

Castlemaine Naturalist

November 2007

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Caper White *Belenois java*

THE LONG FOREST 13/10/07

The Long Forest (800 hectares) is the only area of remnant Bull Mallee occurring south of the divide. Just outside Bacchus Marsh, very close to Lake Merrimu, this area was isolated when climatic conditions over several thousand years caused the mallee to retreat northwards. It persists here due to the poor soils and low rainfall.

We were very fortunate to have local ornithologist Marilyn Hewish, author of "Birds of the Long Forest 1889-2005" and a sub-editor of HANZAB, as our guide. Marilyn has been studying the area intensively for 25 years and her skill in identifying birds by their calls alone has to be seen to be believed.

A large group of people took the opportunity to visit this unique area - thanks to Bruce Donaldson for arranging the day.

PLANT LIST (Natalie de Maccus)

This list is not exhaustive, but is a list of those plants seen flowering in the Long Forest which could be identified from Richard Piesse's book "Long Forest - Mallee at the back door".

Carpobrotus modestus	Inland Pigface
Rhagodia parabolica	Fragrant Saltbush
Enchylaena tomentosa	Ruby Saltbush
Atriplex semibaccata	Berry Saltbush
Dianella admixta	Black-anther Flax-lily
Stackhousia monogyna	Creamy Candles
Goodenia ovata	Hop Goodenia
Goodenia blackiana	Black's Goodenia
Velleia paradoxa	Spur Velleia
Eremophila deserti	Turkey Bush
Geranium affinis solanderi	Austral Cranesbill
Bursaria spinosa	Sweet Bursaria
Acacia acinacea	Gold-dust Wattle
Acacia pycnantha	Golden Wattle

Acacia mearnsii	Black Wattle
Acacia retinodes var. retinodes	Wirilda Wattle
Cassinia arcuata	Drooping Cassinia
Eutaxia microphylla	Common Eutaxia
Clematis microphylla	Small-leaved Clematis
Nicotiana suaveolens	Austral Tobacco
Eucalyptus baueriana	Blue Box
Eucalyptus leucoxydon	Yellow Gum
Eucalyptus behriana *	Bull Mallee

*Not flowering but significant because Long Forest has the only stand of Blue Mallee south of the dividing range.

BIRD LIST (39) (Geraldine Harris)

According to Marilyn bird numbers have reduced greatly over the past few years.

Australian Magpie	Purple-crowned Lorikeet
Black Swan	Red Wattlebird (h)
Brown Treecreeper (very young ones on ground)	Red-rumped Parrot
Brown-headed Honeyeater	Rufous Whistler
Buff-rumped Thornbill	Sparrow
Chough (h)	Spotted Pardalote (h)
Crimson Rosella	Striated Pardalote
Eurasian Coot	Striated Thornbill (h)
Galah	Superb Fairy Wren
Great-crested Grebe	Varied Sittella
Grey Currawong (h)	Wedge-tailed Eagle
Grey Fantail (h)	Welcome Swallow
Grey Shrike-thrush (h)	Whistling Kite
Great Cormorant	White-browed Scrub-wren
Little Raven	White-naped Honeyeater
Long-billed Corella	White-throated Treecreeper
Mistletoe Bird	Yellow Robin
Musk Duck	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
New Holland Honeyeater	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
Pelican	

Gower School Walk 7/10/07 3-4pm - Phillip West

Red Wattlebird, Fuscous honeyeater, Spotted Pardalote
 Brown Treecreeper, Grey Shrike-thrush, Crested Bellbird (h), Common
 Bronzewing, Australian Raven, Galah, Peaceful Dove (2), White-browed
 Babbler (3), Superb Fairy-wren

TRAIL BIKE COMMUNITY FORUM – N W VICTORIA

By Natalie de Maccus

This forum, convened by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), was held at the All Seasons Quality Resort in Bendigo on Wednesday 3rd October and attended by Geraldine and me. It ran for almost four hours with 40 to 50 people in attendance.

The aim of the forum was to bring together interested parties e.g. trail bike riders, industry members, environmentalists, affected residents and Victoria Police, as well as members of DSE to address issues and to try to find solutions. A range of activities throughout the evening was aimed at trying to see other people's points of view through "active listening". The topic to be addressed was "What would a sustainable recreational trail bike future look like? One in which the environment, trail bike riders, local residents and other recreational users happily co-exist." I thought that this topic begged the question of whether these parties could "happily co-exist".



Most of the local residents saw noise as the major issue. Geraldine and I felt it was also destruction of the bush (Photo). It is difficult to see how it is possible for one group (riders) to pursue their activities without infringing the rights of others, especially those who use the bush for quiet enjoyment.

Trail bike riders have a legal right to use forest tracks provided they (the riders) are licensed and their vehicles are registered. The only responsibility the industry has is to see that bikes meet with government regulations at the point of sale. They accept no responsibility for modifications by individuals after sale. These modifications seem to create a major part of the problem. Perhaps the industry needs to accept more responsibility, e.g. by making modifications to bikes much more difficult or prohibitively expensive. In fairness to the riders who attended I should acknowledge that those I spoke with claimed to comply with all regulations (one bike rider was also a member of Victoria Police). They also acknowledged there were some riders who broke the regulations and gave all riders a bad name. Some riders claimed that they "loved the bush".

After taking this forum to other areas of the state DSE will produce a report. Let us hope action leading to more stringent regulations or legislation to protect the bush will follow. Some of the more moderate solutions suggested were tolerance, education and etiquette.

Wednesday Evening Wildflower Walks

3/10/07 Wildflower walk 3 – Demo Track, on way to Newstead.

Leader: Hans van Gemert – large number of walkers and pleasant warm evening. No list of plants was available at time of printing.

10/10/07 Wildflower Walk 4 - Kalimna Park

Leader: Noel Young – 12 people, with the young Hall family members ably assisting the older spotters

Luzula meridionalis and *densiflora*, *Arthropodium strictum*, *Burchardia umbellata*, *Dianella admixta*, *Caladenia carnea* s.l., *C fuscata*, *Calochilus robertsonii* (approx 10), *Glossodia major* (one perfect white one), *Lomandra filiformis*, *Craspedia variabilis*, *Microseris* sp. 3, *Ozothamnus obcordatus*, *Senecio quadridentatus*, *Xerochrysum viscosum*, *Wahlenbergia stricta*, *Drosera peltate* sp., *Brachyloma daphnoides*, *Daviesia leptophylla*, *Daviesia ulicifolia*, *Dillwynia sericea*, *Goodenia blackiana*, *Gonocarpus tetragynus*, *Prostanthera denticulata*, *Acacia acinacea*, *A aspera*, *A paradoxa*, *Bursaria spinosa* ssp *spinosa*, *Rhytidosporum procumbens*, *Grevillea alpina*, *Philotheca verrucosa*, *Pimelea humilis*, *Tetralathea ciliata*, *Calytrix tetragona*

19/10/07 Wildflower Walk 5 - Specimen Hill, Chewton

Leader: Richard Piesse

Luzula meridionalis v *densiflora*, *Arthropodium strictum*, *Dianella admixta*, *Caladenia cucullata*, *C gracilis*, *Calochilus robertsonii*, *Glossodia major*, *Lomandra multiflora*, *Microseris* sp 3, *Ozothamnus obcordatus*, *Xerochrysum viscosum*, *Hibbertia exutiacies*, *Drosera peltata* ssp *peltata*, *Brachyloma daphnoides*, *Daviesia leptophylla*, *D ulicifolia*, *Dillwynia sericea*, *Gompholobium huegelii*, *Platylobium formosum*, *Goodenia blackiana*, *Gonocarpus tetragynus*, *Prostanthera denticulata*, *Acacia aspera*, *A paradoxa*, *A retinodes* var *retinodes*, *Bursaria spinosa* ssp *spinosa*, *Rhytidosporum procumbens*, *Philotheca verrucosa*, *Stylidium ameria*, *Pimelea humilis*, *Tetralathea ciliata*, *Wahlenbergia stricta*



Black-anther Flax-lily *Dianella admixta*



Sweet Bursaria *Bursaria spinosa*

Detour to the West via Broken Hill (Aug/ Sept)– Rita Mills

Doug and I had been sort of "planning" (in our usual style of " I'd really like to go back to Tenterfield and have a proper look around there." "Yes, well I wouldn't mind going back to Townsville.") a trip to the North but ten days before the projected leaving date Doug decided he'd like to go back to Geraldton and visit the Museum and the Batavia relics again. (He'd been discussing the wrecks with a friend and re-reading his books again) I promptly agreed. I'd been longing to have a trip to the West again for years, *taking our time and doing the crossing in the car.*

Unfortunately we left a bit earlier than we normally would as I wanted to be back in time for an exhibition I was involved with during September, and more unfortunately, the drought seems to have reduced the bird numbers, even Ravens and Crows. Certainly we saw far fewer raptors.

We set out through Maldon and had our morning tea just after Bells Swamp, which was quite dry, but we'd been driving past green paddocks and all over the part of the swamp, where the trees were bulldozed years ago, are thousands of saplings. Apparently the new (?) owner has decided to let them grow, and that cheered me considerably.

We spent the night at Ouyen with the idea of heading off towards Murrayville and up to Pinnaroo next day, but decided that perhaps it would be nice to detour through Broken Hill as we had never been there before. If my (usually pretty faulty) adding up of distances was correct it wasn't very much further.

We certainly drove through arid lands after Mildura, but we saw a couple of pairs of Major Mitchell Cockatoos and once when we stopped I spotted a family of White-winged Wrens. That always sends me all curly inside.

We both enjoyed our time in Broken Hill. A park near the centre of the city was a lovely oasis with quite a number of birds in the tall, white-trunked eucalypts and palms. We spent a lot of time visiting galleries, including the Regional Gallery, which is an old warehouse and has been adapted beautifully, while the collection itself is excellent. We also visited the Pro Hart Gallery and I was surprised at his collection of old masters. I had a wonderful time going round a room full of Sir William Dargie's sketches.

We visited Silverton, too, and that was a drive I found fascinating as the country was nothing like I have ever driven through - an undulating road through low vegetation, largely mulga and saltbush from what I remember, with numerous floodways - in a region that looks like it could

never flood. Again I saw very few birds, but I guess if I'd been travelling with a birder instead of a historian things might have been different!

The trip from Broken Hill to Peterborough is full of memories of distant purple and blue ranges and closer red and brown ones with a thin veil of green.

We stopped for a couple of days at Streaky Bay and enjoyed some wonderful sunsets. Still not a lot of birds, though we were beginning to see Port Lincoln Parrots, a race of Ringnecks.

Then across to the border, first through wheat and barley growing areas, then mallee, and out onto the plains where I was surprised to see, in the low rainfall areas, things looking so much healthier than I had expected - lots of saltbushes, bluebush, and shrubs doing quite well, too. Then I realised there were very few kangaroos - in fact, one, near Darebin. We'd only seen two road kills, one not far from Broken Hill and one near Ouyen. This time we didn't see any sheep either and I wondered if that was the reason that the country looked so good - but still there were very few birds. The swallows were still at the cliff top lookouts on the Bight though.

When we got back to Castlemaine we met a friend who had gone to Townsville, and he was able to tell me that the Common was flooded and the Magpie Geese were nesting, and there were "thousands of birds". Ah, well. Perhaps next time? (Continued next month.)

Caper Whites – Tony Morton

19th October '07. This is the first day I have seen Caper Whites this year. Heading largely west, fifty or sixty moved through in twos and threes from about 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. These are migratory butterflies, and one theory is that this behaviour is due to an ancient drive to populate new territories that dates back to Gondwanan times. They'll probably fly through for a month or so and then peter out until next year. I came across a different species of the same genus in Sri Lanka, where they're one of the migratory butterflies there they call 'Flighters'.

Their flight is quite pointless, for there is no larval food-plant (which has to be *Capparis spp.*) for them in temperate Australia, I believe. I have heard of a single specimen of *Capparis nobilis* in the Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, however. Charles McCubbin told me that one year, after the butterflies had passed through, there were thousands of eggs on the tree, each leaf being covered in eggs!

Great Dividing Trail - Taradale Walking Group

Plants found both days

Hedge Wattle *A paradoxa*, Wirilda *A retinodes*, Chocolate Lily *Arthropodium strictum*, Daphne Heath *Brachyloma daphnoides*, Musky Hood *Caladenia gracilis*, Black-anther Flax-lily *Dianella admixta*, Black's Goodenia *Goodenia blackiana*, Downy Grevillea *Grevillea alpina*, Waxlip Orchid *Glossodia major*, Purple Coral-pea *Hardenbergia violacea*, Yam Daisy *Microseris* sp 3, Grey Everlasting *Ozothamnus obcordatus*, Pink Bells *Tetralochea ciliata*, Twining Fringe-lily *Thysanotus patersonii*, Sticky Everlasting *Xerochrysum viscosum*,

Day 1 8/10/07 (25 participants) Castlemaine to Calder Highway

Additional Plants found on Day 1

Common Wood-rush *Lazula meridionalis*, Dusky Fingers *Caladenia fuscata*, Crimson Spider-orchid *C. concolor*, Greencomb Spider-orchid *C. dilatata* s. l., Pale Sundew *Drosera peltata* ssp. *peltata*, Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea *Daviesia leptophylla*, Austral Indigo *Indigofera australis*, Gold-dust Wattle *Acacia acinaceae*, Rough Wattle *A aspera*, Buttercup *Ranunculus* sp, Common Rice-flower *Pimelea humilis*, Twining Fringe-lily *Thysanotus patersonia*, Common Fringe-lily *Thysanotus tuberosis*, Twining Glycine *Glycine clandestina*, Common Reed *Phragmites australis*

Day 2 9/10/07 (7 participants) Sedgewick to Bendigo Train Station

Additional Plants found on day 2

Running Postman *Kennedia prostrata*, Slender Rice-flower *Pimelea linifolia*, Scaly Buttons *Leptorhynchos squamatus*, Hood Orchid *Caladenia cucullata*, Spiky Guinea-flower *Hibbertia exutiaces*, Creamy Candles *Stackhousia monogynya*, Bulbine Lily *Bulbine bulbosa*, Greencomb Spider-orchid *Caladenia dilatata* s l, Plantain *Plantago* sp., Fairy Wax-flower *Philotheca verrucosus*, Erect Guinea-flower *Hibbertia riparia*, Heath tea-tree *Leptospermum myrsinoides*, Common Beard-heath *Leucopogon virgatus*, Rosy Baeckea *Euromyrtus ramosissima*, Milkmaids *Burchardia umbellata*, Gorse Bitter-pea *Daviesia ulicifolia*, White Marianth *Rhytidosporum procumbens*, Fringe-myrtle *Calytrix tetragona*, Scented Sun-orchid *Thelymitra megalyptra*, Pink Sun-orchid *Thelymitra* sp., Sweet Bursaria *Bursaria spinosa* ssp *spinosa*

Thank you to this month's newsletter contributors.

Grampians Campout -19-21, October 2007

An enthusiastic group of field naturalists (guided by a detailed map and instruction sheet) began arriving at Kiah, an extensive untouched bushland area not far off the Stawell to Horsham highway, on a hot windy afternoon. Greetings, hot cuppa or cool drink, plus delicious homemade fruitcake, quickly eased the journey over, some coming from as far as Gisborne.

Unpacking and settling in was interspersed with oohs and aahs at the beautiful surroundings of the interestingly designed home. Most of the group would be staying there while others stayed nearby at Old Dadswell Town or camped down the road, with the luxury of a flushing loo.

Daisy, the red-necked wallaby, with large offspring in pouch hopped in for a drink at the pond, much to the delight of the children and adults - such a close-up view through a large window.

A tasty range of soups and other goodies satisfied the hungry horde – lots of conversation, followed by some ideas for Saturday morning and sorting of sleeping spaces, completed Fridays duties.

Breakfast/lunch preparation over, the party of 25 all up travelled to Hollow Mountain. The group divided – some heading for the summit, the rest going to the Aboriginal Gulgurn Mumja Shelter – both groups finding a beautiful range of orchids and other interesting plants despite the dry conditions. A picnic lunch in the shade at the car park, and again much checking through flora books and discussion on each group's findings ensued. Then back to Kiah for drinks and some rest and later further exploring around the property.

As the sun set people drifted in, sampling drinks and nibbles and wearing the ink off flora books again. Wow! What a lovely tea Saturday night – a tasty range of casseroles, salads and desserts. Various members quietly undertook duties such as clearing and washing up at each mealtime.

Because it was still quite warm, it was decided to leave for Golton Gorge at 8am Sunday morning. Most of the group completed the round trip, highlights being a Perigrine Falcon moving about on the cliff face, a large variety of orchids and the finding of a Downy Star-bush *Astrolasia phebaloides*, an endangered species. Photos available.

The Group returned to Kiah for a late lunch, to pack up and exchange notes on plants etc spotted that morning.

A heartfelt thankyou to Geraldine, Geoff and family for their generosity and for providing such a relaxing weekend stay in a rare bushland environment.

Denis Hurley

On behalf of the happy participants.

Observations

- Wax-lips, Buttons, Pimileas, Donkey Orchids and Chocolate Lilies at 32 Weynton Rd (unmade end) Natalie de Maccus
- At Buchan – fortunate campers were treated with good view of a Powerful Owl holding a possum in a tree above and, a little way off at the same time, a Lyrebird in full display mode on the ground below! Janice Burgess
- 8/10 At the Monk – Red Spider- orchids and Greencomb Spider-orchids. Penny Garnett
- At Kalimna - Purple Beard-orchids. Anne van Gemert
- Blue-winged Parrot at Chewton junction towards Wattle Gully – an uncommon sighting for here. Noel Young
- Olive-backed Oriole eating ivy berries at Chewton. Sue Mc Callum
- At Mt Eccles catching Koalas to insert contraceptive chips and disturbed two Powerful Owls that flew out of a Cherry Ballart – low but the only dense shelter in the area. Ed Oram
- Five newly hatched Wood Ducklings on dam at Taradale – one day later fifteen tiny Wood Ducklings on the dam! Natasha Harris
- British Columbia, Canada – winds no longer cold enough to control beetles and other nasties – thousands of acres of dead Lodgepole pines – effect of global warming. George Broadway and Penny Garnett
- Broom in flower – get rid of it before it spreads its seed. Natasha Harris
- Are Cuckoos less common this year? Bruce Donaldson
Bronzings and Horsefield Cuckoos about. George Broadway
Faintails and Pallid Cuckoos heard daily. Albert Golden
- Silver Wattles not nearly abundant as in past seasons. B. Donaldson
- Are there less ducks around? Gil Rayner

Fairy-wren Attack – Tony Morton

In 2000/01, when we first moved to Vaughan, the car's rear view mirrors were regularly subjected to angry attack by male Fairy-wrens in Spring. (I remember Robins doing the same thing in the UK and Great-Tits in France.) When we bought a new car, in 2002, the same thing happened, only the sunroof was included in their attentions. They chattered away furiously stabbing at the glass with their massive beaks and vicious talons and leaving enormous piles of droppings all over glass and paintwork. I presume they were seeing an unwelcome intruder and wanted to chase him away.

But since 2003, there has not been a single attack. Why not? Have the birds 'stopped seeing' the intruder? Did it take them three years to get used to a car being there? Did the Mortons civilize them in some way? Is this a different family of less ferocious Fairy Wrens? Anyone got any ideas?

Position Vacant: Newsletter Editor

As the end of the year approaches and the Annual General Meeting in February draws closer the inevitable question of position vacancies arises. Our club has a very healthy membership and good attendances at meetings and outings but for too long the task of administration has been borne by too few.

Although there is a policy that executive positions be rotated every two years, this has not happened. The same individuals have generously filled many positions for years and, while this has fostered a degree of stability in the group, it has also resulted in many members being hesitant to take on these positions.

While there have always been offers of assistance, a regular rotation of positions would enable an ongoing learning process where previous position holders could offer guidance to new position holders and a pool of skilled people could be established who would be able to 'step in' in an emergency or if someone wanted to take a break.

I for one have enjoyed my job, as newsletter editor, but I need a break and it is time for someone else to bring their individual creativeness to the task for a couple of years. Having done this job for four years I have improved my computer skills, learned to recognise and name many plants, enjoyed the buzz of completing a new creation each month, and I now look forward to researching and writing some of the articles I intended to write as editor!

The process has already begun, we welcomed three new committee members this year – so don't think "I could never do that" – instead consider which skill you would like to learn most. You will be rewarded and our club will be strengthened.

Geraldine Harris

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

**Not to be missed! –
November Meeting, 9/11/07 UCA Hall, 8pm.
Conserving Natural Values on Private Land**

While traditionally a government responsibility, not-for-profit organisations and private individuals are becoming owners and managers of important land for nature conservation. This talk will provide some facts, figures and photos, including a brief discussion of relevant legislation and help available to conservation-minded landowners. We will also discuss our own experience with purchasing a “private nature reserve” in Northern Tasmania, and the actions now required to enhance its conservation values. Non-members welcome. Phil Collier and Robin Garnett.

PHOTO GALLERY



Clockwise from Top Left: Grampians Camp. *Philothea pungens* - but 5 and 6 petals? (A van Gemert). *Xanthorrhoea australis*, Golton Gorge, Daisy the Red-necked Wallaby. (G. Harris)

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Programme

November 2007

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 Broadways, 7 Wheeler Street, at 7.30 pm. All members are invited to attend.

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

Mon Nov 5. Festival of Gardens Walk – Morgans Track. Depart from car park opp motel in Duke St at 10am. R. Mills

Fri Nov 9. Conserving Natural Values on Private Land - Phil Collier and Robin Garnett. UCA Hall, 8pm. (more information, P 11).

Sat Nov 10. Field Trip - Wewak Track. Depart from car park opp the motel in Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp. BYO afternoon tea. R. Piesse

Sat Nov 24. Roadside Cleanup. Meet near Taits Decorative Iron, Pyrenees Hwy at 8am. Gloves, garbage bags and safety vests provided. Wear sturdy footwear. Contact: Hans van Gemert

Sat Dec 1/Sun Dec 2, Annual BOCA Bird Challenge Count. Register interest by November 30 with Chris Morris.

Fri Dec 14. 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 15. December Christmas Outing: Vaughan Springs, 3pm. BYO meal and drinks.

Sat Jan 12. Dawn Breakfast. (Details in December)

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Pensioner or student: Single \$19, Family \$ 24

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