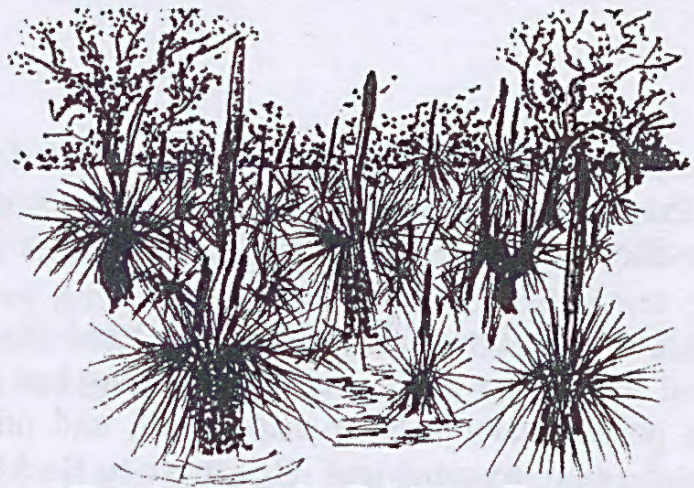


Castlemaine Naturalist

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Regrowth in the Brisbane Ranges

Castlemaine Field Naturalists - 2006 - Celebrating 30 years

Brisbane Ranges, after the fires – Rita Mills

A visit to the Brisbane Ranges seemed appropriate for the August outing after Mary Thompson's "After Anakie" exhibition at the Tourist Information Centre, but because it was such a busy weekend, only 6 of us set off in beautiful sunshine for Butchers Road, as recommended by the Ranger.

On the way to our destination and just after we entered the area of the fires, where eucalypts were sprouting all the way up their trunks, I spotted one blackened specimen which was completely dead but with a dozen or more large specimens of Horsehoof Fungus growing at intervals all the way up the trunk.

We explored around the Butchers Road/Anakie Road area, after a quick cuppa, finding many plants such as Tea-trees, Daphne Heath, several pea species and Horny Conebush, with its wonderfully attractive red and dark green re-growth, sprouting again from below the ground. Other plants such as the Banksias, Hakeas and Wattles were relying on seed propagation and in places these young seedlings were showing above the ashy, sandy soil. I found very few orchid leaves and wondered if the fire was too hot for them, though there were plenty of mat-rushes and lily species coming along well.

The Austral Grass Trees, which had sprouted leaves long enough to be sweeping the ground beneath them in the wind, were sending up flowering spikes, the stems of which were quite thick. Some individual plants were sending up 4 or 5 smaller spikes next to the main one.

There were scattered daisy flowers including Swamp Daisy, Everlastings and Billy Buttons. There were Scented Sundews coming into flower, too.

We had lunch at the Steiglitz picnic ground, had a look around the old Court House, and then set off back to a fuel reduction area which had been burned prior to the fires and where the main fire had stopped just before a bulldozed firebreak. There we found some Hibbertias just coming into flower, Hovea, and

Dusty Miller, which was featured in the August CN. We found a couple of plants of the endemic Brisbane Ranges Grevillea and a single flower of the Golden Grevillea.

We found one Dwarf Greenhood, and hundreds of orchid leaves, some sprouting a red stem and a single red bud, but they had us thoroughly confused as some had purple under a heart-shaped leaf, and others had a paler green under a slightly more rounded leaf. Reference to Backhouse and Jeans suggests that the latter is the Small Gnat Orchid, and the other one perhaps the Mayfly Orchid - but it's not supposed to grow in that area, and it usually has more than two flowers? Obviously, we'll have to go back in a week or two!

Birds seen? Very few. In the badly burnt area we saw and heard Crimson Rosellas and heard Red Wattlebirds and, I think, a White-eared Honeyeater. At lunch there were more Wattlebirds and Crimson Rosellas, as well as a Spinebill, Ravens, Magpies, and a Wedgetail soaring overhead. At our third spot there were a number of Thornbills and a Scarlet Robin, and just before we left I spotted a Grey Fantail over the other side of the road.

Of interest was the difference a fuel reduction burn can make - not much in that kind of fire I suspect. One area that had had a fuel reduction burn had burnt thoroughly; another area which had not had a reduction burn had actually escaped the fire. In the area we visited last, there had been a fuel reduction burn at some stage fairly recently. Part had been burnt in the fire in January and some had escaped, but at the edge of the burnt area there were masses of orchid leaves and other plants and there was a film of green over much of the area, unlike the badly burnt area we visited first.

It seemed to me that thorough studies (such as the quadrats being set up by some of the clubs in this area) need to be done before any real conclusions can be drawn as to the usefulness of fuel reduction burns and their effect on the plants and animals. Until studies are done we can't say whether they are good or otherwise for the conservation of species, or for reducing the risk of wild fire.

Grey - headed Lapwing – Nigel Harland

From time to time the local birding community is brought to life by the appearance of an uncommon bird. That is not intended to imply a general lethargy amongst birders, but something out of the ordinary sometimes happens. Two months ago a couple from near Sydney set out on a birding trip in northern New South Wales. Driving west of Narrabri, they came to a place called Burren Junction. Stopping was not on the itinerary, but the speed limit of 60 slowed them down. A lapwing was on the side of the road and it looked sufficiently

interesting for them to stop for a look. It was somehow different from other lapwings and they couldn't identify it from the books they had. So they took some photos and continued with their trip. On returning home, they did some more research without success. So they sent one of the photos to a local expert and waited to hear. Next thing they heard was that the bird was a Grey-headed Lapwing and it had never been seen in Australia before!

Birdwatchers from everywhere started to arrive in Burren Junction to get a look at a new bird for Australia. Word spread like wildfire. I was keen to join the exodus, but family commitments kept me at home for a couple of weeks. Narrabri is about 1200km from Castlemaine, so driving there on my own was going to be difficult. I happened to mention the possibility of going to someone I was playing croquet against one Saturday and before I knew it, he offered to come with me and share the driving. He is not a keen birdwatcher, but he does enjoy "chasing" things.

So we left Castlemaine at 4am one Tuesday morning and drove to Burren Junction, arriving at just after 4.30pm. We filled up with petrol and asked about the bird. It turned out that someone had been there earlier in the day and left a note about the location. It was starting to get dark, but we couldn't resist the temptation of having a look. We drove back to the spot and there it was!! Just standing there, waiting to be watched. We spent 15 minutes observing and taking some photos, before it flew off. We booked into some very basic accommodation at the local pub, had a celebratory meal and a glass or two of wine.

In the morning, we got up before the sun and went back to the same spot and there it was again. We spent about half an hour this time and got some more photos before it flew off again. We looked at each other in a very satisfied manner and decided to head home. We reached Castlemaine at 8.30pm. Less than 40 hours and more than 2,300 km!

If anyone wants to know more, I suggest you have a look at the birding-aus web site, you should find lots of emails about it. It is still there, so there is still time to go! The bird is normally found in China and Thailand and has never been seen in Australia before. It makes you wonder how many other rare birds are out there and what would have happened if that couple hadn't stopped.

Articles wanted: If it interested you it will interest us. Articles can be forwarded to Geraldine Harris, P O Box 703, Castlemaine, 3450. Ph 547 2244 or email to gedharris@castlemaine.net

A special encounter...

Walking along La Gersche Track in Creswick recently, Margaret Badminton was privileged to have a special encounter with a Ground Thrush. In a moist gully with moss-covered fallen logs and quite a lot of ground cover, Margaret disturbed a bird in the undergrowth that she knew "wasn't a female Blackbird" because of the way it walked quickly away when it saw her, and then froze. The bird was only about 10 metres away so Margaret kept very still and watched. The bird picked up a worm and shook it from side to side. Moving on it placed this worm on the ground while it caught another worm, placed it with the first worm and then picked up the two worms and shook them before moving on to catch a third worm using the same routine. This process was repeated until it had six worms. With its mouth full of worms the bird flew across the track and out of sight. Moments later it flew back across the track and started the process all over again!

Margaret has seen Ground Thrush before at Mt Franklin and near Daylesford.

and a sad accident.

Margaret also found an Owlet Nightjar drowned in a bucket (one third full of water) in her vegetable garden.

Provision of Suitable Bursaria Plants might be the Key to Increased Copper Butterfly Populations.

Provision of suitable *Bursaria spinosa* plants may be the key to a healthy Copper Butterfly population. After noting that some *Bursaria* plants are well chewed while others are not it is now thought that the provenance of *Bursaria* plants may be the key to determining palatability and therefore the attraction to Copper Butterfly caterpillars. Providing more of the plants the caterpillars prefer may be critical to building populations. Adult butterflies have wider access to food sources because they are mobile and the ants that are needed to care for the caterpillars are attracted by the presence of the caterpillars. As a result of this insight, it was moved at the recent Committee Meeting that Frances Cincotta be asked to provide 100 plants derived from cuttings taken from plants known to be used by the caterpillars in the butterfly area of the Botanic Gardens. So a "caterpillar/ chewed plant" hunt is required and regular checking will be needed to monitor this situation. SEE BELOW

Caterpillar Count on Tuesday Evening, October 3.

(Bring a torch).

As a start to such a study members are invited to attend a caterpillar count to be held on Tuesday October 3. Meet at Mary Street carpark at approx. 7.30pm. **Contact Ern Perkins (Ph 5472 3124) for further details.**

SEANA Campout at Forrest in the Otways, March 7-13, 2007.

The Geelong FNC Inc has issued an invitation to fellow naturalists to attend the SEANA March 2007 Campout based at Forrest from March 7-13 including the Labour Day long weekend.

As participants will be in widespread accommodation – up to 20 km from Forrest – a different format is planned which creates a pre-dinner timeslot for additional activities, reduces travel and minimizes cost.

Format:

- Assemble at Forrest Caravan Park, pool cars, depart for full day excursion, return to Forrest Hall, pre-dinner session – meet and greet, BYO drinks, show and tell, inspect displays and projects – catered dinner, illustrated talk, supper.
- The pre-dinner session and the catered dinner will be safari style in the hall grounds where there is ample shaded grassed area with tables and seats. Inside if inclement.
- Each day BYO own lunch, am and pm teas, pre-dinner drinks, plates, cutlery, glass and folding chair.
- Boiling water, tea, coffee, milk and sugar for pre-dinner, dinner and supper will be provided BUT participants are requested to bring and share food for 6 suppers.
- Wednesday 7, register from 4pm then as per above
- Tuesday 13, am excursion, BYO lunch and farewell.

Talks and activities will include topics such as water, general Otways biodiversity, bats, birds, small mammals, insects, ferns, and a new book on the Otways plants.

Excursion sites include Kaanglang and Delaney Rds, Turtons Tk, Waterfalls (Hopetoun, Stevenson, Triplet, Beauchamp), Lake Elizabeth, Blanket Leaf, Maits Rest, Beechy Rail-trail, West Barwon Dam, Aire River Crossing, Carlisle Heath, Big Trees, Pennyroyal, Rain Forest Aboretum. Where possible Thursday and Friday excursions will be repeated at the weekend.

Estimated cost \$155 -\$170. A firm figure will be calculated once initial registration payments are received and participants advised of balance owed in October; payment and balance due in December.

Early notice of this camp is necessary because accommodation in the Otways can be fully booked Christmas to Easter and especially at long weekends during that period. Early return of Registration/Booking Form and \$30 deposit (**closing date 22 September**) would be appreciated.

Accommodation lists and Registration Forms will be available at our September Meeting or contact Ern Perkins.

Observations

- Striped Honeyeater, Apostlebird, 85 Red-rumped Parrots seen on a trip north in early August. Ern Perkins
- Blue-faced Honeyeater opposite Yellow House in Lyttleton Street, also White-faced Honeyeater. Rita Mills
- Family of owls in Bunya Pine, 108 Lyttleton Street – Barking Owls? Rita Mills
- While holidaying on Brampton Island - 4 Yellow-bellied Sunbirds (one each day) and definitely Bush (not Beach) Thick-knees near the waters edge. Marjorie and Ken Cross
- Three Wedged-tailed Eagles flying over Barkers Creek. Geoff Harris
- Golden Wattle *Acacia pycnantha*, Rough Wattle *A. aspera*, Spreading Wattle *A. genistifolia*, Gorse Bitter-pea *Davesia ulicifolia*, Yellow Box *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* ss *pruinosa* and Tall Greenhoods *Pterostylis longifolia* flowering along the line at Muckleford Station. Gold-dust Wattle *Acacia acinacea* early this season - almost out in flower. Red Box *Eucalyptus polyanthemos* s *vestita* flowering –looking good this season. Richard Piesse
- Red Wattlebirds still about. Chris Morris
- While on recent visit to Brisbane - Double-eyed Fig-parrots calling all the time and Scrub Turkey on back verandah and building in the other corner of the garden this time. George Broadway
- Echidna diggings reported widely.
- 24/8 Group of about 10 Swift Parrots finally revealed themselves for positive identification after calling all week at Barkers Creek. Also an Olive-backed Oriole regularly visiting the garden. Geraldine Harris
- Bendigo Bush – six wattles and Leopard Orchid in flower. Richard Piesse
- On Wednesday Walk – Golden Moths in flower at Kalimna. Also at Muckleford, Maldon and in Bendigo Bush. Richard Piesse
- Common Hovea and Blue Caladenia, along Quartz Hill Track. Rita Mills.
- Hovea also in Botanic Gardens. Ern Perkins
- Dusty Millar near Garfield Wheel. Richard Piesse.

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

Draft Framework of Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management in Victoria – Briefing Meeting in Bendigo

Ern Perkins will attend DSE briefing session on the draft Framework of Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management in Victoria to be held in Bendigo, from 5-7pm on September 13. Other meetings will also be held in Ballarat, Melbourne, Bairnsdale and Benalla. The 45 indicators have the potential to reveal trends that inform decision making, and provide a framework for monitoring and information reporting undertaken by the DSE.

To register for the briefing session or to download an electric copy of the draft Framework, email SFM.Group@dse.vic.gov.au or visit www.dse.vic.gov.au/SFM or phone 96378273.

The draft framework is available for comment until Friday 29 September 2006.

Comments can be forwarded via mail to 'Feedback – SFM Indicators, Land Monitoring and Reporting Branch, DSE, PO Box 500, East Melbourne, VIC 3002', or email the address above.

From the Business Meeting 24/8/06

- \$2500 raised by the "After Anakie" photographic exhibition has been presented to the Castlemaine CFA by Mary Thompson, Rita Mills and George Broadway. Mary would like to thank all members who assisted with the exhibition.
- Richard Piesse to attend Fire Management Planning Bus Tour.
- 1/8 Ten members worked to plant the 200 plants in the Butterfly area of the Botanical Gardens recently – some working on into the afternoon to complete the task. With substantial guards and follow up rains, the plants were looking good on Broom Pull day.
- 24/8 Four members attended and made some impression on the Broom in the butterfly area of Castlemaine Botanic Gardens – woody weeds were marked for attention by Peter Johnson of DSE. Plenty of Broom still remaining – for those who may have an hour or two to spare.
- Concern that lack of funding has meant that Swift Parrot Survey records are not being accepted. Moved that CFNC continue to record results from its own monitoring programmes and also of local sightings.
- CFNC to lead a walk during the Heritage Festival in May 2007.
- Richard Piesse has agreed to be Convenor of Excursions for the Club. So if you know of any interesting places suitable for outings, contact Richard. Ph 5472 3191.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Programme

September 2006

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.

Excursions (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the carpark opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and 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 27 Doveton Street, at 7.30 pm. All members are invited to attend.

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB MEETINGS AND EXCURSIONS.

Fri Sept 8. Identifying Local Native Pea Species. Frances Cincotta. UCA Hall, 8pm.

Sat Sept 9. Terrick Terrick. Full day excursion. Depart from carpark opposite motel in Duke St at 10am sharp. BYO refreshments and lunch. Leader: Rita Mills Ph 5472 4553

Wed Sep 13. Wednesday Evening Wildflower Walk (1). All these walks depart from the carpark opposite the motel in Duke St at 4pm sharp and return at 5.30pm. Contact: Geraldine Harris Ph 5474 2244.

Wed Sep 20. Wednesday Evening Wildflower Walk (2).

Wed Sep 27. Wednesday Evening Wildflower Walk (3).

Wed Oct 4. Wednesday Evening Wildflower Walk (4).

Wed Oct 11. Wednesday Evening Wildflower Walk (5).

Tue Oct 3. Copper Butterfly Count. Mary Street carpark at 7.30pm. Bring a torch. Contact: Ern Perkins 5472 3124.

Fri Oct 13. The Box Ironbark Forest. Ern Perkins. UCA hall 8pm.

Sat Oct 14, Sun Oct 15. SEANA Campout at Maryborough. Castlemaine members are invited to attend the SEANA Campout activities. Registration fee \$20 due August 30. Contact : Ern Perkins Ph 5472 3124.

2006 Committee

Rita Mills (Pres).....	Ph 5472 4553	George Broadway (Sec)....	Ph 5472 2513
Hans van Gemert (Treas/ Public Off)..	Ph.5472 1082	Ern Perkins (Web).....	Ph.5472 3124
Noela Cain.....	Ph 5470 6223	Athol Dorman.....	Ph.5472 4429
Chris Morris.....	Ph 9885 4221	Richard Piesse(Excursions).	Ph.5472 3191
Geraldine Harris (Editor).....	Ph. 5474 2244,	PO Box 703, Castlemaine, 3450,	

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Subscriptions for 2006 (Screensaver with each 2006 membership \$2 postage)

Ordinary membership: Single \$22, Family \$30

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

The subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, *Castlemaine Naturalist*.

Website: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~cfnc>

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