



NEWSLETTER: FEBRUARY 2018

**Little Desert Camp
October 13 – 15, 2017**

Ringwood Field Naturalists Club hosted Field Naturalists from all over Victoria – 130 plus of us – to a weekend at Little Desert Lodge. It was a brilliant weekend – immaculately organised by Ringwood FNC, great venue, good weather, and the location. The Little Desert was spectacular, both in wild flowers and birds. The orchids were so prolific that I was saturated with them by the end of the weekend. There were at least five *Caladenias*, plus sun orchids, leopards and green hoods.



Golden Pennants *Glischrocaryon behrii*. Photo - Judy Smart

If we had just spent the weekend hanging out at the Lodge we would have been content – the bush had orchids, golden pennants and lots of flowers, and I was thrilled to see Diamond Firetails and White-throated Gerygone among many others.



Violet Honey-myrtle *Melaleuca wilsonii*. Photo - Judy Smart

I had always wanted to see Snape Reserve, which is open by arrangement only, and it was a great microcosm of the

Little Desert, with a large dry lakebed and a desert section. Highlights for me there were a lace monitor, emu with chicks, rainbow bee-eaters mating and great tracts of flowers including *Senna artemisioides*, quandong trees and everlastings.

My other excursion was Kiata, a feast of flowers and birds. The acacias alone were worth the journey, let alone the daisies and everlastings, blue emu bush, scarlet mint bush, *Micromyrtus*, *Astrolomas*, blue boronia and the spectacular *Melaleuca wilsonii*. And did I mention the mallee fowl we saw at Keith Hateley reserve?

What a great weekend it was, and thanks again to Ringwood FNC. — **Judy Smart**

MOUNT ARAPILES

One of the full day excursions on Saturday was to Mount Arapiles, situated about 45 km. south of the Little Desert Lodge. This interesting geological outcrop rises abruptly, 230m above the flat Wimmera Plains and is one of the best rock climbing locations in Australia. It is also a valuable conservation reserve with 14% of Victoria's flora, including some very rare species, protected within Mount Arapiles–Tooan State Park. It is located between the Grampians & the Little Desert and has species found in both of these areas.



View from the summit of Mt Arapiles. Photo - Heather Ducat

Mount Arapiles & nearby Mitre Rock are outliers of the Grampians Formation which is composed of interbedded quartz sandstone, conglomerate and red siltstone, deposited about 420 million years ago (mya), in shallow marine conditions, tidal inlets and large braided river channels. Mount Arapiles has been hardened and 'cooked' by contact-metamorphism from a localized granite intrusion, 400 mya.

The softer sediments surrounding the mount have been eroded away, leaving peaks of quartzite & quartzose-conglomerate, now isolated from the Grampians.

We paused at Mitre Rock where our leader Peter Rogers gave a brief description of the geology, flora & fauna of the area. Threads of morning mist clung to the cliffs, the rocks enlivened to red-orange as the clouds burned away; promise of a lovely day ahead.



Daviesia pectinata. Photo - Heather Ducat

Our first stop was on the summit of Mount Arapiles (369m above sea level), fortunately reached via a good road, so we didn't have to dangle from ropes and claw our way up sheer rock walls. The lookout gave us a wonderful view: to the north, Mitre Rock and circular Mitre Lake set in a green patchwork of lush cereal crops and legumes; to the south-east we could see the tailend of the Grampians in the distance. Perched on the edge of the cliff we scanned nearby rock walls and were fortunate to have a lovely view of a pair of Peregrine Falcons circling below us, shooting the breeze. The very rare Rock Wattle (*Acacia rupicola*) grows on these high rocky areas.

Returning to the lower slopes and around the base of the mount, at numerous locations we explored the mixed forest of Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*) & Yellow Gum (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*) with an understorey rich in wildflowers. It seems to have been a good season for orchids, I saw more Green-comb Spider Orchids than I've ever seen before! Other species included Pink Fairies, Milkmaids, Bulbine Lilies, a multitude of pea flowers, thickets of Fringe-myrtle with its tiny pink-white star flowers, Sweet Quandong, with red fruit & the well-named

Barb-wire Bush (*Daviesia pectinata*), a vicious 2 m. high shrub you would not want to tangle with. Peter and Alison knew exactly where to find these treasures and many more.

Alison kept our bird list for the day, some of the more interesting species being White-browed Babbler, Brown Treekeeper, Peaceful Dove, Owlet Nightjar, Rufous Songlark and Restless Flycatcher, species we don't see on the Mornington Peninsula. Our total for the day was about 50 species. I was delighted to see the sweetest baby Shingleback Lizard, only 20 cm. long and born in Feb.-March this year. I resisted the urge to give her a cuddle and escorted her off the road and away from our convoy of 4WD vehicles.



Shingleback Lizard. Photo - Heather Ducat

Peter's family lived in the area and he visited for many holidays; we had the advantage of his vast local knowledge and love of the flora & fauna in this beautiful location. I certainly had a delightful day.— **Heather Ducat**.

**Tania Ireton, Bayside Birdlife
Islands of the Albatross Latitudes
October 11, 2017**

Tania is a very well travelled birder and has a great array of talks which we look forward to seeing. This talk was about her trip to the islands south of New Zealand, in November 2007.

It was an eighteen day cruise on the Russian research vessel, *Professor Khromhof*, renamed the *Spirit of Enderby* for cruise purposes. Starting from Bluff in the south of the South Island, they visited The Snares, Bounty islands, Auckland Islands, Macquarie Island, Chatham Islands, Antipodes Islands and Campbell Island, returning to Dunedin. All except Macquarie were NZ territories.

It was a feast of birds – albatross, shags, penguins, petrels, prions, skua, shearwaters and many more, all beautifully photographed by Tania.

First stop was The Snares, where they were not able to land, but had great views of Snares Crested Penguin, black tomtit and members of the Shy Albatross group, now split into separate species too many for me to list.

Next was the Auckland Islands, which is vegetated with Southern Rata forest (*Metrosideros umbellata*) and the megaherbs, a Sub-Antarctic speciality: lilies, daisies and other herbs with large leaves and tall flower spikes. The

most unusual bird there is the Auckland Island teal – a flightless duck whose wings have reduced to stumps. There were many land birds too – parakeets, bellbird, Subantarctic snipe, pipit and plovers as well as the sea birds.



The Snares

They had a two day storm at sea with nine metre waves and 50 knot winds, keeping most of the guests confined uncomfortably to their bunks until it was over.

Next was Macquarie Island, the only Australian island visited, with a very equable annual temperature range of 8° maximum and minimum on average. Among the highlights of Macquarie were the Southern Elephant seals – the adult males are called beach masters because of their control of their harems on the beach, and penguins – King, Royal, Gentoo and Southern Rock hopper.



King Penguins

Tania’s visit was before the Australian government eradicated rabbits, so there were eroded areas and landslips.

Since rabbit eradication vegetation has re-grown and erosion is no longer a problem.

Campbell Island is the largest island, and had been farmed, leaving a population of sheep, cats, rats and mice. Once the sheep were removed the vegetation grew back, making it too dense for the cats to survive, leaving the rats and mice to be eradicated by baiting. Now Southern Royal Albatross nest in grass tussocks. The female is the largest seabird in the world.



*New Zealand Fur Seal pups
All photos - Tania Ireton*

Antipodes Islands have steep cliffs, making it impossible to land, but the passengers had great views of albatross nesting in the cliffs, and rock hopper and erect crested penguins bounding up the cliffs.

Bounty Islands also are all steep cliff, and they saw NZ fur seal pups, shags, albatross, petrels and prions from the boat.

Chatham Islands are 800km east of NZ, and have a farming and lobster fishing community. The Maori colonised the islands in the 1840s, displacing the earlier Moriori people who had lived there for 400 to 600 years. There were many Chatham Islands endemics, many made extinct by colonisers and feral animals, but there have also been some remarkable successes, after enormous effort, such as the black robin, down to 5 birds, and now back up to 100 birds, and the shore plover – down to 80 birds, but now breeding up and being re-introduced to other parts of NZ.

As well as seals and sea lions, they saw sperm whales, southern right whales and dolphins. For us it was a visual delight, with the added advantage of not having to endure sea sickness and cold conditions to see these rare and beautiful birds.— **Judy Smart**

Baluk Willam 7th October

Our trip to Baluk Willam Flora Reserve, in Belgrave South, was primarily aimed at locating orchids, of which there were plenty - although our start wasn't promising. We began by walking Orchid Track, and apart from a single Brown Beak near the start we were struggling at first to find any orchids at all. A little further in we found a great many Pink

Fingers, by far the most numerous orchids, as well as a single patch of Common Bird Orchids, a few Mayflies, a couple of Waxlips and a patch of Nodding Greenhoods.

Besides the orchids we were interested to find Butterfly Flag, Yellow Rice-flower and Golden Bush-pea, among

many other plants in flower. Rufous Whistlers were abundant in the soundscape, but could not be seen.



Brown Beaks Lyperanthus suavolens .Photo - Lee Denis

After a fairly disappointing morning we returned to the car park for lunch and immediately stumbled upon more Brownbeaks by the roadside. A Rufous Whistler gave up being elusive and came down to see what we were doing. Several other groups had shown up by this time, including a Facebook group, to look for orchids.

The other groups skipped Orchid Track and concentrated on the roadside, where we joined them after lunch, and found an abundance of orchids, including many more Brownbeaks, a couple of Caladenias, some different Diuris species, Tongue orchids, and a lot more Greenhoods (see complete list below). A total of 14 species was found on the day.

Orchids at Baluk Willam Flora Reserve, 7th October 2017		
Species	Common	Location
Acianthus caudatus	Mayfly	Orchid Track
Caladenia carnea	Pink fingers	In great numbers on Orchid Track
Caladenia oenochila	Wine-lipped Spider orchid	on roadside
Caladenia tentaculata	Green comb spider	on roadside
Chiloglottis valida	Common bird orchid	Orchid Track
Cryptostylis subulata	large tongue orchid - leaves only	
Diuris orientis	Donkey orchid	Orchid Track & roadside
Diuris sulphurea	Tiger orchid	roadside
Glossodia major	Waxlip	Orchid Track
Lyperanthus suavolens	Brown beaks - yellow and brown forms	both roadside and Orchid Track
Pterostylis alpina	Mountain greenhood	Eastern Track

Pterostylis melagramma	Tall greenhood	everywhere
Pterostylis nutans	Nodding greenhood	everywhere
Pterostylis pedunculata	Maroonhood	Orchid Track

A total of thirty-six species of plants besides orchids was recorded in flower. Our interest was particularly directed towards plant species not or rarely seen on the Peninsula. Besides the Butterfly Flag and Yellow Rice-flower mentioned earlier, some notables were the Dandenong Ranges Sticky Wattle, Many-flowered Mat-rush, Rusty Bush-pea, and Dusty Miller.

Plants in Flower, Baluk Willam FR 7 October 2017	
Species	Common Name
Acacia brownii	Heath wattle
Acacia myrtifolia	Myrtle Wattle
Acacia stictophylla	Dandenong Ranges sticky wattle
Acacia verticillata	Prickly Moses
Allocasuarina paludosa	Swamp casuarina
Anyema pendulua	Drooping Mistletoe
Billardiera scandens	Apple berry
Bossiaea prostrata	Creeping Bossiaea
Chamaescilla corymbosa	Blue stars
Comesperma volubile	Love creeper
Coronidium scorpioides	Button everlasting
Craspedia variabilis	Billy-buttons
Dianella tasmanica	Tasman Flax-lily
Diplarrena moraea	Butterfly flag iris
Goodenia geniculata	Bent Goodenia
Goodenia ovata	Hop bush
Hakea ulicin	Furze hakea
Hardenbergia violacea	Purple Coral Pea
Hibbertia riparia	Erect Guinea-flower
Hovea heterophylla	Common Hovea
Leptospermum continentale	Prickly teatree
Lomandra filiformis	Wattle Mat-rush
Lomandra longifolia	Spiny-headed Mat-rush
Lomandra multiflora	Many-flowered Mat-rush
Pultenea gunni	Golden bush pea
Pultenea hispidula	Rusty bush pea
Olearia lirata	Snowy daisy bush
Platylobium infecundum (formerly P. formosum)	Handsome flat pea
Platylobium obtusangulum	Common Flat pea
Pimelea flava	Yellow Yellow Rice-flower
Pimelea humilis	Common Rice-flower
Poranthera microphylla	Small Poranthera
Sphaerolobium minus	Leafless Globe-pea
Spyridium parvifolium	Dusty Miller
Thysanotus patersonii	Twining Fringe-lily
Wurmbea dioica	Early Nancy

Birds were less common, with 14 species being identified, including a fleeting glance at a pair of King Parrots.— **Lee Denis**

Bird List For Baluk Willam FR 7th October 2017	
Galah	Eastern Spinebill
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Eastern Yellow Robin
Australian King-Parrot	Golden Whistler
Crimson Rosella	Rufous Whistler
Eastern Rosella	Grey Shrike-thrush
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Grey Fantail
Laughing Kookaburra	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike

White-throated Treecreeper	Olive-backed Oriole
Superb Fairy-wren	Grey Butcherbird
Spotted Pardalote	Australian Magpie
Brown Thornbill	Grey Currawong
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Little Raven
White-eared Honeyeater	Mistletoebird
White-plumed Honeyeater	Common Blackbird



Butterfly Flag *Diplarrena moraea*



Many-flowered Mat-rush *Lomandra multiflora*

Photos - Lee Denis

Wyperfeld National Park – 100 years 8th November

The Friends of Wyperfeld National Park made a DVD a few years ago to commemorate the Park’s 100th birthday.

The DVD starts with the legends of the Wotjobaluk people, then goes on to the sad history of farming attempts on the site, ending in early settlers walking off the land. Influential citizens and naturalists in the early 1900s recognised the Mallee’s prolific birdlife and natural values, and pressed for a national park. The first reservation was made in 1909, it was proclaimed Australia’s first Mallee National Park in 1921, and the area protected has since been added to so that it is now 100 times larger than in 1909. It is Victoria’s third largest National Park.

Wyperfeld is at the end of the Wimmera River system. The Wimmera starts near Beaufort, runs south to north through Horsham, Natimuk and along the edge of the Little Desert to Lake Hindmarsh, which has water in good years, and dried up altogether in the last drought. When Lake Hindmarsh overflows the Outlet Creek carries water to Lake Albacutya, and then on to a series of lakes in Wyperfeld, which haven’t had water since the 1970s.

The southern part of Wyperfeld is the most visited, with Wonga Campground, many walking tracks through heath land, open red gum and grey box woodland, and sand dunes vegetated with *Callitris* pines, *Spinifex* and *Bulokes*. The northern part, Pine Plains, is drier with spectacular sand

drifts and dry lakes. It is the home of the Major Mitchell cockatoo.

The DVD features the people of Wyperfeld. Geoff Durham, a stalwart of the VNPA and the Friends of Wyperfeld wrote the field guide to Wyperfeld, (*Wyperfeld: Australia’s First Mallee National Park*), and tells much of the story, along with past and present Rangers and Friends. There is the story of the young postman, Hugh O’Sullivan, who trekked on horseback from Dimboola to Kow Station twice a week to deliver the mail to remote stations, and went on to own Pine Plains station, held by the O’Sullivan family for decades. A beloved character was Rudd Campbell, the first ranger, who started as caretaker in 1948, and went on to be ranger until his death in 1970. His knowledge and wry humour made him very popular, and when he died funds were raised to build a visitor centre as a tribute to him.

It also covers the achievements of the Friends Group; in weed control, tree planting, especially of *Callitris* pines, and the provision of interpretation signs – writing the information and getting the signs made and installed.

The field guide is now out of print but is readily available online for free. The DVD – *Wyperfeld 100: a Traverse in Time* – is available from the Friends of Wyperfeld. — **Judy Smart**

Crib Point & Lorna's Triangle 11th November

After joining Ringwood Field Naturalists for their field trip to Bunyip State Park last September, as well as the SEANA Camp they hosted at Little Desert, it was our turn to host them, looking for orchids at Lorimer St, Crib Point, and also at Lorna's Triangle nearby. Ringwood had a good turnout as usual, as did we.

It was a little late in the year for the orchids, although we did find a number of Sun Orchids (*Thelymitra ixioides* and *T. pauciflora*), some Onion and Leek Orchids (finished flowering), and one patch of Large Tongue Orchids at Lorimer St. Wildflowers seen included Blue Pincushion (*Brunonia australis*), Fringe-lilies, a couple of Pimeleas, Creeping Bossiaea, and some Dillwynias.



Brunonia australis with Soldier Beetles. Photo - Lee Denis

Our member Rog Standen was mainly concentrating on the invertebrates. His observations included: a Scorpion Fly that was holding a captured bee as an offering to a prospective mate; numerous micro moths with some dazzling colours ranging from pure white Oecophorid moth

(*Thema holoxesta*), to the brilliant blue Satin Forester moth (*Pollianisus* sp) and another which was orange with silver stripes; a Hypertrophid moth (*Thudaca mimodora*); a striking looking wasp-mimicking longicorn beetle (*Enchoptera apicalis*) feeding on tea-tree flowers, as was a black and orange coloured jewel beetle (*Castiarina octomaculata*) and an orange and black scarab beetle; pairs of mating Soldier Beetles (*Chauliognathus* sp) on different flowers, and Metallic Ringtail (*Austrolestes cingulatus*) damselflies prowling around the rushy areas, landing on the narrow rush stems to survey for possible prey.



Scorpion Fly. Photo - Rog Standen

We went on to Stony Point railway line, where everything except onion orchids had finished. It was interesting to see the ingenious seed collection devices on some of the leek orchids though

After lunch and a walk at Woolleys Beach (the orchids were finished there too, except for a Tiger Orchid – *Diuris sulphurea*) we had a short walk through Lorna's Triangle at Crib Pt, where we saw no orchids but a few birds, including an Olive-backed Oriole that we initially heard in a neighbouring backyard. It occurred to me that it might get a little trying having to listen to that call in your backyard all day! — **Lee Denis**

Frankston Nature Conservation Reserve Seniors Festival Walk 20th October

As part of Frankston Council's Seniors Festival, our club has hosted a walk for the last 3 years. Last year we looked at Langwarrin FFR, and this year we thought we would introduce people to FNCR, previously known as Frankston Reservoir.

The Reserve has only been open to the public for 18 months, after being locked up by Melbourne Water as part of its water management since the reservoir was constructed in 1921. Melbourne Water de-commissioned the reservoir a few years ago and built a huge holding tank on the site to hold the water piped from Cardinia before distributing it to Frankston. They then looked for someone

to manage the site for public access and nature conservation, and a voluntary committee took on the task. It was some time before they could open up the site, as a car park and walking tracks had to be constructed, and a start made on the enormous woody weeds infesting the park.

Now, unfortunately, the reserve is temporarily closed, as the government has taken management away from the voluntary committee and handed the reserve to Parks Victoria to manage. They are in the process of assessing the site before re-opening, hopefully over summer.

We are very grateful to Terry, the Parks Victoria ranger, for

opening up for us, and to Quinn, from the previous committee of management, for organising this for us.

We had nine participants join us on the Kookaburra Walk, which takes you up through the park, climbing all the way, through a forest of Cedar Wattle and Pittosporum to the Sweetwater Creek crossing, and then back down to the reservoir via heath land, with beautiful Spring wildflowers.

We ran out of time to do the heath land walk, where we would have seen orchids probably.

As it was the milk maids, chocolate lilies, pea flowers and creamy candles made for an enjoyable walk. The birds were not remarkable, but we had good views.

We look forward to being able to visit FNCR more often in the future. — **Judy Smart**

An Odonata Trip That Wasn't. Bunyip State Park 9th December

A dedicated group of six members ventured under thick cloud cover to the Buttongrass Dam in Bunyip State Park in search of Odonata species. A recce the week before had been very hot with clear sky and there were ten species of dragonfly/damselflies there, but the surrounding walk had been very dry and bland.

On Saturday Dec 9 when the group arrived, the place was lush and green and vibrant with life around the walk following the 60-odd mm of rain in the intervening time. We walked the Buttongrass walk when we first arrived. For the return trip of 3.2km it was suggested to allow 1.5hr. Three hours later we were skipping over things to get back for a late lunch.



Potato Orchid *Gastrodia sesamoides*. Photo - Judy Smart

What had held our interest? There were plants galore starting with the unusual potato orchid (*Gastrodia sesamoides*) or was that cinnamon bells? Our good friend Wikipedia says that the potato reference comes from reports that the indigenous Australians dug out the tubers and ate them. Tubers were located by observing where bandicoots had scratched after detecting them by scent.

Other notable plants for the area included the Pouched Coral-fern (*Gleichenia dicarpa*) that readily spreads by continued Y-shaped branching and the Bushy Clubmoss (*Lycopodium deuterodensum*), an interesting spore-bearing plant related to ferns and resembling a miniature pine tree. Velimir discovered that it spread by sending new shoots up from a ground-hugging root/rhizome type of growth.

As for the Button-grass (*Gymnoschoenus sphaerocephalus*) itself, it has flower-heads in characteristic 'buttons' at the end of the long stalks but is actually a sedge, not a grass. It is only found in the wet areas.

The plant list was by far the longest for the day (white, blue, purple, yellow and brown flowers plus all the vegetative plants) as the birds barely got into double figures, with no surprises or unusual sightings (or hearings). Definitely no sign of the emu-wrens that are reputed to abound there.



A beautiful Planarian or flatworm (*Caenoplana dubia*) – the first record of this to be posted on Bowerbird (Museum Victoria website). Photo - Rog Standen

Of great interest to all was a brightly coloured yellow and green striped flatworm that Judy found very sticky to touch. Velimir found an interesting orb spider finding safety in an opened Bushy Needlewood (*Hakea decurrens*) seedpod and Heather was delighted to observe (as were the rest of us) the sprawling mound of 'Spiny golden-bum' (*Polyrhachis* sp) ants. These had made a mound of living insects that swelled above the hole through which immature ants were being carried out, only to be subsumed by the sprawling mass when they disappeared from sight again.

The strength of the jumping jack ants (*Myrmicine* sp) was on display as they built large cones of stones around their nest. The size of the stones they can carry and drag is astounding.

Colourful Varied Sword-grass Brown (*Tisiphone abeona*) butterflies were regularly seen and interestingly, they would perch with their wings out flat, but on the rare occasions that the sun shone through, they would immediately fold

the wings above their back, only to return to the flattened position when the clouds returned.



Golden spiny ants (*Polyrhachis* sp). Photo - Rog Standen

A humungous (meaning very, very big) Tachinid fly from the Rutilini tribe was the biggest ever seen.



Huge Tachinid fly (tribe Rutilini). Photo - Rog Standen

After lunch, when the sun did finally sporadically appear, we had quick glimpses of Eastern Billabongfly (*Austroagrion watsoni*), a small blue damselfly, Yellow-striped Hunter (*Austrogomphus guerini*), a medium sized dragonfly that perched on the track and Blue-spotted Hawker (*Adversaechna brevistyla*) that flew continuously around a metre or two above the water. It was largely overcast still and the wind was getting up so we called it a day and moved toward home, stopping at another small road-side dam on the way. Here the sun was out and it was protected from the wind and people had great views of the Blue Skimmer (*Orthetrum caledonicum*), warming itself on a rock, Wandering Ringtails (*Austrolestes leda*) damselflies mating, some saw the Red & Blue Damsel (*Xanthagrion erythroneurum*) flying around and then good sightings were had by some, of the Cup Ringtail (*Austrolestes psyche*) that perched on a reed close to the edge making it easy to see.

Overall, we had a great day with a real 'field nats' collection of sightings and experiences, some new to us, which always makes it interesting. The lure was dragonflies, but the prizes were something different.

Note that the Parks Victoria parknotes for the Button-grass Nature Walk were very useful as we walked the trail and for this report. — **Rog Standen**



Blue Skimmer (*Orthetrum caledonicum*) dragonfly. Photo - Lee Denis

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The Plants of the Button-grass Walk

We didn't expect to see much in the flora department in December, but the rain the week before gave everything a new flush of life, and we were pleasantly surprised by the beauty of the flora.



Slender Yellow-eye *Xyris gracilis*. Photo - Judy Smart

The surprises started in the car park, with a Potato orchid and Common bird orchids, plus a fan-tailed cuckoo. On the walk the highlights in flower were the yellow wedge pea, several Goodenias, and the lovely *Xyris*. Blues were plentiful with *Dampiera*, *Wahlenbergias*, both *Patersonias* and lots of fringe lilies. And in the pink were *Bauera* and trigger plants. There were masses of *Hyacinth* orchids in bud so they will be spectacular soon. The four species of *Hakea* kept us busy, and other interesting plants were *Epacris obtusifolia* and *Pultenea weindorferi*.

And Roger forgot about the small Copperhead snake coiled up on the side of the track, which didn't like being admired and took off into the *Melaleuca*.

Altogether a fascinating day, and we did see some Odonata!
— **Judy Smart**

Button-grass Walk in Flower, December 9, 2017

Plant List compiled by Judy Smart

<i>Bauera rubioides</i>	River Rose
<i>Chiloglottis valida</i>	Common Bird Orchid
<i>Caesia parviflora</i>	Pale Grass Lily
<i>Dampiera stricta</i>	Blue Dampiera
<i>Dipodeum roseum</i>	Hyacinth Orchid
<i>Epacris obtusifolia</i>	Blunt-leaf Heath
<i>Gastrodia sesamoides</i>	Potato Orchid
<i>Gompholobium huegelii</i>	Common Wedge-pea
<i>Goodenia geniculata</i>	Bent Goodenia
<i>Goodenia humilis</i>	Swamp Goodenia
<i>Hakea decurrens</i>	Bushy Needlewood

<i>Hakea nodosa</i>	Yellow Hakea
<i>Hakea teretifolia</i>	Dagger Hakea
<i>Hakea ulicina</i>	Furze Hakea
<i>Kunzea ericoides</i>	Burgan
<i>Lobelia alata</i>	Angled Lobelia
<i>Melaleuca squarrosa</i>	Scented Paperbark
<i>Patersonia fragilis</i>	Short Purple-flag
<i>Patersonia occidentalis</i>	Long Purple-flag
<i>Pultenaea weindorferi</i>	Swamp Bush-pea
<i>Stylidium graminifolium</i>	Trigger-plant
<i>Thelionema caespitosum</i>	Blue Grass-lily
<i>Thysanotus tuberosus</i>	
spp. <i>tuberosus</i>	Common Fringe-lily
<i>Xyris gracilis</i>	Slender Yellow-eye

Birding Reports

Woods Reserve - October

Our day started promisingly before leaving the car park with an Olive-backed Oriole calling loudly somewhere in the Scout camp. As we marked it down as 'heard but not seen' it flew down to continue calling above our heads. A few Bell Miners still occupied the gully, although the Eucalypts there were in a bad way, probably because of the Miners, and most of the birds have moved on. From then on, apart from a close sighting of Horsfields Bronze-cuckoo, it became a matter of the usual suspects and our interest was diverted to orchids, which included Waxlips and White Fingers. As usual, no birds on the dam, plenty of Crimson Rosellas, Red Wattlebirds, Grey Fantails, Brown Thornbills and so on — the final tally being 26. Numbers were well down from our last visit in October 2014, when we recorded 40 species. The only exotic noted was Spotted Turtle-dove.



Olive-backed Oriole at Woods Reserve. Photo - Lee Denis

Coolart — November

A couple of us had visited Coolart in October and recorded over 50 species, so our tally of 35 a few weeks later was well down. Part of the problem was that the invasion of the lagoon by Azolla had progressed much further, so that there

were very few birds noted on the water. The White Ibis were feeding young, who were making quite a racket, and Swampheens and Moorhens patrolled the banks.

In October we were excited to see quite a few Red-capped Plover chicks running around on the beach. Hopefully their absence by November meant that they had dispersed. For the rest it was again a case of the usual suspects, the only species not often seen there being Cape Barren Goose. There were four exotic species, including the exotic that no-one seems to mind, European Goldfinch.

The Pink Fairies (*Caladenia latifolia*) in the dunes were well and truly finished, but there were a couple of additional sightings: a Lowland Copperhead, and, sad to see, the banks of Merricks Creek were lined with dead Bream. A representative of Melbourne Water estimated the ages of the fish at around 30 years, and their deaths to be caused by oxygen depletion in the creek from which they could not escape to the sea.

Langwarrin Flora & Fauna Reserve — December

As at Woods Reserve, our first contact came in the car park on arrival — in this case Pallid Cuckoo at the Warrandyte Rd entrance. There were several of them, and they seemed to be associating with Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike. Later we also noted a Fan-tailed Cuckoo.

The weather soon turned slightly uncomfortable, with a steady drizzle which we ignored until it gave up. A close-up view of a Kookaburra reminded us of what a handsome bird it really is; the usual Rainbow Lorikeets and Eastern Rosellas, Grey Fantails, Grey Shrike-thrushes et al were duly noted, together with Dusky Woodswallow and a variety of honeyeaters. On the way back we watched a family of Common Bronzewing, and were able to observe the way the male makes its call that carries so far — it puffs out its chest, then presses its beak in to expel the air.

The final tally of 22 included no exotics at all. Our walk took us along SEC Break, then to the Reservoir, over the dunes and back along SEC.

Although the rain had ceased, the weather remained dull and cool so, after checking out the Horned and Tongue orchids in the Warrandyte Break we finished after lunch.

- — ooOoo — -

It is interesting to compare the results for these three outings, which were more or less carried out in the Spring (or perhaps closer to Tim Entwisle's "Sprummer") at three widely separated sites on the Peninsula. In the table below I have listed the species that the sites had in common — eight were observed at all three sites, and a further twelve at two sites. Of course this is a snapshot only — excluding the birds found in the wetland and beach areas of Coolart, most of the birds seen at each site are probably to be seen at some time at the other sites. However it does give some indication of what birds are most commonly seen on the Peninsula. It is also interesting to compare the sites.

The highest day tally was from Coolart; even if we allow for the birds found in its wetland and beach environments, which are not available at the other sites, it still had the highest tally. It is a little surprising to me that Woods Reserve had a higher tally than Langwarrin, since Langwarrin, even in the small part that we traversed, has more diverse vegetation communities. A look back over bird lists for these locations from past years shows that it was generally the case that the count at Woods Reserve was higher than at Langwarrin.

Woods Reserve is largely Messmate woodland with little understory, with a moist gully (strictly speaking not actually

in the Reserve, but in the Scout Camp) and some smaller areas of other Eucalypts, while the northern part of Langwarrin covered in this list includes Eucalypt woodland (Manna Gum, Silver-leaved Stringybark, and Narrow-leaved Peppermint) with a diverse understory; dune heath, open areas on the firebreaks, and the Reservoir.

It could be that the diversity of vegetation communities at Langwarrin just gives the birds more places to be, and makes them harder to see, but Langwarrin is more isolated environmentally, surrounded by suburban housing, whereas Woods Reserve is conjoined with Devilbend Reserve, and surrounding properties generally contain areas of bushland.

What Langwarrin does have is a greater variety of honeyeaters — even in our list, honeyeaters make up more than a quarter of the total. Besides the six listed here, previous lists have added Brown Headed, White-plumed and, lately, Scarlet Honeyeaters, as well as Eastern Spinebill. Red Wattlebird and Yellow-faced Honeyeater were seen at all three sites in these surveys, with only Little Wattlebird added at Coolart.

The total for Coolart in the list below is well below the usual tally, surely partly because of the lack of water. The diversity of environments here includes the lagoon and other wetlands, farmland and farm buildings, Eucalypt woodland, streamfront, beach and extensive areas of coastal scrub, so it is not surprising that it has higher numbers of birds, as well as a higher number of exotics associated with urban areas. — **Lee Denis**

Bird Lists for October-November-December 2017			
Woods Reserve 2nd October 2017 (26)	Coolart 13th November 2017 (35)	Langwarrin FFR 4th December 2017 (22)	Species in Common
Straw-necked Ibis	Cape Barren Goose	Australian White Ibis	All three sites (8)
Spotted Turtle-Dove*	Chestnut Teal	Common Bronzewing	Fan-tailed Cuckoo
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	White-faced Heron	Rainbow Lorikeet	Laughing Kookaburra
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Australian White Ibis	Eastern Rosella	Superb Fairy-wren
Crimson Rosella	Black-shouldered Kite	Pallid Cuckoo	Brown Thornbill
Eastern Rosella	Purple Swamphen	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Red Wattlebird
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Dusky Moorhen	Laughing Kookaburra	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	Pacific Gull	Superb Fairy-wren	Grey Fantail
Laughing Kookaburra	Silver Gull	Brown Thornbill	Australian Magpie
Superb Fairy-wren	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Red Wattlebird	
Spotted Pardalote	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Little Wattlebird	
White-browed Scrubwren	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Two of three sites (12)
Brown Thornbill	Laughing Kookaburra	White-eared Honeyeater	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo
Red Wattlebird	Superb Fairy-wren	White-naped Honeyeater	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Bell Miner	Spotted Pardalote	New Holland Honeyeater	Eastern Rosella
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Brown Thornbill	Eastern Yellow Robin	Spotted Pardalote
White-eared Honeyeater	Red Wattlebird	Grey Shrike-thrush	Little Wattlebird
Eastern Yellow Robin	Little Wattlebird	Magpie-Lark	White-eared Honeyeater
Golden Whistler	Noisy Miner	Grey Fantail	Eastern Yellow Robin
Grey Shrike-thrush	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike	Golden Whistler
Grey Fantail	Golden Whistler	Dusky Woodswallow	Magpie-Lark
Olive-backed Oriole	Grey Shrike-thrush	Australian Magpie	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike
Grey Butcherbird	Magpie-Lark		Grey Butcherbird

Australian Magpie	Grey Fantail		
Little Raven	Willie Wagtail		
Welcome Swallow	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike		
	Grey Butcherbird		
	Australian Magpie		
	Little Raven		
	European Goldfinch*		
	Welcome Swallow		
	Clamorous Reed-Warbler		
	Silvereye		
	Common Blackbird*		
	Common Starling*		
	Common Myna*		



Photos - Lee Denis

Peninsula Field Naturalists Club Inc

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month with a field trip the following Saturday. Further information and current Programme of Activities can be found at our website.

President:
Coralie Davies
0425 763521

Treasurer:
Linda Edwards
95846790

All correspondence to
Secretary
Judy Smart
51 Wimborne Ave
Mt Eliza 3930
mandjsmart@gmail.com

Annual Subs due July
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www.peninsulafieldnaturalists.org.au
