



# PENINSULA FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC.

Mornington Peninsula, Victoria, Australia

## NEWSLETTER: SEPTEMBER 2014

### Sweetwater Creek

**19<sup>th</sup> July**

In July we joined members of Action Sweetwater Creek for their working bee. Some of us were set to helping with the removal of weeds, especially asparagus fern, while others helped out with some planting. There was quite a good turn out for the Friends Group, and the work was followed by a sausage sizzle – a good way to encourage participation!



'The Granites' at Sweetwater Creek. Photo – Lee Denis

Sweetwater Creek lies just to the south of the Frankston business area. A highly modified area, the creek itself enters Port Phillip Bay via a culvert under the Nepean Highway near the foot of Olivers Hill. Most of the Eucalypts and Wattles along the valley were cleared for firewood by the late 1880s, and the area was invaded by weeds.

The Reserve essentially dates from 1974 when an action group from the community was formed to press for better management of the creek, and later to begin voluntary work

to turn what was a badly degraded area into a natural reserve, with formed walking trails and boardwalks, and to combat the spread of weeds species.

This work continues to this day – the position of the Reserve, essentially a steep valley below backyards, with the Creek at the bottom, means that the progression of weed species down the slope will continue to present problems.



Golden Whistler at Sweetwater Creek. Photo – Lee Denis

Nevertheless, through the dedicated work of volunteers, the Reserve has been preserved as an oasis of bushland which provides habitat for a number of bird species, including some bush birds (i.e birds that are not generally found in backyards) such as Golden Whistler..

Information about the Reserve and the Friends group can be found at [www.sweetwatercreek.org.au](http://www.sweetwatercreek.org.au). - Lee Denis

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### Bulldog Creek Road

**7<sup>th</sup> July**

This regular birding spot generally provides a good bird count, as well as being a pleasant stroll. Six members were present on a fine mild clear day and starting from the end of Foxeys Rd we walked the length of Bulldog Creek Rd all the way to where it meets Wallaces Rd which leads to the Nepean Highway.

On the way we saw the usual bush birds including Eastern and Crimson Rosellas, Spotted Pardalote, Golden Whistler and a couple of different honeyeaters. Both Brown and Striated Thornbills were seen. A pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles were soaring over the paddocks and a herd of

curious calves.

Further along past the Bulldog Creek crossing quite a few species of water birds were seen on the dams and other water bodies in that area, including the usual Coots, Moorhens and Swamphens, Cormorants and a few ducks, together with Great and Little Pied Cormorants.

The addition of these species lifted the total to 37, 11 more than last year, although the less common birds such as Varied Sitella and Mistletoebird were not seen this year.

Since this is a regular birding destination, it is interesting to look back over our observations for the past three years – we visited this spot in September 2012 and June 2013. The total species observed is 51, with 19 species seen each time

and 24 species observed only on one occasion. These observations are of course all over the winter to early spring period. A visit at a different time of year might provide an interesting comparison. - Lee Denis

<b>Bird List For Bulldog Creek Rd 7 July 2014</b>				
Australian Wood Duck	Dusky Moorhen	Laughing Kookaburra	White-naped Honeyeater	Grey Butcherbird
Chestnut Teal	Eurasian Coot	Superb Fairy-wren	New Holland Honeyeater	Australian Magpie
Little Pied Cormorant	Masked Lapwing	Spotted Pardalote	Eastern Spinebill	Little Raven
Great Cormorant	Crested Pigeon	White-browed Scrubwren	Eastern Yellow Robin	Welcome Swallow
Straw-necked Ibis	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Brown Thornbill	Golden Whistler	Common Starling
Brown Goshawk	Rainbow Lorikeet	Striated Thornbill	Grey Shrike-thrush	
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Crimson Rosella	Noisy Miner	Magpie-Lark	
Purple Swamphen	Eastern Rosella	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Grey Fantail	

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### **Coolart 4<sup>th</sup> August**

For various reasons our numbers were reduced to four for this visit. Our planned visit to the Somers Treatment Plant being cancelled at short notice. Coolart was our contingency plan – but Coolart is always worth a visit.



*Barn Owl at Coolart – Photo: Lee Denis*

On the lagoon species like Blue-billed Duck, Freckled

Duck and Australasian Shoveller could be seen together with the nesting White and Straw-necked Ibis, Hardheads, and both Teal. Bush birds included a few raptors (Black-shouldered Kite, Wedge-tailed Eagle and Swamp Harrier), five different honeyeaters, Golden Whistler and White-browed Scrubwren. However the two highlights of the day were Barn Owl and Mistletoebird.

As we walked along the path between the Observatory Lagoon and the paddocks, heading for the Antechinus Hide, a Swamp Harrier flushed from the lagoon bank close to the track below us, and began soaring over the nearby paddocks. As we got closer a second bird flushed from what seemed to be the same spot, and flew to a nearby dead tree and then to a shrub where we were able to determine that it was a Barn Owl. It is hard to believe that these two birds were unaware of each others presence as they were quite close to each other if not together.



*Female Mistletoebird – Photo: Lee Denis*

The second highlight came courtesy of Yvonne, who is a member of the regular bird counting group at Coolart. She told us that there was a large concentration of mistletoe along a certain section of track so we went to have a look and, after seeing nothing of note and turning back for lunch

the trees suddenly seemed to be alive with Mistletoebirds. Both males and females were seen and we spent some time watching these birds deftly pluck the fruit from the plants, discarding the pericarp and swallowing the white fleshy contents. - **Lee Denis**

#### **Bird List For Coolart 4 August 2014**

Blue-billed Duck	Little Pied Cormorant	Rainbow Lorikeet	White-eared Honeyeater	Australian Magpie
Freckled Duck	Australian White Ibis	Eastern Rosella	New Holland Honeyeater	Grey Currawong
Black Swan	Straw-necked Ibis	Barn Owl	Eastern Spinebill	Little Raven
Pacific Black Duck	Black-shouldered Kite	Laughing Kookaburra	Eastern Yellow Robin	Skylark
Australasian Shoveler	Swamp Harrier	Superb Fairy-wren	Golden Whistler	Mistletoebird
Grey Teal	Wedge-tailed Eagle	White-browed Scrubwren	Grey Shrike-thrush	Welcome Swallow
Chestnut Teal	Purple Swamphen	Brown Thornbill	Magpie-Lark	Silveryeye
Hardhead	Eurasian Coot	Red Wattlebird	Grey Fantail	Common Blackbird
Hoary-headed Grebe	Masked Lapwing	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Grey Butcherbird	Common Starling

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### **Martin Langeway A Visual Study of the Various Orders of Insects 13<sup>th</sup> August**

Martin is a qualified biologist who has turned his enthusiasm into a business. He conducts school incursions to show children insects, especially the super sized spectacular ones, and how butterflies and moths hatch out from pupae. He also breeds and sells butterflies and moths, stick insects and other interesting creatures. He has a fascinating website with a gallery of his beautiful photos.

He started with statistics of total world species of life – mammals 5490 species, birds 9998, reptiles, 9048, fish 31,300, and then – insects – 1 million. Or another one – 18% of species are plants, 75% invertebrates. These mind boggling figures indicate that the well known larger animals we concentrate on are only the tip of the species iceberg.

Arthropod means jointed foot, and within this are 4 groups: Chelicerata – spiders; Myriopoda – centipedes & millipedes; Crustaceae – including crabs & shrimps, insects' nearest relatives; and Hexapoda – 6 legs – insects.

Insects have 3 parts – the head, thorax and abdomen. The head is for seeing and eating, the thorax has 3 sections, each with a pair of legs, and is for locomotion, and the abdomen has 11 sections, and is for reproduction and metabolizing food.

Insects have 3 methods of development, and the 31 orders of insects are in order of evolutionary complexity. The first, simplest insects are anetabolous, which grow in size by moulting, but do not change form. Bristletails and silverfish are in this group.

The next in evolutionary order are hemimetabolous, or exopterygotes, which have a nymph stage of development. There are 17 orders of insects in this group, including mayflies, dragonflies, earwigs, stoneflies, stick insects, grasshoppers, lice, thrips, aphids, leps, cicadas, termites, cockroaches, and mantids.

The most advanced are holometabolous, or endopterygotes, which have complete metamorphosis through egg, larva and pupa stages to adult. In this group are 12 orders including fleas, lacewings, antlions, flies, ants, bees, wasps, sawflies, butterflies and moths, and beetles, which are so diverse and numerous that they make up 40% of insects. JS Haldane said that, “God, if he exists, has an inordinate fondness for beetles.”

Martin encouraged us all to get involved with internet based organizations which share photos, sightings and information. He recommended Bowerbird, founded by Museum Victoria, which aims to “share and deliver biological sightings to a broad audience”, the Atlas of Living Australia, which has information on all the known Australian species, and Project Noah, a worldwide free mobile application to explore and document local wildlife.

I recommend Martin's own website, [www.martinsbutterflyworld.com.au](http://www.martinsbutterflyworld.com.au), which includes many amazing facts, photo gallery, and a link to Martin's Insect World. - **Judy Smart**

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## Studio Park 16<sup>th</sup> August

Nine members met on a fine mild day at the Sycamore St entrance to the Reserve. This Reserve covers an area of about 8 hectares of bushland – it is not clear if this is remnant or regrowth, but is probably the latter. According to the Frankston City Reserves brochure the land was originally part of an orchard which was purchased by artist Harry McLelland early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; half of this land became the McLelland Gallery while the other half became Studio Park.

The vegetation is mostly open woodland of Coast Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis* subsp *pryoriana*) with in places a dense understory which includes a number of *Acacia* species, Swamp and Scented Paper-barks *Melaleuca ericifolia* and *M. squarrosa*, Heath and Spiky Tea-trees *Leptospermum myrsinoides* and *L. continentale*.



*Earth Star – Photo: Lee Denis*

Lower species included *Leucopogon ericoides* and *L. virgatus* growing side by side; Wedding Bush *Ricinocarpus pinifolius*; Bacon and eggs (Fabaceae) *Bossiaea cinerea* and *Pultenea gunnii*; *Correa reflexa* both red and green flowered forms; Sheoaks *Allocasuarina littoralis* and *A. paludosa*; and quite a large concentration of Cherry Ballart *Exocarpus cupressiformis*.

Ground cover included Nodding and Tall Greenhood orchids *Pterostylis nutans* and *P. melagramma*, as well as Tall and Scented Sundews *Drosera peltata* and *D. whittakeri*.

A snake was sighted – some wanted to make it a Tiger Snake, others suggested a Lowland Copperhead – unfortunately it moved too quickly for a photograph to be taken. In one section was a large patch of Earth Star fungi *Geastrum triplex*.

Birds were usual common bush birds. A couple of Common Bronzewings were seen, some honeyeaters and Golden Whistler.

After lunch we visited the grounds of the adjoining McLelland Gallery – somewhat depressing to some for its weed population, although we did find patches containing Nodding Greenhoods and also Trim Greenhoods (*Pterostylis concinna*). Scented Sundews were also in flower. A few water birds brought our days tally to 23. - **Lee Denis**

### **Bird List For Studio Park & McLelland Gallery 16 August 2014**

Australian Wood Duck	Spotted Pardalote	Golden Whistler
Pacific Black Duck	Brown Thornbill	Magpie-Lark
Chestnut Teal	Red Wattlebird	Grey Fantail
Silver Gull	Noisy Miner	Grey Butcherbird
Spotted Turtle-Dove	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Grey Currawong
Common Bronzewing	New Holland Honeyeater	Little Raven
Galah	Eastern Spinebill	Welcome Swallow
Rainbow Lorikeet	Eastern Yellow Robin	

## The Briars September 1<sup>st</sup>

Six members turned out on a overcast day which soon developed into a wet day. Due to fairly heavy rain we spent an extended time in the Chechingurk hide – this turned out to be worthwhile because we were able to determine that not only were there Welcome Swallows skimming over the water but also both Tree Martins and Fairy Martins. A Clamorous Reed-warbler came into view a couple of times, while the lagoon was also notable for the numbers of Hardheads – 16 were counted. Black Swans were nesting on the north side of the hide.

After the rain let up we walked the short Woodland Walk, seeing the usual bush birds, but as the rain returned during lunch we decided to call it a day, after adding Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo and Fan-tailed Cuckoo which we heard in the distance.

The day's total of 38 birds was reasonable in the circumstances. - **Lee Denis**

<b>Bird List For The Briars 1 September 2014</b>				
Black Swan	Dusky Moorhen	Eastern Rosella	White-eared Honeyeater	Little Raven
Australian Wood Duck	Eurasian Coot	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	New Holland Honeyeater	Welcome Swallow
Chestnut Teal	Masked Lapwing	Laughing Kookaburra	Eastern Yellow Robin	Tree Martin
Hardhead	Silver Gull	Superb Fairy-wren	Rufous Whistler	Fairy Martin
Hoary-headed Grebe	Spotted Turtle-Dove	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Shrike-thrush	Clamorous Reed-Warbler
Australian Pelican	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Brown Thornbill	Grey Fantail	Common Blackbird
Straw-necked Ibis	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Red Wattlebird	Grey Butcherbird	
Purple Swamphen	Rainbow Lorikeet	Noisy Miner	Australian Magpie	

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### **Roger Standen**

#### **Newhaven Station – Bird Surveying & Habitat Way Out West Of Alice Springs**

**10<sup>th</sup> September**

Roger is a member of the Club, and has spoken on his bird survey at a cattle station in WA previously, and also taken us to the Werribee Treatment Plant.

Newhaven Station is an Australian Wildlife Conservancy property 4 hours drive north-west of Alice Springs, off the Tanami Road. It was bought by Birds Australia 14 years ago, the cattle removed, and managed for wildlife ever since. Roger had long wanted to visit the property, and put his name down to participate in a bird survey in March 2010, when the drought broke up there.

It rained heavily on the way up there, and the group had to wait at Tilmouth Well for 2 nights while the road dried out enough for them to drive on to the property.

Roger started with the geology of the property, which was more varied than the usual perception of the desert, with a large salt lake, granite hills, gypsum and calcrete plains. To illustrate the unusual lushness of Newhaven after the rains, he contrasted his photos from 2010 with Judy's photos taken when she visited in 2008. In 2008 the trees and shrubs had minimal vegetation, and the grasses and Spinifex were dry and dormant. The bright green of the vegetation in 2010 was quite a contrast. The chain of salt lakes which are usually dry had water in them, and the group could swim in the afternoons after birding. As temperatures reached 36o most days this was very welcome.

The bird survey was organized so that 2 people would record at marked out 2 hectare sites in the different vegetation communities each morning, with each pair doing different vegetation communities each day. One of the pair was designated to count and observe the behaviour of the

birds within the 2 hectares, while the other's job was to watch the birds in the same vegetation community next to the 2 hectare site.

Some results: the nine most recorded birds were- singing honeyeater, white winged triller, crimson chat, rufous skylark, masked wood swallow, budgerigar, black faced wood swallow, pied honeyeater and diamond dove. Pallid cuckoos and rufous whistlers were heard everywhere, but not seen as much, possibly because their voices carry a long way and they give the impression that they are omnipresent, but are not. Although there was a lot of water, there were few waterbirds.

Black breasted buzzards were the dominant large raptor, as they are further north, but wedge tailed eagles were dominant just south of there, so it was a demarcation line for them. Brown falcons were the most commonly seen raptor.

Not one emu was seen, much to the group's surprise. (A number of our members remarked from their travels on the scarcity of emus in the Centre, though they are plentiful in Victoria's arid areas).

Rufous-crowned emu wrens have a very high pitched call, which only 4 people from the group could hear, so those 4 people were involved in a trial to use playback to determine their presence and were also in demand to find them for the rest. Roger had beautiful photos of them, a treat to see. There were 3 reptiles seen, including sand monitors and thorny devils.

Over the 10 days the group recorded 128 birds, of the 168 on the list for the property.

Post script: Roger also had photos of dragonflies, and recommended the web-based Australian Dragonfly

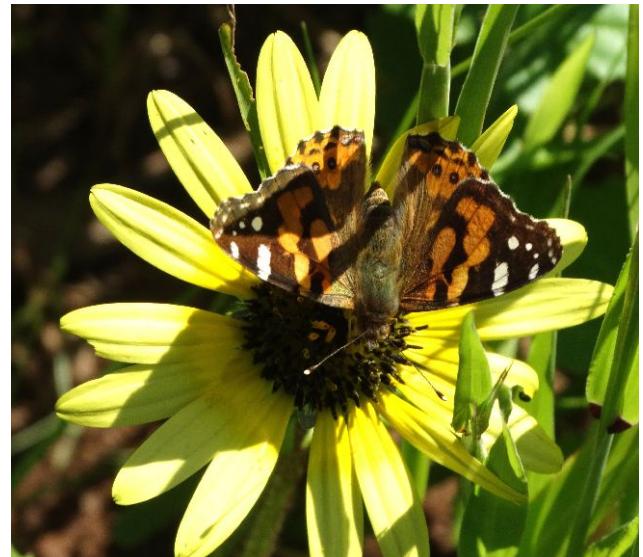
Identification Key, a very useful and user friendly program for identifying dragonflies. - **Judy Smart**

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### Colley St Bushland Pearcedale September 13<sup>th</sup>

On a glorious Spring day a group of us started at Colley Street Bushland at Pearcedale, which was a small and interesting reserve near the town. The highlights were wedding bush just coming in to flower, with Epacris and a few wattles still in flower.

We ate lunch on the deck overlooking Cannons Creek, where we could watch a kingfisher, a royal spoonbill and pallid cuckoos while eating. We walked along the Creek after and had great views of striated pardalotes as well as many other birds and over to Warneet and Quail Island. - **Judy Smart**



*Australian Painted Lady – Photo: Yvonne Incigneri*

Bird List for Colley St
Little Wattlebird
Red Wattlebird
Black-Faced Cuckoo-Shrike
Starling
Spotted Dove
Noisy Miner
Common Mynah
Grey Butcherbird
Rainbow Lorikeet
Blackbird
Eastern Rosella
Crested Pigeon
Brown Thornbill
Kookaburra
Little Raven

Bird List for Cannons Creek 13 September 2014		
Red Wattlebird	Pallid Cuckoo	White-Eared Honeyeater
Black-Faced Cuckoo-Shrike	Sacred Kingfisher	Eastern Spinebill
Starling	Royal Spoonbill	Galah
Spotted Dove	Masked Lapwing	White-Naped Honeyeater
Noisy Miner	White-Faced Heron	Superb Fairy-Wren
Common Mynah	Yellow-Faced Honeyeater	Silver Gull
Grey Butcherbird	Grey Shrikethrush	Striated Pardalote
Rainbow Lorikeet	White Ibis	Common Bronzewing
Blackbird	Straw-Necked Ibis	Pacific Gull
Eastern Rosella	Magpie	Wedge-Tailed Eagle
Crested Pigeon	Magpie-Lark	Chestnut Teal
Brown Thornbill	Welcome Swallow	Fan-Tailed Cuckoo

### Warren Partington

We were so sorry to lose our member of many decades, Warren Partington. Warren died suddenly at age 68, leaving everyone in shock. His daughter Amy, who used to come to the meetings with him often when she was younger, notified us.

Warren was interested in many things, especially the environment, and especially Frankston foreshore, but he was also a surfer, a maker of surfboards, he qualified in physics, he was a scholar of local history, (an interest he shared with Margaret Grice), and always an individual. He was great company and a fount of knowledge, and we miss him.

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### 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.

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