

# Castlemaine Naturalist

November 2008

Vol. 33.10 #360



Glossodia major

photo Noel Young

## **IN SEARCH OF A RARE ORCHID (OR TWO)**

Natalie de Maccus

On Friday 3rd October the Castlemaine Mail ran an article about the rare Sutton Grange Greenhood Orchid (*Pterostylis* sp. aff. *bicolor*). This orchid, discovered only 10 years ago, is endemic to Victoria and seems to be confined to the Goldfields region of Central Victoria. DSE had requested public assistance to search for the orchid in likely locations (with similar soil and vegetation types to where the orchid is known to grow at Maldon). There are 10 locations where the orchid occurs: namely Metcalfe, Redesdale, Sutton Grange, Sedgwick, Spring Hill and Maldon.

On Sunday 5th October three of our members, George Broadway, Denis Hurley and I, plus four other people met at the Beehive car park where we were greeted by three DSE staff members. We were taken to a site a short drive from Maldon where we were shown a couple of small colonies of another small greenhood (yet to be identified by DSE). Although we did not find (though we searched widely) any more colonies of this greenhood or the Sutton Grange greenhood we saw many other wild flowers, including Bulbine Lily, Creamy candles, Twining Fringe-lily, Austral Bugle, Common Rice-flower, Early Nancy, Hedge Wattle, Chocolate Lily, Pink Bindweed, Greencomb Spider-orchid, Pink Fingers, Cowslip Orchid.

After lunch we moved a short distance to another site where we were shown a sizeable colony of the Sutton Grange Greenhood. Some of the participants in the search found more of this species as well as one plant of the unidentified species. (It seems to be a matter of "getting your eye in".) Both the species we saw were quite small (three inches tall maximum) and were multi-flowered. If you are disappointed at missing out on this search DSE are planning another search in the Castlemaine area.

## Wednesday Wildflower Walks - reports

### No. 3: 1<sup>st</sup> October: Wattle Flat - Natalie de Maccus

Approximately 20 people turned up for the Wattle Flat walk, including members and visitors. I chose the site because the western side of Youngman's Track had been "ecologically thinned" and burnt (how recently I'm not sure), whereas the eastern side was untouched. The difference was quite pronounced, with the "thinned" side having a far greater profusion of flowers, especially of Waxlip Orchids and Yam Daisies. I'm not sure if this constitutes a recommendation for human intervention.

Species found flowering -

<i>Caledonia gracilis</i>	Musky Caladenia
<i>Caladenia carnea</i>	Pink Fingers
<i>Glossodia major</i>	Waxlip Orchid
<i>Wurmbea dioica</i>	Early Nancy
<i>Microseris sp</i>	Yam Daisy
<i>Ozothamnus obcordatus</i>	Grey Everlasting
<i>Xerochrysum viscosum</i>	Sticky Everlasting
<i>Craspedia variabilis</i>	Billy buttons
<i>Senecio</i>	
<i>Thysanotis patersonii</i>	Twining fringe-lily
<i>Arthropodium strictum</i>	Chocolate lily
<i>Philothea verrucosa</i>	Fairy Waxflower
<i>Daviesia ulicifolia</i>	Grorse Bitter pea
<i>Acacia acinacea</i>	Gold dust Wattle
<i>Lomandra sp</i>	
<i>Stackhousia monogyna</i>	Creamy candles
<i>Pimelea humilis</i>	Common Rice-flower
<i>Tetratheca ciliata</i>	Pink Bells
<i>Hibbertia exutiacies</i>	Tangled Guinea-flower
<i>Rhytidosporum procumbens</i>	White Marianth
<i>Drosera sp</i>	



*Arthropodium strictum*



*Philothea verrucosa*

Photos: Noel Young

#### No. 4: 8<sup>th</sup> October: The Monk -

Leader George Broadway: Report by **Rita Mills**

This walk combined nicely with the Seniors Week Walk, though, despite a number of enquiries, we only had three who had come because of that, and the effort was well rewarded for them and the other the 20+ who came along. George Broadway had typed up a list of plants that he had found few days earlier, and we added to that list, though some plants had finished flowering in the meantime.

Plants in flower were - Chocolate Lily *Arthropodium strictum*, Bulbine Lily *Bulbine bulbosa*, Pink Fingers *Caledonia carnea*, Greencomb Spider Orchid *C. dilatata*, Black-anther Flax-lily *Dianella admixta*, Leopard Orchid *Diurus pardina*, Waxlip Orchid *Glossodia major*, Woodrush *Luzula meridionalis*, Twining Fringe-lily *Thysanotis patersonii*, Gold-dust Wattle *Acacia acinacea*, Billy Buttons *Craspedia variabilis* (The Monk almost always has a great show of Billy Buttons in Spring), Gorse Bitter-pea *Daviesia ulicifolia*, Tall Sundew or Erinallum *Drosera peltata*, Primrose Goodenia *Goodenia blackiana*, Downy Grevillea *Grevillea alpina*, Grey Everlasting *Ozothamnus obcordatus*, Slender Riceflower *Pimelea linifolia*, White Marianth *Rhytidosporum procumbens*, Fireweed *Senecio sp.*, Candles *Stackhousia monogyna*, Pink Bells *Tetralthea cillata*, Handsome Flat-pea *Platylobium formosum*, Sticky Everlasting *Xerochrysum viscosum*, \*Proliferous or Velvet Pink *Petrorhagia dubia*, Variable Plantain *Plantago varia*, Scaly Buttons *Leptorhynchos squamatus*, and Rough Bedstraw *Galium gaudichaudi*.

#### No. 5. 15<sup>th</sup> October Kalimna Park -

Leader Noel Young: Report by **Rita Mills**

We had fewer people on this walk, which was a pity, as some of the ones who were on the first walk would have noted a great difference in the flowers seen, as Noel chose to visit the same spot as the first walk.

Greencomb Spider Orchids were just finished where we made a temporary stop just past the Pressure Dam. The long marginal teeth which are bent forward suggested that they might be the Mantis Orchid, *Caledonia tenticulata*.

Plants in flower near the start of the loop walk were - Rough Bedstraw *Galium gaudichaudii*, Gorse Bitter Pea *Daviesia ulicifolia*, Scaly Buttons *Leptorhynchos squamatus*, Native Primrose *Goodenia blackiana*, Showy

Parrot Pea *Dillwynia sericea*, Chocolate Lily *Arthropodium strictum*, Slender Riceflower *Pimelea linifolia*, Black-anther Flax Lily *Dianella admixta*, Grey Everlasting *Ozothamnus obcordatus*, Fairy (or Bendigo) Waxflower *Philotheca verrucosa*, Tall Bluebells (a very pretty show just near the start of the walk) *Wahlenbergia stricta*, White Marianth *Rhytidosporum procumbens*, Milk Maids *Burchardia umbellata*, Many-flowered Mat-rush *Lomandra multiflora*, Hedge Wattle *Acacia paradoxa*, Sticky Everlasting *Xerochrysum viscosum*, and the two stars of the walk, Rough Mintbush *Prostanthera denticulata* and Common Fringe-myrtle *Calytrix tetragona*. And we also found Rock Fern.

Two of the problem plants as far as identification is concerned, *Caledonia cucullata* Hooded Caledenia, and *C. gracilis* Musky Caledenia, weren't present, just when I had set out a comparison of descriptions from Galbraith, Willis, Jeannes and Backhouse and. But we'll be ready for them next year!

## **Field Trip to Irishtown Boronia Patch, 11/10/08**

Rita Mills

The field trip to Mount Alexander was abandoned because Geoff and Geraldine Harris found that there was only a few species flowering up there - "Mainly masses of Early Nancies". Neither was well enough to go anywhere anyway, and Richard Piesse stepped into the breach. We decided that Irishtown would be ideal, as Richard had told us that the *Boronia anemonifolia* was in flower. It was a good kilometre walk, and some of it was rather rough and/or steep going so 4x4s were brought in to carry those who are finding such terrain a bit beyond them these days, so we were all able to enjoy the Boronia. Those who walked had the added pleasure of finding some other treasures, and there was quite a bit of discussion over how to differentiate between Hooded and Musky Caledenias. Another plant which needed checking was a Parrot Pea (*Dillwynia* species), which I finally decided was the Small-leaf Parrot-Pea. We came home with quite a respectable plant list, but only recorded 4 bird species - Magpie, Kookaburra, Spotted Pardalote and White-winged Choughs.

### **Plants in flower, Boronia Patch, Irishtown, 11/10/08**

The highlight of the afternoon, and our ultimate goal, was the Pink Boronia *B. anemonifolia*, also known as Fox Wax because of its fox-like "perfume".

Others were Primrose Goodenia *G. blackiana*, Musky Caledonia *C. gracilis*, Hooded Caledonia *C. cuculatus*, Sticky Everlasting *Xerochrysum viscosum*, Pink Bells *Tetralochea ciliata*, Waxlip Orchid *Glossodia major*, Daphne Heath *Brachyloma daphnoides*, Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea *Daviesia leptophylla*, Small-leaf Parrot-pea *Dillwynia phyllicoides*, Slender Riceflower *Pimelea linifolia*, White Marianth *Rhytidodorum procumbens*, Rough Wattle *Acacia aspera*, Black-anther Flax-lily *Dianella admixta*, two *Senecio*, or Fireweed species, Erinallum *Drosera peltata*, Climbing Sundew *D. macrantha*, Fairy, or Bendigo Wax *Philotheca verrucosa*, Heath Ti-tree *Leptospermum myrsinoides*, Chocolate Lily *Arthropodium strictum*, and the tiny pale pink flowers of Stonecrop *Sedum caespitosum*. Buds on the Karalla *Gompholobium huegii* gave promise of a good flowering of this showy clear yellow pea with it's grey-green foliage.



Boronia anemonifolia

photo: Noel Young

## **Myall Lakes, end September 2008**

### Tony Morton

A family stay right on the lakeside produced a couple of encounters that might interest members. Several times a day, the verandah of our 'Villa' was inspected by a pair of Radjah Shelduck in search of sustenance. They were very tame, and seemed to be the senior ducks in the area, energetically seeing off the Black Ducks whenever one of the latter approached too close. What were they doing just an hour north of Newcastle? Their range seems to be far more tropical NE Australia. Perhaps they had escaped from somewhere.

There is a small car ferry close by. It operates every half-hour during the day. The crossing from Bombah Point takes five minutes. Under the ramps that allow cars to embark and disembark, Welcome Swallows had built their nests. At all times, even during crossings, you could see the birds zooming under this metal flange, often staying there to feed the chicks. I imagine they took the site to be a moving cave or rock! They'd certainly be safer there from Goannas, of which there were plenty about.

## Jacky Lizard

Rita Mills

On our Wednesday Wildflower Walk to the Monk I was thrilled when someone called me back to see a lizard that was sitting still just off the path.

Very prosaically described in *A Photographic Guide to Snakes and other Reptiles of Australia*, by Gerry Scott, and published by the Australian Museum, as having a “grey to grey-brown upper parts with a series of lighter patches along the back, sometimes merging to form two vertebral stripes....” and so forth, the Jacky Lizard, which is found along a fairly narrow curved band from Southern Queensland to south-eastern South Australia, is a most attractive little lizard of the dragon family. It reaches from 25-35 cms in length, which includes its tail, which is longer than the body. They are also known as Tree Dragons, and will readily climb the nearest tree if put to flight, but, in my experience, if approached quietly they tend to just sit and watch you, not making any effort to run, but they can run very rapidly, often rearing on their hind legs and running with a “bike pedal” sort of gait. I have seen one racing across a country road, and thought it was a leaf bowling across the road with the wind.

I have on a number of occasions when I was working at the old High School (now the site of the Junior campus of the Secondary College) been presented with one that some children have picked up, and wanted me to look after! Each of them sat quietly in my hand while I finished what I was doing at the time, until I was able to return it to somewhere near where the children had found it.



The first one I came across was one that was in a vivarium when I first started at the school, and I found that the food it most enjoyed were termites which I found in wood lying on the ground at the edge of the bush. I wondered if the one we saw at the Monk had been hunting termites that afternoon.

They prefer dry sclerophyll forest, such as the Box - Ironbark woodlands, and coastal heaths. They feed on insects. The female lays up to 12 eggs in a hole dug in sandy soil which is then filled in and hidden.

**A reminder to the twitcher teams**  
that the bird count is on **6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of December**. Further details at the meeting.

## Observations

- ◆ At the last meeting, Bruce Donaldson passed around a good frozen specimen of an Antechinus found inside at Mt. Macedon. He has seen them feeding on Banksia
- ◆ Natasha Harris brought a nest from a gorse bush – thought to belong to a Thornbill. She also reported sightings at Guildford of a Platypus (again) and a Bearded Orchid
- ◆ Denis Hurley noted lerp feeding behaviour of both Currawongs and Pardalotes
- ◆ Rita Mills reported an Owlet Nightjar occupying a nesting box
- ◆ Blue chinned Honeyeaters, Mistletoe bird and White browed Woodswallows at our property – Geraldine Harris
- ◆ Numerous Striated Pardalotes, Mistletoe birds and flock of 150 White browed Woodswallows – Alison Rowe
- ◆ At home, Denis Hurley has found five Hooded Caladenia plants, Blue Wrens nesting in rushes, and recently, the return of a Leaden Flycatcher.
- ◆ Pardalote nesting in the roof, and a Goldfinch attempting to drink from a frozen birdbath – Natalie de Maccus
- ◆ Wildflowers still good along Poverty Gully track, especially Everlastings and Bitter Pea – Chris Morris
- ◆ An adult Powerful Owl accompanied by a juvenile seen in the Botanical Gardens on Oct 2<sup>nd</sup> - No sightings since, but I found 2 or 3 fresh looking pellets on 28<sup>th</sup> – Noel Young
- ◆ Speckled Warbler seen at Nuggetty Range – George Broadway
- ◆ A Pelican on the dam at the Prison Farm – Natasha Harris
- ◆ My husband & I saw a Blue faced Honeyeater at Castlemaine Golf Course 4<sup>th</sup> Nov. being chased by wattlebirds – Debbie Worland

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

# Castlemaine Field Naturalists Programme

## November 2008

**Fri Nov 14 meeting:** Kathy Powers on "Orchids and their interactions with insects"

**Sat Nov 15 field trip:** Pilchers Bridge - leader Chris Morris

**Fri Dec 12 meeting: Members Night.** Members' "Show and Tell". Share a few photos, a nature experience, a poem - be as creative as you like. Slide and digital projector available for use (jpeg or powerpoint format on CD or use USB key). UCA Hall, 8pm. Bring a plate of supper to share

**Sat Dec 13 Christmas outing:** Wombat Reservoir 3pm. BYO food and drinks

### VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

**General meetings** - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 8.00 pm.

**Field Trips** - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.

**Business meetings** - fourth Thursday of each month, except December, at Natalies; 65 Johnstone Street, at 7.30 pm. All members are invited to attend.

### Subscriptions for 2008

Ordinary membership: Single \$27, Family \$35

Pensioner or student: Single \$24, Family \$29

Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

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