

# The Murrumbidgee Naturalist



July 2022 - Issue #305

Journal of the Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc.

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## Objectives

To facilitate and promote the knowledge of natural history, and to encourage the preservation and protection of the Australian natural environment, especially that of the Murrumbidgee River Valley



**Black Swans on Ita Lake, Norwood by Nella Smith**

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## CONTRIBUTIONS

For the August issue are due issue by  
Wednesday 3 August

To Rowena Whiting

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**The beginning of wisdom is to call  
things by their proper name  
Confucius ca. 500 BC**

## Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc. Office Bearers and Annual Subscriptions

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**MEETINGS** are held on the second Thursday each month, except January, at the Henry Lawson Room, Leeton Library, Sycamore Street, Leeton at 7pm.

**FIELD TRIPS** NORMALLY TAKE PLACE ON THE FOLLOWING WEEKEND.

INTENDING NEW MEMBERS, GUESTS AND VISITORS WELCOME.

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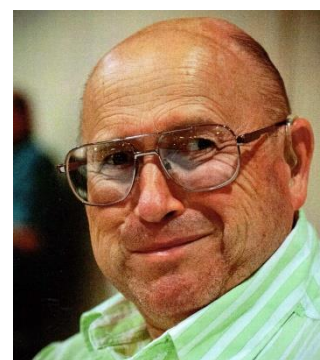
## Welcome to the July issue

Winter is certainly making its presence felt; those people who ventured out were rewarded. Maybe it was a little on the cold side but that is a small price to pay for walking in the hills and surveying the plains and river country. We were fortunate with both our trips last month to have dry & with some sun giving us a lovely sunrise and sunset at Norwood. Reports of both trips are in this issue.

Also in June we were delighted to welcome William Ingram to our meeting to speak to us about the Aboriginal history and activities in our area.

This month's we will be visiting another National Park, Jimberoo, north of Rankins Springs an area we haven't been to for some time as a group.

For those who remember **Richard Faulder** will be sad to hear that he passed away last month after many years in care. He was a member of MFN from the outset, being our first secretary/treasurer. He held that position until we split the roles in 2006. He made a considerable contribution to the Club: above all the early members relied on him to point out and identify all the insects and spiders he found on our field trips, always with that little bit more information added in quietly and unobtrusively to arouse interest. And we must not forget his sense of humour. In memory of Richard I have reprinted the first part of a talk he gave at the Club's July meeting in 2004. Farewell to the 'go-to spider expert



Happy reading, **Rowena.**

### **Don't Forget: Membership subscriptions were due on the 30<sup>th</sup> June**

Please send your money to the Treasurer, Glenn Currie promptly to PO Box 541, Leeton, NSW 2705 or make a bank transfer (preferred) to the MFN's bank account (Please make sure you are using the current account - BSB 082 672 account no. 722043387). Make sure you include your name and description of payment.

**Annual Subscriptions:** Family \$45.00, Adult/Single \$35.00, Journal only/Concession \$25.00  
Any queries, Glenn can be contacted on 0488 563 321.

## Duncans Creek to Steamboat Creek

We set off on a cold, windy morning from Mt. Bingar Road heading north across the lower part of Duncans Creek and across the low ridge to Steamboat Creek, returning via the Whitton Stock Route. The first part was through more *Salsola kali* (Buckbush) than we would wish to see, which hid the variety of grasses amongst it. While we walked through scattered *Callitris glaucophylla* (White Cypress Pine) towards the first slope, we noticed *Nicotiana suaveolens* (Scented Tobacco) in flower and then a *Pandorea pandorana* (Wonga Vine) on an unknown small tree.

As we started up the slope, the variety of plants changed dramatically, with *Zygophyllum glaucum* (Pale Twinleaf) flowers in large numbers amongst *Calotis cuneifolia* (Purple Burr-daisy). *Eucalyptus dwyeri* (Dwyer's Mallee Gum) became more prominent as we saw *Hibertia obtusifolia* (Grey Guinea flower) in flower, a few *Wahlenbergia communis* (Tufted Bluebell) and *Phyllanthus thymoides* (Thyme Spurge).



Over the rest of the slopes and ridges, dark green *Gonocarpus elatus* (Hill Raspwort) was the main ground cover. Large numbers of shrubs rare to our region were a feature of the walk from there on, the first being *Leptospermum divaricatum* (Tea Tree) in bud, then the rarer *Prostanthera nivea* (Snowy Mint Bush).

*Acacia doratoxylon* (Currawang), one with *Amyema quandong* (Grey mistletoe) on it, became more numerous on the ridges as with *Calytrix tetragona* (Common fringe-myrtle), rare *Phebalium obcordatum* (Club-leaf Phebalium), all in bud, and *Dodonaea boroniifolia* (Fern-leaf Hopbush). Rosettes of *Pterostylis* sp. with one flowering *P. ampliata*



(Autumn Greenhood) and several *Stypandra glauca* (Nodding Blue Lily) were also spotted.

The second ridge past a very shallow minor creekline was covered in vegetation similar to the first, with the addition of rare *Lomandra patens* (Irongrass) in flower, *Brunonia australis* (Blue Pin-cushion) also in flower, *Melichrus urceolatus* (Urn Heath) and *Parsonsia eucalyptophylla* (Gargaloo).

Once we were down the northern slope of the second ridge there was an obvious change in habitat with stands of *Hakea leucoptera* (Needlewood) and then *Alectryon oleifolium* (Rosewood) the obvious indicators. Here we were out of the wind and finally saw small birds, being Double-barred finches with a single Southern Whiteface.

Alongside Steamboat Creek a huge *Pittosporum angustifolium* (Butterbush) grew almost inside and amongst the branches of a eucalypt, creating a complex scene.

Some of the rare shrubs from the slopes and ridges had spilled down to the current Whitton Stock Route roadside, no doubt along with the soil



Up on the hill – Rowena Whiting  
(left) Pale Twinleaf – Virginia Tarr  
Rusty Grevillea – Virginia Tarr  
Grooved Dampiera – Virginia Tarr

as gravity aided by water will have it. We walked back to the Mt. Bingar Road, admiring *Dampiera lanceolata* (Grooved Dampiera), *Grevillea floribunda* (Rusty Spider-flower), *Indigofera australis* (Hill Indigo) and a *Goodenia glabra* (Smooth Goodenia) all flowering. On the road we saw a beautiful White-backed Swallow, so unwell that it allowed me to carry it to a bush with sincere hope that it may survive.

Despite this report noting several flowers, most of the plants we saw were in bud with the promise of a fantastic flower display in the near future. Thanks to Eric for organizing this short but fascinating walk and for his tuition in getting us to think about the possible names of plants based on observations, so that our brains are more likely to recall the information later.



**Margaret Strong** *Common names for plants used are those listed in the Plants of Western NSW.*

Seen at Jacks Creek Eastern Yellow Robin and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater – Melva Robb

## Historic Steamboat Creek Bridge, notes and interpretations

Beside the deep creek between the Rosewoods and the Pittosporum, as described above, we identified the site of the former bridge now washed away. It would have been built between 1857 (1st Ballandry Run license) and 1877, being the first mail delivery route there. This was by Mr. E. Potter of Urana on horseback from Narrandera via Mejum, Moombooldool, Barrellan, Nth Gogeldrie, Binya, Ballandry and Conapaira Stations. It makes sense that the bridge was there for the mail route to be west of the range, otherwise Ballandry would have collected their mail from Conapaira. In 1878 Crawford and Co (Beechworth) delivered the mail by horseback, followed by a longer Cobb and Co coach route to Rankin's Springs and Cudgellico, 1879-1880.



Site of the historic Steamboat Creek bridge – Rowena Whiting

The track that became the Whitton Stock Route after 1883 was up the creek 100m or so from the present-day road, where the historic bridge site is located. From 1886 for 30 years, mail was delivered from Whitton by coach via the Steamboat Creek bridge to Rankin's Springs, Lake Cargellico and back. The contractors were Crawford and Co, Joseph Byrnes (Hillston) and William Bud (L. Cargellico) in that order for about ten years each.

The bridge would originally have been built for local purposes (Ballandry) to access River Road to Narrandera and Wagga, or diagonally to Narrandera from south of the range. At least one passenger coach from Wagga to Hillston via River Road, Mailman's Dam and Sugarloaf used it in 1879. The Ballandry section of the track was upgraded in 1887 by NSW Colonial Govt as traffic increased for access to the Whitton Railway Station from northern Pastoral Stations. More recent roadworks moved the track downstream with the modern culvert in place for a safer creek crossing.

**Margaret Strong**, with information from historic NSW GOVT Gazettes <Trove.nla.gov.au>

## Field Trip to Kalyaar National Park

I had been trying to arrange this trip for a while and when Jess Murphy the ranger for Kalyaar National Park offered to lead we took the opportunity that presented itself but with the trepidation as I thought it would be freezing!! It wasn't. As you can see from the photos, we were up at dawn and out until late.

Ita Lake fills with water from the Pimpara Creek and the Lachlan River but only in wet years. MFN previously visited in 2012 and 2016 both wet years when the lake was full but also in 2008 when it was dry. Not a drop in the lake at all. Evaporation is very high when the lake does fill but it does take 2 or 3 years to evaporate. When the lake fills the waterfowl turn up in huge numbers to take advantage of the food source the lake provides. You could see a great rufous line of azolla on the other side of the lake offering food for the ducks, swans and grebe. Huge flocks of Grey Teal, Pink-eared Duck and shoveller were busy building

up their bodies as were the Black Swans. Some Black Swan appeared to be nesting. Surprisingly there were very few pelicans, maybe they have already been here and have eaten all the carp fingerlings. The water was very clear and you could see quite a few macro-invertebrates providing more input into the food chain. A White-bellied Sea-Eagle alighted in a tree waiting for an opportunity to catch breakfast. Last time we were here we saw hundreds of Native Hen. No Black-winged Stilts either!!

The woodland birds were using the healthy looking shrubs adjoining the lake. I kept on hearing White-winged Fairy wrens and saw females but alas no beautiful males. The White-fronted Chats make this area home, we have seen them on every visit to Norwood. Sightings of a Red-capped Robin and a Flame Robin were surprises.

Saturday dawned sunny, and we spent the day looking at different vegetation types in different areas towards Murrumbidgee where Meredith tried to get bogged.

In the evening we adjourned for a barbecue at the picnic area where a spectacular sunset was enjoyed over the lake.

On Sunday we decided to take the opportunity to view the landscape at a time after all this rain when it doesn't get better. So we drove the long way home. We drove past Oxley and the adjoining Lachlan River and its associated wetlands and lakes: Lake Comayiong (where there were pelicans present.) past Lake Bungarry, an extensive Black Box depression and on to the Corrongo woolshed. This woolshed is in quite good condition considering a storm had previously caused considerable damage.

We moved on to "The Ville" and admired the healthy Black Box wetlands and walked to the Lachlan River.



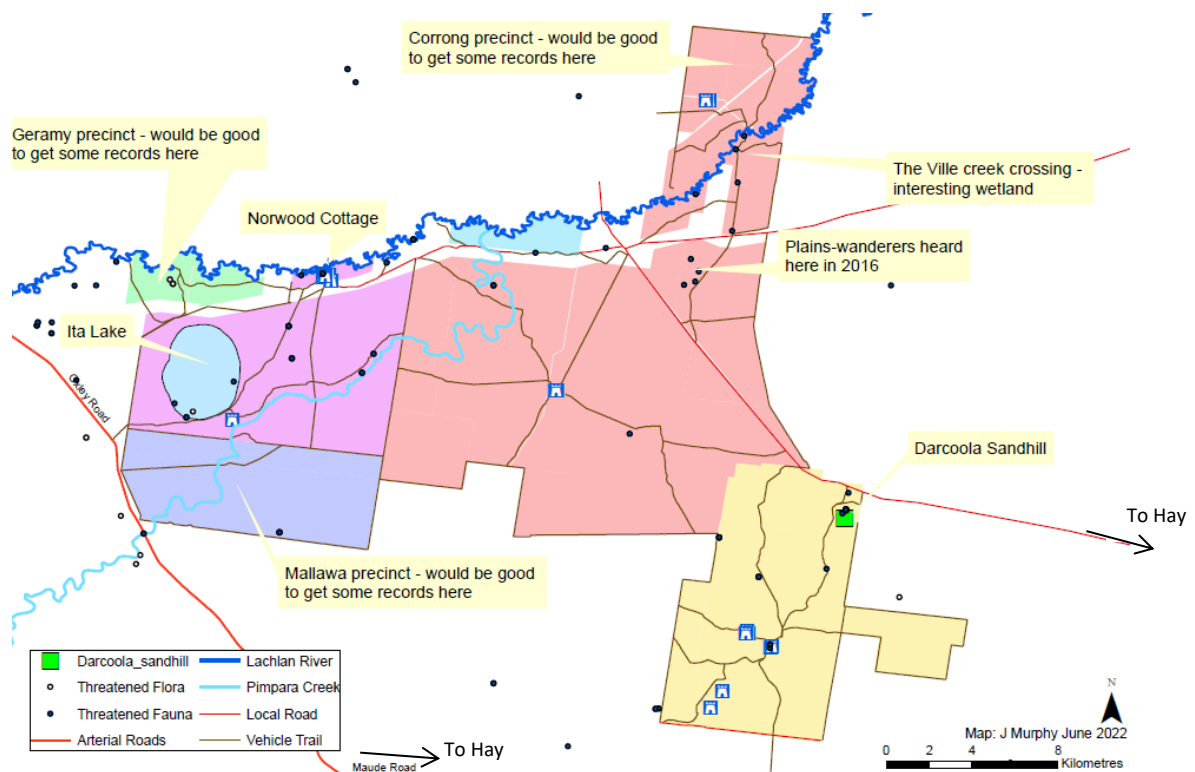
From top Hanger at sunrise - Nella Smith  
Ita Lake at sunset - Nella Smith  
Black Box depression The Ville – Nella Smith  
Group resting at The Ville lagoon– Rowena Whiting

I was keen to visit the Darcoola Sandhill which from my knowledge was one of the best vegetated sandhills in the region. It had been fenced by the previous landholders (for better or for worse). These beautifully diversely vegetated sandhills are scarce as they have been grazed by stock, macropods and rabbits. I must say that the sandhill was downright disappointing. Although the box thorn has been cleared it has been grazed extensively probably by rabbits. The 5 species of Cypress Pine that I thought were found there were looking stressed and nearly dead. Little recruitment of anything could be seen. A flat ending to an otherwise rejuvenating campout to Kalyaar National Park. Thanks to Jess Murphy the NPWS ranger for showing us around. Thanks to those who came along for the visit and those who have contributed to this article.



Sandhills at Darcoola -Rowena Whiting

Nella Smith



### Margaret Strong's impressions of the weekend

The vast plain, the full lake and the thick carpet of multi-coloured shrubs were the backdrop for our visit northwest of Hay. The Lachlan (Kalyarr) River, full and flowing, with wetlands in peak condition alongside it was a wonderful sight.

The yellowish green fruit of *Maireana pyramidata* (Black Bluebush) featured beautifully with the pale leaves of *M. sedifolia* (Pearl Bluebush), both contrasting with the deep green of



*Sclerolaena tricuspis* (Streaked Poverty-Bush) which grew in huge numbers. As we drove further afield on the Sunday, the burgundy colours of other *Maireana* species added to the illusion of a plush carpet of ground cover.

My enduring visual memories of the visit, other than the plain, are Ita Lake and the silhouettes of the swans on it. Their coronet tones and the laughing



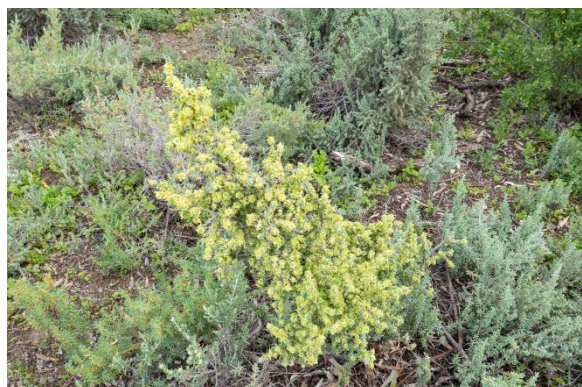
Images by Rowena Whiting  
Left: Black Bluebush; Right: Streaked Poverty Bush

performance of dozens of grey teals at sunset is also memorable. The calls of both species of Butcherbirds were dominant during both days, amongst the whispering of wrens and other small birds.

Nature as we experienced it at Kalyarr was wonderful and the enjoyment was enhanced by the harmony and knowledge of the people who made up the group.

### Eric Whiting has compared this visit to earlier recollections of the park

I have stayed at Norwood on several occasions but not since 2012. I was therefore interested in seeing what changes in the vegetation has occurred since then. Most notable was the increase in ground coverage, now nearly total; a great improvement since 2012 and vastly so from the 2008 visit at the height of the Millennium drought. Disappointingly however was to see a fair bit of cover was by the introduced Match-head Plant, *Psilocaulon tenue*. Streaked Poverty Bush, *Sclerolaena tricuspis* – the low bush with all the spines- is still dominant in most places. It has been cited as an indication of over-grazing though it is a native.



Various saltbushes (Black Bluebush in centre) - Rowena Whiting

With the flooding of the Black Box areas I had a chance to compare aquatic species with those seen in 2012. The rafts of Azolla were as expected but Duckweed, *Lemna disperma* was a new record for me there. The biggest surprise was to see Floating Pondweed, *Potamogeton tricarínatus* near the Ita Hut. It is usually associated with more permanent water. Maybe a reflection on just how long the area has been in flood.

### Bird Lists have been compiled for each of the locations we visited, Nella

#### Ita Lake 17/6/2022

Masked Lapwing 5	Galah	Magpie	Black Swan 500 + cygnets
Restless Flycatcher	Little Grassbird	Willy Wagtail 6	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
White-faced Heron 2	Hoary-headed Grebe 15	Australasian Grebe	Silver Gull 20
Australian Shelduck 3	Magpie-lark	Grey Teal 12	Welcome Swallow 15
Tree Martin 5	Grey Teal 500+	Little Black Cormorant 500+	Coot 1000+
Blue Bonnet 2	Striated Pardalote	Striped Honeyeater	Peaceful Dove
Pied Butcherbird	Hobby	Pink-eared Duck 150+	Australasian Shoveller 50+
Hardhead 50+	White-bellied Sea-Eagle		

#### Norwood Cottage

Willy Wagtail	Grey Shrike-thrush	Great Cormorant 6	Darter
Magpie	Galah	Australian Raven	Pied Butcherbird
Little Black Cormorant 50+	White-faced Heron	White-winged Fairy-wren	Grey Fantail
Welcome Swallow 100's	Yellow Rosella	Restless Flycatcher	Straw-necked Ibis
Red-capped Robin	White-fronted Chat	Flame Robin	

#### Pimpara Creek

Striated Pardalote	Weebill	Mallee Ringneck 2	Yellow Rosella
Pied Butcherbird	Grey Fantail	Willy Wagtail	Little Grassbird
Superb Fairy-wren	Chestnut-rumped Thornbill	Grey Shrike-thrush	Little Pied Cormorant
White-faced Heron	Grey Teal 4	Masked Lapwing	Restless Flycatcher
Whistling Kite	Black Kite	Emu	

#### Mallowa and Southern Boundary

Brown Songlark	Australasian Pipit	Emu	Superb Fairy-wren
Bluebonnet	White-winged Fairy-wren	Crested Pigeon	Tree Martin
Pied Butcherbird			

#### The Ville

Little Pied Cormorant	Superb Fairy-wren	Australian Wood Duck	Pied Butcherbird
Eurasian Coot	Australian Raven	Little Grassbird	Black Kite
Australasian Darter	White-faced Heron	Intermediate Egret	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater
Brown Treecreeper	Australian Pelican	Grey Butcherbird	Grey Teal
Galah	Yellow Rosella	Grey Shrike-thrush	Magpie-lark
Australian Raven	Chestnut-rumped Thornbill		

**Division Among the Spiders** from a talk Richard Faulder gave at the July 2004 club meeting

Reprinted in memory of Richard

The earliest spiders probably looked somewhat like a scorpion, but without pincers and with spinnerets instead of a tail and sting. Over time the segments of the abdomen were fused together. Today the spiders least-changed from their ancestors are the *Liphistius* spiders of southeast Asia, where the upper parts of the segments can still be seen on the abdomen.



*Liphistius batuensis*, emerging from under its burrow lid. Note the trip-lines radiating out from under the burrow lid.



*Liphistius desultor*, Malaysia. Note segmented abdomen. Mike Gray, Australian Museum

Their construction of burrows with sealable lids proved invaluable for those of their descendants that found themselves in the driest inhabitable continent. These include the Mouse Spiders and the Four-spotted Trapdoors. Sealed within their burrows and in a state of hibernation, they can last out the dry times for a lifespan of twenty years. When the favourable times return the females, with their abdomen full of eggs, unseal their burrows, feed on passing insects, and wait for a male to find them.

**The Four-spotted Trapdoor spiders**



The neat door of these trapdoor spiders



A male  
The "boxing gloves store sperm just before mating



Note the difference in size. Eggs take up much more space in her body than sperm does in his, so she lives in her burrow and he has to find her.

**The Mouse Spiders**



Female Mouse Spider in threat posture .

Male Red-headed Mouse spider. He searches for her by day.





While Australia was warm and wet the Funnel webs could set up their door- less webs anywhere. However, as the island continent moved north, out of the region of moist winds, the funnel-webs were increasingly restricted to the (then) moist east coast, to wait for primates and day-old rats to bite.

Down-striking fangs can deliver a powerful bite, but require a solid surface to strike down on. Inward-striking fangs, on the other hand, do not have this limitation, and spiders were able to take to the trees, the water and to suspended webbing.

### Coastal Funnel-webs

The Sydney Funnel-web and its immediate relatives are without doubt the deadliest spiders in the world – if you are a primate or a day-old rat. Fortunately, no one has died since the development of the anti-venom. Treat as for snake bite: a constrictive bandage, limb immobilisation and immediate medical attention.



Male Sydney Funnel-web in threat posture



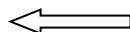
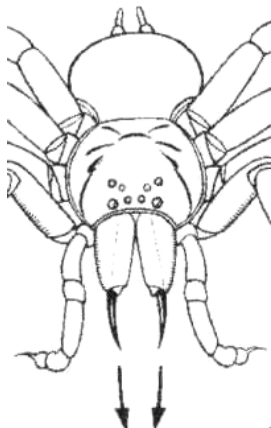
Female Sydney Funnel-web



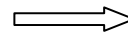
The open entrance of a funnel-web. It cannot seal in humidity, so funnel-webs cannot survive in dry climates.

### An important difference

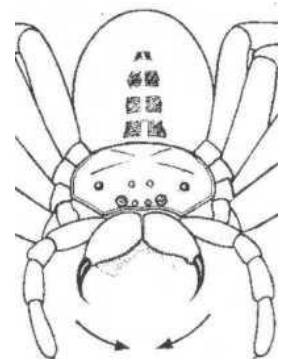
At the end of each of a spider's jaws (chelicerae) is a fang, a syringe-like structure that is hollow and very sharp. These are used to puncture the body of prey and to inject poison and digestive enzymes.



Mygalomorphs have jaws which move vertically, so that the fangs, with the aid of the legs, can be driven down with great force.



Araneomorphs have jaws which move horizontally, so that the fangs can be used to seize prey. The jaws can more easily crush prey, to ease the entry of digestive enzymes.



### Friends for the House

Common huntsman spiders, such as this attractive female, are hairy with long legs and flat bodies which enable them to crawl underneath bark and other such hiding places. They feed on insects and other such invertebrates. Blow on them. Special sensory hairs will warn them to flee.

[www.australianfauna.com](http://www.australianfauna.com)



### Don't be afraid of a myth

People have become afraid of contracting a condition called Necrotic arachnidism

They blame Wolf Spiders and White-tailed Spiders BUT there is a similar condition long known to dermatologists. Necrotising fasciitis is a very serious bacterial infection of the soft tissue and fascia (a sheath of tissue covering the muscle). The bacteria multiply and release toxins and enzymes that result in thrombosis (clotting) in the blood vessels. The result is destruction of the soft tissues and fascia.

**Know your daisies, Part 15 Dwarf plants.** 1 – Plants with sessile flowerheads on stemless or prostrate, and achenes unarmed.

Plants that have a small stature and/or are ephemeral are often considered as insignificant. Far from it, many play an important role pioneering open spaces and anchoring loose soil against erosion. Asteraceae species are prominent in this vital role. Apart from the small size the only common feature of them is that they all have tubular florets.

***Actinobole uliginosum*, Flannel Cudweed**

Plants woolly grey-brown to grey-green, usually stemless, usually recorded on sandy soils where perennial pasture is sparse. Leaves  $\pm$ spathulate, oblanceolate or obovate, 3-13mm long, fleshy. Flowerheads 1-12 in a compound head. General bracts in 2 rows sub-equal to the flowerhead, partial heads with c30-60 florets. Partial bracts with upper portion reflexed and pale yellow.



***Chthonocephalus pseudevax*, Ground-heads**

Plants stemless, reduced to a compound head surrounded by a basal rosette 10-40mm diam. Recorded in a wide variety of communities, mostly in open sites, especially in sand or sandy loam depressions. Leaves oblanceolate to obovate, usually 6-20mm long by 1-5-4mm wide, tomentose. Flowerheads solitary, compound. General bracts absent. Partial bracts 5-6, c3.5mm long, margins and mid-rib hairy.

***Myriocephalus rhizocephalus*, Woolly-heads**

Plants with stems  $\pm$ absent or branched, covered by broad leaf bases, greyish, winged. Recorded in moister areas in mallee and on sandy and clay. Leaves basal or alternate, linear, 20-70mm long, c1mm wide, erect, bright green. Flowerheads compound, solitary, sessile, greenish-white, greatly exceeded by leaves. General involucrel bracts erect, obovate to broad-lanceolate, hyaline with green mid-ribs, woolly. Partial bracts narrow-lanceolate, hyaline with green mid-ribs. Florets 1-2 per partial head, pale yellow.



***Isoetopsis graminifolia*, Grass Cushions**

Plants stemless. Recorded in mallee, shrubland, woodland and pastures. Leaves basal, linear, 20-50mm long, 1-2mm wide, sub-terete, bases sheathing, fleshy,  $\pm$ hairy becoming glabrous. Flowerheads numerous clumped at base, not compound.



***Millotia perpusilla*, Tiny Bow-flower (syn Toxanthos)**

Stems prostrate, 10-40mm long, glandular pubescent,  $\pm$ woolly. Recorded as a cool season ephemeral on bare ground of claypans and stony hills. Leaves linear to narrow-elliptic, 4-15mm long, <1mm wide, bases  $\pm$ stem-clasping, surfaces glabrous or cob-webby. Flowerheads solitary, sessile among terminal leaves, 3-5mm long. Involucrel bracts 3-5 in 2 rows, narrow-lanceolate, woolly, loosely spreading in fruit. Florets 3-10, white turning pink.



***Lemooria burkittii*, Wires and Wool (syn Angianthus, Gnephosis)**

Stems prostrate, 20-100mm long, wiry, reddish and brown, sparsely woolly. Recorded in shrubland communities, typically on sandy soils. Leaves linear, 5-20mm long, 0.3-0.6mm wide, blunt. Flowerheads compound, densely white-woolly. General involucrel bracts conspicuous as long or longer than flowerheads. Partial bracts usually 5-6, ovate or elliptic, c3mm long.

Images from top: Flannel Cudweed, Woolly Heads, Grass Cushions, Tiny Bow-flower

***Pogonolepis muelleriana*, Stiff Angianthus (syn Angianthus strictus)**

Stems prostrate, 10-120mm long, ±glabrous, densely hairy below flowerheads, brown to reddish-brown. Recorded in a variety of habitats on sand or loam, especially on saline flats. Leaves lanceolate to linear, usually 3-10mm long, 0.5-1mm wide, margins often hyaline. Flowerheads compound. General involucrel bracts 16-40, 3.5-4.5mm long, ±lanceolate, straight or recurved, inner shorter. Partial bracts elliptic or obovate, outer yellowish to golden brown, transversely wrinkled, long ciliate.

**Eric Whiting**

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## Photos and Social Media Help Scientists Identify a Hybrid Fairywren

By Macaulay Library Team 27 May 2022

Contributed by Max O'Sullivan



**A presumed hybrid Superb x White-winged Fairywren. This male shows black plumage around the throat and nape similar to a Superb Fairywren and blue body plumage with white wings similar to a White-winged Fairywren.**

**fairywren sp. *Malurus sp.***

© Glenn Roman

Queensland, Toowoomba, Australia, 23 Oct 2020, [Macaulay Library](#), [eBird](#)

In 2015, the Macaulay Library began accepting photos of birds alongside eBird checklists with the

hopes of creating a curated collection of bird photos to help people learn more about birds. Now the Macaulay Library contains more than 36 million photos of more than 10,500 species.

Scientists are now starting to tap the collection of photos to ask questions about natural history, conservation, and more. Since 2017, scientists have published more than 60 papers using photographs from the Macaulay Library. Another recent study was added to the list that [used photos to identify hybrid Fairywrens in Australia](#).

Joe Welklin, a postdoctoral scholar at the University of Nevada, and his colleagues used the power of social media and the Macaulay Library to document two Red-backed and Superb Fairywren hybrids and two White-winged and Superb Fairywren hybrids in Australia. Only four records of hybridization have been reported for fairywrens previously, so any new reports are newsworthy.

**A Superb x Red-backed Fairywren hybrid male that was photographed attending to a nest with female Red-backed Fairywren. This male shows blue facial plumage similar to a Superb Fairywren and red plumage on the back similar to a Red-backed Fairywren**



**fairywren sp. *Malurus sp.***

© Greg Nye

Queensland, Brisbane, Australia 20 Dec 2006, [Macaulay Library](#), [eBird](#)

Welklin learned about the first of these Red-backed x Superb Fairywren hybrids on Facebook in an area where normally only Red-backed Fairywrens occur. With a little digging into eBird Welklin found reports of a Superb Fairywren in the same area, well outside the species' normal range. Puzzled, Welklin turned back to social media to find the eBirder who first reported the Superb Fairywren. When Welklin finally

got in touch and saw photos “they matched up,” Welklin said, “so we think we know the origin of these hybrids thanks to this photographer and her eBird comments.” Welklin hopes that with increased availability of photographic archives like the Macaulay Library, scientists will be able to better understand the evolutionary consequences of hybridization in birds.

## June Meeting Talk by William Ingram

We were delighted to welcome William to speak to us about the Aboriginal history and activities in our area. He began with a welcome to country in Wiradjuri and proceeded to tell us of how the Aboriginal community is organised. The country is divided into a number of nations of which Wiradjuri is the largest; within it there are many clans or family groups. He explained some of the lore: meaning of totems, ochre use, the importance of the connection to country including the protection of trees, medicines, animals etc.

Elders are recognised for their knowledge and it is from them that you have to learn. Listening is important, the leader carries the message stick and is the only one allowed to talk, the others follow in a single line singing the message. There is a set order, with the last having the least knowledge. If you don't learn then you miss out on food.

Leeton was not an Aboriginal place, people came here to work at the cannery.

One interesting aspect is the way they view seasons, being guided by the land with each region having its own. They vary in number and length, and depend on the flowering of plants, the hibernation of reptiles and moulting of birds. The Wiradjuri people had 10. He mentioned a couple: saltbush fruits have a connection to ants which collect the seed whilst leaving the flesh, another was the spawning of Murray Cod which happens when the river is high but not fast. As we know these events aren't static each year though do depend on the weather conditions.

While his talk was relatively brief we welcomed his invitation to ask questions and the evening became more of a discussion albeit with William contributing much of it. Our sincere thanks to him for coming to our meeting; a very worthwhile learning exercise for all who were there.

### Rowena Whiting

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## Bits and pieces / Member's sharing

### Meredith Billington has sent a link to rare footage of Malleefowl chick emerging from its nest mound

The chicks hatch inside the mound and use their strength to dig through a metre of soil to reach the surface, which can take hours.

Malleefowl (*Leipoa ocellata*) work in pairs, shifting sand around their mounds to adjust the temperature inside where their eggs are incubating. These two, however, seem to be out of sync! *Image credit: Courtesy National Malleefowl Recovery*



<https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/wildlife/2021/05/rare-footage-of-malleefowl-chick-emerging-from-its-nest-mound/>

### Another link you may like to check out:

#### The release of Plain Wanderers on the Hay Plains

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/news/endangered-bird-release-brings-joy-to-local-farmers>

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**Sarah Danckert went to Alice Springs recently.** For anyone travelling that way, there is a brochure [https://northernterritory.com/media/files/documents/birding/tnt\\_birding\\_red\\_centre\\_trails.pdf](https://northernterritory.com/media/files/documents/birding/tnt_birding_red_centre_trails.pdf)

Birdwatchers are able to gain access to the Alice Springs Sewerage Treatment Plant with a local guide. There is a process to follow in order to gain access. Go to

<https://www.powerwater.com.au/about/community/bird-watching> and complete the online Safety Induction and Indemnity, then contact Tourism Central Australia 8952 5800, 1800 654 199 or [info@discoverca.com.au](mailto:info@discoverca.com.au) who will provide contact details for local guides.

On the morning I attended with Maria and Dorothy, we tallied 40 birds, including these that I am less familiar with: Spotted Harrier, Red-kneed & Black fronted Dotterels, White winged fairy wren, Australian spotted crane and Black tailed native hen.

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If you're into facebook we've made an event for our National Tree Day planting on 31st July [Narrandera Landcare's 2022 National Tree Day Planting | Facebook](#)

# MEMBERS' SIGHTINGS

These sightings are from members' observations. Please check with the relevant person before quoting any record.

Flame Robin	Narrandera Common	23/05/22	Glenn Currie
Barn Owl [roadkill]	Brobenah Hall/Evans Smyles roads	01/06/22	Keith Hutton
Collared Sparrowhawk	San Isidore via Wagga	03/06/22	Sarah Danckert
Flame Robin	San Isidore	03/06/22	Sarah Danckert
Pelican [100+]	Lake Talbot, Narrandera	05/06/22	Alan Whitehead
Little Black Cormorant [100+]	Lake Talbot, Narrandera	05/06/22	Alan Whitehead
Brown Falcon	Rawlings Park, Wagga	05/06/22	Sarah Danckert
Golden Whistler	Rawlings Park, Wagga	05/06/22	Sarah Danckert
Emu [7]	Newell H'way Jerilderie	06/06/22	Aanya Whitehead
Flame Robin [fem]	Fivebough Wetlands	06/06/22	Anne Lepper
Eastern Rosella [2]	Narrandera Wetlands	08/06/22	Susan Whitehead
Speckled Warbler	Gogga to Marrambidya Track, Wagga	12/06/22	Sarah Danckert
Black-tailed Native-hen [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	12/06/22	Keith Hutton
Black Swan nests [7]	Fivebough Wetlands – start of season	12/06/22	Keith Hutton
Double-barred Finch [several]	Duncans Creek, Cocoparra National Park	12/06/22	MFN outing
Grey Shrike-Thrush	Jacks Creek, Cocoparra National Park	12/06/22	MFN outing
Eastern Yellow Robin	Jacks Creek carpark	12/06/22	MFN outing
Magpie Goose [181]	Fivebough Wetlands	13/06/22	Keith Hutton
Brolga [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	13/06/22	Keith Hutton
European Goldfinch [2]	Fivebough Wetlands	13/06/22	Keith Hutton
Purple Swamphen [100+]	Fivebough Wetlands	13/06/22	Keith Hutton
Red-necked Avocet [9]	Fivebough Wetlands	14/06/22	Anne Lepper
Speckled Warbler	Silverlite, Wagga	17/06/22	Sarah Danckert
Double-barred Finch	Silverlite, Wagga	17/06/22	Sarah Danckert
Buff-rumped Thornbill	Silverlite, Wagga	17/06/22	Sarah Danckert
Buff-banded Rail [1]	Hooley Lookout, Fivebough	18/06/22	Keith Hutton
Spotted Harrier [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	19/06/22	Keith Hutton
Flame Robin	Flowerdale Lagoon, Wagga	21/06/22	Sarah Danckert
White-browed Scrubwren	Gogga to Marrambidya Track Wagga	24/06/22	Sarah Danckert
Royal Spoonbill [28]	Fivebough Wetlands	25/06/22	Keith Hutton
Australian Hobby [1]	Fivebough Wetlands	25/06/22	Keith Hutton
Black Swan [35 nests]	Hooley Lookout Fivebough	26/06/22	Keith Hutton
European Goldfinch [11]	Hooley Lookout Fivebough	26/06/22	Keith Hutton
Tawny Frogmouth	Flowerdale Lagoon, Wagga	28/06/22	Sarah Danckert
Red-browed Finch	Rocky Hill, Wagga Wagga	30/06/22	Milena & David Dunn
Barn Owl	Murrumi	June '22	Margaret Strong
Bluebonnet [5+]	Wambulgal	June '22	Margaret Strong
Striped Honeyeater [2]	Whitton – feeding on flowering succulents	June '22	Margaret Strong
Peaceful Dove [H]	Whitton	June '22	Margaret Strong
Max O'Sullivan			

Brolgas at Fivebough – Anne Lepper  
Flame Robin Livingstone National Park – Joanne Connelly



# \*\*\*\* COMING EVENTS \*\*\*\*

Please note all outings are subject to weather conditions.

Any Covid-19 restrictions need to be adhered to, for outings you must register with the nominated person by email (preferred) or phone to participate, Please do not attend if feeling sick or if you have been a close contact in the week beforehand.

- 14 July Thursday**      **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7pm.  
**Topic: 'Two Wet Days in Tasmania'**  
**Presenter: Graham Russell**  
**Bring along your Show & Tell**  
**Contact:** Dione Russell 0428 536 290  
**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com)
- 16 July Saturday**      **Outing to Jimberoo National Park**  
**Meet outside Rankins Springs Community Hall at 9am.**  
Bring morning tea and lunch  
**Contact/leader: Glenn Currie** Contact Glenn if you'd like more details.  
**Please register with him.**  
Phone 0488 563 321 Email: [glenncurrie100@hotmail.com](mailto:glenncurrie100@hotmail.com)
- 3 August Wednesday**      **Copy for the August newsletter is due. Please send to Rowena.**  
**Email:** [ericwhiting4@bigpond.com](mailto:ericwhiting4@bigpond.com). Phone: 6953 2612.
- 31 July Sunday**      **Tree Planting Day at Narrandera (Narrandera Landcare)**  
**[National Tree Day planting](#)**  
**9.00 am to 12.00 pm at The Wetlands**  
With tremendous assistance from Leeton Toyota and Narrandera Pizzeria they'll be planting seedlings again at Narrandera Wetlands this year, all to add to the biodiversity of the site. A grant from Landcare Australia enabled them to expand their propagating nursery and they have loads to put in!  
**Contact: Glenn Currie** [glenncurrie100@hotmail.com](mailto:glenncurrie100@hotmail.com)
- 7 August Sunday**      **Springvale Swamp - a mix of water birds and forest birds.**  
**Meet at 9:30am** Park along Springvale Rd  
Walking up to 1km total, off track and could be wet underfoot so waterproof footwear a must. Coffee at local cafe.  
**Leader: Janet Hume, RSVP by Thursday 4 August to** [janethume@icloud.com](mailto:janethume@icloud.com)
- 11 August Thursday**      **Monthly Meeting** in the Yellow Room at the **Leeton Library**, Sycamore St., Leeton commencing at 7pm.  
**Topic: To be decided**  
**Contact:** Dione Russell 0428 536 290  
**Email:** [murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:murrumbidgeefieldnaturalists@gmail.com)
- 4 September Sunday**      **Field trip to Galore Hill is planned**  
**Details next issue.**  
**Contact: Sarah Danckert** [spdanckert@gmail.com](mailto:spdanckert@gmail.com)