



Lerps. These are protective shelters for the nymphs of psyllids, often seen on eucalypt leaves, particularly those of red gums. The adult psyllids lay the eggs on the leaf surface and the hatched nymphs build lerps to shelter beneath while they feed by sucking on the sap. The lerp is constructed from the honey-dew sugar-rich sap exudate of the nymph. Valued as a sugar source by Aboriginals and early European settlers and so quite edible – as well as by quite a few bird species. The Pardalote is in sugar heaven. Peter Spencer.

Chiltern Valley Dam No.1 – Sat 22nd February

Gail Steed

On a pleasant morning ahead of a very warm afternoon, we assembled in the shade of the River Red Gums at Dam No. 1. A large branch down along the water's edge was a timely reminder of the risk of limb-fall.



Photo: Gail Steed

Overlooking Chiltern Valley Dam No. 1

Despite us being a large group the birds seemed relaxed: there was little breeze and the air was filled with seemingly unperturbed, easily-heard birdsong.

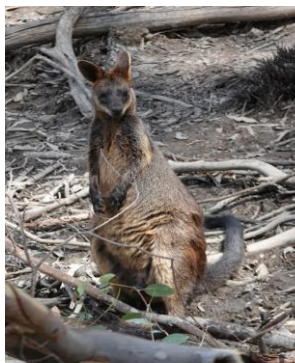
Human activity has significantly impacted the area, and the dam was built due to mining. I've also been told that sand from Dams 1 & 2 was shipped down to Melbourne for Tullamarine airport!

River Red Gums form a sparse canopy with no shrub understorey and despite the dry weather, the dam still contained plenty of water. We saw a good range of waterbirds – Pelicans, Little Black and Little Pied Cormorants, ducks, Grebes and waders. As carnivores, the many Australasian Grebes actively feeding suggest the water is well-stocked with small fish, water insects and other aquatic life. Birdlife Australia also note that Grebes often eat their own feathers & feed their young, a behaviour thought to help prevent injury from swallowed fish bones.

As Peter's photos attest (see over) there were many juveniles – the Dotterels, the Oriole and the many juvenile (yellow-throats) Little Friarbirds. A personal highlight was seeing a White-necked Heron fly 'face-on' - the white shoulder patch was very eye-catching & distinctive. A Whistling Kite and unidentified raptor circled overhead while Sacred Kingfishers

fished in front of us. Water is vanishing in the small dam on the adjacent property, but still housed Pink-eared Ducks, Black Ducks, Wood Ducks, Shovelers, Grey Teal, Australasian Grebe, Hardheads, White-faced Heron, and Masked Lapwings. A languid 'reccie' 2 days before had provided a similar birdist, with the noteworthy addition of numerous Rainbow Bee-eaters who had moved on by the time of our club visit, presumably heading back north after their summer breeding season.

After lunch back beneath Chiltern's shade trees, some braved the heat & ventured out to Honeyeater Picnic area. Again, the area is very dry and the bird list only increased slightly.



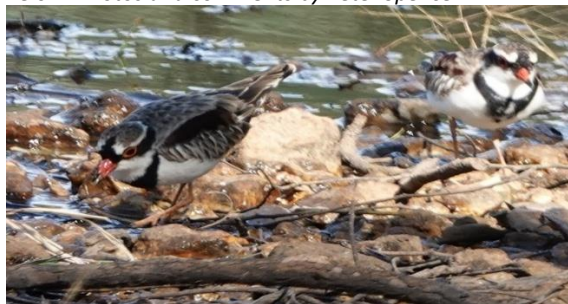
Cyanide Dam (Gail Steed), Right - Black Wallaby patiently waiting for a drink (Peter Spencer)

A final avian highlight was the aerial display by a small group of Rainbow Bee-eaters as they dived, dipping their heads in the small patch of water left in Cyanide Dam. I initially thought they must have been catching insects but was left wondering if perhaps they were simply drinking on the wing? Then a Swamp Wallaby decided it wasn't going to wait any longer for a drink and cautiously moved to the water's edge after we passed by.

Other birds seen on the day were the Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike, Superb Blue Fairy Wren, Grey Fantail, White-plumed Honeyeater, Kookaburra, Magpie-lark and Magpie, Red-rumped Parrots and Eastern and Crimson Rosellas, including the Yellow form, Grey-shrike Thrush, Eastern Shrike-tit, Willy Wagtail, Dusky and White-breasted Woodswallows and Australian Raven.

I found it a relaxing, restorative day.

Below: Photos and comments by Peter Spencer



Left - The juvenile Black-fronted Dotterel, right of photo, has not yet fully developed its black 'waistcoat'. Also, the white 'eyebrow' is broader than the adult.



This White-necked Heron has extensive spotting to sides of neck making it appear slightly off-white, indicative of a juvenile.

Peter Spencer



The juvenile Olive-backed Oriole has a dark bill and eye, not the orange colour of an adult and does not yet have the olive-green back.

Articles/Member Observations

8/12/24 - From Phillip Seely



Photo of a Cicada taken along the walk on the rail trail at Yackandandah on the morning of our Christmas breakup. Can anyone identify this species?

22/2/25 – From Gail Steed: On the way home from Wonga Wetlands along the Riverina Hwy, I went for a walk near Woolshed Road & found this unlucky Christmas Beetle (*Anoplagnathus sp.*) 'mounted' on the barbed wire of a fence alongside the river.



23/2/25 - From David Bird: We have large flocks of corellas lately that come for the marble sized fruit on the ornamental pear trees and they leave a big mess behind.

Upcoming Autumn Outings

9 March - Kremur Street (Completed)
22 March - Mt Buffalo National Park (Completed)
26 April - Sandy Creek and Lockhart's Gap
10 May - Bright area
24 May - Eldorado

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

**Summer 2024-25
Bird Observations**

Dec 8th '24 Yackandandah	Jan 25th '25 Corowa	Feb 9th '25 Wonga Wetlands	Feb 22nd '25 Chiltern
Leader Jan Palmer	Leader Phillip Seely	Leader Bernie Datson	Leader Gail Steed
Babbler White-browed	Corella Little	Cockatoo Sulphur-crested	Coot Eurasian
Bee-eater Rainbow	Dotterel Black-faced	Cormorant Little Black	Cormorant Little Black
Bowerbird Satin	Duck Pacific Black	Crake Spotless	Cormorant Little Pied
Cisticola Golden-headed	Duck Blue-billed	Dollarbird Oriental	Cuckoo-shrike Black-faced
Cockatoo Sulphur-crested	Duck Pink-eared	Dotterel Black-fronted	Dotterel Black-fronted
Duck Wood	Eagle Sea	Duck Maned (Wood)	Duck Pacific Black
Fairywren Superb	Egret Great	Duck Pacific Black	Duck Pink-eared
Fantail Grey	Fairywren Superb	Egret Eastern Cattle	Duck Australian Wood
Finch Red-browed	Finch Zebra	Egret Great	Fairy Wren Superb
Flycatcher Restless	Goose Magpie	Egret Intermediate	Fantail Grey
Friarbird Noisy	Hardhead	Fairy-wren Superb	Friarbird Little
Honeyeater Brown-headed	Heron White -throated	Friarbird Little	Grebe Australasian
Honeyeater White-naped	Heron White-faced	Galah	Hardhead
Honeyeater White-plumed	Honeyeater White-plumed	Hardhead	Heron White-faced
Honeyeater Yellow-faced	Ibis Australian White	Heron white-faced	Heron White-necked
Ibis Australian White	Ibis Straw-necked	Heron White-necked	Honeyeater White-plumed
Ibis Straw-necked	Kestrel Nankeen	Honeyeater White-plumed	Kingfisher Sacred
Kingfisher Sacred	Kingfisher Sacred	Ibis Australian White	Kite Whistling
Kookaburra Laughing	Kite Whistling	Kingfisher Azure	Kookaburra Laughing
Magpie Australian	Kookaburra Laughing	Kingfisher Sacred	Lapwing Masked
Magpie-lark	Lapwing Masked	Lapwing Masked	Magpie Australian
Mistletoebird	Magpie Australian	Magpie Australian	Magpie-lark
Oriole Olive-backed	Magpie-lark	Magpie-lark	Oriole Olive-backed
Pardalote Striated	Martin Fairy	Moorhen Dusky	Parrot Red-rumped
Parrot Australian King	Moorhen Dusky	Pelican	Pelican Australian
Pipit Australian	Myna Common*	Raven Australian	Raven Australian
Quail Brown	Pelican Australian	Reed-warbler Australian	Rosella Crimson
Quail Stubble	Pigeon Crested	Rosella Crimson	Rosella Crimson Yellow form
Raven Australian	Shoveler Australasian	Rosella Crimson Yellow form	Rosella Eastern
Robin Yellow	Starling Common*	Shoveler Australian	Shoveler Australasian
Shrike-thrush Grey	Swallow Welcome	Shrike-tit Crested	Shrike-thrush Grey
Starling Common*	Swan Black	Spoonbill Royal	Shrike-tit Crested
Swallow Welcome	Warbler Australian Reed	Spoonbill Yellow-billed	Swallow Welcome
Treecreeper White-throated	Woodswallow White-breasted	Swamphen Purple	Teal Grey
Turtle-dove Spotted*		Swan Black	Wagtail Willy
Wagtail Willy		Teal Chestnut	Woodswallow Dusky
Wattlebird Red		Treecreeper Brown	Woodswallow White-breasted
Whipbird Eastern		Treecreeper White-throated	
Whistler Rufous		Turtle-dove Spotted*	
		Wagtail Willie	
Totals	38	40	37