

Castlemaine Naturalist

February 2023

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**Monthly newsletter of the
Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.**



Grevillea obtecta. The focus of our Feb events, see p. 11. Photo: John Walter

End of the Year Members' Meeting

After a year full of memorable events, the greatest of which were the destructive but awesome rain events from July through to late October, members gathered on December 9th at the Uniting Church Hall to share their best nature sightings. Sadly the picnic planned for the following Tuesday had to be cancelled because of inclement weather.

Kerrie Jennings: Rescuing a Distressed Whistling Kite

Kerrie had some good news on the recovery of an injured juvenile Whistling Kite she found amongst the flood debris on the river bank at their property after the large flood event last year, as reported at our November Monthly meeting. After rescue, a vet found the bird to be emaciated with water on its lungs. However the bird improved in the hands of a specialised raptor carer over several weeks, where it was taught to fly and hunt, and had physio/muscle strengthening. It was then returned to the property and released. Kerrie fed the bird with supplied rats for a few days but then left it to hunt for itself. "We don't know, but often wonder if he 'made it' and is visiting the Red Gums around Baringhup or has travelled far off to find a mate and new home. We may never know but we do know that we all gave him his best chance. Soar high and safe 'WK' you take part of us with you."



Release 22 Nov 2022



Soaring high 25 Nov 2022

Geraldine Harris: Plants - The Same / Not the Same

Caladenia phaeoclavia and *Caladenia parva* were once distinct species that shared many characteristics. When pollinator research by Colin Bower showed that both *C. parva* and *C. phaeoclavia* were pollinated by the same thynnine wasp (*Lophocheilus anilitatus*), the species were combined under the same earlier name *C. parva* (Greencomb Spider-orchid).



Caladenia parva



Caladenia parva (green form)

In contrast, the following two very similar looking Rice Flowers are distinct species.



Slender Rice-flower (*Pimelea linifolia* subsp. *linifolia*) showing the stalk below the flower is hairless and smooth.



Common Rice-flower (*Pimelea humilis*) a young plant showing the hairy stem below the flower.

Geoff and Geraldine Harris - Impressions of the Birdsville Track

Here are two of the 10 photos Geoff showed us to give us a glimpse of their travel along the Birdsville Track on their memorable journey into the outback.



Jill Williams: Observations from Shepherds Flat

I am always on the lookout when working and roaming around our area. If I don't have my camera handy, my iPhone is nearly always in my back pocket.



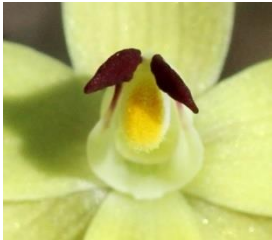
Southern Marbled Gekko
Christinus marmoratus



Shield Bug

Cathrine Harboe-Ree - Curious Sun Orchids

There are over 100 species of *Thelymitra*, or Sun Orchids, in Australia, which is the main place they are found in the world. We list 7 species in Castlemaine Flora, but they hybridise easily and can be difficult to identify. The key to identifying them is the column and column arms (the extensions at the top of the column). Ignoring the colour, if you look at the close-ups of these three Sun Orchids, *T. antennifera* (Rabbit Ears), *T. megcalyptra* (Scented Sun Orchid) and *T. rubra* (Salmon Sun Orchid) you can see quite marked differences in the columns and column arms.



If you then look at the following three pink orchids you can see three different columns and arms. The first is the named hybrid *T. xmacmillanii* (Crimson Sun Orchid) and the remaining two are unknown hybrids. The Crimson Sun Orchid is endemic to our area. All of these photos were taken this year, locally (the middle photo was taken by Geraldine Harris; I have taken the others). The unknown hybrids could be *T. luteocilium* (Fringed Sun Orchid), but if either of them is, they are occurring in places not previously known.



Mez Woodward: Golden Sun Moths

Mez has been rewarded by sightings of the endangered Golden Sun Moths. Their pasture preferences were wallaby grasses, wild oats and dandelions, much taller than the moth is supposed to prefer. Patrolling robber flies are the signal that the moths are emerging.



Male Golden Sun Moth



Female Golden Sun Moth



Typical pasture



Pupal Case



Robber fly feasting

A Bonanza for Butterflies

Euan Moore

In Kalimna Park, Sugar Gliders have been feeding on the Sugar Gums. They chew holes in the bark which allows the sap to ooze out and provide them with food. The sap continues to flow for some hours after the Sugar Gliders have finished. During the hot days the bark on the Sugar Gums sometimes cracks, again allowing sap to flow to the surface of the trunk.

When walking amongst the Sugar Gums on a warm day look for these flows of sap. The sap provides a bountiful food source for butterflies and other insects.

The accompanying photos show butterflies feeding on this sap on a recent visit to Kalimna Park. The highlight was the presence of Tailed Emperors, *Charaxes sempronius*. These are one of our largest butterflies with a wingspan of up to 85mm. They are mainly found further north in Australia. This season is the first time they have been reported in our area since Tony Morton reported them in 2012.



Tailed Emperor - *Charaxes sempronius*



Yellow Admirals - *Vanessa itea*

The most abundant butterfly visiting the sap on that day was the Common Brown, *Heteronympha merope*. Several could be seen huddled around each patch of flowing sap. The males and females of this species are dimorphic in size and pattern. It was mainly females taking advantage of the sap. They probably benefit more than males from the high-energy food which increases their reserves for egg laying.

The sap was also being frequented by small numbers of Yellow Admirals, *Vanessa itea*, and Marbled Xenica, *Geitoneura klugii*. Yellow Admirals are dark brown on the underside with bright yellow, red and black upper wings. The Marbled Xenica, on the other hand look somewhat like a smaller, darker version of the male Common Brown.

More generally, there has been an abundance of butterfly species over the last four months. Early in the season there were numerous Caper Whites, *Belenois java*, a species that feeds (and breeds) on members of the *Capparaceae* (caper family) which occur mainly in arid and semi-arid zones from central NSW north. Their numbers have dropped off in recent weeks but there are still a few around.

In recent days Dainty Swallowtails, *Papilio anactus*, have been hill topping just below Kalimna Point in the saddle near Fletcher St. Hill topping is probably a form of lekking behaviour where the males congregate and display to have an opportunity to mate.

The Eltham Coppers, *Paralucia pyrodiscus lucida*, have also been doing quite well in

Kalimna Park. We have recorded them at five locations in the southern end of the park. This year they seem to have been a couple of weeks later than in previous years, perhaps a result of the wetter than usual spring.

Of course this is not all the butterflies that have been around this summer. Here is a summary of reports from our region on iNaturalist from 1st October until 18th January.

Species	Common Name	No. of Reports
<i>Argynnis cyrila</i>	Forest Brown	2
<i>Belenois java</i>	Caper White	6
<i>Charaxes sempronius</i>	Australian Tailed Emperor	2
<i>Delias aganippe</i>	Red-spotted Jezebel	1
<i>Delias harpalyce</i>	Imperial Jezebel	7
<i>Erina hyacinthina</i>	Varied Dusky-blue	2
<i>Geitoneura klugii</i>	Marbled Xenica	3
<i>Heteronympha cordace</i>	Bright-eyed Brown	6
<i>Heteronympha merope</i>	Common Brown	46
<i>Jalmenus evagoras</i>	Common Imperial Blue	3
<i>Junonia villida</i>	Meadow Argus	5
<i>Lampides boeticus</i>	Pea Blue	2
<i>Neolucia agricola</i>	Fringed Blue	1
<i>Ocybadistes walkeri</i>	Yellow-banded Dart	1
<i>Ogyris amaryllis</i>	Satin Azure	1
<i>Papilio anactus</i>	Dainty Swallowtail	2
<i>Paralucia aurifer</i>	Bright Copper	1
<i>Paralucia pyrodiscus lucida</i>	Eltham Copper Butterfly	12
<i>Pieris rapae</i>	Cabbage White	7
<i>Tisiphone abeona</i>	Swordgrass Brown	6
<i>Vanessa itea</i>	Yellow Admiral	8
<i>Vanessa kershawi</i>	Australian Painted Lady	28
<i>Zizina otis labradus</i>	Common Grass-blue	6

A highlight from this list is the reporting of Bright-eyed Brown, *Heteronympha cordace*, a species with patchy distribution in cooler, swampy areas. It has probably benefitted from the wet seasons. The reports of this species are all from near Trentham in the cooler and wetter southern part of our region. This is a new species for our region. You can find out more about our local butterflies at: <https://castlemainefieldnaturalists.org.au/butterflies-of-mount-alexander-shire/>

If you see a butterfly that you are unfamiliar with, record the location and try to take a photo of it. Use the telephoto / zoom on your camera to get in close and don't worry if you can only photograph the underwing. Most species can be identified from the underwing and for some species a view of the underwing is essential for identification. Send us a copy of the photo(s) for our observations reports either for the newsletter (newsletter.cfnc@gmail.com) or our monthly meetings (calamanthus5@bigpond.com), and please load the sighting on to iNaturalist.

Observations from the Wildlife Magazine - February 1946

George Broadway

I still have a few "Wildlife" magazines which we have not yet looked at. This year we will look at what readers were sending to the Editor, Crosbie Morrison in 1946. The war was over and I was starting at High School, which is where I later found most of these magazines being thrown out, and I managed to rescue them.

It will be interesting to see whether readers in 1946 were able find hitherto undiscovered specimens or whether the usual Suspects continued to be submitted. Here goes then for February, but first something else. I found in the photographic page, a photo of the Lyttleton Street Anticline, pointing out what often happens to layers of sedimentary rock.

Botanical

Armadale: The dainty hanging tubular flowers were *Billbergia nutans*, a popular garden plant, not a native.

Bayswater: Young specimen of *Amanita orchrophylla*. Has no common name despite being the largest gilled fungus in Victoria. One author has remarked that it may prove to be edible but as it a relative of the "Angel of Death" fungus one is disinclined to sample it.

Insects

Longueville NSW: We know of no way of stopping cicadas from "singing", but we can imagine the effect on your outdoor lessons. One can only hope that they will have ceased their vocal efforts after the school vacation.

Hawthorn: Wingless solitary wasp known as the Blue Ant, *Diamma bicolor*. see Feb '17. Charges feverishly about on hot days and stings like fury.

Darley: The flat fly found on the fledgling swallow was one of the true flies which attack birds as external parasites. The flattened bodies enable them to move about between the layers of feathers. Louse Fly is the common name and they infest a large variety of birds.

Elliminyt: The very tiny flattened insect was a *Psocid*. or Booklouse. See Feb '17. They are so tiny they seem to do little if any damage. They feed on starchy foods and probably exist on the paste used in books and wallpaper.

Northcote: Cottony Cushion Scale *Icerya purchasi*. Live on wattles and suck the sap. When introduced to California they nearly wrecked the citrus industry. See Feb '17.

Deep Lead: Botany Bay Diamond Beetle, *Chrysolopus spectabilis*. See Mar '17
Darraweit Guim. Same

Preston: Water Boatman, an insect of the Bug group *Ranatra*. See Mar '18. Can dive in search of prey carrying a little bubble of air.

General

Tresco. The two shells found near Kerang are a type of pond snail named *Bulinus*. I know of no common name.

Healesville: Your frog specimen was not petrified but rather mummified as it apparently died from lack of water.

Elmhurst: The flat tail identifies the Pygmy Phalanger or Gliding Possum (Feathertail Glider?).

Melbourne and S.Melb: Johnny Hairylegs or *Scutigera* - the House Centipede. See Feb '17. A useful animal as it preys on silverfish.

Birds of Sutton Grange Dec 2022 – Nigel Harland

Australian Magpie	Long-billed Corella	Crimson Rosella
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	Galah	Superb Fairywren
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Red Wattlebird	Wedge-tailed Eagle
White-browed Scrubwren	Red-rumped Parrot	Welcome Swallow
Eurasian Blackbird	Rufous Whistler	Australian Raven
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Shining Bronze Cuckoo	White-faced Heron
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Southern Boobook	Laughing Kookaburra
Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo	Spotted Pardalote	Wedgie (being
New Holland Honeyeater	Striated Pardalote	mobbed by Magpies)

Needle Grass Volunteer Weeders

Thanks to all the volunteers who are helping Margaret Panter tackle the Needle Grass infestation in the Castlemaine Botanical Gardens. Now is the time to be on the look-out for seed heads and remove the plants carefully, so there will be other opportunities to help.

More information on Needle Grasses and links to Margaret's detailed and well illustrated brochures can be found on our website [here](#).

In our last newsletter, we reported Margaret's recent brochure on the Chilean Needle Grass with a photo of this grass. The photo credit is Ern Perkins/Castlemaine Flora.

Mapping Large Old Trees in Central Victoria

Connecting Country has announced the arrival of their new mapping portal, aimed at helping community citizen scientists to map the old, and often large, trees of Central Victoria. The interactive mapping portal is part of Connecting Country's larger project, '[Regenerate before it's too late](#)' that engages the community about the importance of old trees and how to protect them. Read more about this important project and how to access the portal [here](#).



Photo by Beth Mellick

Observations

Jan Hall has been monitoring Hyacinth Orchids (leafless saprophytic orchids) along Willy Milly and Diamond Gully Roads in the McKenzie Hill area.



Rosy/Pink Hyacinth Orchid,
Dipodium roseum



Spotted/Leopard Hyacinth Orchid,
Dipodium pardalinum

Helen Lawrence photographed this beautiful moth in Guildford in December.



Euan Moore advises that "Moths of Victoria" by Peter Marriott shows that the species is *Eutrichopidia latinus*. It does not have a common name but moths in this group are known as whistling moths. It is in the same family as *Phalaenoides glycinae*, the Grapevine Moth or Vine Day Moth.

FROM THE COMMITTEE

Welcome to 2023 and another year of informative and enjoyable activities!

Details of coming events are included in this newsletter and on our website. Please make sure you are a subscriber to our website (from Home Page) in order to receive monthly email posts about activities and any last minute changes.

Monthly meetings will be held in the Uniting Church Hall except for winter months (June, July, August) when they will be held by Zoom for the convenience of members and speakers.

Membership Fees

The Committee is recommending that membership fees are unchanged for 2023. The following **motion** will be put to members at the February meeting: "That membership fees for 2023 remain the same as for 2022: Single membership \$35, Family \$50, Pensioner/Student/Single Concession \$25, Family Pensioner/Student/Concession \$30. *Moved* Geoff Harris, *Seconded* Euan Moore."

The **Annual General Meeting** will be held on Friday March 10th at 7.30 pm before the usual monthly meeting observations and talk. All positions on the committee will be open, so you are encouraged to consider joining the committee. Members with a range of skills and interests are welcome. Members considering nominating for the committee are encouraged to contact the President or one of the committee members. Nomination forms are included with this newsletter and will be available at February and March meetings.

Working Groups

The club has several working groups for different projects. These groups offer an excellent way for members to become familiar with the club's organisation and help with activities. Groups include Publications, Photopoints, Flora guide, Vegetation surveys, Bird surveys, Herbarium specimens and Castlemaine Botanical Gardens weed removal. Please contact our President or Secretary for more information on these projects and how you can get involved.

SEANA Autumn Camp – 2023

Hosted by Timboon Field Naturalist's Club

Port Campbell April 28, 29 and 30th

It is now close to twenty years since the South East Australian Naturalist Association (SEANA) last explored this part of the southern coast. TFNC invites you to join them for a variety of activities along their wild part of the southern coast including – beachcombing with guide, the wetland plants of the clifftop ponds, coastal and estuary birds, drawing workshop and clifftop walks. Contact Sally Loveridge sallyloveridge@gmail.com for registration form and further information.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

COMING EVENTS

MEETING: Friday 10th February, 7.30pm, Uniting Church Fellowship Room, Lyttleton St

Speaker: Georgie Custance “Monitoring Fryerstown Grevillea, a threatened species in our region”

Rescheduled from last October when floods prevented our speaker travelling here.

Learn how to look after this unique and rare plant found only in our backyard.

Georgie Custance, an ecologist from the Threatened Species Conservancy (TSC), will talk about a locally endemic plant, the Fryerstown Grevillea (*Grevillea obtecta*, see photo page 1). Although locally common in small areas, it is not widespread and is subject to threats such as inappropriate fire management. Learn how to record and monitor this species using a threatened plant monitoring app. called ProofSafe.

By mapping locations of the Fryerstown Grevillea, the TSC will be able to assess the true status of this species and develop appropriate recovery actions.

We encourage you to load the free phone app, ProofSafe, to your mobile phone or tablet before the meeting as Georgie will provide instructions on how to use it as part of her talk. For detailed instructions from the TSC on how to load and use ProofSafe, please refer to the page on the CFNC website [here](#). Further information on the Fryerstown Grevillea project is also on our website [here](#).

EXCURSION: Saturday 11th February, NOTE 9am start

“The *Grevillea obtecta* project and app., Fryers Ridge”

Leader: Georgie Custance

Enjoy a morning walk in the bush to visit some local populations of this wonderful species as well as the many other native plants in this area. During the walk we will use [ProofSafe](#) to record [Fryerstown Grevillea](#) (*Grevillea obtecta*) and practice what we learnt at the Friday meeting.

We hope to see you there to learn how you can contribute to the crucial monitoring and conservation of a rare plant that is thriving in our neighbourhood.

Meet: 9.00am at the Octopus (Duke St, opposite the Castle Motel).

Bring: Water, morning tea and hat. There may be a small amount of off-track walking, so sturdy shoes and a walking stick are recommended.

If possible, please download the [threatened species monitoring app. ProofSafe](#) on to your phone or tablet before the walk.

The Field Trip will be cancelled in extreme weather conditions.

ROADSIDE CLEAN-UP: Monday 13 February, 9am

The first clean-up for the year along our stretch of the Pyrenees Highway

- Meet near Tait's Decorative Iron, corner of Willy Milly Rd and Pyrenees Highway.
- Garbage bags and safety vests supplied. Wear sturdy footwear and bring your own gloves and water.

Please contact Geoff Harris (mob 0418 392 183) if you can help with the clean-up.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club PROGRAM

General meetings - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church Hall (UCH, enter from Lyttleton St.) at 7.30pm.

If you have observations to report at the meeting and photo(s) to illustrate your report, please email them to Euan Moore (calamanthus5@bigpond.com) by noon on the day of the meeting.

Field Trips - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite the Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea.

Excursions will be cancelled in extreme weather conditions.

Fri Feb 10 Meeting 7.30pm UCH: Georgie Custance (Threatened Species Conservancy) "Monitoring Fryerstown Grevillea, a threatened species in our region"

Sat Feb 11 Excursion 9.00am: Georgie Custance "The *Grevillea obtecta* project – learn how to identify and record sightings of this rare species in the field"

Mon Feb 13 Roadside Clean-up 9am: see "Coming Events" page for details.

Fri Mar 11 Meeting 7.30pm UCH: John Lewis "Our unique southern Australian marine flora"

Sat Mar 12 Excursion 1.30pm: Peter and Rosemary Turner, Tullaroop Reservoir

Castlemaine Naturalist - email newsletter material to: newsletter.cfnc@gmail.com

* Deadline for the March edition: **24th February**

Club website (Webmaster: Ron Wescott) – www.castlemaine-field-naturalists.org.au

Subscriptions (Membership forms on CFNC website)

Ordinary membership: Single \$35, Family \$50

Pensioner or student: Single \$25, Family \$30

Subscription includes the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist.

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