

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



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Journal of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc.

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Objects of the Club

To facilitate and promote the knowledge of natural history, and to encourage the preservation and protection of the Australian natural environment, especially that of the Murrumbidgee River Valley



**MFN Group
in front of
Wallace's Hut**

2016

**Summer Camp
at Falls Creek**

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CONTRIBUTIONS

**For the March issue by
Wednesday 2 March
To Rowena Whiting**

Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com.

**Twilight Outings for February
Rocky Waterholes
Wattle Dam**

Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

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Secretary:	Penny Williams	6953 3524			
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MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THE SECOND THURSDAY EACH MONTH, EXCEPT JANUARY, AT THE Yellow Room, Leeton Library, Sycamore Street at 7.30 PM

FIELD TRIPS NORMALLY TAKE PLACE ON THE FOLLOWING WEEKEND.

INTENDING NEW MEMBERS, GUESTS AND VISITORS WELCOME.

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Opinions expressed by authors are their own and do not necessarily represent the policies or views of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc.

Welcome to 2016.

First a mention of last year's Christmas Breakup at Yarrabimbi on 12 December

Again the location for our Christmas celebration was Yarrabimbi, at their delightful property in the Colinroobie Hills; with Ana and Andrew as our hosts.

Members began to assemble in the late afternoon and were soon partaking of drinks and nibbles.

With the heat of the sun abating, some went for a walk along the track to the dam while others drove hoping to see Glossy Black Cockatoos come in for a drink. Alas they did not oblige. Various small birds were observed from the terrace, around the dam and in the fruit trees close to the house.



It was then time to enjoy a meal of cold meats and salads followed by a variety of desserts supplied by members. As usual, all most delicious. It was also a chance to catch up on news and other happenings with old and new along members alike. We extend our grateful thanks to Ana and Andrew for their hospitality.

Rowena Whiting

CONGRATULATIONS TO BETTY

Betty Bradney – our latest nonagenarian was bestowed the honour of Senior Citizen of the Year in Narrandera Shire 2016

She is a founding member of the Narrandera Landcare Group and is still very active in the group. Betty is also a member of the sub-committee for Narrandera Landcare Food Garden and is an active member of the Narrandera and Coleambally Garden Clubs.

Betty writes newsletters and donates a lot of her time each week doing physical planting and watering for these clubs.

Betty is also a member of several other community groups including the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists and the Camera Club and also regularly volunteers her time at the Narrandera Visitors Centre.

Nella Smith



Summer Camp at Falls Creek - 14-17 January 2016

Neil, Johanna, Andrew, Ana and myself decided to go up to Falls Creek on the Thursday to spend a couple of days there rather than just the weekend. Well what an experience that was. By the time we arrived the clouds started coming over and during a brief walk at the back of the lodge, it started to rain so we retreated back to shelter for early drinkies and nibbles. It rained quite heavily that late afternoon so we were pleased to be looking at it all from the warmth of the lodge.

The lodge, the Australian Alpine Club Lodge, was superb despite it being on many levels and adjusting to the many stairs to get to your accommodation was a little exhausting until we found our alpine legs. Falls Creek is over 2000m above sea level and from there almost all else is up!

Neil cooked for us on Thursday night and we retired to the prospect of negative temperatures in the morning. And negative it was, minus two in fact! We decided to go for a pre-breakfast walk at 7am – well Neil, Andrew and I did, and immediately came across the first problem, Andrew's diesel vehicle wouldn't start! So we went in my old reliable petrol one. Conditions were unbelievable with strong winds and fog/mist so visibility was pretty restricted. We went across the causeway at Rocky Dam and couldn't even see the water below!

Not to be deterred we ventured into the blizzard-like conditions and were pleased to get the shelter from the prevailing gale along the track. We eventually made it to the lookout on the Roper's Track only to be nearly blown over the edge by the wind. We noticed a slight snow covering on some of the trees along the way so a little snow did fall overnight!

Back for breakfast which Ana cooked and we, Neil, Johanna and I, decided to venture further out to check on some more tracks to see if they would be suitable for the group on Saturday. Needless to say the weather didn't improve so we came back with wet boots and trousers from the knee down. Neil and Johanna decided to check out yet another likely spot before lunch but I chickened out.

By lunchtime, the weather started to improve, the wind dropped and the mist disappeared with lots of sunshine. By the time of the first arrivals you wouldn't have believed the morning could have been so miserable. Everyone got to the lodge and found rooms and even had time for a brief walk along the aqueduct tracks just behind the village. Ana in the meantime, was busy preparing the dinner with oversight by Andrew who could be called on in case help was required.

The pre-dinner gathering was a wonderful opportunity for everyone to catch-up on gossip and to share experiences. It was more like musical chairs as people moved around to talk to everyone – it was good to see how well we all mixed and not even Johanna on her laptop had any privacy as people interrupted her for chats.

It was good to have the regulars but I was pleased Jane Paul was able to make it despite her ongoing problems with her eyes. She had a friend Niki come with her from Orange and she was made welcome by everyone. I hope she enjoyed her stay. Of course, young Andre came with his Grandad Dick again and he was his usual delightful self. He and Joanne's two girls spent most of their time at the lodge in the games

room so most of the time the 'oldies' were unaware there were children about. They were definitely "seen" as the games room had CCTV coverage with a monitor in the common area but "not heard" as there was no sound from the room. Andre had full charge of the giant TV so chose what to watch! That's what he told me on our walks.

Dinner was excellent as usual for Ana's catering and people pitched-in as usual with the cleaning up afterwards. Thanks Ana and everyone who helped – Graham in particular who did the barbie number on the balcony.



Photos: Flame Robins (right after a bath) - by Graham Russell.

Saturday morning, we all, well mostly all, met out front and pooled cars to go on the same walk Neil, Andrew and I did the previous morning. Well 'what a difference a day makes' as the weather was picture perfect – just so clear and sunny with no wind. Great excitement, well for me anyway, was the sighting of 4 Gang Gang Cockatoos flying down the valley from the dam. I needn't have worried about getting a good view as about 50 came in a flock up the valley not long after and landed in the dead trees just below us. Birds were more evident from the previous day with Grey Currawong, loads of Flame Robins, Silvereyes, Brown Thornbills and White-browed Scrubwrens seen by most people. On the return from the lookout, I came across a whistler which I quickly recognised as an **Olive Whistler**. Not an easy bird to get but these ones were very co-operative and Graham managed to get some good photos.

Back at 9.30 for breakfast and then everyone packed lunch and we were off to the Wallace's Hut walk. Oh, in the meantime, Penny and Phil arrived from Canberra with an overnight in Albury en route to Falls Creek – they arrived when we were still having a late breakfast.

The walk was very good but very demanding for some because of the pre-breakfast walk earlier and it was long with lots of strenuous uphill bits. By the time we got back to the cars, we were all pooped and needed lunch. Dione had made chicken soup the night before so that was much appreciated by the exhausted walkers – thanks Dione.

That ends my part of the weekend as I had to return home on Saturday and head off to Sydney on Sunday so the rest of the weekend will follow. Just to conclude, I must comment on the venue – the Australian Alpine Lodge. It was excellent and suited our needs perfectly. Having it to ourselves made it such a good choice and thanks to Rowena and Eric for recommending it to us.



Photo: Olive Whistler by Graham Russell.

Max O'Sullivan

Falls Creek from Neil

The contrast between Griffith at 45°C and Falls Creek at -2°C on Friday morning could not be greater (or more painful). I guess feeling these conditions even as it is mid-summer must give us some idea of what it takes for plants and animals to prosper up here.

The sensible people stayed in bed **Friday** morning, but then the sensible people missed out on a bracing, exciting and magical walk. Even the drive to the Ropers Lookout track head was a challenge, and once out of the car it was obvious that we were going to suffer. Minus 2°C with a 50km/h wind means a wind chill of -10 or -15 or -20°C depending on whose table you look up – felt like minus 20 to me! Max had a beanie, Andrew and I had frozen ears.

The first couple of hundred metres were very exposed and we considered turning back, but as we rounded the bend on the aqueduct track we became sheltered and pleasant and we found a variety of birdlife also sheltering here. Where the flat aqueduct track stops there was a congregation of Flame Robins flitting back and forth, as well as Silvereye, Brown Thornbill and Grey Fantail, and was that a Whistler calling? From here well formed steps give access to a mini tabletop delightfully calm and white in the low early sun with snow? frost? sleet? and then another very exposed short walk out to the lookout. We were only able to spend seconds out there, imagining the view through watery eyes, before rushing back to shelter. This really is a delightful short walk which has everything – variety, flora and fauna, views.

Next walk was Mt Cope with the weather barely better, and the view at the trig – nil! But the Snow Gums in these conditions get those wet and wonderful colourings.



Photo: Australasian Pipit by Graham Russell.

Saturday dawned clear and calm, and so it was the rest of the weekend, sunblock more in need than coats, thank you to whoever put that weather order in. We repeated Ropers Lookout walk (without the pain) and on the way back we all got excellent and multiple views of the Olive Whistlers which we heard but were unable to spot on our last outing to Falls Creek. The usually elusive Whistlers were showing off now. And to keep Max happy we had ourselves not just a few, but a flock of Gang Gang Cockatoos. I was sure we had a Common Skylark back at the carpark but photographic evidence cannot be argued with (or were the photos doctored?) so we eventually decided on juvenile Pipit.

Next was the pleasant but longer Wallace's Heritage Trail, and so many bloody Flame Robins that you could run out of film on a digital camera. White-browed Scrubwren were common along the aqueduct, a small patch of Yellow-faced Honeyeater, and a single Eastern Spinebill, a couple of picturesque huts, views, plenty of flora, plenty of chat, a bit of huff and puff, and by this time the party looked spent.

However a surprising number opted for walk number three to Mt Cope ... groan, I was hoping you would all say no and I could head back and rest. Today the view from



the top was forever. This is the highest point on the High Plain and the crystal clear air and cloudless sky gave views from Mt Hotham and beyond in the south to Mount Kosciuszko in the north. We passed through a field of Pipits, and almost back to the road we came across patches of a plant which I am not able to identify. Low growing and slightly whorled, in small patches about 10cm high, with leaves that looked and felt sharp like cycad leaves, we found some in bud and some with spent flowers. I might have crashed before dinner, but thank you Ana for the passionfruit/lemon gin sling!



Photos: Clockwise from top:
Huffing puffing to Cope Hut
Pretty Valley is
Aciphylla gracialis Snow Aciphyll or Mountain
 Celery Family Apiaceae

Sunday we decided our walk would be followed by breakfast ... so we

could walk faster not weighed down by food? A drive to Pretty Valley and a walk up the Tawonga Hut track (Fainter Fire Trail) to the ridge, hopefully for a view. Birdlife was very light on but the flora was more varied as we crossed wetter areas, and in the calm and mild conditions there were plenty of insects out on the flowers. And yes, the views were good – Pretty Valley is.



Neil Palframan

Bird List for Falls Creek

Australian Wood Duck
 Black-shouldered Kite
 Crimson Rosella
 White-browed Scrubwren
 Flame Robin
 Pied Currawong
 Little Raven
 Olive Whistler
 Eastern Spinebill
 Great Cormorant

Pacific Black Duck
 Nankeen Kestrel
 Pallid Cuckoo
 Brown Thornbill
 Grey Fantail
 Grey Currawong
 Australasian Pipit
 Gang Gang Cockatoo
 Yellow-faced Honeyeater
 Hardhead

Hoary-headed Grebe
 Masked Lapwing
 Spotted Pardalote
 Red Wattlebird
 Australian Magpie
 Australian Raven
 Silvereye
 Shining Bronze-Cuckoo
 Grey Teal

Falls Creek from Virginia

What a wonderful weekend we had with like-minded souls. The last leg of the trip there between Mt. Beauty and Falls Creek on the winding road tested my vertigo. I just made it to the top in time before having to heave into the bushes. I felt much better after that!

The accommodation was luxurious. The meals – tops - better than 'Kitchen Rules' meals! Thanks to Ana, Andrew, Neil Johanna, Dionea & Graham for their wonderful dedication.

The walks were spectacular with much to see and alpine vegetation to photograph. We did get to see 2 species of orchids the Mauve Leak Orchid and a patch of Veined Sun Orchids that were just starting to open, on our Saturday morning walk to Ropers basalt knoll lookout. There was the Grass Trigger-plants, Bogong daisies (mauve coloured daisy flower), Alpine Mintbush and many other species, too numerous to name.

The Snow Gum trees that were burnt in the 2003 and 2006 fires were still stark against the green undergrowth of the next generation which was half way back to the original height. As someone stated looking over the highlands;

"Like an aged man's cropped grey hair!"

After a late brekkie, we drove to Wallace Heritage Trail car park. On the walk we visited the Wallace hut for the cattlemen of former days. Note that the fires had missed that area and the Rover chalet, the next building along the trail. The next part of the trail, we had a constant climb to the snowline where there was a change of scene and vegetation. The open areas presented many species of cream and yellow daisies including the Silver or Snow daisy *Celmisia longifolia*, common Billy Buttons, Snow Buttercups *Ranunculus niphophilus* across the tall herbfields.

On our Sunday walk along the Pretty Valley track, there are large patches of sphagnum moss with interesting plants growing alongside. The small springs along the edge of the track provided interesting plants such as the pennywort family. The photos provide a picture of what we saw, an amazing alpine garden.

The views have been great with the help of the magnificent cool sunny weather. Thankyou team for organizing this wonderful weekend.

Virginia Tarr



Photos above
Pretty Valley trail & pondage,
Sun-veined Orchid, Mauve Leak Orchid,

Below (L to R) Billy-buttons Neil Palfaman
Red and Black Spider (Ambicodamus crinitus) Family Nicodamidae Neil Palframan
Spotted Mountain-grasshopper (Monistria concinna) Graham Russell



Climate Changes Through History

Did you watch the SBS program on the last day of January how climate change has changed the course of human history. From the demise of the Neanderthals, the rise and fall of Bronze Age civilisations, the rise and fall of the Roman Empire to the exploits and disasters of the Mediaeval world. All had a common causative agent – climate change.

Contrary to what present day media would like to you to believe, the world's climate has always been changing. The program began by illustrating three cycles that have a major effect. The Earth's orbit around the sun changes from nearly circular to distinctly elliptical with a periodicity of around 100,000 years. The greater the ellipse, the greater the difference in seasons (hotter summers and colder winters or vice versa).

The second cycle with a periodicity of around 40,000 years, is the variation of tilt in the Earth's axis, again leading to the variation of seasons. Just over 40,000 years ago was the start of the last phase of the Ice Age!

In a shorter time frame of approximately 8000 years are the changes in intensity/frequency of sun spots (also in c11 year cycle). Greater activity leads to greater insolation and therefore warming of the Earth.

What I have not been able to find out is where we are on each of the three cycles.

In addition to these cycles is Earth's activity. Tectonic Drift changes the pattern of continents and oceans. When South America and Australia broke free from Antarctica in the final phase of the break up of Gondwanaland, a new ocean current formed, the Circum Antarctic Current. This isolated Antarctica from warmer tropical flows, so the continent literally froze, and also southern continents were exposed to the frequent lows and fronts bringing rain to the south west parts. Australia's drift also took us from cold temperate latitudes into more generally subtropical and even equatorial monsoon influences.

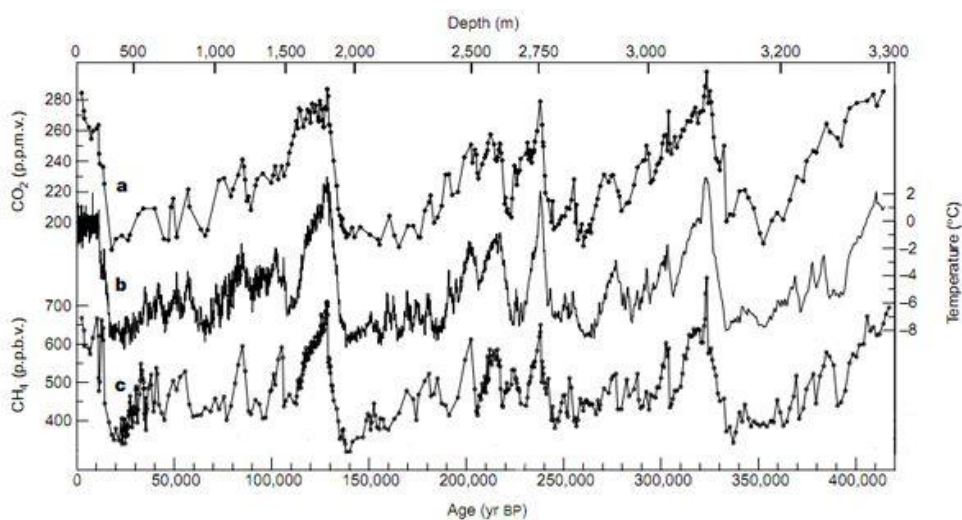
The ever moving Earth, or to be precise the mantle, has its effects on the surface with the formation of volcanoes. Every so often there is a super eruption. The last very big one was in 1815 when Indonesian Toba volcano blew out millions of tons of ash into the atmosphere and even the stratosphere. The ash cloud circled the Earth for a number of years blocking out the sun and producing winter conditions all year round. We have no idea what will be the next super-volcano nor when it will explode. Yellowstone in the USA is predicted to erupt violently again, and any of the volcanoes around the Pacific Ring of Fire could be the one (watch out Indonesia and New Zealand!!)

After giving the natural reasons for an ever changing climate, the program spoilt itself by claiming that we can stop change if we act now. We can reverse some

of the push that we have created by burning fossil fuels by changing to renewable energy sources. What we can't do is change the cycle in Earth's orbit, the change in the Earth's axis tilt nor the sunspot activity. We can't stop Tectonic Drift nor the eruption of volcanoes. We still have to plan for climate change and adapt to it.

That also means expecting changes in the natural environment. As Field Naturalists we have the responsibility of recording such changes – and that makes our hobby so interesting.

Eric Whiting



Variations over 420,000 years of CO₂, methane(CH₄), and temperature, from the Vostok ice core after it reached bedrock (1999): four complete glacial cycles.

Age in years Before Present, older to right. Adapted from [Petit et al., Nature 399:429-36 \(1999\)](#).

Frequencies of Ice Ages

Eric Whiting

Notes on unusual and rare sightings over December/January

There have been a number of interesting sightings over the holiday period and some notes follow as well as a few photos.

Spotted Dove at Binya State Forest: Last year Keith reported this dove around his place on Karri Road and felt it was possibly an escaped bird from a local aviary as they are a commonly kept species. On the 5 December, I was in Binya SF at the southern section looking for **Painted Honeyeaters** and heard the familiar call of this dove. It is a very recognisable call if you live on the coast so I was surprised to hear it there. I had a good clear look at it calling before it flew off and, on later visits, I haven't seen or heard it again. It could have been the same bird that Keith had around his place rather than an extension of the range westward of this common eastern species.

Eastern Koel in Leeton and Narrandera: Definitely a rare visitor to our area. Keith reported hearing it



calling from 28 December around Karri Rd towards the ovals. Phil and Kathy Tenison also heard it regularly and when they appreciated it as a rare visitor Phil went out looking for it in the trees opposite his place. The bird sent Phil on a merry chase and he eventually tracked it down near the Leeton Swimming Pool only to find his camera was playing up and so he missed getting a shot of the bird.

In the meantime, Nella was reporting hearing one in Narrandera and on 30 December Warwick Bradney actually saw a male bird and reported it to Nella.

No female Koels were seen. (See photo of the difference between the sexes of these cuckoos that usually parasitise the nests of



Red Wattlebirds).

Black-tailed Godwit at Fivebough Wetlands: Again another reasonably rare visitor to the Riverina, this bird was reported by Keith on 10 January. There were 3 birds just off the T-intersection and remained a number of days before disappearing once the water started drying up. Phil Tenison and I got to see them on the same day and Phil managed a few photos even though the light and distance was not good.

Brolga at Fivebough: Definitely not a rarity but it is unusual for them to be here around this time of year. There were 4 birds present on 10 January – an adult pair and two juveniles. They have been seen off and on ever since and were last seen on 30 January but not always present so they must feed elsewhere during the day and just roost at Fivebough.

Australasian Bittern at Fivebough: Still one bird being seen regularly flying over the swamp towards the old hide. We hope it has bred successfully this year.

Max O'Sullivan

Photos – above top Eastern Koel (female left by Jim Smart, male right by Max Maddock)

Above: Black-tailed Godwit – Jim Smart
Right: Brolgas at Fivebough – Phil Tenison



MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

These sightings are from members' observations. Please check with the relevant person before quoting any record.

Red Wattlebird	Narrandera	01/12/15	Roy Wade
Dollarbird	Narrandera	01/12/15	Roy Wade
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Karri Rd, Leeton	02/12/15	Barry Allen
Eastern Yellow Robin [8]	Yarrabimbi via Leeton	05/12/15	Andrew Thompson
Glossy Black Cockatoo [11]	Yarrabimbi via Leeton	05/12/15	Andrew Thompson
Major Mitchell Cockatoo [15]	Yarrabimbi via Leeton	05/12/15	Andrew Thompson
Brown Snake	Narrandera Common	05/12/15	Warwick Bradney
Spotted Dove [unusual]	Binya State Forest	05/12/15	Max O'Sullivan
Fork-tailed Swift [2]	Toorak Rd, Leeton	08/12/15	Max O'Sullivan
Black Kite [30+]	Mackeller Rd towards Narrandera	14/12/15	Max O'Sullivan
Baillon's Crake	Five Mile Narrandera	14/12/15	Nella Smith
Little Bittern [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	14/12/15	Keith Hutton
Australasian Grebe + 3 chicks	Dam on Barry Heihr's property	15/12/15	Nella Smith
Glossy Black Cockatoo [2]	Barry Heihr's property	15/12/15	Nella Smith
Diamond Firetail [6+]	Barry Heihr's property	15/12/15	Nella Smith
Wood Sandpiper [6]	Fivebough Wetlands	17/12/15	Keith Hutton
Glossy Black Cockatoo [25]	Dam on Middle Rd, Brobenah	23/12/15	Keith Hutton
Major Mitchell Cockatoo [5]	Milbrae Quarry, Colinroobie Rd	23/12/15	Keith Hutton
Koala [8 including 2 young]	Channel bank, Narrandera Common	23/12/15	Keith Hutton
Little Bittern [1 in flight]	Fivebough Wetlands	24/12/15	Max O'Sullivan
Australasian Bittern [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	24/12/15	Max O'Sullivan
Black Falcon [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	24/12/15	Max O'Sullivan
White-fronted Chat [2 males]	Fivebough Wetlands	24/12/15	Max O'Sullivan
Australasian Bittern [1]	Fivebough Wetlands mobbed by a Hobby	25/12/15	Keith Hutton
Spotted Harrier	Brobenah Hall Rd via Leeton	26/12/15	Keith Hutton
Eastern Koel [H]	Karri Rd, Leeton	28/12/15	Keith Hutton
The bird was heard most mornings from 28 Dec until 13 January. Phil Tension actually tracked it down on 9/1.			
Eastern Koel [H]	Narrandera	28/12/15	Nella Smith
Ground Cuckoo-Shrike	Silos at Pine Hill Rd , Narrandera	28/12/15	Nella Smith
Eastern Koel [male]	Narrandera	30/12/15	Warwick Bradney
Red Wattlebird [2]	Cutler Ave, Griffith	30/12/15	Virginia Tarr
Blue-faced Honeyeater [3]	Ross Cres, Griffith	30/12/15	Virginia Tarr
Baillon's Crake [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	31/12/15	Phil Tenison
Magpie Goose [5]	Fivebough Wetlands	31/12/15	Kathy Tenison
Glossy Ibis [6+]	Fivebough Wetlands	31/12/15	P&K Tenison
Wood Sandpiper [4]	Fivebough Wetlands	31/12/15	P&K Tenison
Glossy Black Cockatoo [2]	Wattle Dam Binya State Forest	01/01/16	Max O'Sullivan
The birds flew in to a tree beside the dam about 9.30am on a very hot morning only to be chased off by a flock of White-winged Choughs – so didn't have a chance to drink.			
Diamond Firetail [8+]	Wattle Dam, Binya State Forest	01/01/16	Max O'Sullivan
Australasian Bittern [2]	Campbell's Swamp, Griffith	01/01/16	Max O'Sullivan
Magpie Goose [5]	Campbell's Swamp, Griffith	01/01/16	Max O'Sullivan
One pair seem to be nesting right in front of the hide but about 50m out from it.			
Eastern Koel [male]	Near Leeton swimming pool	09/01/16	Phil Tenison
Black-tailed Godwit [3]	Fivebough Wetlands	10/01/16	Keith Hutton
Brolga [4]	Fivebough Wetlands	10/01/16	Max O'Sullivan
Freckled Duck [4]	Fivebough Wetlands	10/01/16	Max O'Sullivan
Nankeen Night Heron [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	10/01/16	Phil Tenison

Fork-tailed Swift [8+]	Wattle Hill flying low overhead	13/01/16	Max O'Sullivan
Flame Robin [many]	Falls Creek	14/01/16	MFN group
Spotted Pardalote	Falls Creek	14/01/16	MFN group
White-browed Scrubwren	Falls Creek	15/01/16	MFN group
Gang Gang Cockatoo [50+]	Falls Creek	15/01/16	MFN group
Grey Currawong	Falls Creek	15/01/16	MFN group
Olive Whistler [5+]	Falls Creek	15/01/16	MFN group
Mistletoebird [pr nesting]	Bella Vista Dr, Leeton	16/01/16	P&K Tenison
Latham's Snipe [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	21/01/16	Max O'Sullivan
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [15]	Jones Rd ,Lake Wyangan	22/01/16	Neil Palframan
Plumed Whistling-duck [3]	Campbell's Swamp, Griffith	23/01/16	Neil Palframan
Black Swan [returned]	Campbell's Swamp, Griffith	23/01/16	Neil Palframan
Magpie Goose [4+]	Campbell's Swamp, Griffith	23/01/16	Neil Palframan
Glossy Ibis [200+]	Fivebough Wetlands	23/01/16	Max O'Sullivan
Wood Sandpiper [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	23/01/16	Max O'Sullivan
Painted Honeyeater	Kidman Way near Kubank Rd	24/01/16	Neil Palframan
Budgerigar [50+]	Barren Box Swamp	24/01/16	Max O'Sullivan
Black Falcon [4]	Tharbogang Rd, Griffith	24/01/16	Max O'Sullivan
Painted Honeyeater [2]	The Winery site Binya State Forest	25/01/16	Max O'Sullivan
White-fronted Chat [40+]	Round Hill Rd via Leeton	26/01/16	Max O'Sullivan
Little Bittern	Campbell's Swamp, Griffith	27/01/16	Matt Herring
Blue Bonnet [pr]	Fivebough Wetlands	28/01/16	Max O'Sullivan
White-bellied Sea-eagle [adult]	Fivebough Wetlands	29/01/16	Keith Hutton
Little Eagle [adult – light phase]	Fivebough Wetlands	29/01/16	Keith Hutton
Spotted Harrier [adult]	Fivebough Wetlands	29/01/16	Keith Hutton
Freckled Duck [8]	Fivebough Wetlands	29/01/16	Keith Hutton
Pink-eared Duck [25]	Fivebough Wetlands	29/01/16	Keith Hutton
Magpie Goose [4]	Fivebough Wetlands	29/01/16	Keith Hutton
Cattle Egret [80+]	Fivebough Wetlands	29/01/16	Keith Hutton
Black Honeyeater [4+]	Galore Hill	29/01/16	Nella Smith
Diamond Firetail [8+]	Galore Hill	29/01/16	Nella Smith
Budgerigar	Kidman Way, Tabbita	31/01/16	Neil Palframan
Grey-crowned Babbler	McNab Cres, Griffith	regular	Sue Chittick-Dalton
Little Eagle [pair]	Nericon	05/02/16	Neil Palframan

From the Inbox

Karen McCann

I work with a guy who owns a property on the Cudgel Sandhills that backs onto Cudgel Creek. Today he showed me a photo of a Koala he spotted in the Eucalyptus trees on the creek. He said this is the 2nd one he has seen in the last 3 weeks. Not sure if anyone else has spotted the Koalas this far down.

Karen attached photos with the details (date and GPS coordinates) for reference but they are not suitable to include in the newsletter Ed.

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### Joanne Tarbit

Just letting you know the Green Army have slashed the paths to Campbell's Swamp Bird Hide and Nericon Swamp walking track in the last week. They have also cleaned up rubbish around Nericon Swamp carpark area. Both wetlands are still holding water and we saw about 6 Magpie Geese at Campbell's Swamp this morning (4 February).

Tharbogang Swamp is also wet in the basin following the recent rains, with this image taken this morning from the gate accessway towards the dam.



## Meredith Billington

Not sure if you have come across Gary Dunnett (currently Regional Manager Sydney SW in NPWS). A keen wildlife observer, and great photographer - for your enjoyment and maybe to pass on to others you think would enjoy. His web site is <http://www.sydneyweeklywildlife.com/>

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Bitterns in Rice Project

Latest news is that the team have now tagged 2 more booming male birds from Coleambally to join Robbie in the tracking program. Vin was the name chosen by the Murray-Darling Wetlands Working Group after a dedicated member. The third is called Col after one the owners of the rice farm and the donation was from Coly Lions.

Photo - Vin after tagging – Matt Herring



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## Cicadas – deafeners and sprayers

You will all be aware they have been particularly deafening this summer. Why do they deafen and spray on us?

They are well known for their distinctive calls and produce these sounds by vibrating a pair of drum-like organs called tymbals, which are located at the base of the abdomen. Male cicadas primarily sing to attract a female. Different kinds of cicadas each have a unique song so they only attract a mate of their own species.

The crescendo of some species can reach 120 decibels, which is loud enough to damage the human ear. As to the spraying, a tree can appear to be raining when large number of cicadas are on it. They are simply urinating as they feed on the tree. They have a rostrum, which is like a mosquito's proboscis, that they put into the tree for the sap, their main food and, because it is very low in sugar, they have to take in a lot of it and then have to shunt it out fairly quickly in order to get the amount of nutrients they require.



Female cicadas lay their eggs into small slits, which they cut into branches or stems using their ovipositor. On hatching nymphs drop to the ground, following cracks into the soil and digging deeper to reach a suitable spot to construct an air cell. Here they seek the nearest root, which is often one penetrating their cell and begin feeding on the sap. Depending on the species, nymphs may remain feeding underground for a few months up to several years.

When conditions are favourable, fully developed nymphs make their way to the surface where they climb a vertical object, usually the trunk of the tree they have been feeding on. They fasten their claws into the bark and shed their outer skin to emerge as a fully winged adult. Most cicada nymphs emerge from their final nymphal skins on warm evenings, often after rain in late spring and early summer.

There are about 250 species of cicadas described and likely to be as many as 750 to 1000. Each species has a specific type of song, that is, a specific rhythmic pattern and a specific frequency - it is often possible to identify a species by their song.

The larger species are underground for many years, there's one in Australia that's underground for seven years after they hatch in the eggs, and then they are only up around for a few weeks to a couple of months to mate.

Cicadas have been around for a long time, fossils have been found dating back to the Triassic period (250 to 199 million years ago). However the noisy cicadas would have first appeared a bit more recently than that.

## Rowena Whiting

Sources; University of Queensland and CSIRO. Article first appeared in The Murrumbidgee Naturalist in June 2008

# \*\*\*\* COMING EVENTS \*\*\*\*

- 11 February Thursday**    **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7.30pm.  
**Topic:** First Aid for snake bites by Mat Simpson from the local ambulance service.  
**Contact:** Penny Williams 6953 3524  
**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com)
- 14 February Sunday**    **Rocky Waterholes, Narrandera**  
A twilight outing for a walk along the channel bank followed by nibbles at the area by the bridge. Meet at the bridge (off the Old Wagga Road) at 5pm.  
Contact: Max O'Sullivan 6953 4726  
Email: [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com)
- 19 – 20 February Friday / Saturday**    **Rankin Springs Glossy Black Cockatoo Count**  
They are asking for people to help with this: evenings and mornings when the cockies come in to drink at dams.  
**Contact Nella Smith 6959 1210 for further information**
- 20 February Saturday**    **Narrandera Wetlands – walk and talk**  
An event to honour World Wetlands Day  
Join Narrandera Landcare for bird watching, identifying local frog calls and waterbugs catching activities/  
Time: 10am – 12pm. Morning tea is included  
Contact: Betty Bradney 6959 2901 or Kimberley Beattie 0487 953 777  
Email: [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com)
- 27 February Saturday**    **Wattle Dam, Binya State Forest**  
A twilight outing – birds and nibbles  
Time: from 5pm.  
Contact: Max O'Sullivan 6953 4726  
Email: [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com)
- 2 March Wednesday**    **Copy for the March newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**  
Email: [ericwhiting4@bigpond.com](mailto:ericwhiting4@bigpond.com). Phone: 6953 2612.
- 10 March Thursday**    **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7.30pm.  
**Topic:** Our week around Portland by Eric & Rowena Whiting  
**Contact:** Penny Williams 6953 3524  
**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com)
- Other events**
- 6 March Sunday**    **Clean up day**
- 17 – 20 March**    **John O'Brien Festival at Narrandera**  
22<sup>nd</sup> year of the "Australian Festival of Word and Song"  
Poetry, writing, street parade, street markets, busking, bush dance, bush poetry.  
6<sup>th</sup> NHMA National Tractor Week at the showgrounds  
For program of events go to [www.johnobrien.org.au](http://www.johnobrien.org.au)
- 31 March (entries due)**    **Leeton Shire Photography Competition**  
A picture is worth a thousand words...or maybe \$300!  
In an effort to increase Leeton Shire Council's photo library, Council is running a competition to capture the essence of our Shire through the lens of its residents.  
Details and entry form can be found on the Shire's web site [www.leetonsw.gov.au](http://www.leetonsw.gov.au)