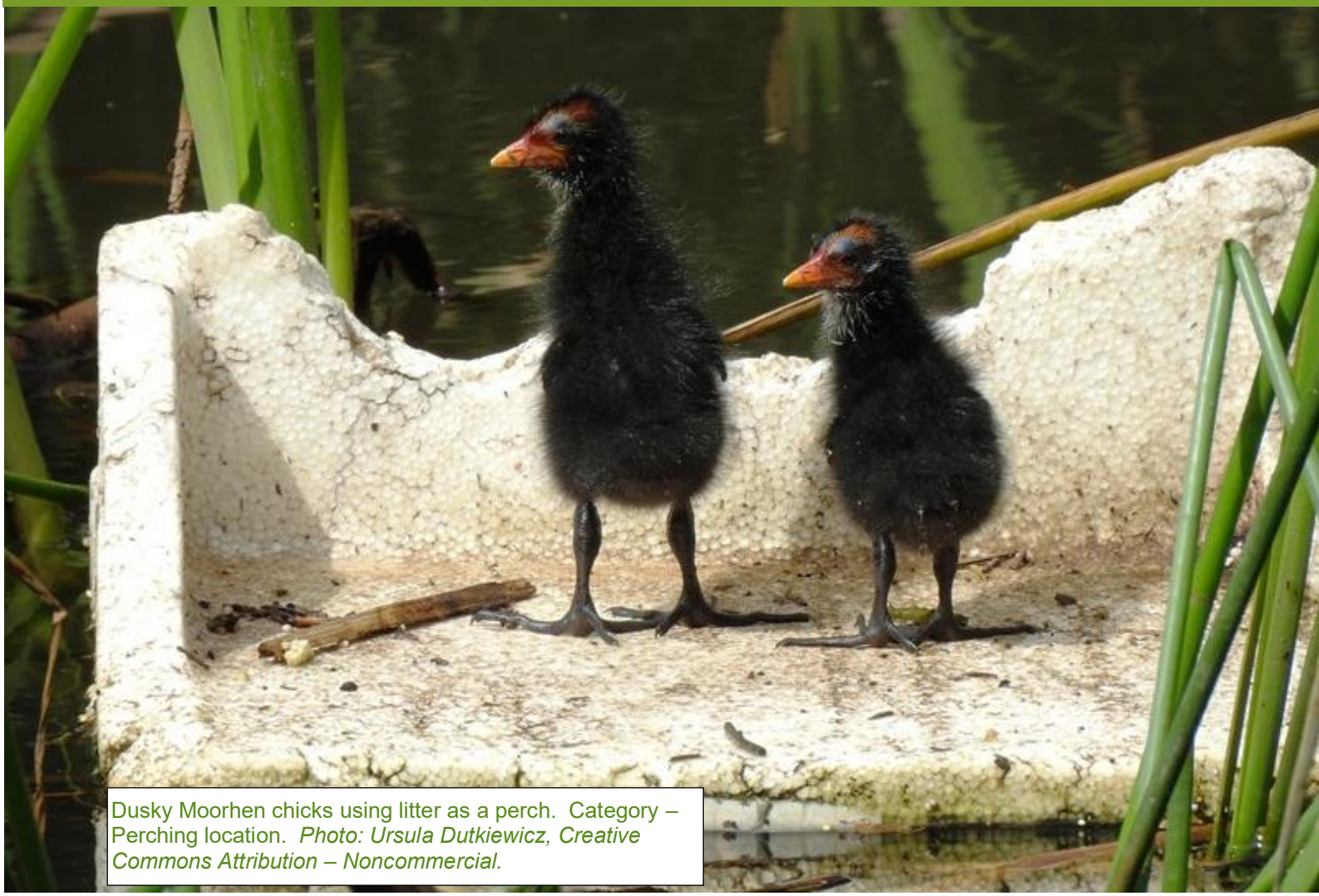
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Dusky Moorhen chicks using litter as a perch. Category – Perching location. *Photo: Ursula Dutkiewicz, Creative Commons Attribution – Noncommercial.*

Birds and Litter or the Litter bird-en

Our September meeting was a joint meeting with Birdlife Castlemaine District and Connecting Country as part of the Feathery Festival. Our speaker for the evening was Hannah Faraone, a PhD candidate at Federation University.

Hannah's area of study is the interaction of birds and litter. Some of you may have contributed to her research by answering her calls for images of birds interacting with litter or by posting those images on iNaturalist.

Hannah started her presentation with the question: 'what is anthropogenic litter?' and defined it as 'persistent, manufactured or processed solid material that is discarded, disposed of or abandoned'. It can come from many sources and once in the environment can be transported great distances by wind and water. Much of the litter discarded on land reaches the sea where it turns up on beaches or may be concentrated in marine 'garbage patches'.

Litter can be a health hazard for humans and for all other organisms living in the environment, e.g. by exposure to a toxic substance. It may also create novel ecosystems such as the marine garbage patches where organisms use the litter as a substrate instead of rocks. There are different categories of litter based on type

The Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung community as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Country where we meet and study the natural environment. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and future.

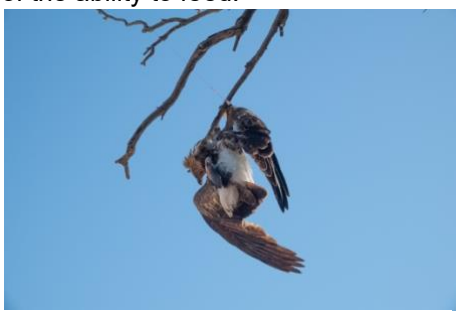
(metal, plastic, glass, other), size (macro >5mm, micro 1µ-5mm and nano <1µ) and colour. Having consistent terminology makes it easier to compare across areas or time.

Interactions between birds and litter have been documented in the past, particularly in marine environments. So far three types of interaction have been documented: ingestion, entanglement and use in nest construction. Interactions with litter come with a cost. Ingestion can result in blockages of the digestive system or poisoning and organ failure.



Australian Pelican consuming litter. Category – Ingestion. *Photo: Gary Tate, Creative Commons Attribution – Noncommercial.*

Entanglement can result in injuries and death through entrapment or loss of the ability to feed.



Little Eagle caught in fishing line. Category – Entanglement. *Photo: Euan Moore*

Even when litter is used in the construction of nests it may cause secondary entrapment of young birds e.g. entanglement with fishing line and bailer twine.

In order to take effective action to solve these problems it is necessary to understand what is going on and know which species are most affected. Hannah used images from iNaturalist and other sources showing bird/litter interactions. To ensure consistency, several people classified each image for bird species, characteristics of the litter and how it was being utilised. 230 images of 52 species were analysed with most images concentrated around the urban area.



Dusky Moorhen nesting in a plastic crate. Category – Nest Construction *Photo: Eliza Thompson, Creative Commons Attribution 3.*

In addition to the three usage categories already mentioned there was also evidence of handling litter, distraction displays, perching location and courtship display to attract mates. Hannah then showed us examples of all these usages.

This shows that birds are interacting with litter in more ways than had previously been considered and that these findings could not have occurred without the data collected by citizen scientists.



Hooded Plover using distraction display against a discarded drink can. Category – Distraction display. The can has blown close to the nest (arrow), where the Hooded Plover sees this as a threat and is trying to lure it away with a distraction display. *Photo: Grainne Maguire*

The most frequent category of interaction was handling. This tended to be a precursor to most of the other interactions such as ingestion, nest building, entanglement, etc., and these interactions could lead to other interactions. For example handling could be a precursor to nest building or for attracting mates (bowerbirds) but where objects such as fishing line or twine are used, subsequent entanglement could occur at the nest or the bower. Ring-shaped items (bottle-cap rings) and threadlike items (fishing line) are a particular risk.



Raven wants a beer. Category – Handling. *Photo: Hannah Faraone, Creative Commons Attribution – Noncommercial.*

Targeted action to reduce entanglement includes the installation of tangler bins at popular fishing spots which should be used for unwanted fishing line and other fishing gear. Another action which we can all help with is the cutting of rings such as rubber bands, hair ties, bottle cap rings and the rings that hold 6-packs of cans before placing them in rubbish bins. This reduces the risk of entanglement if the litter accidentally ends up in the environment. Of course, keeping the litter out of the environment should be the main aim.



Satin Bowerbird bower. Category – Courtship display. *Photo: Daphne Gonzalvez, Creative Commons Attribution – Noncommercial.*

The next step in this project will be to look at bowerbirds and explore how the litter is used and potential impacts on the species, in particular on breeding success. Different species of bowerbird use different types and colours of litter in their display bowers.

Hannah has already started collecting data for this stage of her project so if you have photos of bowerbirds and their bowers then you can contribute by submitting your photos to https://biocollect.ala.org.au/acsa/project/index/43b52a65-7d07-42c1-9c0c-4b967cfce53c?&hub=acsa on the Atlas of Living Australia website or by following this QR code.

Thank you Hannah for a great talk and best wishes for the completion of your PhD.

Euan Moore

Proposed Loddon River Nature Trail, Guildford

For our September excursion the club visited an area along the Loddon River at Guildford where we were hosted by the Guildford and Upper Loddon Landcare Group (GULL).

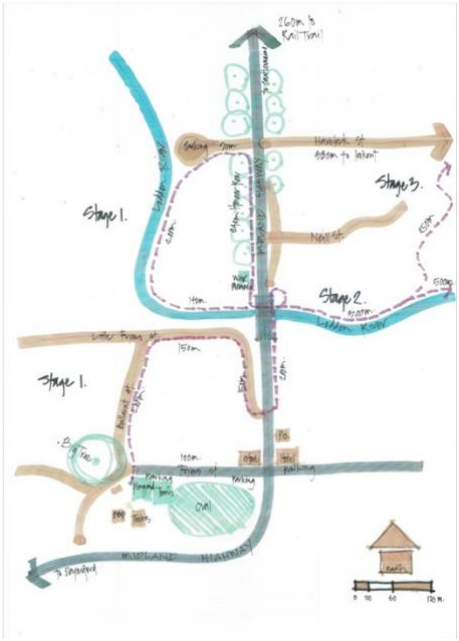


The Loddon River at Guildford. *Photo: Bill Sampson*

The Landcare group is just starting out on what will be a long-term project to restore the native habitat and improve the amenity of the section of the Loddon River where it passes through Guildford.

Like many of us, I have often driven down the main road heading for Daylesford and beyond and never given the river a second glance. Partly this is because the river is hidden by a mix of exotic trees and River Redgums. The open areas are very weedy. But this riparian strip in an attractive setting offers the opportunity to develop an enjoyable and interesting trail.

The Loddon, at this point, is running free. There are no artificial weirs or dams upstream to hold the water back. It is still subject to the natural flow cycles, low in summer and autumn, higher in winter and spring. It may dry out to the point where it is only a series of pools or after heavy rain, be flooded. It is these natural flows that are so important for sustaining the life of the river.



Sketch map of the GULL project. Our excursion visited areas shown as Stage 1 & Stage 2. *Image: Bill Sampson. GULL provided.*

We met Gendrie Klein-Breteler (GULL president) and Bill Sampson (GULL secretary) where Havelock St extends to the river. This is at the northern end of the project area where they hope to eventually establish a quiet picnic area beside the river.

An important reason for our visit was to document the flora and fauna of the area. This will help the group appreciate the natural values that they already have and can build on. With this in mind we followed the river upstream, picking a route between the river and the fenced paddock between us and the highway. Our route took us under the highway bridge and along to where an area of public land extends up to the Guildford Plateau Lookout. We then returned to the bridge and walked the grassy verge back to Havelock St where Gendrie had set up a delicious afternoon tea which was appreciated by everyone.

As we expected, there were many exotic plants seen along the way. Our total plant list included 30 species. About 2/3rds of these were introduced. Most of the natives were trees and shrubs growing along the river bank. Further visits and record keeping by members of GULL will extend this plant list.

While it is daunting to face so many weeds, the presence of native trees and shrubs provides a good starting point. As more overstory is added it will help suppress the weeds. It will also be important for the group to be strategic about the weeds that they do tackle. The woody weeds such as blackberry would be a good place to start. Some weeds may be difficult to control but not have a major impact on the environment so could be ignored. Insight from nearby Landcare groups facing the same problems will be valuable.



Noxious weed Blue Periwinkle *Vinca maior. Photo: Euan Moore*

A highlight of the visit was the number of birds. There were raptors making use of the updrafts at the edge of the plateau. We also had water birds and bush birds along the way. A total of 33 species in all with only two exotics, European Blackbird and European Goldfinch. This shows that the vegetation that is already present is providing valuable habitat for native birds.

The damp areas along the river banks were providing frog habitat. We heard the Common Eastern Froglet calling. Members of GULL have also recorded Eastern Sign-bearing Froglet *Crinia parinsignifera,* Brown Tree Frog, *Litoria ewingii,* Whistling Tree Frog



Water Ribbons *Cycnogeton procerus. Photo: Euan Moore*

Litoria verreauxii, and the Eastern Banjo Frog *Limnodynastes dumerilii* along the river. There could well be some additional species, yet to be recorded.

The clear fast flowing water and still pools will provide habitat for platypus and rakali. Both these species are present in Campbells Ck which joins the Loddon about 500m downstream. This creates continuous riparian habitat for both species.

We did not record any mammals during our visit but did see rabbit burrows in the river terrace. White-striped Free-tail bats, *Austronomus australis,* have been recorded in the area. Some of the larger trees will have hollows suitable for bats so surveying with acoustic recorders should determine the presence of additional species.

Our overall impression of the area was that it still contains significant natural values which can be built on to create an attractive natural asset for the village. We wish GULL every success in their endeavours to turn this area into a valued part of the village.

A project has been set up on iNaturalist where you can see what has been recorded for the area already. https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/projects/loddon-river-nature-trail This shows many of the species we saw during our visit. Please visit the area and add your observations to iNaturalist so we can all learn more about this location.

Euan Moore



Bill Sampson (left in blue shirt) & Gendrie Klein-Breteler (left in green Tshirt) host the group at the planned picnic point. *Photo: Lou Citroën*

Fauna List

Scientific Name	Common Name	Count
Butterflies		
Pieris rapae	Cabbage White	1
Vanessa kershawi	Australian Painted Lady	1
Frogs		
Crinia signifera	Common Eastern Froglet	Calling

Fauna List continued

Scientific Name	Common Name	Count
Birds		
Acanthiza pusilla	Brown Thornbill	2
Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris	Eastern Spinebill	1
Anas superciliosa	Pacific Black Duck	2
Anthochaera carunculata	Red Wattlebird	6
Cacatua galerita	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	2
Cacatua tenuirostris	Long-billed Corella	4
Caligavis chrysops	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	1
*Carduelis carduelis *Introduced*	European Goldfinch	1
Chenonetta jubata	Australian Wood Duck	1
Colluricincla harmonica	Grey Shrikethrush	1
Corvus mellori	Little Raven	1
Dacelo novaeguineae	Laughing Kookaburra	1
Dicaeum hirundinaceum	Mistletoebird	1
Eolophus roseicapilla	Galah	1
Eopsaltria australis	Eastern Yellow Robin	2
Gymnorhina tibicen	Australian Magpie	3
Haliastur sphenurus	Whistling Kite	1
Hieraaetus morphnoides	Little Eagle	1
Hirundo neoxena	Welcome Swallow	1
Malurus cyaneus	Superb Fairywren	4
Melithreptus lunatus	White-naped Honeyeater	1
Milvus migrans	Black Kite	1
Neochmia temporalis	Red-browed Finch	4
Pachycephala rufiventris	Rufous Whistler	1
Pardalotus punctatus	Spotted Pardalote	6
Pardalotus striatus	Striated Pardalote	1
Phaps chalcoptera	Common Bronzewing	1
Phylidonyris novaehollandiae	New Holland Honeyeater	2
Platycercus elegans	Crimson Rosella	3
Ptilotula penicillata	White-plumed Honeyeater	1
Rhipidura albiscapa	Grey Fantail	1
Trichoglossus concinnus	Musk Lorikeet	2
*Turdus merula * Introduced*	Common Blackbird	2

Plant List

Native Species	
Acacia dealbata	Silver Wattle
Acacia melanoxylon	Blackwood
Acacia provincialis	Wirilda
Cycnogeton procerus	Water Ribbons
Eucalyptus camaldulensis	River Redgum
Leptospermum obovatum	River Tea Tree
Melaleuca paludicola	River Bottlebrush
Melicytus dentatus	Tree Violet
Phragmites australis	Common reeds
Introduced Species	
**Arctotheca calendula*	Capeweed
**Cerastium glomeratum*	Common Mouse-ear Chickweed
**Cirsium vulgare*	Spear Thistle
**Conium maculatum*	Hemlock
**Dactylis glomerata*	Cocksfoot
**Euphorbia lathyris*	Caper Spurge
**Euphorbia peplus*	Petty Spurge
**Galium aparine*	Cleaver
**Lysimachia arvensis*	Scarlet Pimpernel
**Oxalis brasiliensis*	Brazilian Woodsorrel
**Oxalis pes-caprae*	Soursob
**Phalaris aquatica*	Phalaris
**Plantago lanceolata*	Ribwort Plantain
**Romulea rosea*	Onion Grass
**Rubus fruticosus sp. agg.*	Blackberry
**Rumex obtusifolius*	Broad-leaved Dock
**Salix sp*	Willow
**Silybum marianum*	Variegated Thistle
**Taraxacum officinale*	Dandelion
**Trifolium sp.*	Clover
**Vinca major*	Blue Periwinkle

Wildflower Wander, 23rd Sept, Sinclair's Lane



We were privileged to have Phil and Judy Hopley as guides for this walk again on a fine and warm afternoon. With a good roll-up for this popular wildflower location, we transversed into the bush west of the lane and recorded a good number of plants in flower, though early for some.

Noel Young

Spiky Guinae flower *Hibbertia exutiacies*
Photo: Noel Young

Plant List

Acacia acinacea	Gold Dust Wattle
Acacia aspera	Rough Wattle
Acacia genistifolia	Spreading Wattle
Acacia pycnantha	Golden Wattle
Arthropodium strictum	Chocolate Lily
Bulbine bulbosa	Bulbine Lily (buds)
Burchardia umbellata	Milkmaid
Caladenia fuscata	Dusky Caladenia
Calochilus robertsonii	Purplish Beard Orchid
Daviesia leptophylla	Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea
Daviesia ulicifolia	Gorse Bitter-pea
Drosera auriculata	Tall Sundew
Glossodia major	Wax-lip Orchid
Grevillea alpina	Downy Grevillea
Grevillea micrantha	Small-flowered Grevillea
Hibbertia exutiacies	Spiky Guinea-flower
Microseris walteri	Yam Daisy
Ozothamnus obcordatus	Grey Everlasting
Philotheca verrucosa	Fairy Wax-flower
Pimelea linifolia	Slender Rice-flower
Pultenaea pedunculata	Matted Bush-pea
Rhytidosporum procumbens	White Marianth
Tetratheca ciliata	Pink Bells
Thelymitra antennifera	Rabbit's Ear Orchid
Thelymitra xmacmillanii (hybrid)	Crimson Sun Orchid
Wurmbea dioica	Early Nancy
Xerochrysum viscosum	Sticky Everlasting (buds)

All photos Noel Young



Small-flowered Grevillea
Grevillea micrantha



Rabbit's Ear Orchid
Thelymitra antennifera



Dusky Caladenia
Caladenia fuscata



Crimson Sun Orchid
Thelymitra xmacmillanii

Phytophthora Control Project

Porcupine Ridge is one of our favourite wildflower areas. Back in 2023 several people from our club and from Friends of the Box-Ironbark Forests (FoBIF) noticed that there were patches of dieback developing in the vicinity of Wewak Track and Loop Track. Some of the worst affected plants were Scented Bush Pea, *Pultenaea graveolans*, and Fryerstown Grevillea, *Grevillea obtecta*, both listed as Endangered under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act.

Parks Victoria (PV) was alerted. Testing confirmed the presence of Cinnamon Fungus, *Phytophthora cinnamomi* (PC) which is actually not a fungus but taxonomically in the kingdom *Chromista*. There are native species of Phytophthora however *P. cinnamomi* is an introduced species, most likely from the Americas. Many of our native plants, including members of the families Proteaceae, Myrtaceae, Fabaceae and Ericaceae are highly susceptible to the disease.

There is no way of eliminating Phytophthora but its spread can be slowed by restricting vehicles and foot access to affected areas. Unfortunately, an attempt to close Loop Tk was thwarted by 4WD drivers who drove around the locked gates and created new tracks. Vehicle and boot hygiene is important as Phytophthora is spread when infected soil is moved from one location to another on boots or vehicles. It also spreads in water running from infected areas to non-infected areas. Fire also facilitates its spread by leaving the surviving plants in a weaker state and by resulting in other disturbances. Without disturbance, spread is relatively slow.

In recent years it has been found that a Phosphite spray has been effective in slowing the spread although not eliminating Phytophthora from the environment. This spray has been used in Western Australia and the Otway Ranges NP in Victoria.

Earlier this year I was approached by Parks Victoria staff who asked if CFNC would be willing to assist with the monitoring of a Phosphite spraying trial at Porcupine Ridge to which I agreed. It has taken quite a while to get all the necessary approvals in place but earlier in September a group of five volunteers from CFNC joined PV staff in the field.

A total of 39 survey plots had been established across the area. Plots were allocated in areas with 'No PC', 'PC', 'PC plus fuel reduction' and 'PC plus Phosphite plus fuel reduction'. Each plot is 10m x 2m in area and almost all include at least one susceptible plant of Fryerstown Grevillea. Most plots were within 10 minutes walk from a vehicle track.

Our job was to locate each plot from the GPS coordinates and record the number and health of several key species. We also estimated ground cover for the canopy, shrub, graminoids, herbs and bare ground. While the ability to identify most of our common species was useful, accurate identification was only required for the key species and a cheat sheet was provided. The number of non-key species was counted but observers only needed to say that 'A' was different to 'B' rather than actually identify 'A' and 'B'. All this information was recorded using a phone app which we had downloaded prior to the survey.

The time required to assess a plot was 10-15 minutes. With three teams we managed to complete around 20 plots a day and completed the whole survey over two days.

This was the initial survey of these plots prior to any treatment. At some point in the future we will be asked to repeat the survey. There will probably be a survey following the Phosphite spraying to assess the effect of the spray on living plants. In some instances it can cause chemical burning of new growth. There will be at least one more survey following the fuel reduction burning.

I would like to thank our volunteers, Carolyn Crowther, Sue Albert, Sue Luke and Jenny Rolland for the time that they contributed. The feedback is that they enjoyed the couple of days wandering around the bush learning about the plants while contributing to an important project.

If you would like to be involved in future surveys please let me know at calamanthus5@bigpond.com. I will be keeping a list of possible volunteers as we may be asked to help at short notice.

You can also help reduce the spread of Phytophthora by keeping your boots clean and spraying them with 'Phytoclean' before walking in the bush. The club has bottles of Phytoclean which we use at the start of excursions. The club can also provide you with a spray bottle of Phytoclean and refills when required. This is a small action that we can all take to help protect our native plants.

Euan Moore

Editor's note: Phytophthora cannot be eradicated from a site once it becomes infested*. The only chemical treatment currently available for Phytophthora dieback is Phosphite, a systemic, non-hazardous and biodegradable fungicide. At the rates used for the treatment of dieback in native ecosystems Phosphite does not kill or eradicate Phytophthora, rather it is believed to suppress the pathogen and boost the plant's natural defence responses to infection.

Phosphite, also known as phosphorous acid, or phosphonate, is a systemically-applied liquid fungicide developed for the control of Phytophthora diseases. Not to be confused, Phosphite is a variation of phosphate - the plant-available form of phosphorous essential for plant growth.

In addition - Early detection and mapping are critical to managing Phytophthora dieback. Dieback detector dogs are proving to be a reliable way to detect Phytophthora dieback in the field more quickly than 2 weeks of testing in the lab.

*Govt. of Western Australia, Dept. of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.



Assessing forbs on a plot near Wewak Track.
Sam Pollard (PV), Mary Thorpe (PV), Jenny Rolland (CFNC). *Photo: Euan Moore*



The Phytophthora front. The plot extended from a highly infected to a less infected area. The dead shrubs in the foreground, killed by Phytophthora, and the living shrubs behind are Scented Bush Pea, *Pultenaea graveolans.* Sam Pollard (PV ranger) at the end of the plot centre line.

Observations

On 19th Sept a Chequered Swallowtail butterfly was seen along Forest Ck. This is the first of this species that I have seen in our area as it is a vagrant this far south. Earlier this year I observed large numbers across northern NSW, SW Queensland and NE South Australia. As the seasons change it is possible that they will migrate further south so one to watch out for on your wanderings. Unfortunately I did not manage to get a photo but you can find images on the butterfly pages of our website or in our butterfly brochure.

https://castlemainefieldnaturalists.org.au/chequered-swallowtail/

Euan Moore







Left - The rare *Caladenia clavescens* south of Chewton.
Centre - Owlet nightjar enjoying the afternoon sun at the Post Office Hill reserve.
Right – Swamp Wallaby *Wallabia bicolor.* Sinclair's Lane. It appears to be an old one as its face and upper body are light grey. From the photo it appears to be blind in its left eye. *Photos: Noel Young*



Jarrod, son of Geraldine & Geoff Harris, found this Dusky Moorhen dead in their paddock on September 3. He contacted the Bird Flu Hotline but was directed to double bag it and put it in his general rubbish bin as they did not have sufficient staff to deal with this matter. The wounds on its back might indicate that it had been dropped by a bird of prey?



Alison Radford found these 3 Echidnas sleeping in her shed. Not known where or how they got in & then out again.





After the recent rain, creeks flowing from Blue Hills and low-lying farm paddocks becoming wetlands, the waterbirds were gathering. This observation was between Eastville and Eddington where the young farm crop was yellowing and the waterbirds were enjoying the day.
There were several waterbird species present as well as the regular roadside varieties. Kerrie Jennngs was photographing with a long lens and the waterbirds were spooked. Kerrie watched as they circled for several minutes. On examining the photos when she returned home, Kerrie realised there was a pair of Australasian Shovelers present. They are a protected species during duck hunting and Kerrie pondered the difficulty that hunters would have, particularly in low light, of accurately choosing one species over another. *Photos: Kerrie Jennings*

A friend of Kerrie Jennings reported about a dozen Noisy Friarbirds had taken up residence in the Yellow Gums on their farm near the Shelbourne/Lockwood area. They stayed and increased to around 20 over the next couple of months, finally leaving on 3rd Sept. Kerrie took these photos to show a few of their antics on 21st August.
They were first seen about 5-6 years ago as a larger flock of several dozen, but had not been seen since. Kerrie thinks they're a partial migrant, chasing the flowering gums in late Winter/Spring and then moving back north.
Geoff Park calls them 'blossom nomads' on his Natural Newstead site.
Photos: Kerrie Jennings







Eastern Yellow Robin, Loddon river, Guildford.
Photo: Euan Moore



Southern Marbled Gecko, Shepherds Flat
Photo: Jill Williams

Coming Events

Fri 9th – Sun 11th October – SEANA Castlemaine

Please note there is no general monthly meeting or excursion in October due to your leaders being busy organising the SEANA weekend with 24 excursions and two evenings with guest speakers. However, October is an excellent time to be out in the bush enjoying our spring wildflowers and gathering observations to share at our next meeting!

Fri 13th November, 7.30pm
Meeting (Uniting Church Chapel, Lyttleton St, Castlemaine): "Bioacoustics and other technologies for surveying our local wildlife"
Speaker: Lawrie Conole

Sat 14th November, 1.30pm
Excursion: "Bioblitz preparation, use of iNaturalist in the field, Walmer Forest Reserve"
Leaders: Mez Woodward and Euan Moore
Meet: at the northern end of the car park north of the Railway Goods Shed, Kennedy St. at 1.30pm

Mon 16th November, 9.00am
Roadside Clean-up
Leader: Geoff Harris

Fri 27th - Mon 30th November
Great Southern Bioblitz – a chance to showcase the amazing wildlife in our region.
Information: CFNC website (Great Southern Bioblitz)

Sat 6th-Sun 7th December Challenge Bird Count
Information: CFNC website (Challenge Bird Count – Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club).
Contact: Chris Timewell, c_timewell@hotmail.com

Fri 11th December, 7.30pm
Meeting: Uniting Church Hall, Lyttleton St, Castlemaine
Members' night – share your nature highlights for the year!

Sat 12th December, 1.30pm
Excursion: End of year walk and picnic.

Visitors are welcome at club activities

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc. #A0003010B

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PO Box 324, Castlemaine, 3450

Membership – fees due 1st April
Includes the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist.
(Membership forms on CFNC website)
Single $35, Family $50
Pensioner or student:
Single $25, Family $30

Newsletter: Castlemaine Naturalist
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The Nodding Greenhood Pterostylis nutans is the club emblem. Design by Rita Mills

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