

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



November 2016 - Issue #243

Journal of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc.

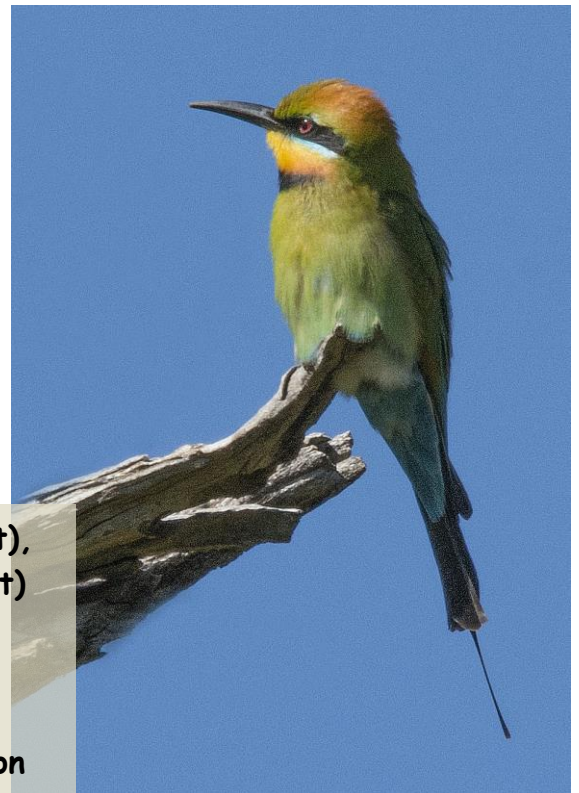
PO Box 541, LEETON 2705 ISSN-1327-1172

Website: www.mfn.org.au

Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

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



**White-faced Heron (left),
Rainbow Bee-eater (right)
by
Phillip Williams**

Taken on the Twitchathon

IN THIS ISSUE

Office Bearers and Subscriptions.....	2
Images this month	2
Brobenah Hills Outing	3
The Storkers – Twitchathon 2016 report	4
Silly Galahs - Twitchathon 2016 - report	5
Adventures with Tim Low	6
Bitterns in Rice Project – update	7
Butterflies – neglected beauties.....	8
Far North Queensland	9
Wild Pollinator Count	10
Members' Sightings	11
Coming Events Calendar	12

CONTRIBUTIONS

**For the December issue by
Wednesday 30 November**

To Rowena Whiting

Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com.

Phone: 6953 2612

***AGM is on Thursday,
10 November, 7:30pm
at the Leeton Library***

Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

President:	Max O'Sullivan	6953 4726	Editor:	Rowena Whiting	6953 2612
Vice President:	Nella Smith	6959 1210	Committee:	Johanna Botman	6963 4855
Vice President:	Eric Whiting	6953 2612		Phillip Williams	6953 3524
Vice President:	Virginia Tarr	6962 5614		Betty Bradney	6959 2901
Secretary:	Penny Williams	6953 3524			
Treasurer:	Phil Tenison	6953 4869	Website Co-ordinator:	Phillip Williams	6953 3524

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.

Membership enquiries:

Leeton	Eric Whiting	6953 2612	Griffith	Virginia Tarr	6962 5614	
Narrandera	Nella Smith	6959 1210	Coleambally	John Wilkinson	6954 4129	
Annual Subscriptions:	Family	\$45.00	Adult/Single	\$35.00	Journal only/Concession	\$25.00

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

Images for this month



Golden Everlastings – Penny Williams
Onion Orchid – Virginia Tarr
Plumed Whistling Ducks, Barellan Rd nr Lake Coolah, Narrandera – Phil Williams
Black Swans, Lake Coolah – Phillip Williams
Red-capped Robin at Pulletop – Phil Tenison (finally got a good photo!)
Barking Owl – sighted a pair at Rankins Springs – Phil Tenison



Brobenah Hills Outing 16 October 2016



Our outing to the Brobenah Hills off Colinroobie Rd started out in very cool windy weather. The 11 of us started walking through low woodland and fairly long grass and weeds.

One interesting grass that caught our attention was the Quaking grass *Briza maxima* with its flowerheads being loose nodding panicles. Other plants came into view as we meandered slowly up the gradual slope and the grasses became more sparse. These

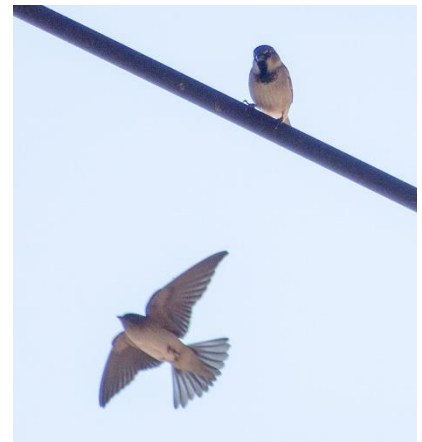


included Onion Orchids, Sundews, Smooth Goodenias, Slender Violets, Nodding Chocolate Lilies, Blue Waxlips (orchids), an

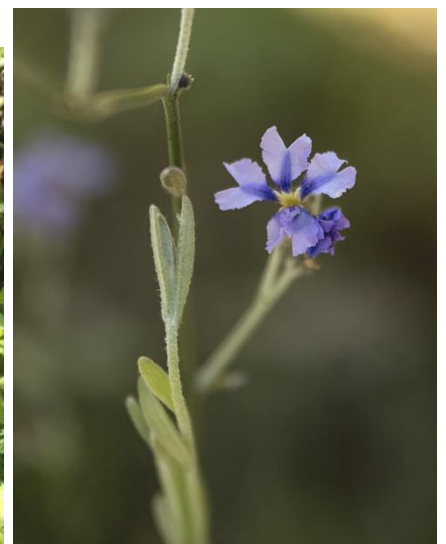
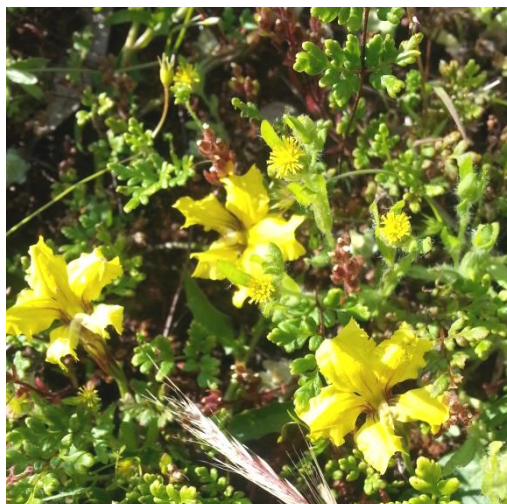
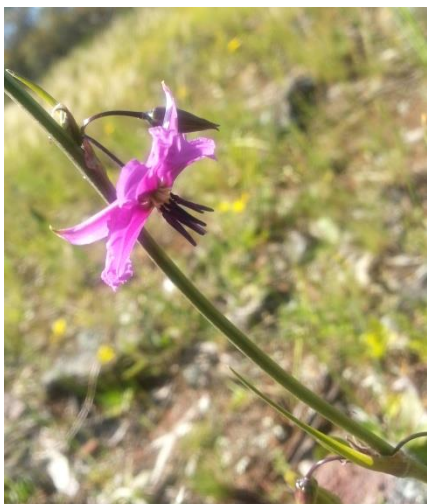
occasional greencomb-type spider orchid, a few Dwarf Greenhoods, Purple Burr-daisies, a Grooved *Dampiera* shrub and a small area of *Eremophila longifolia* (Berrigan) shrubs.

We sat on fallen tree trunks near the top to have a morning tea break, while some were still taking photos and others were observing a few of the birds that were taking shelter from the windbreak of the *Eucalyptus dwyeri* trees. We then about-turned passing by an occasional Grey Box *Eucalyptus microcarpa* tree, a Kurrajong tree, an area of White Cypress Pine to some Bimble Boxes on the lower slopes as we made our way back to the cars. Lunch was pleasant in the shade of the eucalypt trees with our interesting group and getting to know a few new faces.

Virginia Tarr



Top: Group on the walk by Virginia Tarr; Quaking Grass by Penny Williams
 Fairy Martins and their nests (above) by Phillip Williams
 Below from left: Nodding Chocolate Lily, Smooth Goodenia by Virginia Tarr
 Grooved *Dampiera* by Penny Williams



Twitchathon Report / The Storkers / Virginia & Neil

93 species compared with our usual 130+. It certainly confirms that we are in an unusual year.

The new format meant a rethink of strategy, no overnight camping, no listening for night birds calling through the dark. (On the other hand, I don't think we could have coped with camping out in these mozzies, so just as well.)

The Storkers concentrated on the Griffith area, starting at Binya before sunrise for bush birds, then going the rounds of the wetlands, with plans to get to the river but that didn't happen. We all know how productive Wattle Dam can be. I have found twenty plus species within a hundred metres of the dam in previous Twitches. But this year... close to nothing. Obviously there is so much water around that the dam visitors do not need to come in, but neither were there any of the usual species that frequent the area without using the dam. No robins, no Speckled Warbler, no thornbills, no cuckoos, no pardalotes. We wondered if the other factor was the extreme overgrowth of Paterson's Curse. The wet and mild winter creating lush conditions also means that the life cycle of the vegetation has been lengthened or delayed, so maybe the Twitch is too early this year (as compared with two weeks too late most years).

We tripped to Spring Creek in the vague hope of the Peregrine Falcon but all that we saw up the walk was a few thornbills ... but wait ... back at the car and consuming morning tea what happened but the Peregrine found us (thank you from the Storkers to the birdlife that advertised it's arrival). The Winery site gave us a few ticks but we had to work hard for them, and some that we chased would not show themselves. We chased a Speckled Warbler for far too long without success.

Not prepared to give up on the bush birds just yet, we swung back up to Store Creek for lunch, and again ... not much ... but one of the best spottos of the day was Virginia's Tawny Frogmouth nest with chick, made even better by the fact that we couldn't find the Frogmouth later at the Golf Club. And on the road back out, while we were searching unsuccessfully for something completely different, we happened across a immature Olive-backed Oriole which we think was probably the best tick of the day.

So to the wetlands. Where are all the water birds? Certainly not around Griffith. Millions in the Macquarie Marshes I've heard. Heaps along the flooded Lachlan I've heard. And there are plenty of other flood areas. So there is no good reason for a bird to be sitting in our pissy little so called swamps! We will need to wait for the natural water to dry up before our irrigation water becomes attractive again. Along the canals ... nothing. Poo Ponds ... nothing. Saleyards ... a dotterel. Lake Wyangan ... a few Pelicans. Nericon ... nothing. Campbell's ... a bit better, the Magpie Geese were still there and we spotted a solo Blue-billed Duck, but no sign of the Plumed-whistling Ducks or Musk Ducks that were there a couple days ago. Tharbogang Swamp ... a very light sprinkling. No gulls, no terns, no egrets, no spoonbills, bugger all ibis.

Sacred Kingfisher
Phillip Williams



So we had an hour to go. What to do? We decided to swing past the tip for Black Kite ... sorry, they don't seem to have arrived back from Queensland yet ... then a quick trip out to Barren Box. Without a key, we looked in over the fence, and not expecting to see anything we weren't disappointed. But outside the fence we were blessed with White-winged Wren, and a minute before cut-off a mob of twenty Emus ambled across the neighbouring paddock in the golden evening sun ... bliss.

In summary: most common bird: Rufous Songlark which usually shut up and go to ground the week before the Twitchathon

More common than usual : Sacred Kingfisher

Often heard but never seen: Rufous Whistler

Water birds: species 50% down : numbers 99% down.

Birds of Prey: very thin, we got six species and probably 10 - 20 in number.

Honeyeaters: very light on ... absent or quietly nesting?

Insect repellent: yes, volumes of the stuff!

Neil Palframan

The Twitchathon 2016 – Silly Galahs

The Silly Galahs, a team of Phil, Kathy Tenison, and, Phil and Penny Williams, assembled very early on Saturday morning. The team had entered a new section created this year called the 'Birdathon'. Twitchers in this section do a total of 3 hours birding in one day either as three single hours, 2 hours + 1 hour or as a 3 hour block. We chose to do three single hours.

The season was unusual, record rainfall had changed where birds were and flooding changed our access to places. These factors and the different format of the Twitchathon altered how we would approach our counting. The first stop was near Binya State Forest at 'The Winery' for an hour then off to another spot nearby. Our last spot was planned for Fivebough Swamp in the evening. We used the time in between to check things out at the various sites of Fivebough and a long lunch break. Towards the end of the day we headed to Fivebough and spent a very busy hour counting birds at the visitors centre and the Gibbs Road sites.

Our final tally was 73 birds. Not a winning total in the section of 26 teams from across Australia, but about 5th in the preliminary results. We could add to this list large numbers of very big friendly mosquitos.

Over tea we discussed the day's activities. Counting only occurred at particular locations hence birds on power lines were not included. In the past the longer hours of counting meant we included birds at more locations. This twitch did give us a good indication of what birds were about in the locations visited. It put us under pressure to move about at the locations to find the different birds. It limited the places we visited. We all agreed we had enjoyed our day.

Penny Williams

Bird List

Magpie Goose	Plumed Whistling-Duck	Black Swan	Australian Wood-Duck
Pacific Black Duck	Australasian Shoveler	Grey Teal	Pink-eared Duck
Australasian Grebe	Hoary-headed Grebe	Australian Pelican	White-faced Heron
Little Egret	White-necked Heron	Intermediate Egret	Cattle Egret
Australasian Bittern	Australian White Ibis	Black-shouldered Kite	Whistling Kite
Nankeen Kestrel	Purple Swamphen	Dusky Moorhen	Black-tailed Native-hen
Eurasian Coot	Black-winged Stilt	Masked Lapwing	Crested Pigeon
Peaceful Dove	Glossy Black-Cockatoo	Galah	Little Corella
Eastern Rosella	Australian Ringneck	Red-rumped Parrot	Mulga Parrot
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	Laughing Kookaburra	Sacred Kingfisher	Rainbow Bee-eater
Brown Treecreeper	Superb Fairy-wren	Variiegated Fairy-wren	Striated Pardalote
Western Gerygone	Yellow Thornbill	Chestnut-rumped Thornbill	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Noisy Miner	Yellow-throated Miner	White-plumed Honeyeater
Jacky Winter	Eastern Yellow Robin	Grey-crowned Babbler	White-browed Babbler
Magpie-lark	Grey Fantail	Willie Wagtail	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
White-winged Triller	Pied Butcherbird	Australian Magpie	Australian Raven
Little Raven	White-winged Chough	Singing Bushlark	House Sparrow
Mistletoebird	Brown Songlark	Rufous Songlark	Clamorous Reed-Warbler
Golden-headed Cisticola	Common Starling		

Kangaroos at Fivebough Wetlands - Phillip Williams



My Adventures with Tim Low

Rankins Springs Birds of the Bush Festival committee had asked Tim to be the guest speaker at the festival this year. What a great high profile and interesting speaker to have at a small country festival in a most beautiful part of the Cobar Penneplain.

Tim would come if we could show him some relic species of plants and I had the enviable task of showing him.

This year in every way the wet weather benefitted the vegetation to an unprecedented beauty. However the rain that makes the plants flower in such a way causes some inconvenience to those that wish to see their rare beauty. The plan that I proposed was thwarted by the boggy roads.

We did however manage to look at few targeted species.

Our first destination was West Wyalong. Here we have some mallee species of eucalypts that occur in isolated patches which are quite scattered in their distribution. These are *Eucalyptus polybractea*, *E. behriana* and *E. viridis* which occur in different soil depths. The question you can ask is, why have they persisted in these locations and nowhere else in the close vicinity. The soils are shallow and gravelly. We attempted to go to another location that we had been told about for the same species but couldn't risk getting bogged.

To draw comparisons from other locations we stopped at mallee patches on the mid-western highway where we found the usual mallee species *Eucalyptus socialis* and *E. dumosa* together with *Melaleuca lanceolata* again on a gravelly sandy rise.

We know that Taleeban has interesting species of mallee with associated shrubs and herbs but we could only get as far as the railway line as the road had become a river! The Rankins Springs Grevillea growing there would make a great garden plant – it was in good form.

The evening and the next day was taken up with the opening of the "Birds of the Bush" festival by Tim with fantastic hospitality from a very enthusiastic community in Rankins Springs.

Tim's talk revolved around the deep thinking, research and writing he has done in recent times about our birds. In his recent book and in his talk "Where Song Began" he noted that there are very few birds in the world that attack people, you know about it if you have ever been attacked by a Magpie or a Cassowary. They even attack koalas, possums and blue-tongued lizards.

In Australia Honeyeaters rule, they are the dominant birds. Australia is the only continent with vast tracts of bird pollinated trees. Elms and Oaks in the Northern Hemisphere are pollinated by the wind. Nectar rewards aggression more than anything. Our largest honeyeater is 5 times the weight of the largest honeyeater on any other continent.

NSW and more specifically the Riverina has as many parrot species as all of Africa. We have no mammals eating the seeds, parrots do it in Australia. Interestingly the Eucalypts that the parrots rely on for nesting hollows do not form hollows in other countries.

With natural climate change it was important to have mobile pollen instead of mobile seeds and maybe that is why we have the Cypress Pines exploding their pollen at ripening and exploding in clouds of "smoke". I would recommend that you read some of Tim Low's writing.

One day we spent searching for *Acacia currannii*, a relic species of acacia that we know of from only a few sites. This is a curly barked acacia and the only other species of curly barked wattle that we know of occurs in Central Australia *Acacia*





cyperophylla Red Mulga.

We did spend the afternoon trying to get out of a bog and walking around a forest on an unintended wild acacia chase.

I learnt a great deal from Tim including a different way of looking at the natural environment.

Some of the other things I learnt are.

Our native carrot is in the same genus as the orange carrot that we eat. It might have been brought over on the feathers of migrating shorebirds.

If you hold a plant parasite leaf it feels colder than other plants.

Why do Scarlet Mintbush flowers face down? Who pollinates them?

Previous page: Tim Low and Nella Rankins Springs Grevillea
Curly Bark Wattle *Acacia currannii*
This page: Tim Low and the bog
Polygala linarifolia

Is *Acacia curranni* a re-sprouter or is it killed at burning?

Noisy miners which have taken over many native patches, patrol edges. Fragmentation by clearing contributes to this. We have already contributed to this.

There should be a lot of old Bettong mounds around our areas.

I found some plants which I had never seen in these parts. Plants of Western NSW says "only in wet periods"-*Polygala linarifolia*. You should have seen the *Caladenia stellata* and the *Prassophyllum odoratum* and the *Thelymitra*. And the Big question was 'Why do these species of flora or fauna persist here?'

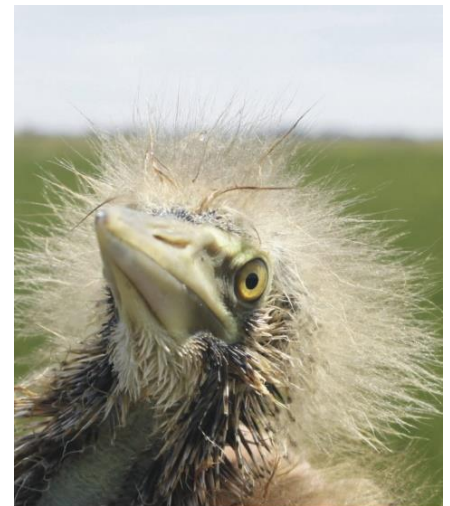


Nella Smith

Bitterns in Rice Project continues apace.

In August a second booklet was launched at Coleambally. It includes the second edition of our Bittern Friendly Rice Growing Tips. For hard copies, please contact Riverina Local Land Services, Ricegrowers' Association of Australia or Birdlife Australia. For an electronic copy follow the link [Bitterns in Rice Project summary booklet, The Story So Far: 2012-2016](#).

Also in August it went to North Carolina in September for the 40th Annual Waterbird Society Conference with "Rice fields support the largest known breeding population of the endangered Australasian Bittern" Their abstract begins "The Australasian Bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*) is a poorly known, globally endangered species with a total population of just 1000-2499 mature individuals. The Riverina region of New South Wales is recognised as a stronghold. It supports around 95% of Australia's rice production, which constitutes approximately 100 000 hectares in years of 100% water allocation. Despite this, little was known about the Australasian Bittern population found in these rice fields.



Bitterns in Rice PROJECT

The Story So Far 2012 - 2016

The September 2016 edition of Australian Birdlife magazine features a great story by Matt Herring, Inka Veltheim and Andrew Silcocks, which tells the full story of Robbie the Bittern, as well as the wider Bitterns in Rice satellite tracking project, which has taught us so much about these mysterious birds in a short space of time. Take the time to have a look – it is a great story!

You can download and read a pdf version of the article here: [australian-birdlife-sept-2016-robbies-gone-a-roaming](#).

Butterflies – neglected beauties

With the return to sunnier, warmer days insects have appeared in force. The flies and mosquitoes have been a big negative but on the positive side is the number of butterflies to be seen. Their slow fluttering flight has added colourful mobile dots to both bush and garden. However unlike birds we never seem to notice them.

Butterflies as adults feed on nectar and as such would be expected to be sweet meats for any predator. Their bright colours in fact generally say 'Don't eat me, I have an unpleasant taste or I may even be toxic' as well as helping to find a mate. The nectar is only to keep up energy for the adult. All the body-building feeding has been done by the caterpillars and by careful selection of food plants the caterpillars incorporate various chemicals produced by the host plants for their defence. This selection of the food plants for the relatively less mobile caterpillars also dictates the distribution of butterflies.

Butterflies to be seen in our area are representatives of five families; Skippers (Hesperiidae), Swallowtails (Papilionidae), Whites and Yellows (Pieridae), Danaids, Browns and Nymphs (Nymphalidae) and the Blues and Coppers (Lycaenidae). From the distribution map in my information source (see below), I think we have forty species in our area, although a few of these are only sporadically seen in better years.

Butterflies are generally tropical or sub-tropical creatures and become increasingly fewer as prevailing conditions get drier or colder.

The Australian Painted Lady, *Vanessa kershawi* is probably the commonest seen butterfly in our bush or gardens. The caterpillars feed on Golden Everlastings, Capeweed amongst other plants of the daisy family. It is migratory and found all over Australia. Another very common migrating brown butterfly is the Lesser Wanderer *Danaus chrysippus* whose North American cousin is famous for its trans-continental migrations.



The Cabbage White Butterfly *Pieris rapae* has the deservedly bad reputation for its caterpillars' preference for members of the cabbage family grown for our food. It is a relatively recent introduction to Australia first being recorded in 1937 but spread very rapidly to become a major pest. Other members of the family with mostly white upper surfaces tend to have mistletoes as host plants and one, the Caper White has Warrior Bush as its host. These other whites tend to have more colour (yellows and reds) on the undersides of their wings.



Most likely the largest butterfly to be seen here is the Orchard Butterfly. This is a sporadic visitor of the Swallowtail family though I think it is becoming more common with global warming. This butterfly has the habit of patrolling up and down its territory often in a predictable routine. The slightly smaller and paler toned Dusky Swallowtail has the same habit and although regarded as sporadic here is much more common. Both have citrus as their host plants.



Our three representatives of the Skipper family are all Grassdarts, small (less than 2cm wingspan) brownish butterflies of grasslands. The caterpillars predominantly feed off the grass. It is difficult to distinguish between the three species with only small differences in their markings to work on.

From top: Australian Painted Lady, Cabbage White, Orchard Butterfly

The Blues and Coppers are also smaller butterflies, distinguished by their overall bluish or violet colours. They have a habit of only flying in sunshine – even settling as soon as a cloud passes over the sun. Generally they have mistletoes or wattles as their host plants. A common one – the Common Grass-blue – has caterpillars that feed on members of the pea family including garden peas and is considered a pest. It is common in the family to have the caterpillars attended to by ants, even to being brought into the ant nests. Like the Skippers, the Blues need patient observation to correctly identify them, and we have something like 14 to choose from in our area alone.

Eric Whiting

Reference: *Butterflies of Australia* IFB Common and DF Waterhouse

Far North Queensland October 2016

The opportunity to escape the cold and wet winter in Leeton was easy to accept when I had the chance to house-sit for my friends at Yungaburra on the Atherton Tableland again.

This was my second trip this year as I came up in July for 4 weeks and met up with Neil to do some intensive birding whilst he was here. As I had seen the vast majority of northern species then, I knew it was going to be difficult to get the birds I had missed in July.

I spent the first 2 weeks at a friend's house at Machans Beach in Cairns and managed to add a few new 'ticks' for my year list, notably the **Lovely Fairy Wren**. The female is quite different from the Variegated Wren in that she is a delicate blue and white bird, the male is basically similar to the Variegated male at home.

My friend, Tony, had planned an overnight trip to Croydon almost on the gulf in order to photograph the **Gulflander Tourist Train** that runs in the dry season between Normanton and Croydon three times a week - up one day and back the next. I was keen to go along for the ride in the hope of adding a few dry country birds to my year list but had great difficulty as everywhere out west was extremely dry so there were very few birds about – **Pale-headed Rosella, Rufous-throated Honeyeater, Banded Honeyeater, Yellow-tinted Honeyeater** and **Diamond Dove** – were the only additions for that trip.



Max on the Gulflander at Croydon
Photo Tony McIlwain

Cairns Esplanade, always good for waders, didn't disappoint and I added quite a few birds. This is a good time of year as the birds have just returned from their breeding grounds in Siberia.

In Cairns, The Lakes at the Botanic Gardens are always worth several visits and I managed a few good birds – **Little Kingfisher** and a nesting **Papuan Frogmouth** were good additions. The other good birding spot close to Cairns is the Catana Wetlands on the way to Yorkeys Knob just north of the city.

On the tablelands there are so many good places to visit that have birds - Lakes Eacham and Barrine, The Curtain Figtree, Hasties Swamp and Mt Hypipamee National Park – are all good places to visit.

Then there is the northern end at Julatten where Mt Lewis and

Kingfisher Park offer great possibilities.

Last year when I was here I missed the **Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher** as I left on 29 October and the first bird arrived at Kingfisher Park on 30th!

This year I was hoping by leaving on 5th November I might be lucky so yesterday I visited Kingfisher Park and was told by the owners that the kingfisher was heard that morning (1 Nov.) for the first time so my hopes were high. Needless to say I didn't locate it but was satisfied when I had great views of a **Noisy Pitta** instead. Also seen were lots of **Topknot Pigeons, Metallic Starlings, Graceful** and **Yellow-spotted Honeyeaters, Channel-billed Cuckoo** and **Wompoo Pigeon**.



© Keith & Lindsay Fisher 2015



© Keith & Lindsay Fisher 2014



Topknot Pigeons are a weird bird with a loose clump of feathers on the head which fall to one side – more like a bad hair day when closely viewed through binoculars. They are basically an all grey bird but have a very distinctive white band in their tail which is an easy way to identify them in flight. They also usually occur in big flocks feeding on fruits in rain forest trees so are easy to see if around.

Lumholtz Tree Kangaroo was seen several times at The Curtain Fig Tree as well as on the roadside near Mt Hypipamee NP – thank goodness it scurried back into the rainforest when we stopped the car right beside it.

A bird, **Black-throated Finch**, that I was searching for last year when Nella got attacked and bitten by the taipan at Mareeba Wetlands was not seen there this time. It was a little freaky walking the track where the incident occurred but I was very wary and carried a big stick in case I met up with anything this time. I was given the directions for another spot which was a long way past Mt Carbine on the way to Cooktown in a most horrible spot full of cattle at a dam with hardly any water and no grass to speak of. I didn't see any bird life at all and to my surprise, in a bush on the dam wall, the only one showing any green, there were both **Double-barred** and **Black-throated Finches** sheltering from the heat.



On the way back I stopped at the McCloud River crossing and found **White-gaped Honeyeaters** and **Fairy Gerygone** which I didn't expect to see in such a dry environment.

At the house where I am staying, the most common birds I see and hear daily are **Red-tailed Black Cockatoos**. During the first week I was here I counted a flock of over 200 in the gum trees on the neighbouring property and since then they have been about in less numbers every day since. Other common species in the garden are **Figbirds** feeding on the fruit of the mulberry tree, **Barred Cuckoo-Shrikes** and **Fig Parrots** feeding in a fruiting native fig tree in the cow paddock. Also common and seen almost daily are **Leaden Flycatchers**, **Spectacled** and **Black-faced Monarchs**, **Varied Trillers**, **Macleay's Honeyeaters** and nesting **Lewin's Honeyeater** and **Sunbird**. The sunbird has built its nest at the back door around a hanging wind chime. It nested there last year and has started rebuilding the nest again in the past few days.

Max O'Sullivan

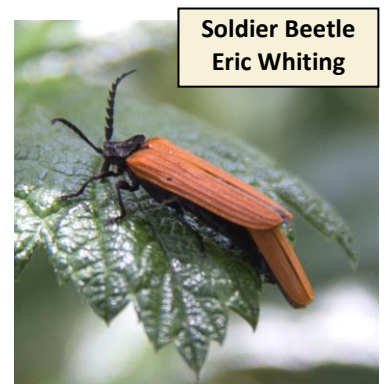
Wild Pollinator Count

The fifth national Wild Pollinator Count is on the week of 13-20 November.

The count organisers anticipate more than 400 observations will be submitted from around Australia.

Australia has about 2000 native bee species, as well as other pollinators such as wasps and flies, but they are under threat from habitat loss and chemical spraying.

It is a national citizen science project that provides an opportunity to step outside and enjoy spring in your backyard, while also contributing to science. The project encourages people to record local pollinators by watching a flower for 10 minutes during the count week and recording what insects land on the flower during that time. Pollinators are vital to keep plant species flowering and re-producing, including many threatened species. More research to identify and understand pollinators is needed as well as your help. Find out how to participate at <https://wildpollinatorcount.com/> or join the field trip on 13 November and participate with other club members.



M E M B E R S ' S I G H T I N G S

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

Plumed Whistling-duck [15-20]	Lake Coolah via Narrandera	23/10/16	Phil & Kathy Tenison
Budgerigar	Karri Rd, Leeton	21/10/16	Barry Allen
Australasian Bittern [2]	Campbell's Swamp, Griffith	26/10/16	Neil Palframan
Grey-crowned Babbler	McNabb Cres, Griffith	01/11/16	Sue Chittick-Dalton
Western Gerygone	McNabb Cres, Griffith	01/11/16	Sue Chittick-Dalton
Rainbow Lorikeet	Mc Nabb Cres, Griffith	everyday	Sue Chittick-Dalton

It is a bit of concern that the numbers of lorikeets is increasing in Griffith and are now seen regularly in Narrandera with the odd sighting in Leeton. In previous years when the Twitchathon was held, Rainbow Lorikeets were very difficult to find but now they are commonly seen.

Plumed Whistling-duck [20]	Campbell's Swamp, Griffith	18/10/16	Neil Palframan
-----------------------------------	----------------------------	----------	----------------

Some good sightings from Virginia and Neil's twitch on 29/10/16 were:

Shining Bronze Cuckoo / Tawny Frogmouth on a nest / White-winged Wren / White-winged Triller / Crested Bellbird / Olive-backed Oriole / Brown Songlark. See their report elsewhere in the newsletter.

Some good sightings from Penny and Phil W and Kathy and Phil T's twitch were:

Australasian Bittern/ Black-tailed Native-hen / Glossy Black Cockatoo / Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo / Singing Bushlark / White-winged Triller.

Keith Hutton's monthly report for October:

Great Crested Grebe	Fivebough Wetlands	There were 16 on 3 Oct., 18 on 6 Oct. and 87 on 27 Oct.
Sacred Kingfisher [2]	Yanco Ave opposite St Francis College	
Freckled Duck [pr]	Fivebough Wetlands	07/10/16
Magpie Goose [4]	Fivebough Wetlands	07/10/16
Australasian Bittern [3 or 4]	Fivebough Wetlands	At the end of Oct.

The first bittern calling was on 23 Oct. and one called at 11am on 27 Oct.

Blue-billed Duck [24]	Fivebough Wetlands	27/10/16
------------------------------	--------------------	----------

These ducks have been present in varying numbers for the whole of October.

Keith's observations are that the following birds have paired and are probably breeding at Fivebough:

Blue-billed Duck, Freckled Duck, Pink-eared Duck, Musk Duck, Australian Shoveller, Wood Duck, Black Duck, Chestnut and Grey Teal, Plumed Whistling-duck, Purple Swamphen, Magpie Goose, Hoary-headed and Australasian Grebes.

There has been a pair of displaying **Swamp Harriers** but no sign of any migratory waders apart from the August report of a single **Marsh Sandpiper**.

Max O'Sullivan



Barry's Budgerigar

"watercolor" emus – between Gunbar and Hay - Neil Palframan



**** COMING EVENTS ****

10 November Thursday Annual General Meeting and Monthly Meeting in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7.30pm.
Speaker: Virginia Tarr. Topic: her recent trip to the Channel Country
Contact: Penny Williams 6953 3524
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

13 November Sunday Outing to Buckingbong State Forest or maybe Galore Hill
Spring wildflowers are continuing to flower.
This coincides with the Wild Pollinator Count so we will observe flowering plants and record all the insects that visit in a 10 minute period.
See page 9 for further details of this.
Meet at the Narrandera visitors centre at 8:30am.
Bring: Morning tea and lunch, insect repellent for the mozzies, wear long sleeves.
Please contact: Eric or Rowena phone 6953 2612

26 November Saturday Outing to Campbell's and Nericon Swamps
To list the birds for the Environmental Water monitoring program.
Meet at Campbell's Swamp at 8am
Bring morning tea
Please contact: Neil Palframan if intending to participate, phone 6963 4855 0427 634 855 or email neil@nericon.com.au

30 November Wednesday Copy for the December newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.
Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com. Phone: 6953 2612.

8 December Thursday Monthly Meeting will be held in Griffith at the Griffith Town Library; an information meeting between 5:30 and 7:00pm
Organised by Kerri Keely, Murrumbidgee Landcare.
Contact: Penny Williams 6953 3524
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com

10 December Saturday Christmas / end of year break up
This will again be held at "Yarrabimbi", Andrew & Ana's property, late afternoon into the evening.
Details next month.
Contact: Penny Williams 6953 3524
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com



January camp this will be discussed at the November meeting.

Other events

22 October to 20 November Willandra: Three Rivers –artworks evocative of the area's unique landscape at the Griffith Regional Art Gallery.
For details contact Melanie Baulch melaniebaulch@bigpond.com or the gallery.