

The Ballarat Naturalist

AUGUST 2010



EXCURSION: UNION JACK RESERVE, BUNINYONG
SUNDAY 4TH JULY 2010
LEADER: FRAN HANRAHAN

*"We're marching off to the Union Jack
It's said in unity lies success
Differences in check us nothing lack
To frontier country onward press".*

This might well have been the anthem of the intrepid men who blazed a trail to this virgin country 153 years ago as it might have been for the thirteen FNCB members today, one might postulate. Perhaps very little has really changed – trees are still trees, birds are still birds, fungi are still fungi.



Photo—Val Hocking

We arrived at the carpark at 1.25pm on this sunny but fresh day approaching mid-winter – our leader Fran distributed maps and off we set into this park, gazetted for educational purposes, now having been claimed by a lot of different people over the years. Heaps of quartz pebbles were seen at the bases of trees – pebbles of the Ordovician era – the same as the Ballarat Goldfields.

Fran said that a 26lb or c. 12 kilo nugget was found here in January 1857 but overall it was not a rich field. The country off the track was particularly treacherous with concealed deep mineshafts, we were warned. There were many puddles and the track in places was slippery after recent rain.

Mycena fungus was seen growing in the clefts between eucalypt roots where the soil had been eroded. Tall Sundews *Drosera peltata* ssp. *auriculata* were awaiting unsuspecting insects. *Tetralthea* buds were turning whitish, nearly pink.

In the Union Jack Gully there was all regrowth of eucalypts and on the ground mosses, lichens and sundews again. Eucalypt forest was of Messmate Stringybark, Scentbark, Narrow & Broad-leaved Peppermint and along the creek Swamp Gum and Manna Gum. Poa Grass was present in clumps; Blackwood *A. melanoxylon* was the main wattle species along the creek. Numerous bracket or shelf fungi were seen during the afternoon including *Crepidotus* spp.

We did see two eucalypts growing close together – a nurseryman might suggest one had been grafted on the other – the two species in the struggle for existence here were Stringybark and Scentbark. Austral Bracket Fern *Ptevidium esculentum* was present in a large patch here along the creek bed, and a tree fern with bright green foliage shooting up amidst blackberries was also noted along the creek bed.

Tree-creepers were seen and heard all afternoon – I observed one, a juvenile distinguished by the striations down its throat, flitting through leaves at the end of a branch, not ascending a trunk as one might expect of the species. New Holland Honeyeaters were also present.

We saw Puffballi fungus – the same family as the Earthstar, but when it opens out, has different-sized individual flap segments compared to its relative which are all the same size. Fran heard then saw a Black Wallaby disappearing down the gully. Some people saw the memorial at the Locomotive Extended Mine – it might be said all people in all walks of life face dangers. Coral Fungus and a giant white rough-surfaced bloated fungus species were observed just off the track.

The call of the Eastern Whipbird was heard and identified thanks to Val Hocking. Also we heard at various times the call of the Grey Shrike-thrush, and White-winged Choughs were seen. A stand of the cypress-like Cherry Ballart *Exocarpus cupressiformis* – which is a partial parasite on eucalypt roots, making its own food but attaches its roots to those of its host for water and minerals - was observed. Hedge Wattle *A. paradoxa* was growing luxuriantly onto the track – once on the noxious weed list but not now.

In the meadow next door six kangaroos eyed us at, for them, a safe distance. Also seen several times today was a golden wavy fungus found at the base of trees. A startled rabbit scurried off from its place of hiding close to where we were standing near one of these fungi. The entire Union Jack Reserve is covered with eucalyptus regrowth known as 'coppice' – where several thin stems sprout from the original trunk base.

At the end of the afternoon we had a cup of tea; Elspeth thanked Fran who had done her homework so well and all that remained was to head home.

Tony Johns

CANNOT SEE THE FOREST FOR THE TREES – ECOLOGICAL THINNING IN THE BOX-IRONBARK FOREST.

DR GRANT PALMER – UNIVERSITY OF BALLARAT.

Grant Palmer's PhD involved work on bird communities in Victorian forests and he has studied the effects of 40 years of habitat enhancement at Clarksdale Bird Sanctuary. He is an environmental scientist at Ballarat University and lives on a bush block. On the evening of the July meeting he had spoken on WIN News on potential adverse effects of using bore water in the filling of Lake Wendouree. The topic for his talk at the July meeting was trial thinning of box-ironbark to improve habitat, a big project in collaboration with the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and the Department of Primary Industries (DPI).

The box ironbark forest extends from west of Stawell, around St Arnaud, Maryborough, Bendigo and Rushworth and up to Benalla/Wodonga. Trees include Red-Ironbark-Eucalyptus tricarpa, Red Box – E. Polyanthemos, - Yellow Gum - E. leucoxyton and Grey Box - E. macrocarpa. With a high diversity of eucalypts these forests are good spots for birds. In pre European times these forests comprised widely spaced trees, perhaps 30 per hectare with diameters greater than 60cm. Today these forests are severely reduced in extent with the higher quality being those that have been cleared. Also, with the loss of large, old trees from remaining forests they are dominated by a high density of small stems. Regrowth from stumps means there can be 3 – 4 stems from one base which is neither good ecologically nor for timber harvesting. No pristine box-ironbark forest remains on public land. A picture showed an example of the current state.

In 2002 a Victorian Environment Council investigation led to the establishment of a number of Box-ironbark reserves and the development of an Environmental Management Strategy (EMS) to create a system that more closely mirrors the pre European situation being the need to maximise the number of large trees creating habitat for creatures that would once have been more widespread. Squirrel gliders which have now moved to the more northern parts would once have been on lower more fertile parts which are now cleared. Brush tailed phascogales need coarse woody debris which is now rare. Yellow footed antechinus were once more widespread. A good picture of a Regent honeyeater was shown, a bird which would have bred much more widely.

Under the EMS a thinning trial was proposed to expedite the development of older, bigger trees. Sites were chosen at Castlemaine Diggings National Park, Pilchers Bridge Conservation Reserve, and Paddy's Ranges State Park. There were four treatments at each site being a control site, isolated stems reduced by 50%, a patchy treatment with stems reduced by 75% and a patchy treatment with stems reduced by 50%. Within each trial area there were 3 sub treatments. All felled material could be removed, 50% of felled material could be removed or all felled material left. The cutting for the project was done between 2005 and 2008. To prevent coppicing stumps were poisoned. The study of the trial showed that pre thinning large old trees were rare and there was a very high stem density of greater than 1,500 stems per hectare. There were hollows in less than 3% of trees and very low amounts of coarse woody debris. Revisiting sites 12 months after treatment showed there had been a positive response by herbs and tussock grasses with profuse herb and shrub flowering post thinning, but a negative response by shrub cover, possibly because tree felling might have damaged these species. Annual weed grasses had also increased. Three years post thinning shrubs were developing.

Bird response showed an increase in species richness following thinning. There was an increase of 30% in the total number of birds with more open country species such as magpies. With increase in understorey and coarse woody debris an influx of small insectivorous birds occurred and fairy wrens increased in number. No change was observed in control plots. Bat activity increased greatly. Invertebrate orders were similar pre and post thinning although this may change over a 10 year period as woody debris rots. There was little effect on ant assemblages which may reflect the long history of disturbance in these forests. Reptiles have not been studied much in the areas.

The study was completed as part of the Parks Victoria Research Partners Program. With the pre and post thinning situation documented the trial is set up for long term study and it is expected that the areas should be looked at every 5 years.

Grant provided an interesting, understandable and clear outline of the importance of box-ironbark forests and the thinning project. Some members visited this project on a SEANA camp at Maryborough and appreciated being able to hear directly from a researcher the progress of the study.

Peter Dalman

EXCURSION - BLACKWOOD FUNGI LED BY LES HANRAHAN, 6 JUNE 2010

In winter, a trip to the bush to admire the wildflowers is a “no-goer”. If you want to see colour- many colours - you need to look closer to the ground to find fungi. The brightest colours included red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple – most of the colours of the rainbow. As well as white and black and many shades of all these colours.

We were joined for the day by a group of people from the Wombat Forestcare. As the number of fungi we saw was great, they are listed in a part of this newsletter separate to this report.

Although we did see some colour among the leaves in the white flowers of the Silky Hakea *Hakea sericea* at the side of the road near the back exit from Garden St. Erth and in the red berries of the Prickly Current bush. Also in various spots there were bushes of common heath with its range of colours from white to red.

During the day approximately 70 different species of fungi were found on our wanders through the bush in Blackwood. In the morning the path we took was mostly along the Great Diving Trail leading down from behind the nursery of Garden St Erth though firstly we did find many species close to the car park. Les was pleased to see that the Trail, which had been blocked by works the previous week, was open again with a gravel path with well-constructed timber bridges, from one of which we were able to get a great view of a number of patches of fungi.

After lunch in sunshine (somewhat limited) we walked out the back exit to join the Trail again and followed it for some hundreds of metres. Every few steps we seemed to find new species of fungi and finished the day with my favourite of a large specimen of the pink Beefsteak fungi.

FUNGI LIST BLACKWOOD JUNE 2010

Agaricus aff. silvaticus	Wood Agaric	Lactarius deliciosus	
Agaricus sp.		Lactarius eucalypti	
Amanita muscaria	Fly Agaric	Leotia lubrica	Jelly Babies
Amanita ochrophylloides		Lycoperdon pyriforme	Pear-shaped Puffball
Calocera sinensis		Marasmiellus affixus	Little Stinker
Clavaria amoena	Fairy Club	Marasmius crinisequi gp.?	Horse-hair
Clavaria miniata	Flame fungi	Marasmius	
Clavicornia piperata		Marasmius elegans	
Clitocybe clitocyboides		Mycena cystidiosa	Tall Mycena
Clitocybe nuda	Wood Blewitt	Mycena epipterygia	Yellow-stemmed
Coprinellus disseminatus		Mycena	
Cortinarius abnormus		Mycena interrupta	Pixies Parasols
Cortinarius alboviolaceus		Mycena visido-cruenta	
Cortinarius austroalbidus		Phellodon niger	
Cortinarius archeri		Psilocybe subaeruginosa	Blue-staining
Cortinarius rotundisporus		Psilocybe	
Cortinarius sinapicolor	Slimy Yellow Cortinar	Rhodocollybia butyracea	Buttery Collybia
Dermocybe austrovenuta	Green Cortinar	Rhodocollybia eucalyptorum	
Dermocybe cramesina		Rigidoporus laetus	
Dermocybe splendida		Russula clelandii	
Discinella terrestris	Yellow Earth Buttons	Russula integra	
Fistulina hepatica	Beef-steak Fungus	Russula persanguinea	
Fistulinella mollis	Marshmellow Bolete	Russula purpurioflava	
Galerina hypnorum		Sclerodema sp.	Earthball
Heterotextus peziziformis	Yellow Jelly Bells	Stereum hirsutum	
Hypoholoma brunneum	Brown Tuft	Stereum illudens	
Hypoholoma fasciculare	Sulphur Tuft	Stropharia semiglobata	Dung Round-head
Hypoholoma australe	Brick Tuft	Tremella fuciformis	
Hypocrea sulphurea		Tricholoma eucalypticum	
Laccaria sp.		Tricholoma saponaceum	
		Xerula australis	Rooting Shank

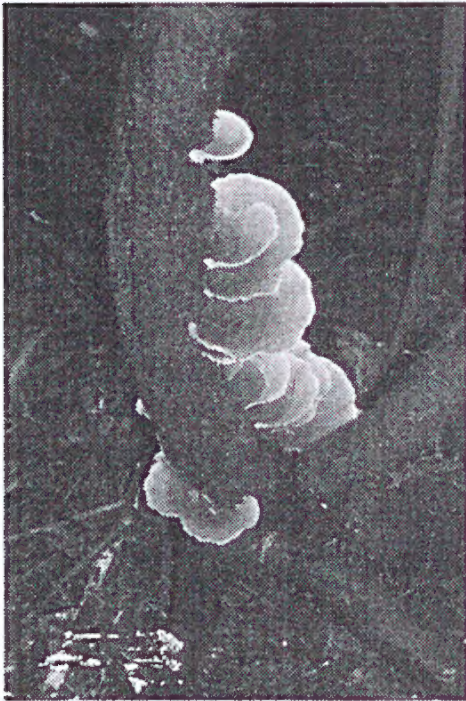
FIERY CREEK WETLAND MID-MONTH EXCURSION, TUESDAY 11 MAY.

Seven field nats travelled to Mt Cole to meet members of the Bendigo District Environment Council and Wombat Forest Care. These groups are working on developing links between Mt Cole, Mt Lonarch and the Pyrenees. We visited Fiery Creek wetland which is down stream from the Cave Hill Creek nature trail. The wetland is surrounded by pine plantation but has a dense cover of sedge and remnants of forest plants on the narrow margins. Elspeth prepared a comprehensive plant list.

On the return journey we were shown an interesting area south of Moonlight Road. The area contained good regeneration of Ben Major Grevillea *Grevillea floripendula* and a daisy-bush *Olearia floribunda*. It would be worth a visit in the spring.

OTWAYS CAMP JUNE 2010

Visiting the Otways has been another opportunity to discover new and beautiful fungi. Included was finding beautiful specimens of *stereum ostrea* golden bracket fungi and *morganella pyriformis* puff balls at the Paradise picnic area. Also along this track was a lovely specimen of stalactite fungi *hericium clathroides* growing on the lower side of a tree.



Photo—Val Hocking

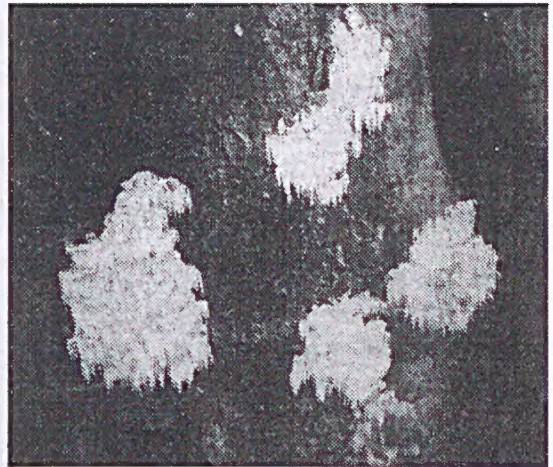
Stereum ostrea, "Golden Curtain Crust", (in USA "False Turkey Tail") is a very common thin wood-rotting shelf fungus found world-wide on dead wood, often in overlapping tiers. It is not a polypore, but has a smooth under-surface bearing basidiospores. It forms fan-like lobes to 140 mm wide, 130 mm radius, 2 mm thick, leathery in texture. The top is slightly hairy, especially near the base, zoned radially in colours from dark brown near the base, out through oranges and chrome yellow, with a very light margin; sometimes green algae.

Morganella pyriformis, "Puffballs" was previously called *Lycoperdon pyriforme* or *L. perlatum*, etc. (NB: *pyriformis* = *pearshaped*.) Growing on a rotting wood substrate, often with visible bundles of mycelium called rhizomorphs, and having a small fleshy base, the fungus forms pale brown spheres 400 mm or so across on the sterile base. The surface is at first covered with tiny, brown, spiky granules which are shed at maturity. At the same time an opening appears at the apex, from which spores are released. The inside is white then turning to an olive brown mass of spore material." *Wikipedia ref Mushroom* "



Photo—Val Hocking

Another excursion was to Shelley beach area west of Apollo Bay and we saw a brilliant purple specimen of coral fungi *ramaria fumigata* as well as the commoner beige/lemon varieties.



Photo—Val Hocking

On a third excursion, walking over the bridge and along the side of the Aire river to the outlet provided a tranquil scene with beautiful reflections of the surrounding hills and cliffs. It ended by emerging onto the ocean beach with its contrasting powerful waves crashing in.

Val Hocking

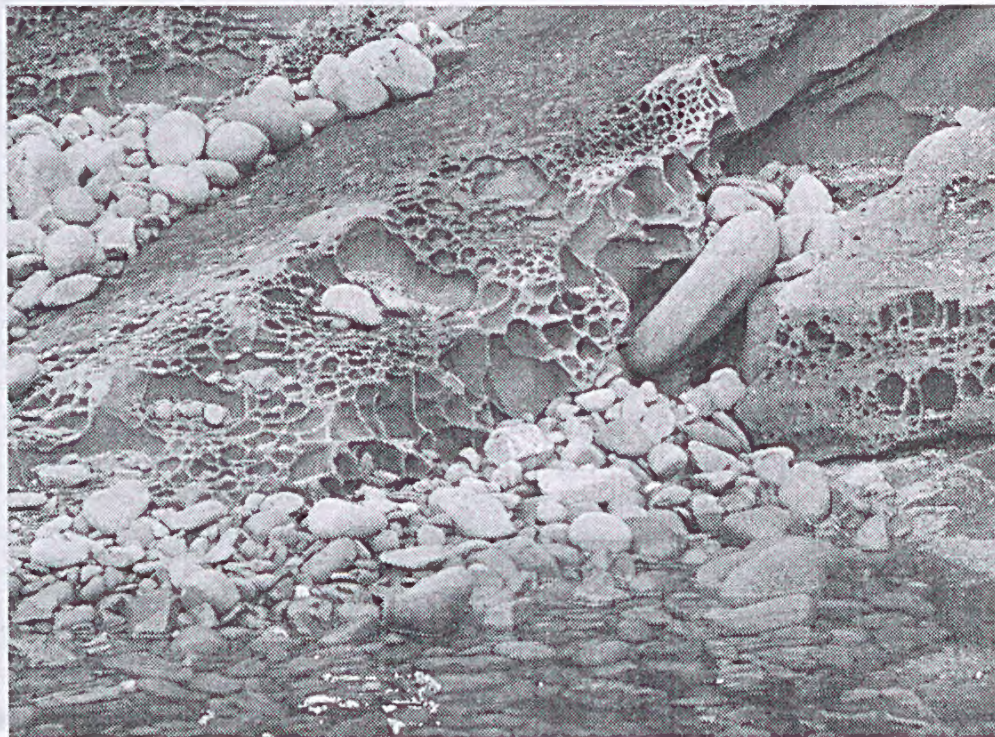


Photo—Carol Hall

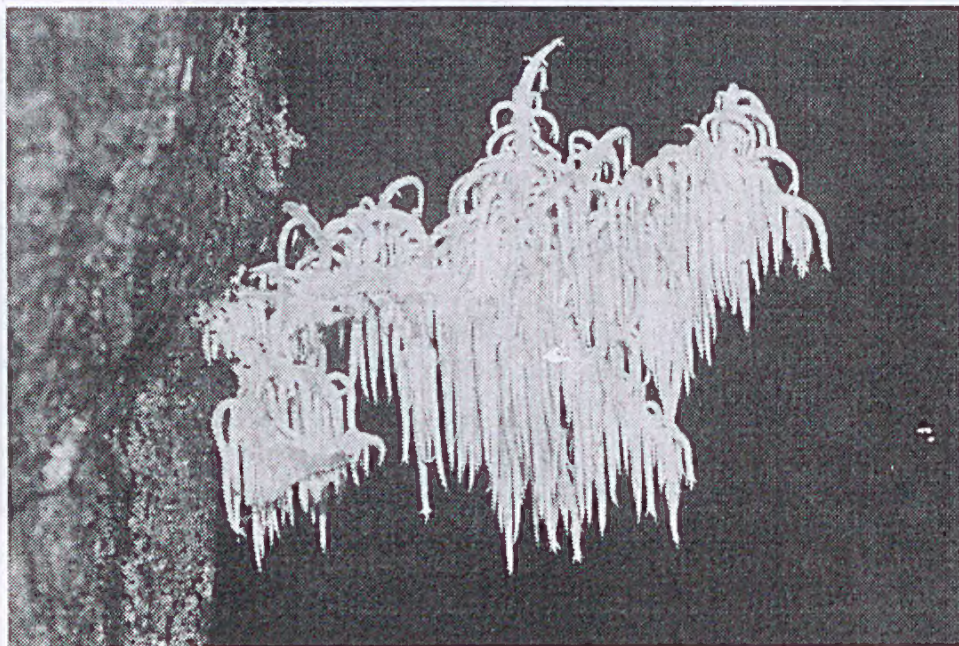


Photo—Val Hocking

The **Pebbles** photo taken at **Smythes Creek** illustrates honeycomb weathering in the gently dipping sedimentary rock and a mixture of rock fragments well rounded by the pounding action of waves and flung up by storms. Honeycomb weathering is thought to be caused by the expansion of salt crystals between the grains of sedimentary rocks, prizing them apart.



The correct name for the **Stalactite fungus** is *Hericium coralloides*. This is one of the Spine fungi and in the Otways most commonly associated with *Nothofagus cunninghamii* - the Myrtle Beech. It can also grow on Acacias and on introduced trees including oaks. Around the world there are several species in this genus. It is amazing how the spines manage to keep free from one another despite the density of growth.



*Photos and articles
by Carol Hall*

A Bike Tour of the Yarrowee Trail – Saturday, 28th August – 2 p.m.-5 p.m.: meet at the Gong Gong Reservoir Park entry to the Trail – with bike. An opportunity to experience this excellent environmental & recreational asset - especially if you haven't travelled it before or for a while – and for BEN to provide some comment to the Ballarat Council about the Trail



**Ballarat
Environment
Network**

Reserves Activity – Sunday 15th August – 2 p.m.-5 p.m.: from Monte Christo Reserve to CORINDHAP RESERVOIR Reserve – to take advantage of suitable weather conditions to do some maintenance of existing plantings at this picturesque reserve. 'Monte' will be November

Winter Swamp planting – Sunday 19th September – 2 p.m.-5 p.m.: planting along the waterways.

All enquiries, notifications/bookings to: Hedley Thomson, Executive Officer –



The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council was established under the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*.

The Council is made up of five members including a Chairperson. The members are collectively required to have a range of experience, skills and knowledge in a number of areas related to management of public land and natural resources. The Council reports to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Mr Gavin Jennings, MLC. The role of the Council is to conduct investigations that are requested by the Victorian Government relating to the protection and ecologically sustainable management of the environment and natural resources of public land.

Remnant Native Vegetation Investigation—Submissions Invited

This investigation's purpose is to identify the condition, values, resources and uses of public land outside Victoria's largely intact landscapes. The investigation will assess these areas for their connectivity and contribution to sustainable landscapes and identify opportunities for greater ecological linkages.

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change has requested the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) to carry out an investigation of remnant native vegetation on Crown land and public authority land in Victoria.

The council is required to prepare a discussion paper and final report by March 2011.

A discussion paper is now available for public comment and submissions close on Monday 30 August 2010.

More information about the work of VEAC can be found on their website:

FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB OF BALLARAT INCORPORATED
No. A0014919P ABN 13 150 403 135
MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING - 2 JULY 2010.

1 Opening and Apologies.

The President, Elspeth Swan, opened the meeting and welcomed 28 members and visitors. Apologies were received from 6 members. *Accepted on the motion of Carol Hall, Seconded: Fran Hanrahan.*

2 Minutes of previous meeting were summarised in the Ballarat Naturalist and tabled.

Accepted as read on the motion of Peter Dalman, Seconded: Paul Norquay.

3 Business Arising from previous minutes: Nil

4 Correspondence.

IN:

- FNCV: Field Nats News, July 2010; Victorian Naturalist, June 2010.
- Latrobe Valley Naturalist, May 2010. / FNC: Castlemaine Naturalist, July 2010.
- RHSV: Affiliated Club membership (\$25) and insurance (\$65).
- Environment Victoria: Appeal.
- TFN: Appeal; *The Morninton Peninsula: through the eye of a Naturalist* Tom Sault; Corangamite Convenantors' Newsletter, Winter 2010; Conservation Bulletin, June 2010.
- DPI: Under Control, May 2010.
- City of Ballarat: Rural Land Use Strategy.
- Helen Burgess: Thank you.
- SEANA: Receipt for camp profit.
- Bendigo Bank: statement for Club and Camp a/c.
- Ken Hammond: Postcard from Timber Creek.

OUT:

- Ballarat Water Resources Committee: Burrumbeet Creek.
- RHSV: payment for Affiliated Club membership (\$25) and insurance (\$65)
- Christian Brothers: Payment for accommodation at Heaths Folly, Apollo Bay

5 Business Arising from Correspondence: - Dealt with by Committee.

6 Reports

- Treasurer's Report: Opening Balance \$4513.87, Income: \$1513.75, Expenses: \$51.89, Closing Balance: \$5975.73.

SEANA Camp A/c has been closed. The SEANA Camp A/c records will be audited by Graham Reynolds. Received Les Hanrahan; seconded Peter Billing.

- Elspeth Swan reported that the Lal Lal Advisory Committee to Moorabool Council is developing a new walking track between Lal Lal Falls and Moorabool Falls. Anchor plants have been propagated and will be planted in the area.
- Apollo Bay camp. Once again we were lucky to experience good weather (apart from very strong winds on Wednesday and Thursday nights). 17 people attended. Highlights were visits:
 - Lower Aire River.
 - Seals on rocks at Marengo.

- Barham River at Paradise – fungi, ferns, Satin Bowerbirds and Bassian Thrush.
- Shelley Beech.
- Kennett River – koalas, King Parrot and Crimson Rosella.
- Grey River Road – ferns.

More details will be included in next *Ballarat Naturalist*.

General Business

- Risk Management Policy draft copies available at meeting and sent by email. Final version will be approved at next meeting.
- Letter expressing concern about addition of bore water to Lake Wendouree was approved and will be sent to Premier, Water Minister, Mayor and Councillors of City of Ballarat, Central Highlands Water, Ian Rossiter and Geoff Howard MLA.
- Equipment Storage: the purchase of a cupboard to store archival materials is being investigated.
- Supper Roster: Thanks to all volunteers – John Petheram has volunteered to help Bill Murphy tonight; volunteer needed to help Tony Johns in August, roster printed in *Ballarat Naturalist*.
- Tony Johns volunteered to write excursion report on Sunday.
- Wombat Forestcare: Workshop brochures available at the meeting and also on line at www.wombatforestcare.org.au
- Motor bikes are causing damage to bed and banks of Slatey Creek. Members advised to contact Parks Victoria with details of incidents including time, place, numbers involved and registration numbers.

Show and Tell

Carol Hall and Bill Murphy showed photographs of fungi, birds and scenes from Apollo Bay.

Field Reports

- Carol Hall per Adrienne Schroeder: 3 Cape Barren Geese at Ascot, maybe semi-domesticated birds from nearby farm.
- Paul Norquay: Several species flowering earlier this year at Mt Egerton:
Nodding Greenhoods - 30 May 2009 cf 13 May 2010.
Scented Sundew – 13 August 2009 cf 22 June 2010.
Bulbine Lily – end September 2009 cf 2 July 2010 (plant in garden).
Probably due to earlier autumn rainfall.
- Gavin Cerini: 100+ Cattle Egret at Deans Marsh.
- Margaret Thomas: Nerrina Wetlands, Masked Lapwing and Galah.

Excursion Arrangements: Meet at 1pm for excursion to Union Jack Reserve. Leader: Fran Hanrahan.

Syllabus Item: Dr Grant Palmer, Environmental Scientist, University of Ballarat, spoke on *Ecological Thinning in Box-Ironbark Forest*. This is a long term project designed to manage the forest to encourage the growth of larger trees at increased spaces. Results show increases in some woodland bird species.

Elsbeth Swan thanked Grant and presented him with a hamper.

Supper

CALENDAR 2010

AUGUST

Fri 6 Members' Presentations

Sun 8 *Clunes/Fells Gully* John Gregurke, Club Member

August 24—September 3 *Australian Naturalist Network, Chinchilla, QLD*

SEPTEMBER — ***No Meeting*******

Sat 4 Excursion—*South of Ballarat*. **NOTE** excursion is on Saturday.

OCTOBER

Fri 1 Cathy Powers *Flora of Western Australia with emphasis on orchids*

Sun 10 (**NOTE** Date) Excursion to *Brisbane Ranges* (Wildflower Show is biennial so not on this year.) John Gregurke, Club Member.



SUPPER ROSTER

August

Tony Johns—another helper wanted

WANTED: Suggestions for speakers and excursions for 2011. Planning will soon be underway, so give your suggestions to a Committee member as soon as possible!

Committee

President.....Ms Elspeth Swan

Vice-President.....Mr Greg Binns

SecretaryMr John Gregurke

TreasurerMr Les Hanrahan

Mrs Claire Dalman

Mrs Carol Hall.....

Mr Peter Dalman

Mrs Val Hocking

Dr Frances Hanrahan

Ms Nina Netherway (editor)

Correspondence: PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350

Email: Secretary:-John Gregurke,
Editor: Nina Netherway,

Website: www.ballarat.yourguide.com.au Click on *Community>Local Clubs> Environment*

Meetings are held at the Prince of Wales Park Clubrooms in Prince of Wales Park, Gillies St on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm.

Excursions: Leave from the carpark adjacent to BGS & BHS boatsheds at the south end of Forest St., Wendouree.

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