

The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



April 2017 - Issue #247

Journal of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc.

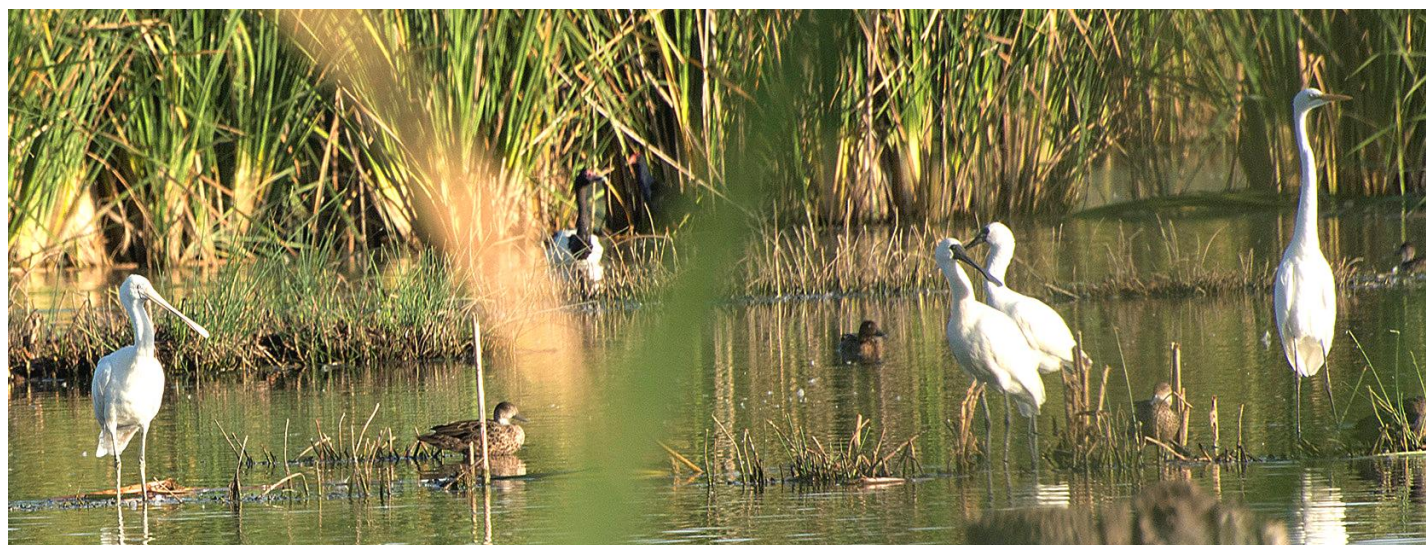
PO Box 541, LEETON 2705 ISSN-1327-1172

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



Birds at Fivebough Wetlands

Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Grey Teal, Magpie Goose, Purple Swamphen, Hardhead, Royal Spoonbills, Grey Teal, Great Egret
Photo by Phillip Williams

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CONTRIBUTIONS

**For the May issue by
Wednesday 3 May**

To Rowena Whiting

Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com

Phone: 6953 2612

***Explore the Red Gum forest
at Darlington Point
and participate in the Annual
Koala Count at Narrandera***

Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

President:	Graham Russell	0419 350 673	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.

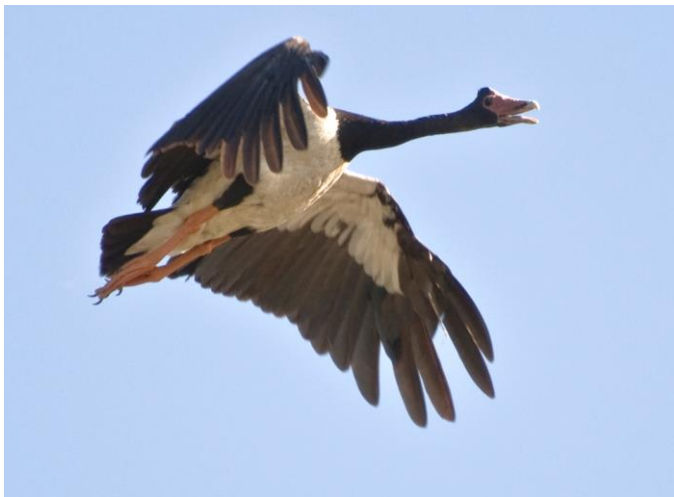
Membership enquiries:

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

Bank details for direct deposit: 062 564 account no. 10039396, a/c name: Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Include your own name and description of payment in the reference box.

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



Birds seen at Fivebough Wetlands on 12 March.

Magpie Goose - Phillip Williams (left)
 Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater – Penny Williams (right)
 Yellow-throated Miner (injured) – Penny Williams (far right)
 Silvereye – Phillip Williams (left below)



Alexandrine Parrot– Johanna Botman (below left)
 Pied Heron – Phil Tenison (below right)
 Listed on the sightings page 11.



Our Walk at Fivebough Wetlands

Sunday 12th March 2017

A group of dedicated MFN members gathered at the Fivebough Wetlands Carpark on Sunday afternoon. Hanging on to our hats against the strong wind and watching the clouds for rain, we headed off along the walking track towards Brolga Shelter to the Brolga Junction. The weather contrasted with the day before which was fine and warm with clear skies, when a couple of us had come to Fivebough on a reconnaissance visit.

We stopped and looked at the birds in the water through breaks in the cumbungi as we wandered along the paths. The scope was put to good use to help identify the distant birds. As we continued to the Australasian Bittern Shelter and to the Freckled Duck Shelter, we noticed a number of dead birds along the path. These included cormorants, purple swamp hens and a duck. A couple of dead turtles and a live turtle were also seen. A lot of juvenile birds were spotted and a comment was made that this made identification difficult, for example the Grebes. There were several groups of Magpie Geese flying over (estimate at least 50). Juvenile Nankeen Night Herons were seen around the track junction. A large group of Pelicans and many Great Cormorants were also observed. Royal and Yellow-billed Spoonbills were also present. A large number (about 100) Freckled Ducks were also seen. The attached bird list is a record of birds identified by MFN members during the walk.

In general the paths were good to walk on and there was evidence of weed control work. However the walking track deteriorated after leaving the Freckled Duck Shelter along the loop return to the carpark but this improved and we had an easy walk back along the track to the carpark. On this part of the track we caught sight of a group of kangaroos and a Whistling Kite.

The few spots of rain didn't really impact on our walk and the wind died down by the end of the walk. We ended the evening with a chat and eats at the Information Centre before heading home before the rain came.

Penny Williams

Photos from top
 Great Cormorant Phillip Williams
 Night Heron (immature) – Phillip Williams
 One of four new viewing platforms 'Glossy Ibis' – Penny Williams



Bird list

Magpie	Whistling Kite	Australasian Shoveler	Little Black Cormorant
Willie Wagtail	Variegated Fairy-wren	Intermediate Egret	Yellow-billed Spoonbill
Black-fronted Dotterel	Crested Pigeon	Australian Pelican (80)	Royal Spoonbill
Grey Teal	Masked Lapwing	White-faced Heron	Silver Gull
Plumed Whistling Duck	Reed-warbler (heard)	White-necked Heron	Little Pied Cormorant
Hardhead Duck	Nankeen Kestrel	Freckled Duck (100+)	Eurasian Coot
Red-kneed Dotterel	Nankeen Night Heron	Australian Wood Duck	Black Swan
Galah	Great Cormorant (100s)	Australian Raven	Straw-necked Ibis
Welcome Swallow	Purple Swamphen	Pink-eared Duck	White Ibis
Magpie Goose (80+)	Great Egret	Black-winged Stilt	
Magpie-lark	Black Duck	Hoary-headed Grebe	

Glossy Black Cockatoo Count

25, 26 March 2017

The total number of man hours and fuel consumed to conduct a count like this is huge and I thank you all for your generosity especially of time as that is the most valuable thing that you have.

The total number of birds sighted was 22 with the greatest number found in the Cocoparras (10) and around Brobenah (9). 3 more were seen at Square Nob.

I think the count was held a bit late as the birds are beginning to nest although they still must drink. I think they drink near where they are feeding and possibly near where they are nesting.

The numbers are similar to 2016 but are reduced from previous years and much less than the Rankins Springs Count last month which yielded more than 100. (Why is this so?)



Interesting were the Major Mitchells which drank at one of the dams near Leeton. This threatened species seems to be increasing in number which may be as a result of a constant supply of food in the form of commercial walnuts. Major Mitchells require smaller nesting hollows and hopefully there's enough for everyone or else we had better get planting. (I know where we could)

Glossy Black Cockatoos require large hollows and many of these trees were cleared historically for building and fencing. The trees which are large enough are found on roadsides or travelling stock reserves and a few areas that landholders did not clear (Thank God for them).

Birds found at most sites were Common Bronzewing, Crested Pigeon, Kookaburra, Australian Raven, Galah, Pee-wee, Willy Wagtail and White-faced Herons. Noisy miners were also everywhere possibly as a result of fragmentation of the landscape.

Other threatened species like the Grey-crowned Babblers and the Diamond Finches tended to be where the Glossy Black Cockatoos were found.

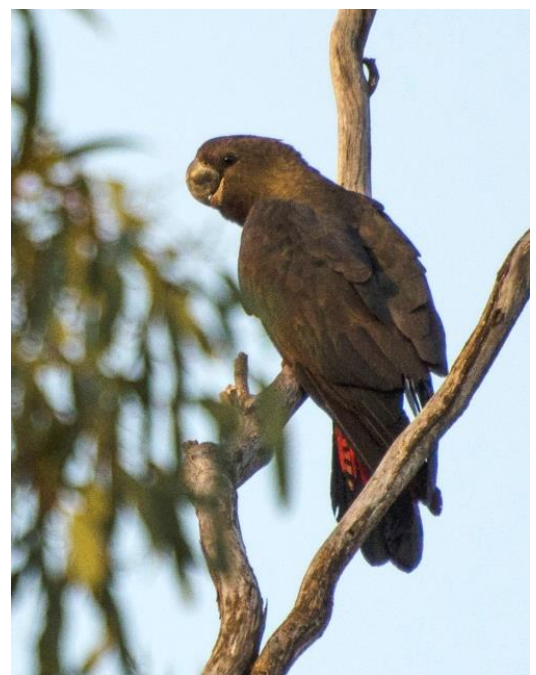
43 different species of birds were found and 4 species of mammal Grey Kangaroo, Red Kangaroo?? Black Wallaby and Fox.

Farm dams add to the biodiversity of our landscape in many different ways. Thanks to the landholders who assisted and allowed us on their properties.



Nella Smith

Major Mitchell Cockatoo – Phillip Williams (above)
Common Bronze-wing – Graham Russell (right)
Glossy Black Cockatoo– Penny Williams (below right)
Three Glossy Black Cockatoos – Penny Williams (below)



March Meeting Presentation – Allan Richards

Allan was the Guest Speaker at the March meeting and gave a presentation of his visit to Myanmar in February 2013. The trip comprised 8 members mostly from his Sydney club and they visited many areas in the southern part of Myanmar. The trip whilst mostly for bird watching, did include visits to the old colonial parts of Yangon, the capital, and many Buddhist Temples and Pagodas. So many in fact that in the end the group chose to view the buildings from the outside and not go into the pagoda itself, mainly because it required the removal of boots every time you entered!

Allan showed a series of photos and it was clear the country has recovered well from its terrible past when in 1962 there was a coup d'etat and a military dictatorship followed with years of ethnic violence and civil war.

This all ended in 2011 when general elections were held but it wasn't until recent years that the military have relinquished total control. Now, the people seem very happy and working hard to make a living for themselves and, despite all the turmoil, have maintained their Buddhist beliefs.

Certainly the pagodas have survived intact and have been restored to their original glory with gold foil in abundance as seen in the various photos Allan showed us of the inside of the ones they visited.

In the countryside, all agriculture is carried out by the people with very little mechanisation – a few old tractors are still in use and water buffalo are still used

to till the terraces for rice and vegetable growing.

Despite all the unrest in the past, the birds still survive and it was an excellent trip for the group to see so many South-East Asian species.

Thanks to Allan for making time to give us his presentation and everyone at the meeting was interested in hearing about a country that has been in the news for so long for all the wrong reasons.

Max O'Sullivan

Photos clockwise from top: Reclining Buddha Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon, Vegie Markets Yangon, country transport, Common Kingfisher, Red-wattled Lapwing, Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher



Common Kingfisher

Wild Pollinator Count

The autumn 2017 Wild Pollinator Count runs from April 9 to 16. Our last autumn count in April 2016 collected over 200 observations from 86 localities across the eastern and southern states.

Autumn is the season for winding down and preparing for the winter hibernation. And it's an important season for pollinators. Many insect pollinator species are provisioning their last nest cells or laying their last eggs before winter. So plants that flower in autumn can be important resources for the next generation of pollinators we will see in spring.

Information on how to count, identification resources and submitting results can be found at their website:

<http://wildpollinatorcount.com>

Remember, you don't need to give us species names, just general insect groups

Bird of the Month - Black Honeyeater *Certhionyx niger*

The Black honeyeater is a petite black and white bird mainly found in the arid interior of our continent, especially where Emu bush and Grevilleas are growing, however they may be found singularly, in pairs or small flocks elsewhere except coastal areas. Apart from nectar, the birds eat insects, including flying ants and bees which they may fly vertically to a great height to capture their meal and drop suddenly to the perch they left to enjoy their quarry.

The vertical flight is also performed during mating season when he ascends rapidly with some zigzagging and makes an unmelodious love call of repeated two notes. (I have watched this and it sounded like a truck reversing.) The nest is made by the female, but the male stays in attendance then assists with the incubation and feeding of the two or three chicks who, when hatched have bare black skin with tufts of white fluff and bright orange mouth. The nest may be parasitised by the Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo. The breeding season is opportunistic and usually after rain.

To distract adversaries the parents will feign injury and flap on the ground to distract the intruder.

Size: 15-20 cm.

Male: head, throat and wings black, belly white with centre black stripe.

Female: head black and wings brown, chest mottled light fawn-grey.

Sue Chittick-Dalton

Black Honeyeater photos by Graham Russell – male is on the left, female the right



Orange-bellied Parrot Update

Following on from my article on the Orange-bellied Parrot recovery program in last month's newsletter, I have received the following update.

“At the beginning of the breeding season in early Spring 2016, some captive bred female parrots were released to improve the balance between the returning wild birds when only 3 females and 10 males returned to the breeding grounds in South-west Tasmania (Melaleuca).

By the recent end of the breeding season, 16 breeding attempts had been monitored every 3 days and the overall results were that 19 Orange-bellied Parrots were successfully bred in the wild.

One captive bred chick, Matilda, was transferred by helicopter from the breeding facility in Hobart and successfully raised by the 'adoptive' wild parents – this now gives more hope of 'fostering' captive bred young birds in the future”.

Max O'Sullivan

An update on news of **Baby Bitterns, Prospectus and Night-Herons** from Matt Herring
Please follow the link to read the latest news ...

<http://www.bitternsinrice.com.au/baby-bitterns-prospectus-and-night-herons/>

200th Anniversary of Exploring our country

On 25th and 26th April 1817 – that’s 200 years ago this month – John Oxley assembled a team of 12 men, equipment and supplies to accompany him on up to 5 months of exploring the course of the Lachlan River. The river had only been discovered by Europeans just two years before by George Evans. In addition to the need to find more farming land to support the growing colony, Governor Macquarie wanted to know if the river reached the sea somewhere along the western Victorian coast or spilled into a great inland sea. At the time both were hotly contested ideas.

Evans was appointed second in command (he was the Assistant Surveyor General with Oxley holding the position of Surveyor General). His job was to precisely measure the route taken and the location of the features seen in the landscape. Mainly this was the arduous task of chaining – literally measuring every days progress by stretching out a 66 foot (20.127 metres) metal chain of 100 links. A second method used was to push a cart with a measuring wheel attached (an odometer) all the way. He was allocated two men to assist him with this, and generally went ahead of the rest of the party, blazing the way for them to follow. A depot had been established on the river about 5 miles downstream of present day Cowra, and this was taken as the starting point for the expedition.

As the intention was to follow the river all the way, two light boats were built at the Depot to carry most of the supplies. Four men were allocated to crew the boats.

Two botanists were included in the party. Allan Cunningham was the King’s Botanist in the colony, working for Kew Gardens in England, and was responsible to Joseph Banks. The second botanist was Charles Fraser, the Colonial Botanist. William Parr was the mineralogist for the party. Neither of the last two seemed to keep (or at least tendered one to authorities) a diary. Perhaps this is why they are never mentioned now.

The boats left the Depot on 27th April and the land party on the 28th proceeding along the north bank. Depending on conditions progress was from 10 to 18 miles each day. On the 3rd May the boat party experienced difficulties with snags in the river and one boat was holed. Although immediately repaired, some of the stores was lost in the misadventure and a day was lost whilst they caught up with the land party, which had camped just west of Forbes.

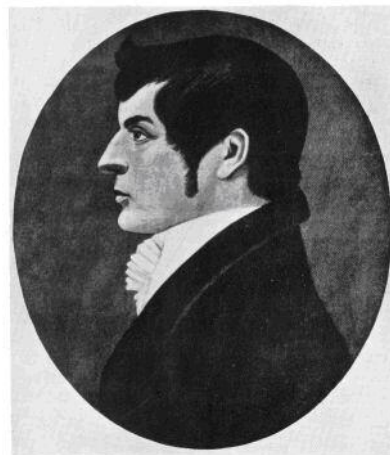
The river had been noted to be in flood and rising. After another 35 miles the river branched. Attempts to follow the northern branch were soon thwarted as the river neared the top of the banks. Away from the river the land was lower and became a vast swamp as far as the eye could see.

The same was evident along the south arm. Oxley decided to back-track to the junction. In possibly desperation he took the decision to leave the river and head south-west. He had the idea he could meet up with the river again on its way to the south east.

He soon found out that finding water was an extreme problem. The horses, now heavily laden were particularly deprived. When he reached the foot of Mount Narriah on 25th May, the horses had become so desperate that they wandered back trying to get to water. It took them to the 30th to find them all and continue onwards. Whilst there Oxley and at least Evans climbed to the summit and had their first sightings of the Ural Ranges (Oxley named them Goulburn Range) and the Cocoparra Ranges (Peels Range).

Up till then the route after leaving the river had been through Boree country. Not the easiest of land to pass through, but after a few more miles on they entered the mallee. Parts of this were enmeshed in Mallee Strangle Vine and a path had to be cut through for the horses.

JOHN OXLEY



GEORGE EVANS



ALLAN CUNNINGHAM



Finally they passed out of the mallee and began to rise up onto a spur from the Cocoparras. On 1st June they camped in the vicinity of Flower Vale on the Erigolia Road. The horses were in such a bad condition, in fact one had to be put down, that Oxley decided to rest them for a day. The opportunity was made to travel to and climb Mount Caley.

The next day the party moved on to camp just north of the Burley-Griffin Way. A patch of recently burnt grass was found here and had sufficiently regrown to at least give the horses some feed. However the horses still had to be sent back to Flower Vale for water. The party stayed three nights at this camp site. Two men were sent south-westwards to explore but only got as far as six or seven miles before being defeated by thick bush. Oxley abandoned continuing in that direction, to head back to the Lachlan via the west side of the Cocoparras. [to be continued]

Eric Whiting

Main Reference: Whitehead J. (2003) *Tracking and Mapping the Explorers. Vol 1 The Lachlan River: Oxley, Evans and Cunningham 1817.*

Congratulations and Birthday Greetings to Enid on her 90th

Enid Atkinson's two daughters, Pat from South Australia and Debbie from Scotland, arranged an "Open Day" in Enid's front garden to celebrate her 90th birthday on Sunday 2nd April.

The Autumn day was perfect with a clear sky and a soft breeze. Friends and relatives were welcomed between 2-5pm by a beaming Enid.

This remarkable lady has been such a mentor to so many Nature lovers, imparting her knowledge of the bush and local terrain.

Back in the early nineties, Enid introduced June Sell and myself to the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists which consequently created a Griffith Branch run by Bill Moller and held at the D.P.I. station.

Enid has retained a great deal of her experiences with the Field Nats and it was such a delight to have her reminisce.

Well done Enid, you are a Legend.

Sue Chittick-Dalton

Nature abounds

Maybe it is true that small things amuse small minds, but if you were sitting on my front porch watching the antics between a baby skink and some tiny black ants, I am sure you would be amused too. I had dropped a few crumbs of cake which the ants found immediately. A baby skink emerged and studied the scene then tried to dislodge a morsel from food but couldn't, so as each little ant carried their smaller prize, the skink would lunge and steal it from their grasp. Every little ant was robbed but returned to replace their loss only to have the theft repeated.

You can never be bored if you watch nature.

Sue Chittick-Dalton



Enid where she is happiest - in the bush!
Taken in December 2014 by Rowena Whiting

Another of our nonagenarian members, cameleer John Wilkinson, a rare cuddle with a camel. Normally camels would never do this, it just put its head over his shoulder as he was looking at his GPS in the desert.



Discovery of more Night Parrots in Qld and WA

On 23rd March 2017 on the Birding-aus birdline, there were 2 reports of new sightings of the once thought extinct Night Parrot.

John Young had found the first birds in 2014 in western Queensland and a conservation management plan was set-up to protect the birds and seal off the area where they were discovered so as not to disturb them.

Since then, John has discovered more areas with populations of these birds. The most recent one was at Goneaway National Park in far western Queensland. So remote is this park that there are no roads into the area so the birds should be left alone, hopefully.



PHOTO: The discovery is the first confirmed sighting of a night parrot in WA for nearly a century. (Supplied: Bruce Greatwich)

After much carry-on from the birding world for the release of the call of the Night Parrot, John finally agreed to have it published in the hope that more people will be able to discover more isolated populations across northern Australia. The birds only call at night and it is extremely difficult to see the birds in the daytime.

That is until the most recent discovery was made somewhere in northern Western Australia when 4 birders went in search of the birds in a selected area there. The group had studied maps of likely spinifex rich country before setting out on their quest.

“The sighting was all the more remarkable when you consider that the Night Parrot was not confirmed as still alive in Australia until 3 years ago and that the photograph was taken in a patch of spinifex 2000km from where the bird was rediscovered in western Queensland.

While the group described the parrot as a 'fat budgerigar', the sighting was the equivalent of winning the bird-watching lotto.

The night before the sighting, we actually heard the birds, which sounded very unusual to us, actually. We couldn't sleep, we were just pondering the question 'what was making that noise?'

There were quite a few of them, there was at least 5 or 6 calling around us, but felt, because of the habitat, they could be Night Parrots.

The next day we walked out into that area and one just burst out from under our feet from the spinifex. In that moment, Bruce (Greatwich) managed to take a photo of it flying off.”

The 4 members of the team were Adrian Boyle, Nigel Jackett, George Swann and photographer Bruce Greatwich.

Max O'Sullivan

(Taken from the Press Release via the ABC website).

Key Biodiversity Areas

Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) are nature's hotspots (they were called Important Bird Areas). They are the most important places left for life on earth. Australia's KBAs are the irreplaceable homes of birds and other wildlife that make our country unique – they are places we love. And many are closer than you might think. Despite their global significance, many KBAs don't receive the protection they deserve. As a result, the health of these special places is in decline. But we can turn this around. BirdLife Australia is working with local communities to improve recognition of the value of these places, and finding solutions to the threats they face.

Everyone can play a role in safeguarding the future of Australia's nature hotspots – will you join us? Find out more <http://www.birdlife.org.au/>

MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

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

Nankeen Night Heron [4]	Narrandera Wetlands	05/03/17	Warwick Bradney
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [4]	Ross Cres. Griffith	05/03/17	Virginia Tarr
Cockies were feeding on Virginia's neighbour's walnut tree.			
Mallee Ringneck [5]	Ross Cres. Griffith	05/03/17	Virginia Tarr
Noisy Friarbird [1]	Mountain Dam via Leeton	05/03/17	Graham Russell
Little Eagle [1]	Hillston Rd, Griffith	05/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
Superb Parrot [male]	Kookora St, Griffith	05/03/17	Allan Richards
Marsh Sandpiper [1]	Campbell's Swamp Griffith	05/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
Black-tailed Native-hen [8]	Campbell's Swamp Griffith	05/03/17	Allan Richards
Crested Bellbird [1]	Spring Hill, Cocoparra National Park	05/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
Painted Button-quail [1]	Spring Hill, Cocoparra National Park	05/03/17	Allan Richards
Spotted Pardalote [1]	Spring Hill, Cocoparra National Park	05/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
Nankeen Night Heron [29]	Fivebough Wetlands	05/03/17	Keith Hutton
Gull-billed Tern [4 juv]	Fivebough Wetlands	05/03/17	Keith Hutton
Glossy Ibis [100]	Fivebough Wetlands	05/03/17	Keith Hutton
Red-capped Plover [12]	Fivebough Wetlands	05/03/17	Keith Hutton
Red-necked Avocet [7]	Fivebough Wetlands	05/03/17	Keith Hutton
Blue-faced Honeyeater [4]	Cutler Ave, Griffith	06/03/17	Virginia Tarr
Red Wattlebird [5]	Cutler Ave, Griffith	06/03/17	Virginia Tarr
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo [2]	Cutler Ave, Griffith	06/03/17	Virginia Tarr

This White Cocky is not a common sight in Griffith and adds to Neil's sighting at Nericon.

Masked Woodswallow [8]	Evans Smyles Rd, Leeton	06/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
White-browed Woodswallow [100]	Evans Smyles Rd, Leeton	06/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
Ground Cuckoo-shrike [2]	Round Hill Rd via Leeton	06/03/17	Allan Richards
Plumed Whistling-duck [50+]	Round Hill Rd dam via Leeton	06/03/17	Allan Richards
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [12]	Mountain Dam via Leeton	07/03/17	Graham Russell
Black-faced Woodswallow [4]	Barren Box Swamp	07/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
White-fronted Chat [12]	Barren Box Swamp	07/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
Common Greenshank [1]	Barren Box Swamp	07/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
Gull-billed Tern [6]	Barren Box Swamp	07/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
Caspian Tern [8]	Barren Box Swamp	07/03/17	Allan Richards
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper [8]	Campbell's Swamp, Griffith	07/03/17	Allan Richards
Magpie Goose [40+]	Campbell's Swamp, Griffith	07/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
Goanna	Koonadan at Peter Draper's place	07/03/17	Peter Draper

This is the first goanna Peter has seen on his property in 33 years.

Gull-billed Tern [15 incl 9 imm]	Fivebough Wetlands	07/03/17	Keith Hutton
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo [3]	Freedom Foods, Stanbridge	08/03/17	Graham Russell
Australian Shelduck [3]	Fivebough Wetlands	09/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
Alexandrine Parrot [1]	Gordon Ave, Griffith	09/03/17	June Sell

This parrot has been coming to June's bird feeder along with Rainbow Lorikeets for over a week – definitely an aviary escapee. This is the same species that Nella, Neil and I saw in Griffith a few years ago.

Freckled Duck [100+]	Fivebough Wetlands	12/03/17	MFN outing
Magpie Goose [80+]	Fivebough Wetlands	12/03/17	MFN outing
Plumed Whistling-duck [10+]	Fivebough Wetlands	12/03/17	MFN outing
Spotted Bowerbird [2]	Caravan Park Rankins Springs	18/03/17	Max O'Sullivan

I had driven up Eight Mile Rd in search of the Black Honeyeaters reported in last month's newsletter but found none – it was very windy at the time. I drove through that road to Rankins Springs and stopped at the picnic area beside the caravan park camping area and saw the bowerbirds straight away. Not sure if any campers staying over the Cocky Count weekend saw them or not – apparently some early arrivals did.

Brolga [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	19/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
Red-necked Avocet [10]	Fivebough Wetlands	19/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper [15+]	Fivebough Wetlands	19/03/17	Max O'Sullivan

Great Cormorant [>300 roosting]	Fivebough Wetlands	19/03/17	Keith Hutton
Silver Gull [420]	Fivebough Wetlands	19/03/17	Keith Hutton
Royal Spoonbill [7]	Fivebough Wetlands	19/03/17	Keith Hutton
Yellow-billed Spoonbill [36]	Fivebough Wetlands	19/03/17	Keith Hutton
Magpie Goose [100]	Fivebough Wetlands	19/03/17	Keith Hutton
Whistling Kite [5]	Fivebough Wetlands	19/03/17	Keith Hutton
Darter [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	19/03/17	Keith Hutton
Freckled Duck [8]	Fivebough Wetlands	19/03/17	Keith Hutton
Red-necked Avocet [8]	Fivebough Wetlands	19/03/17	Keith Hutton
Magpie Goose [235 flying in]	Fivebough Wetlands	20/03/17	Keith Hutton
Glossy Black Cockatoo [3]	Spring Hill Cocoparra National Park	21/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
One bird flew over around 10am heading towards Wattle Dam and then later 2 more flew back in the opposite direction.			
Fan-tailed Cuckoo [1]	Spring Hill Cocoparra National Park	21/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
Crested Bellbird [2]	Spring Hill Cocoparra National Park	21/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
Leaden Flycatcher [fem]	Spring Hill Cocoparra National Park	21/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
Great Crested Grebe [3]	Causeway at Lake Wyangan	21/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
There were a two adult birds and one immature close to the causeway.			
White-bellied Sea-Eagle [1 juv]	Fivebough Wetlands	22/03/17	Keith Hutton
Ground Cuckoo-Shrike [2]	Koonadan Rd, Leeton	23/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
Brolga [2]	Peter Draper's farm at Koonadan	29/03/17	Peter Draper
Wedge-tailed Eagle [pr]	Peter's farm Koonadan	29/03/17	Peter Draper
Pelican [152]	Fivebough Wetlands	30/03/17	Keith Hutton
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper [3]	Fivebough Wetlands	30/03/17	Keith Hutton
Red-capped Plover [22]	Fivebough Wetlands	30/03/17	Keith Hutton
Black-tailed Native-hen [3]	Fivebough Wetlands	30/03/17	Keith Hutton
Noisy Friarbird [6]	Melaleuca Ave, Leeton	31/03/17	Max O'Sullivan
Brolga [5]	Fivebough Wetlands	01/04/17	Keith Hutton
Red-necked Avocet [24]	Fivebough Wetlands	02/04/17	Max O'Sullivan
Superb Parrot [12]	Road to Barry Heihl's property Leeton	02/04/17	Max O'Sullivan

Comings and Goings:

It is interesting to see how things are changing at this time of year:

The **Night Herons** have gone from both Fivebough and the Basin Dam after being present all summer in large numbers including many juvenile birds. The **Magpie Geese** have left their Fivebough day roost and have now relocated to the dam in Petersham Road near the Brobenah Road intersection. Also gone are the terns and most of the **Glossy Ibis** – not unexpected though for this time of year.

Birds starting to return are **Brolgas, Shelducks, Red-capped Plovers and Avocets** all have been either missing or very scarce over summer.

Sue's Birds in her Front Yard: Sue Chittick-Dalton has daily visits from a variety of local birds that make use of her bird bath and, more surprisingly, her car! Every afternoon a family of up to 8 **Grey-crowned Babblers** hoon around on the front windscreen of her car parked in her carport. She feared they were picking at the rubber seal around the windscreen but on close inspection from inside her house looking through the screen door it would seem they are merely searching for insects that have hit the screen and fallen into the drain below. They also play around the rear vision mirror taking it in turns to look at themselves. They then fly off to the bird bath have a drink and head back to Scenic Hill. Other regular visitors are thornbills, honeyeaters, peewees and magpies – the usual town birds. There is also a regular flyover of **Major Mitchells** twice a day – one, in the mornings, coming from their overnight roost in the golf course heading into the town somewhere and the other in the late afternoon on their return.

Sighting Record accepted:

Pied Heron Lake Coolah via Narrandera 29/12/16 Max, Keith & Phil T

The **NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee** has officially accepted the above sighting as the 7th confirmed record for NSW thanks mainly to Phil Tenison's photos of the bird.

Since then there have been reports of the Pied Herons breeding just south of Condoblin (Warren Chad) and more recently of at least 4 pairs breeding at a rookery at Red Bank north of Yanga National Park, Balranald (James Maguire).

**** COMING EVENTS ****

- 13 April Thursday** **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7.30pm.
Topic: Andrew Thompson will talk about the conservation order he has on his farm, 'Yarrabimbi'.
Contact: Graham Russell 0419 350 673
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- 14-16 April** **Mid-Murray Field Naturalist Club 50th anniversary-** Dinner, campout, excursions.
Easter Bush camp at Wandown Flora and Fauna Reserve (Swan Hill area). Basic facilities only. Excursions to nearby reserves including the Boundary Bend area.
For more information contact Eric or Rowena 6953 2612.
Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com.
- 29 April Saturday** **Murrumbidgee Valley National Park**
Meet at the Rotary Park, Darlington Point at 8:30am.
Bring morning tea and lunch.
Contact Eric or Rowena Whiting 6953 2612
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- 30 April Sunday** **Annual Koala Count at Narrandera Common**
Contact Betty Bradney 6959 2901
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- 3 May Wednesday** **Copy for the May newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**
Email: ericwhiting4@bigpond.com. Phone: 6953 2612.
- 5-7 May weekend** **Camp at Whroo, near Rushworth, Victoria – Ironbark Forest**
Friday to Sunday This will be self sufficient camping, there is accommodation available in Rushworth at the Budget Motel (15 minutes from camp). More details will be sent by email.
Organisers Graham & Dione Russell. Phone (Dione) 0428 536 290
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- 11 May Thursday** **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7.30pm.
Topic: To be decided
Contact: Penny Williams 6953 3524.
Email: murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com.
- 27, 28 May w/e** A vegetation survey is being planned for **Ingleba Nature Reserve** (near Temora).
Date is still to be confirmed. Expressions of interest to Nella Smith 6959 1210.
- 9 October – Monday onwards - A biodiversity survey at Yathong of the reserve is planned.**
please contact Nella Smith 6059 1210 if you are interested.
- Other events**
- 9-16 April** **Wild Pollinator Count** is on and you are invited to watch a flowering plant in your garden or local park for 10 minutes on any sunny day during the week of April 9th to 12th and submit your observations of insect visitors via the website:
<http://wildpollinatorcount.com>
- 25 April – 2 May** **Biodiversity Survey – South West Woodlands National Park**
Self sufficient camping. Expressions of interest to Nella Smith 6959 1210.