

Castlemaine Naturalist

June 2007

Vol. 32.5 #344



Fungi

Excursion to Mopoke Gully - Anne van Gemert

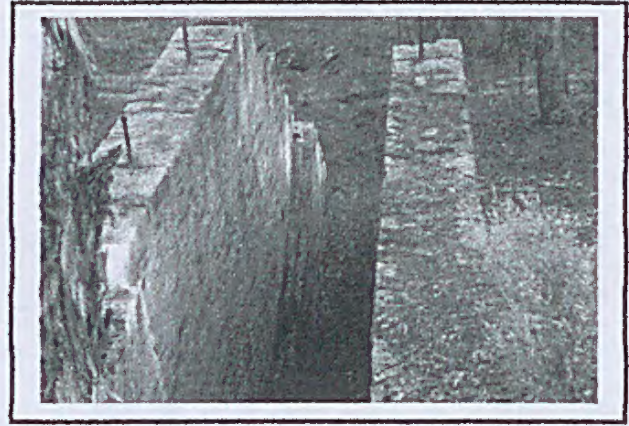
On Saturday 13th May 2007, 10 members met at the Octopus in Castlemaine. While we were waiting a flock of 50 yellow tailed cockatoos flew overhead. Their call was unmistakably known by all.

Geraldine was our leader for the afternoon. We travelled towards Blanket Gully Road and here we stopped to reminisce about the days when you could hail the train by waving a red flag. Maggie could also remember her uncles talking about this.

We arrived at the Mopoke Gully property and were greeted by an environment that has suffered greatly from mining and grazing in the past. In 1855 Mopoke Gully seemed a favourite spot. A miner reported that "the quartz reefs are turning out exceedingly rich", however it did not last very long and by June 1859 it was reported that, "the gold was very patchy; shafts of 70 feet were sunk, 28 ton of rock was crushed but zero gold was extracted". However a later unverified report claimed that altogether some 10,000 ounces had been extracted from depths down to 100ft by 1867.

There were quite a few historical remnants including the scars and indentations of a puddling wheel and the butts of what would once have been a substantial water wheel.

This 60ft diameter water wheel was erected in 1887 to power a 10-head battery. An estimated 2.5 million gallons of water per day were brought to the wheel from the main government water race along 19 chains of race with a fall of _ inch per chain. The mine was reported as paying good wages in 1889.



Although the drought has been severe we were still able to enjoy the trees e.g. Red Box, Grey Box, Long-leaved Box. Also we found an introduced species, Wyalong Wattle (*Acacia cardiophylla*) and the first grass-like shoots of the Yellow Star (*Hypoxis glabella*).

While walking in the valley there was this beautiful stillness. Not a leaf on the trees was moving. It was very awe inspiring. A place to share with friends. We took many photos and discussed the arsenic content of the crushed rock among other things.

We shared afternoon tea at the quarry which was filled with water. A wonderful afternoon was had by all.

Thank you Geraldine for organising the trip.

Photos above:

Left: Remains of puddling circle.
Right: Remains of Mopoke Gully
water wheel.

Photo to right:

Stone Quarry.

Photos: Anne van Gemert



P.S. Birds sighted during the afternoon were: Crimson Rosella, Brown Thornbill, Sitella, Grey Fantail, and a Scarlet Robin.

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

A Spot of bird watching on a trip to Grafton – Rita Mills

Our three weeks away, taking in the Grafton Artfest where I took part in a four day workshop, was also going to be a wonderful opportunity to checkout some good bird areas that had been recommended to me. The dryness of the countryside, especially the Hay Plain, where there were parts north of the Hay shire itself where the cattle on the "long paddock" had done much damage as apparently that shire had let the drovers overuse the area. I couldn't help wondering how long it would take it to recover. Even in the Hay Shire only the toughest shrubs seemed to be struggling on, and the reed beds near Wanganella, half an hour north of Deniliquin, were dry, and the birds were gone. Even the ravens seemed to be fewer. On the way back - in rain, by that time! - I did spot a male White-winged Wren not far north of Wanganella, so there are seemingly a few survivors.

One of the places that our son-in-law had recommended was Iluka, on the coast north east of Grafton. We were told that we would see lots of birds, including new ones to me, on the walking track in the nature reserve next to the National Park. We certainly saw, and heard, lots of Lewins Honeyeaters! And came face to face with a Sand Goanna up a tree on the side of the track. I also saw the first Rufous Fantail that I've seen for years, and a Little Shrike-thrush.

Another of Bryan's recommendations was the Washpool National Park, and on our walk there we stood in the middle of the path and watched two Superb Lyrebirds scratching and turning over stones and vegetation with their large strong feet as they fed. They knew we were only a few feet away, but were quite unafraid as long as we just stood still. They didn't even mind us talking. We saw another one a bit further along the path but the only other birds we saw there were Lewins Honeyeaters, a Bassian Thrush, Pied Currawongs and a Scrub Turkey! Admittedly it was the middle of the day, and not a good time for birdwatching.

The highlight of the Grafton part of the trip, though, was the Lollback Picnic Area on the Mann River at Jackadgery in a valley on the east side of the main part of the Range. We stopped there for lunch on the way to Grafton, and for morning tea on the way back, because there was a family of Red-backed Wrens living there. Other sightings included Double-barred Finches, a female Satin Bowerbird and lots of Wanderer Butterflies, and the Mann River itself was a delight; a braided river with islands, gravel shallows and lots of vegetation, with Egrets and White-faced Herons reflected in the water as they fished.

More later!

Sightings at Mia Mia Road over April – John Alexander

2/4 Spreading Wattle in Flower

24/4 Crested Bell Bird feeding on the ground.

26/4 First sighting of Hooded Robin for a number of years - on South German Track. Scarlet Robin seen at home and Powerful Owl calling during the night.

28/4 Yellow Robin at home.

29/4 Cranberry Heath flowering.

Note: Birds missing from home: Red Wattlebird, White-plumed, White-naped and Black-chinned Honeyeaters, Lorikeets and Pardalotes.

Birding in our beloved Box Ironbark Forest. 16/4/07

Ken and Maureen Dredge

We recently spent a few days in Castlemaine visiting family, so naturally took some time out to do some birding in our beloved Box Ironbark Forests. The highlight of the birding was two separate sightings of Speckled Warbler. One group was at Kalimna Point (irregular sightings do occur here) and the other was a single bird in stony and cleared land adjoining bushland in the upper Happy Valley area.

It was also pleasing to see some Golden Whistlers and White-eared Honeyeaters present in the Muckleford Forest near the Red White and Blue mine. The Quince Tree and Gower School yielded little.

Off to Northern Qld- for approximate six months - will send some east coast observations later in the year.

Observations

- Muriel Sovar was attracted by the call of a Grey Butcherbird at her home at Campbells Creek.
- Blackbirds hanging upside down picking fruit from the peppercorn tree. Dennis Hurley
- Albert brought a moth for identification - a male Swift or Wood Moth?
- Pair of Powerful Owls in the Botanic Gardens. Hans van Gemert
- Virginia Bartlam heard Powerful Owls calling their distinctive "Whoo Hoot" call over towards Lyttleton Street.
- Also Boobook in gardens on return from Heart Week Walk. George Broadway.
- Natasha Harris brought small fragile white eggs she thought might be gecko eggs – does anyone know?
- 20/5 *Acacia genistifolia*, *Bursaria spinosa* and *Xerochrysum viscosum* in flower near C'maine. 100's of Rainbow Lorikeet feeding in *E. maculata* and *E. leucoxyton* in Sunshine district. Also Little Pied Cormorant, White-faced Heron & Little Egret. Richard Piesse

Gariwerd: Reflecting on the Grampians – Geraldine Harris

In April 2003, environmental photographer and ecologist, Alison Pouliot was commissioned to provide images for the book, "Gariwerd: Reflecting on the Grampians". Three years and 33 trips to the Grampians later, the book has been published. One week after the photography was complete, fires ravaged the Grampians, destroying much of what was photographed.

Alison's aim was to show something as special, unique and wild as the Grampians in a way that would capture something of the emotional, cognitive and intuitive attraction, in addition to the visual.

In the Grampians there are eight broad Vegetation classes and over 800 indigenous plants species - 25 that are endemic (grow only in the Grampians). After fires we can measure the toll of houses lost and sheep destroyed but can never accurately estimate the native animal toll. Many animals that survive the actual fires are affected and succumb afterwards through injury and loss of habitat and food sources. After years of drought, this impact is even greater.

Alison talked about the importance of photographic records of this island surrounded modified landscape - and the mystical power of memory.

She recalled a 30 year relationship with one tree on the Henham Track in Red Gum Woodland – a relationship involving not just the tree but an entire ecosystem contained in that one tree - 1000's of generations of insects and birds, etc, etc. The anthropomorphic qualities of a weathered old trunk - like a weathered old face. Wondering if this tree was lost in the fires - where do these memories go? Photography is very important – as a record of an instant that once gone, can never be recaptured.

Alison talked about the privilege of her job but also the trials of having to get up predawn to climb with heavy camera equipment to hard-to-get-to places in the cold and wind to be at a location in time to catch the best light; sometimes trying for days on end and being defeated each time by early morning cloud. Several times she was caught in torrential rain and making her way down, lost expensive tripod legs along the way!

There were abstract images that captured unfamiliar scales, textures, water tension and clouds and plants reflected in water. There were images of Xanthorrhoea, Red Gum trunks, fruiting lichen, Gang Gang Cockatoos, geckoes, fungi, geological features etc.etc. All showing the ability of light to reveal the obscure...

What a privilege to be treated to a unique view of this magical place by a photographer with a passion for her subject.

National Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater Survey May 19 & 20, 2007.

On Saturday we went with John Alexander to Sth German Track Dam, Red White and Blue Mine, The Quince Tree in Pullans Rd and then to Smiths Reef Track dam. The weather was cold and there were no Swift Parrots or Regent Honeyeaters to be seen. Our bird list for Saturday was:

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Brown Treecreeper	Choughs
Crimson Rosella	Eastern Rosella	Flame Robins
Galah	Golden Whistler	Lapwing
Grey Shrike-thrush	Little Pied Cormorant	Magpie
Mistletoebird	Magpie Lark	Musk Lorikeets
Noisy miner	Scarlet Robin	Weebill
Spotted Pardalote	Welcome Swallow	Wood ducks
White-throated Treecreeper	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	

The highlights for this outing were a Spotted Quail-thrush off Bells Reef Track and some Tiny Greenhood Orchids *Pterostylis parviflora* at Smiths Reef Dam and Flame Robins near the dam on our way home.

On Sunday we went to the Castlemaine Golf Links and walked through to Erin Court with Debbie Worland. There were no Swift Parrots but an interesting variety of fungi.

Thankyou, Rita, George, Hans and Anne, John, Geraldine and Geoff and Debbie.

From the Business Meeting 24/5/07

Helen Robertson, Elaine Bayes, Damian Cook and Talia Madigan.

- The Financial Records for 2006 have been independently audited and found to be true and correct.
- Offer of books from Penny Garnett regretfully declined: no library
- CFNC Walk at Morgans Track, 10am on Nov5 (Garden Festival)
- The GDT route between Blackwood and Macedon has been settled and the management plan for the National Heritage Park is about to be released. Richard Piesse
- Maps of the Superpipe from Bendigo to Ballarat displayed for comment. Decision: no knowledge of any notable species at risk.

Thank you for all your Newsletter Articles this month!

Send your articles, reports, questions, observations etc to Geraldine Harris, P O Box 703, Castlemaine, 3450. Ph 54742244 or gedharris@castlemaine.net . If you found it interesting, others will too.

Extra Events for Members

Aust Naturalist Network Get-together 10-18 May 2008

Hosted by the Northern Territory Field Naturalist Club and held in the Mary River region of the Top End, Northern Territory.

The week will include seven one day trips into the area bounded by the Fogg Dam, Territory Wildlife Park, Point Stuart and Kakadu National Park, including an indigenous cultural experience, a wetland cruise, a visit to the Territory Wildlife Park and a visit to rock art sites.

Expressions of interest and a deposit of \$200 should be sent to the NTFNC ASAP (deadline Oct 1, 2007) to secure one of the (90 max) places. The cost is not expected to exceed \$1000 (and may be as low as \$850). A final account will be forwarded in October and the balance is due on December 15, 2007.

Preferred accommodation is at Mary River Park. Costs do not cover food and accommodation which need to be arranged independently.

Further information available at June meeting or contact Geraldine Harris Ph 5474 2244 or email: fiona.douglas@octa4.net.au, or write to NTFNC (ANN2008), PO Box 39525, WINNELLIE, NT 0821 or Gay Crowley ph (08) 8995 5005

SEANA Spring Camp - Mornington Peninsula, 5-7 Oct 2007

Hosted by Peninsula Field Naturalist Club Inc.

Venue: 'The Briars' Park Nepean Hwy, MT MARTHA 3934, an operating historical pastoral property. (Melways p17, Map 145 D11)

Accommodation: The Outdoor Education Camp, "the Briars' Park 10 rooms containing 4 bunk beds. BYO linen, blankets, towels, clock.

There are no camping facilities.

Catering: Fully catered for:

Light Breakfasts (Sat & Sun); 2 course evening meals -BYO drink and glass (Fri & Sat); make your own take away lunches - ingredients provided plus hot water tea, coffee etc

Cost: Registration fee (all participants) \$30.00 per person due now

Camp accommodation and all meals \$125.00

Evening meal only (accommodation elsewhere) \$12

Programme:

Fri – registration after 4pm –possible SEANA Meeting

Sat – Steve York, Ranger, Mornington Peninsula, BYO chairs and rugs

Have a full tank of petrol when you arrive – no petrol avail at 'Briars'.

Further information: at the June Meeting, Geraldine Harris, 5474 2244.

Doris Weigert (campout organiser), 3/2 Skinner St, HASTINGS, 3915

Cheques payable to 'SEANA Inc. Spring 2007 Campout'.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Programme

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

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

Fri Jun 8. A Moth Beginner? Tony Morton, Entomologist. A study of local Moths. UCA Hall, 8pm.

Sat Jun 9. Field Trip: Smiths Reef Track – response to rain. Depart from the car park opp. the motel in Duke St at 1.30pm sharp. BYO afternoon tea. Leader: Rita Mills, 5472 4553

Fri Jul 13. Global Warming and What We Can Do About It. Terry White, founder of Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance. UCA Hall, 8pm.

Sat Jul 14. Club Development Workshop. Facilitator: Maurie Crooke. *The success of this event is depends on your attendance.* Come along and share your aspirations and explore future directions that will ensure the continued effectiveness of our club. Chewton Community Centre, Main Street, Chewton. 10am til 4pm. Lunch and refreshments provided. Parking at rear of building. Past, present and potential members all welcome. For catering purposes please **RSVP by June 30, 2007**(see separate notice). Contact: George Broadway, Ph 5472 2513, CFNC Inc., P O Box 324, Castlemaine, 3450, broadway@bigpond.com

2007 Committee

George Broadway (Secretary) 5472 2513

Rita Mills 5472 4553

Hans van Gemert (Public Officer) 5472 1082

Natalie de Maccus 5472 4499

Alison Rowe (Treasurer) 0408 899 283

Chris Morris 0418 996 289

Richard Piesse 0407 087 319

Debbie Worland 5472 2474

Geraldine Harris (Newsletter Editor) 5474 2244, gedharris@castlemaine.net

Ern Perkins (Web Editor) 5472 3124, lperkins@netcon.net.au

Subscriptions for 2007

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>

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc., PO Box 324, Castlemaine, 3450.
Inc #A0003010B