

THE FIELD NATURALIST

NEWSLETTER NO. 157: SUMMER 2025/26

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 303 940

OTHER COMMITTEE:

Jenny Bleakley

Phillip Seely

Neil Blair

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Glenda Datson

gdatson@bigpond.net.au

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

\$15.00

By direct transfer (see Page 2)



EDITOR'S REQUEST

Just a reminder to the leader of each outing. Following the outing I would be grateful if your report could be sent to me to at gdatson@bigpond.net.au in Word format so that it can be easily edited for inclusion in the newsletter.

SUMMER ISSUE 2025/26

Outing Reports:

Mt Buffalo	p2-4
Wonga Wetlands	5
Corowa	5
Wonga Wetlands	6
Member Observations	7
Summer Bird Observations	8

NEXT OUTING

Sunday 28th March: Woomargama

Please note all outings are subject to weather conditions.
Please register with the leader ahead of the outing so you can be contacted if there is a change in arrangements.
Registering also means that the leader is better able to plan activities.

~~~~~  
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)

~~~~~

SUMMER REPORTS

MT BUFFALO 14th December 2025

Leader: Neil Blair

Report: Glenda Datson

Nine members and a guest met at the Mt Buffalo National Park entrance just as the showers stopped and the cloud lifted for what was mostly a perfect day.

Neil spoke to us firstly about the geology of the Park. The Mt Buffalo plateau's geological origins go back about 360 million years ago when the original granitic magma was intruded from crustal depths into existing Ordovician sedimentary rock. The molten rock cooled over millions of years and crystallised to form granite. The soft sedimentary rock overlay slowly eroded away to expose the harder granite remains with remnant sedimentary rock. Then the whole area reduced to a low-level plain in the Mesozoic era followed by at least two phases of subsequent uplift, with the granite resisting erosion more than the surrounding country, remaining as a granite massif. The ancient plain is still partly preserved as the current day 'plateau'. Erosion along fault lines in the massif has been responsible for the stream orientations of the following: **Eurobin Creek** (which forms Lake Catani and cascades as Eurobin Falls); **Crystal Brook** (known for Ladies Bath Falls); **Dickson's Falls Creek** (a tributary of the Buckland River); and smaller tributaries feeding the **Buffalo Creek**. These four flows contribute to the larger Buffalo River system and Ovens catchment. The development of precariously perched giant blocks of rock (tors) and the almost vertical escarpments also arose from uplifting and erosion along the fault lines.

Neil outlined what we would observe as we travelled the road up to the plateau, traversing vegetational changes with increasing altitude. From the Park entrance, as we ascended, we passed through a sandstone-based tree layer of narrow-leaved peppermint *Eucalyptus radiata*, Manna Gum *E. viminalis*, Red Stringybark *E. macrorhyncha* and Brittle Gum *E. mannifera* subsp. *mannifera*. We spotted flowering Grass Triggerplant *Stylidium graminifolium*, Common Everlasting *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*, Fireweed Groundsel *Senecio linearifolius*, Shiny Cassinia *Cassinia longifolia*, and Tall Rice-flower *Pimelea ligustrina* subsp. *ciliata*. The granite layer became obvious as we passed The Font. The Brittle Gum continued into this granite layer with the white flowering Fringe-myrtle *Calytrix tetragona* contrasting against the Violet Kunzea *Kunzea parvifolia* and orange Gorse Bitter-pea *Daviesia ulicifolia* subsp. *ruscifolia* spotting through the shrub layer.

At about 1000m the Alpine Ash *E. delegatensis* became dominant along with a few Mountain Gum *E. dalrympleana*. A short stop at this point revealed Snow Daisy-bush *Olearea lirata* (identified by the leaf venation), Prostanthera *rotundifolia*, Derwent Speedwell *Veronica derwentiana* subsp. *derwentiana*, Hop Bitter-pea *Daviesia latifolia*, Forest Phebalium *Phebalium squamulosum* subsp. *alpinum*, Pink Bells *Tetradlea ciliata*, Mountain Poranthera *Poranthera oreophila*, Tiny Violet *Viola fuscoviolacea*, and Clustered Everlasting *Chrysocephalum semipapposum*. The Alpine Ash here is mostly even-aged regrowth from the 2006 fires but a few older trees like Mountain Gum have survived here and there amongst the Ash. As we left, two

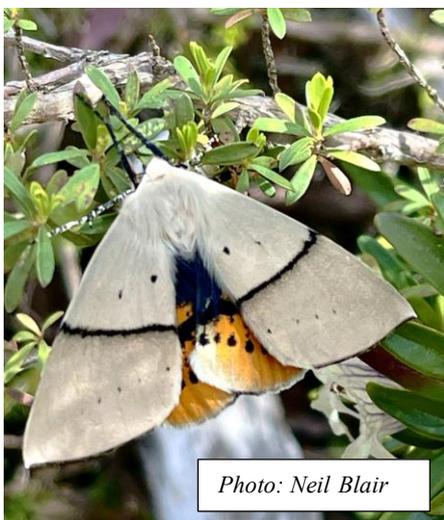
Black Rock Skinks nodded goodbye to us from their basking point on a log (see Jan's article, page 4).

At Tuckerbox Corner we wandered through the Yellow Kunzea *Kunzea muelleri* which was flowering where located against the warm rocks, and Alpine Grevillea *Grevillea australis*. A few Spoon Daisies *Brachyscome spathulata*, Orange Billy Buttons *Craspedia aurantia* var. *aurantia* and Rosy Baeckea *Euryomyrtus ramosissima* spotted through the Snow-grass *Poa seiberana* ground layer. Mossy Knawel *Scleranthus fascicularis* was also found by a few keen-eyed members. The yellow flowered *Bossiaea sericea* formed dense, low thickets along with Rusty Pods *Hovea montana* of which only a few remained in flower. One single lovely flowering specimen of Mountain Needlewood *Hakea lissosperma* aroused interest. Whip Birds, Pipits and Crimson Rosellas were heard calling here.

A short wander along Old Galleries Track found Alpine Podolepis *Podolepis alpestris*, Elderberry *Panax Polyscias sambucifolia* Dusty Daisy-bush *Olearea phlogopappa*, Bird Orchids *Chiloglottis valida* and Waxberry *Gaultheria appressa* in flower. Native Raspberry *Rubus parvifolius* and Pale Vanilla Lily *Arthropodium milleflorum* foliage was pointed out along with Tall Rice-flower *Pimelea ligustrina*, Round-leaf Mint-bush *Prostanthera rotundifolia* and Royal Grevillea *Grevillea victoriae*. A couple of Mountain Hood Orchid *Caladenia alpina*, Showy Violets *Viola betonicifolia* and a robust specimen of Dianella *Dianella tasmanica* were also observed as well as Mountain Pepper *Tasmannia lanceolata*.

A quick stop at The Leviathan to check out this amazing >30m long tor, balanced on a 6 x 3m base, is where the yellow-flowering Alpine Pepper *Tasmannia xerophila* (as opposed to Mountain Pepper) was found. This site proved a haven for White-eared Honeyeater, Eastern Sprinebill, Grey Fantail and others. Hoary Sunrays *Leucochrysum albicans* was seen along the roadside here.

On reaching the peatland plateau at the Cresta Valley carpark the heathy, grassy, boggy communities lay invitingly before us, with Snow Gums *Eucalyptus subsp. debeuzevillei* on the better drained rocky rises. Granite Buttercup *Ranunculus graniticola*, Silver Daisy *Celmisia pugioniformis*, the tiny pink-flowering Alpine Rice-flower *Pimelea alpina*, Coral Heath *Epacris gunnii*, Alpine Marsh-marigold *Caltha introloba* leaves, Sky Lilies *Herpolirion novaezelandiae*, Australian Bugle *Ajuga australis*, Mountain Aciphyll *Aciphyll simplicifolia*, and Mountain Milkwort *Comosperma retusum* were some of the species found in flower. We lunched in the carpark where we spotted a Peregrine Falcon and heard the Grey Shrike-thrush and Pipits while Jan entertained us with a quiz on Tasmania's endemic birds. Some were entertained later by singing Flame Robins, a feature not usually heard on their winter passage through our foothills.



We then drove back to the carpark at the saddle of The Cathedral and The Hump where a quick roadside reccy found Box Micranthem *Micranthem hexandrum*, Alpine Wattle *Acacia alpina*, Alpine Westringia *Westringia senifolia* and Mountain Woodruff *Asperula gunnii* (flat leaves). Bang on time the forecast south-westerly gale arrived as we struggled back to our cars. A quick detour from our downward trek, towards The Chalet, we stopped at Crystal Brook where some of us gazed over the steep escarpment. The Buffalo Mint Bush, *Prostanthera monticola* was found in flower with a beautiful moth *Gastrophora henricaria* resting in the foliage. Whilst looking at the introduced trout in the stream below the bridge we had good views of MacLeay's

Swallowtail Butterfly *Graphium macleayanus* flitting about the Victorian Christmas-bush *Prostanthera lasianthos* on the stream banks.

Our thanks to our leader Neil for another great outing. What a beautiful adventure we had!

Sources: *The Alps in Flower*, I.R. McCann, VNPA 1987; *Discovering Mount Buffalo*, Philip Ingamells, VNPA May 2001; *Native Trees and Shrubs of South-eastern Australia*, Leon Costermans, Weldon Publishing 1889

Black Rock Skink - *Egernia saxatilis intermedia*

Jan Palmer

The Skinks photographed on our Mt. Buffalo trip, basking on a fallen log, appear to be the Black Rock Skink. The following is an extract from Wikipedia which demonstrates one example of the many consequences changes in vegetation composition has on one particular species, whether it be changes through fire or logging practices.

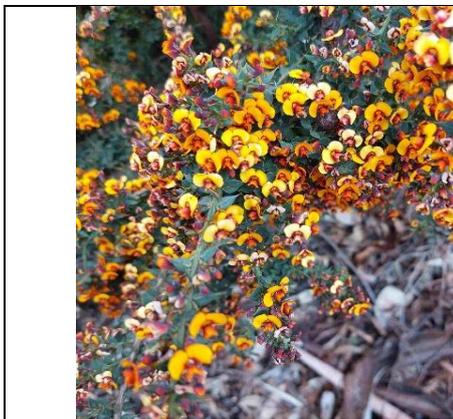
The species is locally abundant, but distribution is severely fragmented and the number of adults appears to be decreasing. *Egernia saxatilis* was assessed by the NSW Threatened Species Committee, but there was not sufficient data to draw a clear conclusion on how threatened the



Photo Jan Palmer

species was, though due to the declining population, further investigation was suggested. The logging of eucalypts in southeastern Australia has caused a shift in the forest composition from a mixed population of young and old vegetation to an abundant amount of regrowing plants and trees. Lizards that require older and more sturdy trees to inhabit have been adversely affected. However, *Egernia saxatilis* is predominately a log-basking species and features of regrowth including thicker regenerating vegetation and high stem density prevent adequate

sun exposure for these basking lizards. The absence of canopy openings in regrowing vegetation excludes *E. saxatilis* to the limited number of exposed logs clear of thick vegetation and in direct sunlight. Therefore, the deforestation in these areas forces these lizards out of their established habitats and requires them to look for a suitable habitat that becomes much more difficult to find with the regrowth process.



Gorse Bitter Pea *Daviesia ulicifolia* subsp. *ruscifolia*. Photo: G Datson



Buffalo Mint Bush *Prostanthera monticola*. Photo: B. Datson



Silver Daisies *Celmisia pugioniformis* Photo: G. Datson

A dozen of us benefited from an early start and a forecast cooler day to leisurely explore several Wonga Wetlands habitats.

After the extreme early January heatwave we had experienced, to be at Wonga was very pleasant especially as we had the company of four new faces Helen, John, Beverley and Claire. We were soon alerted to the presence of Dollar Birds near Lagoon 1 and discovered that they were in the same tree they frequented the previous year. It was a group of four or five and they probably nested there as tree hollows were clearly visible.



A puzzling sighting was that of a Kingfisher that when flashing past us and when stationary appeared at first to be the Azure because of its azure blue colour. However this bird had a neckband, so it could not have been the Azure. It was later ruled out as being the rare Forest Kingfisher as it lacked the white wing patches characteristic of that species. It did not have the red rump of the Red-backed Kingfisher. So, it was just another Sacred Kingfisher albeit with unusual blue colouring!

Forty odd species were seen including both the Royal and Yellow-billed Spoonbills. Among the insects encountered the highlight was a Eucalyptus mealybug *Eucalyptococcuss sp. pseudococcidae* discovered by Dick. Mosquitoes were absent and I guess we had the previous heatwave to thank for that.

Also seen: Nankeen Night Heron. Photo Neil Blair

COROWA 24th January 2026

Leader: Phillip Seely

Whitehead Street Wetlands & Corowa Sewage Ponds

Report: Bernie Datson



On a 40 degrees plus day, six stalwart members met to find the scenery at our meeting place at the wetlands was far different from our previous visits. The bush fire on January 9th had impacted a large area of vegetation, threatening nearby homes and businesses. We were most delighted to find that despite the proximity of the fire the Zebra Finches were still present albeit in small numbers. Several nests were found in the unburnt shrubbery on the eastern property

boundary adjacent to the Corowa Treatment Plant . Two Brown Quail wandered out of another unburnt area next to the track adjoining the wetland. Several species of waterbirds, including one Pink-eared Duck maintained our interest whilst we sat in the shelter.

After lunch at the Nixon Street Treatment Ponds we were especially pleased and surprised to see Pink-eared Ducks in many hundreds. We are getting used to seeing the Magpie Geese these days and these were also present in large numbers.



Above – Pink-eared Ducks. Photos taken at the Nixon St. Settling Ponds. Neil Blair



Magpie Geese

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 6TH February 2026

The newly elected office bearers are listed on page 1.

After the meeting our President, Bernie Datson, gave a presentation of some of the calls of night and ground birds which frequent our region.

WONGA WETLANDS 28th February 2026

Helen Corrigan

The planned Kremur Street outing was moved to Wonga Wetlands due to a Park Run event from Kremur St. boat ramp.

A group of fourteen members enjoyed a cool and mostly shaded walk, setting off along the Wonga Wetlands inner circuit trail past the old tank stand and shed.

Common Bronzewing call. Some group members were soon able to identify the far-carrying call of the Common Bronzewing. “The Common Bronzewing call is a series of deep, low *ooms* repeated at intervals of about 2.5 seconds”. In contrast, the “Tawny Frogmouth call is a soft, low swelling *oom-oom-oom*, uttered faster than *oom* calls of the bronzewings and button quails”. Source: *The Australian Bird Guide, (2019) Rev. ed., CSIRO Publishing.*

Editor’s note: If you would like to listen to the call, copy and paste this link into your browser, click on the play arrow, wait for the SKIP sign on the right side of the advertisement to come up, click SKIP then enjoy!

<https://youtu.be/7bAIQXaaVPk>

Azure Kingfishers. The group lingered on the footbridge over Bagnall’s Range Lagoon to watch two Azure Kingfishers repeatedly perch then dive head-first into the water for prey. Further along the trail the call of an Eastern Yellow Robin was noted and Crested Shrike-tits and an Olive-backed Oriole were sighted.

Pied Stilts. The group diverged from the inner trail to walk to Lagoon Four.

Pied Stilts, with their very long pink legs, were observed at both Lagoon Four & Lagoon Six.

Pied Stilts *Himantopus leucocephalus*, also known as White-headed Stilts, are now considered a distinct Australian species. They were “formerly lumped with the Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*”. Source: *The Australian Bird Guide, (2019), Rev. ed., CSIRO Publishing.*

After returning to the carpark for morning tea the group walked to Lagoon One & were rewarded with sightings of Hardheads and a Royal Spoonbill with breeding plumage.

A total of 36 bird species were recorded over the morning. A big thank you to all participants for a very engrossing outing.

MEMBER OBSERVATIONS

Black Honeyeaters were observed by a few keen members at Bartley's Block, Chiltern NP during February. They were easily seen from just inside the entrance gate, feeding on the nectar of a Grey Box *Eucalyptus microcarpa*. The bill is longish and curved. The male has black upperparts and a wedge down the centre of the white underparts. The female is grey-brown, with an obscure whitish rear eyebrow; underparts whitish, mottled grey-brown with blackish legs. The juvenile is like a smutty female. The Black Honeyeaters' range is usually arid inland Australia where they feed on flowering eremophilas and desert bloodwoods but during drought they irrupt coastwards in all States. *Source: Field Guide to the Birds of Australia. Pizzey and Knight. Harper Collins Publishers.* They had also been observed recently feeding on eremophilas in a garden near the Warby Ranges. With Grey Box normally beginning its flowering in the northeast in February, keep an eye out for these 'blossom nomads'



Left: Male Black Honeyeater

Right: Flowering Grey Box

Photos: Phillip Seely



ALBURY WODONGA FIELD NATURALISTS' SUMMER BIRD OBSERVATIONS

Species	Mount Buffalo	Wonga Wetlands	Corowa	Wonga Wetlands
	Dec 13th 2025	11th Jan 2026	24th Jan 2026	Feb 28th 2026
Bee-eater Rainbow			*	
Blackbird Common#			*	
Bowerbird Satin	*			
Bronzewing Common				*
Chough White-winged	*			
Cisticola Golden-headed			*	
Cockatoo Sulphur-crested	*	*	*	*
Coot Eurasian		*	*	
Cormorant Great			*	
Cormorant Little Black		*	*	
Cormorant Little Pied		*		
Currawong Pied	*	*		
Cuckoo-shrike Black-faced				*
Darter Australasian			*	
Dollarbird Oriental		*		
Dotterel Black-fronted			*	
Duck Australian Wood		*	*	
Duck Musk			*	
Duck Pacific Black	*		*	*
Duck Pink-eared			*	
Duck Hardhead	*	*		
Egret Great	*	*		*
Fairywren Superb	*	*	*	*
Fantail Grey				*
Finch Red-browed		*	*	*
Finch Zebra			*	
Friarbird Little		*		*
Galah		*	*	
Goose Magpie			*	
Grassbird Little		*		
Gerygone Western		*		
Grebe Australasian		*	*	*
Heron Nankeen Night	*			
Heron White-faced		*	*	
Honeyeater White-eared	*			
Honeyeater White-plumed		*		*
Honeyeater Yellow-faced		*		*
Ibis Australian White			*	
Ibis Straw-necked			*	
Kingfisher Azure	*			*
Kingfisher Azure		*	*	*
Kite Whistling		*	*	*
Kookaburra Laughing		*		*
Lapwing Masked		*	*	*
Magpie Australian	*		*	*
Magpie-lark	*		*	
Martin Tree			*	

Species	Mount Buffalo	Wonga Wetlands	Corowa	Wonga Wetlands
Moorhen Dusky	*		*	
Myna Common#			*	
Oriole Olive-backed		*		
Pardalote Spotted	*			*
Pardalote Striated	*	*	*	
Pelican Australian	*		*	*
Pigeon Crested			*	
Pigeon Feral			*	
Pipit Australian	*			*
Quail Brown			*	
Raven Australian		*		*
Reed Warbler			*	
Robin Flame (singing)	*	*		*
Robin Eastern Yellow		*		
Rosella Crimson		*		*
Rosella Crimson ssp Yellow	*			
Scrubwren White-browed				*
Shrike-thrush Grey				
Shrike-tit Crested		*		*
Sparrow House#			*	
Spinebill Eastern		*		
Spoonbill Royal		*	*	*
Spoonbill Yellow-billed		*		*
Starling Common#			*	
Stilt Pied		*		
Swallow Welcome			*	*
Swamphen Australasian		*		
Swan Black		*	*	
Teal Chestnut		*	*	
Teal Grey		*	*	
Treecreeper White-throated				*
Wagtail Willy			*	
Wattleird Red				
Whipbird Eastern				
Whistler Golden				
Whistler Rufous				
Woodswallow White-breasted			*	
Total:	20	39	45	31