GEELONG NATURALIST

MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE GEELONG FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC

In this issue...

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President's report

…Barry Lingham

The new GFNC year has started and it is great to be able to welcome four new people to the committee—Rod Lowther, Grace Lewis, David Boyle and Graham Possingham. At the same time, we are losing several people who have provided outstanding service to the club over many years.

Lorraine Phelan joined the committee in 2003, taking on the role of Minutes Secretary. She became editor of the *Geelong Naturalist* in February 2005—at the time the GFNC moved the meetings to the Geelong Botanic Gardens. Over the past nine years, she has developed the *Naturalist*, working hard to create an informative, interesting and engaging publication. Countless hours of work have allowed us all to benefit from reading our monthly *Naturalist*. Thank you for your amazing contribution, Lorraine.

Peter Turner joined the committee in 2009, and has been the Treasurer until April this year. Peter's analytical mind has been put to good use, updating the financial recording system and creating an efficient membership database. He has been a capable and dedicated Treasurer and committee member—thanks for a job well done Peter and best wishes to you and Rosemary in your move back to Castlemaine.

John Bell served on the committee over the past four years. His wise counsel was much appreciated. John has volunteered to continue in his role as coordinator of the Wider Geelong Flora Lectures.

Ros Gibson was an exceptionally efficient Minutes Secretary during the past year. Thanks for your efforts, Ros.

Our President for the past three years, Bruce Lindsay, is not leaving the committee. He will use his legal skills to deal with the many environmental issues facing the Geelong area by leading the Conservation Sub-group. We all thank Bruce for his work during his time as President.

In 1961, the founding members of the GFNC wrote a carefully drafted Statement of Purposes. These statements are as relevant today as they were 50 years ago. It is worth noting them again, as they guide the actions and activities of the GFNC:

To stimulate the study and appreciation of natural history by:

- *lectures, discussions and visits to areas displaying features of ecological significance*
- *taking part in ecological surveys and field studies from time to time.*

To preserve and protect Australian flora and fauna.

To issue statements and comments on proposals regarding the management of areas of ecological significance, so as to aid the conservation of natural resources and the protection of endangered species and habitats.

To faithfully record information, to disseminate knowledge on and to act as a source of information and opinion on matters relevant to the Association's purposes.

I look forward to working with the committee and members over the coming year.

Tonight…

... Craig Morley will be talking about the wildlife of Madagascar, an island nation in the western Indian Ocean off the coast of Mozambique. Many mammals and birds occur nowhere else on earth. It is an amazing place, full of amazing animals. Craig was fortunate to travel there for a month in late 2013. Craig has been a member of the Geelong Field Naturalists Club since the late 1970s when he returned to Geelong after university studies. Birds have held a life-long fascination for him and he is still captivated and amazed by them. Craig thoroughly enjoys watching local birds and learning more about them, but in recent years he has made the most of opportunities to travel further afield, on wonderful adventures, to many wonderful places.

At the June meeting…

... Lindy Lumsden will be talking about bats, those fascinating creatures of the night.

GFNC website

Any observations (plant, mammal, bird, reptile, invertebrate etc.) can be emailed to the GFNC email address or phoned to Barry Lingham (5255 4291) so that they can be incorporated onto the site frequently.

GFNC website: http://www.gfnc.org.au
e-mail address: info@gfnc.org.au

GFNC Facebook

http://www.facebook.com/geelongfnc

Members are encouraged to arrive early at general meetings.

The room will be open at 7.15 p.m. to allow members to chat to other members and visitors.

The photo on the front cover, by Chrissy Freestone, is of an Agile Antechinus. See p. 6.

The photo on the back cover, by Alison Watson, is of Common Correa at Distillery Creek. See full report on p. 7.

Mid-week Bird Group excursion: Lake Corangamite and surrounding areas
27 March 2014
Leaders: Craig Morley, Euan Moore

...Stuart Quick

The March Bird Group excursion headed west, to explore a small portion of the lakes of the Victorian Volcanic Plains. This area features some unique and spectacular scenery which provides at times excellent fauna habitat.

The day started off quite wet, with much needed rain arriving to fill lakes and reinvigorate flora and fauna. Thankfully the day was almost windless, although when I arrived at Meredith Park, on the northern shores of Lake Colac, I found a small group of very wet birders who had just completed a twenty-minute survey so were very happy to move on.

We were fortunate to have the assistance of a local bird expert, Rob Missen, who then took us a kilometre down the road to the next survey point, partly for the tall pine trees we could shelter under and also, in Rob's view, that it was the best bird watching spot at that end of the lake. We immediately had great close up views of Whistling Kites. Red-necked Stints and Red-capped Plovers were on a nearby mud flat, while Freckled Ducks and Pelicans were near the basalt intrusions into the lake. Rob observed that the lake's birdlife has really rebounded since the vegetation has reappeared around the lake after its recent dry period, with rushes looking green and vibrant.

As we were about to leave, 14 Cape Barren Geese flew in. Rob explained that in good years, this species breed on one of the lakes in the area. Hopefully this species will be able to expand its range permanently westward.

We then headed off to the Ondit basalt quarry. The Holcim staff very kindly escorted us around the site, discussing the issues at length. The quarry follows seams of basalt, so has excavated channels through the landscape, leaving sections of inferior basalt as islands to act as wildlife shelter, quite a spectacular vista. The water was very clear, with the staff assuring us that the water quality was excellent, thanks to the results of monthly testing and following environmental management guidelines. The quarry is being actively rehabilitated as each section is exhausted of basalt, with most of the banks 'battered'. Battering involves removing harsh rock edges and grading soil over the edges of the quarry face, then replanting with indigenous vegetation. In some areas, basalt rocks have been arranged to form habitat for the endangered Corangamite Water Skink. Once the quarry is totally exhausted and rehabilitated, it is expected that the local shire will assume its management for environmental and recreational purposes. It should be an outstanding area for all the locals.

Within the confines of the quarry waters, there was an interesting array of waterbirds: Grey Teal (150), Chestnut Teal (10), Musk Duck (6), Pink-eared Duck (30), Hardhead (4), Hoary-headed Grebe (40), 1 Freckled Duck and a couple of Royal Spoonbills. A Nankeen Night-Heron was spotted amongst the vegetation. Unfortunately we could not see any cliff-roosting raptors, though a Nankeen Kestrel did fly into view as we were leaving.
Along the way some of us were fortunate enough to see two Brown Tree Frogs *Litoria ewingii* when we made a brief stop along Duck Ponds Rd (see photos).

Rob then escorted us to Wood Road, a narrow scenic road along the shores of Lake Corangamite, where the higher elevation provided an excellent scenic view of the lake. Alas, there were no shore birds to be seen, but riparian species such as Goldfinches were active. Rob assured us that the previous day the lake was dry in this section, but thanks to the overnight rain the water in the nearby section of lake had nearly reached the vegetation on the bank.

Brown Tree Frogs Photos: Euan Moore

This was our lunch stop, so we gathered under the awning on my car to escape the drizzle and to allow Euan Moore to talk in detail about BirdLife Australia's Important Bird Areas (IBAs) and the desire to develop habitat and management information about each IBA, or section of, to better monitor the health of the IBA and to be able to advocate for these areas if required. Euan is a hardworking volunteer at BirdLife and at the Victorian National Parks Association. He urged us to keep submitting data to BirdLife, not just about the species observed, but to include other information such as the state of the habitat that is surveyed, any threats to the surveyed areas' environmental values that you may notice, etc. He demonstrated a new environmental assessment form that BirdLife is developing and expressed his hope that people like us would complete them for BirdLife. Euan stated that a great deal of the Victorian Government's environmental data is not up-to-date and that it was up to people like us to bring it up to speed, as the staff at DEPI (Department of Environment and Primary

Industries), Parks Victoria and other governmental organisations don't have the time or resources to do it fully.

Rob then rounded us up and escorted us to the Lake Corangamite barrage, a man-made structure erected in the 1950s to control the amount of water flowing into Lake Corangamite. The 1950s was one of the wettest decades on record and followed on from some very dry years where lakes such as Learmonth were cropped for wheat. Unfortunately the barrage was incorrectly engineered, leaving the connecting pipes too high above the floor of the Woady Yallock River, and now Lake Corangamite does not receive as much water as it needs for its health. Apparently funds have been allocated to install a new set of barrages with the piping at the correct level. Unfortunately as yet this has not occurred. Rob suggested that Cundare Pool, the man-made lake upstream of the barrages is an excellent bird watching location when it is half full. Unfortunately Rob had to leave us at this point. Many thanks to Rob for his guidance and for sharing an amazing array of local knowledge.

We then headed to Lake Rosine, a wildlife reserve near Cressy, on Lower Darlington Road. As we emerged from the cars, we were greeted by Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos, Restless Flycatchers and the usual waterside grassy woodlands species. Photographers targeted the Restless Flycatcher, as we discussed its unique call. We then turned our attention to the lake's shores. An incredible number of water fowl were in front of us. Euan, David and Craig counted species through their telescopes (thanks Euan for bringing two scopes!) with 8000+ Pink-eared Ducks, 512 Blue-billed Ducks, 69 Shelducks and 23 Musk Ducks. There were also 500 Coots and 390 Hoary-headed Grebes with a smattering of Black Swans and teal. The Pink-eared Ducks seemed to form an unbroken line around the far shore of the lake; an amazing sight. The high number of Blue-billed Ducks represents a significant proportion of the total population and illustrates the importance of preserving these wetlands.

March Bird Group excursion
(68 species)

Musk Duck	Masked Lapwing
Freckled Duck	Red-necked Stint
Cape Barren Goose	Silver Gull
Black Swan	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo
Australian Shelduck	Galah
Australian Wood Duck, en route	Long-billed Corella, en route
Pink-eared Duck	Little Corella, en route
Australasian Shoveler	Purple-crowned Lorikeet
Grey Teal	Crimson Rosella
Chestnut Teal	Red-rumped Parrot
Pacific Black Duck	Superb Fairy-wren
Hardhead	Striated Fieldwren
Blue-billed Duck	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Hoary-headed Grebe	Striated Pardalote
Crested Pigeon	White-plumed Honeyeater
Little Pied Cormorant	Noisy Miner
Little Black Cormorant	Red Wattlebird
Australian Pelican	White-fronted Chat
Eastern Great Egret	New Holland Honeyeater
White-faced Heron	Grey Shrike-thrush
Nankeen Night-Heron	Grey Butcherbird
Royal Spoonbill	Australian Magpie
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Grey Fantail
Whistling Kite	Willie Wagtail
Black Kite, en route	Little Raven
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Restless Flycatcher
Nankeen Kestrel	Magpie-lark
Brown Falcon, en route	Eurasian Skylark
Black Falcon, en route	Golden-headed Cisticola
Eurasian Coot	Welcome Swallow
Black-winged Stilt	Common Starling
Red-capped Plover	House Sparrow
Black-fronted Dotterel	Australasian Pipit
Red-kneed Dotterel	European Goldfinch

This was an excellent day out, with dramatic scenery that we do not have closer to Geelong. The reality is that there are many days that could be spent checking out the Victorian Volcanic Plain. For more ideas on the area, check out the Kanawinka Geopark website.

With special thanks to Euan Moore for his help and guidance before, during and after the excursion.

Pink Robin (bown bird) at the Geelong Botanic Gardens (5 April 2014). Each year 1 or 2 birds return to the garden to spend the autumn and winter months before returning to the south-western gullies. They are great birds to observe in the shadier areas of the garden with displays of typical robin behaviour. Photo: David Tytherleigh

We saw this Orange Spider Wasp *Cryptocheilus bicolor* on the pavement outside a friends' house in Highton on 5 April. From the pictures in the Museum Vic app [see right], the victim seems to be a Badge Hunstman *Neosparassus diana*. I took a short movie after this photo–the wasp dragged its prey along to the metal cover over a water tap and down a hole. Our friend had seen the wasp drag another spider along the grassed nature strip for many meters on the day before.

Photo: Peter Turner

Do you own a smart phone or tablet? If so, you may be interested in this blogpost by Museum Victoria, 1 May 2014.

'In 2011 Museum Victoria produced our first Field Guide app: the *MV Field Guide to Victorian Fauna*....For the past two years, scientists around Australia have been writing species descriptions, sourcing images and we have been tweaking the code. We have also worked with colleagues from the *Atlas of Living Australia* to source taxonomic names, conservation status and recorded observations of each species.

We are very excited to announce that the products of this nation-wide collaborative project are now available.
There are now eight apps – Field Guides to the Fauna of New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Western Australia and the ACT – as well as a new version of the original Field Guide to Victorian Fauna.
Collectively the apps contain 2105 species, 7281 images and 270 audio files.

They are available for both Apple and Android devices. And are all absolutely FREE. We hope you enjoy them!'

Links to the App Store and Google Play can be found via the museum's webpage.
http://museumvictoria.com.au/discoverycentre/museum-victoria-apps/national-field-guide-apps/

Additions to the library

...Lorraine Phelan

Rosalind Smallwood is moving house and has donated the following books to the group's library. She has participated in many guided tours and naturalist events throughout Australia and purchased local field guides wherever she went. Her generosity is appreciated and I'm sure the books will be well used by members.

A Field Guide to Central Australia, Penny van Oosterzee, 1995 (574.9942 OOS)
A Field Guide to the Grampians Flora, Rodger Elliot, 1984 (581.994 ELL)
A Field Guide to the Plants of Lord Howe Island, Ian Hutton, 2002 (581.994 HUT)
A Guide to Flowers and Plants of Tasmania, Launceston FNC, 1999 (581.994 LAU)
A Guide to Plants in Little Desert & Mt Arapiles Area, F J C Rogers, 1988 (581.9 ROG)
A Naturalist's Guide to Perth, Kevin Kenneally, 1987 (578.7 KEN)
Buloke Woodlands flora and fauna guide for the Wimmera, Martine Maron, Tim Burnard & Julie Kirkwood, 2005 (578.73 MAR)
Colour Guide to the Wildflowers of Central and Western Australia, Denise Greig, 1992 (582.13 GRE)
Common Plants of the Kimberley, Kevin Kenneally, 2007 (581.994 KEN)
Eucalypts of the Western Australian Goldfields (and the Adjacent Wheatbelt), G M Chippendale, 1973 (583.42 CHI)
Extraordinary Plants, P Blair, T Swain & D Annison, 2003 (582.13 BLA)
Field Guide to the Native Plants of Sydney, Les Robinson, 2003 (581.994 ROB)
Floodplain Woodland Plants of North East Victoria, Helen & Peter Curtis, 2008 (581.9945 CUR)
Flowers and Ferns of Morwell National Park, Ken Harris, 1997 (582.13 HAR)
Flowers of the ACT & Region, Don and Betty Wood, 2005 (582.13 WOO)
Grassland Flora: a Field Guide for the Southern Tablelands (NSW & ACT), David Eddy, David Mallinson, Rainer Rehwinkel & Sarah Sharp, 2003 (581.994 EDD)
Guide to the Wildflowers of South Western Australia, Simon Nevill, 1998 (582.13 NEV)
How to Identify Wildflowers of the Grampians, Ken Woodcock (581.9 WOO]
Into the High Country: Your Guide to Victoria's Alpine National Parks, Stephanie Bunbury, 1992 (333.780 BUN)
It's Blue with Five Petals: Kangaroo Island Field Guide, Ann Prescott, 1995 (582.13 PRE)
Place of Plenty: Culturally Useful Plants around Byron Bay, Tim Low, 2004 (581.9 LOW)
Plants of the Forest Floor: A Guide to Small Native Plants of Subtropical Eastern Australia, Penny Watsford, 2006 (581.73 WAT)
Plants of the Great South West, Kevin Sparrow & Andrew Pritchard, 2004 (580.9 SPA)
Plants of the Victorian High Country, John Murphy & Bill Dowling, 2012 (581.9945 MUR)
Pocket Bushtucker: A Field Guide to the Plants of Central Australia and Their Traditional Uses, Peter Latz, 1999 (581.63 LAT)
Sherbrooke Forest: its flora and history, Friends of Sherbrook Forest, 2000 (581.994 SHE)
Significant Flora of Cradle Mountain Day Walk Areas, Dick Burns, 2001 (581.994 BUR)
Taken for Granted: The Bushland of Sydney and its Suburbs, Doug Benson & Jocelyn Howell, 2000 (581.994 BEN)
The Plant Life of Kosciuszko, Peter Codd, Bill Payne & Colin Woolcock, 1998 (580.9 COD)
Victoria's Box-Ironbark Country: a Field Guide, Malcolm & Jane Calder, 2002 (581.73 CAL)
Volcanoes in Victoria, William Birch, 1994 (551.21 BIR)
Wild Plants of Greater Brisbane, Queensland Museum, 2003 (580.99 BAR]
Wildflowers & Plants of Central Australia, Anne Urban, 1990 (582.13 URB)
Wildflowers in the Dandenong Ranges, Laura Levens, 2000 (582.13 SMA)
Wildflowers of Southern Western Australia, Margaret Corrick & Bruce Fuhrer, 2002 (582.13 COR)
Wildflowers of Sydney and adjoining areas, Alan Fairley, 2001 (582.13 FAI)
Wildflowers of the North Coast of New South Wales, Barry Kemp, 2004 (582.133 KEM]
Wildflowers of the Shire of Dalwallinu (581.994 DAL)
Wildflowers of the West Coast Hills, Darling Range Wildflower Society, 2001 (582.13 MAR)

Fauna report

...Trevor Pescott

Mammals

Platypus	3	05/04/14	Lake Elizabeth, Otway Ranges.	CF
Short-beaked Echidna	1	27/03/14	Barwon Downs. Fossicking in the mown grass beside the main road through town.	TP
Koala	1	10/01/14	You Yangs. A Brown-headed Honeyeater was collecting fur from its back, presumably as nest-lining.	EWt
	1	8/02/14	You Yangs, late afternoon on a very hot day. The Koala was in a fork high in the tree, and a Common Brushtail Possum was hanging out of a hollow lower in the same tree.	EWt
	1	31/03/13	Whinray Road, Meredith. Sitting in a fork high in a Manna Gum, awake.	WCo
	1	22/04/14	Along Currawong Falls Track, Distillery Creek.	CF
Common Brushtail Possum	1	14/04/14	Staughton Vale, beside Granite Road. As the car approached, it turned and climbed the nearest tree.	WCo
Sugar Glider	1	16/04/14	Whinray Road, Meredith. It was in the top branches of a tree, grooming and leaping between the branches. Glided to a neighbouring tree, climbed and glided again. I saw it in four trees. It glided almost above me so I had a perfect view.	WCo
Eastern Grey Kangaroo	30	10/04/14	Airey's Inlet. Loafing and grazing on the grassy floodplain of Painkalac Creek during the day.	TP
	3	22/04/14	Along Currawong Falls track, Distillery Creek.	CF
Black Wallaby	1	21/03/14	Grasstree Nature Reserve. Photographed on the Club's camera.	GFNC
	1	29/03/14	Little River Gorge, Brisbane Ranges. Hid in bushes as we approached, then hopped away.	WCKC
	1	22/04/14	Along Currawong Falls track, Distillery Creek.	CF
Grey-headed Flying-fox	2	15/04/14	Victoria Terrace, Belmont, flying overhead just after dark.	TP
Little Forest Bat	4	21/03/14	Grasstree Nature Reserve. 2M/2F caught in harp traps.	GFNC
Water Rat	1	27/04/14	In the Barwon river, Newtown.	CF
Black Rat		23/03/14	Grasstree Nature Reserve. Several photographed on Club's cameras.	GFNC
Feral Goat	4	29/03/14	Little River gorge, Brisbane Ranges. They appeared to have come down to drink at the little remaining water in the gorge.	GL, TP

Reptiles and amphibians (Herps)

Marbled Gecko	1	01/04/14	Belmont, on the north wall of our home at 14 Victoria Tce at 11.00 p.m., a warm night.	TP
Garden Skink		18/03/14	Grasstree Nature Reserve, Torquay. Many active during day.	TP
		29/03/14	Brisbane Ranges. Many among the rocks on the dry river bed, near the Little River Picnic Ground.	GL, TP, WCKC
Eastern Bluetongue Lizard	5	14/04/14	Under tiles along the west side of Old Melbourne Road, Little River.	AS, TP
Lowland Copperhead Snake	1	08/03/14	Point Lonsdale, in a garden adjacent to Lake Victoria.	CB
	1	13/03/14	Ocean Grove Nature Reserve. A small individual crossing the track into the Reserve.	AS
Eastern Tiger Snake	1	14/04/14	Under a tile on the west side of Old Melbourne road, Little River. A very dark individual with cross-bars scarcely visible.	AS, TP
Eastern Snake-necked Turtle		05/04/14	A nest with 6–7 eggs found in the gravel path to Teatree Hide, uncovered perhaps by a rat. See notes below.	GMc, MAT, GG
Growling Grass Frog	1	20/04/14	Birregurra. Found at night on a property on the Birregurra–Deans Marsh Road by David Crittenden.	Per SMc
Southern Brown Tree Frog		11/04/14	Calling from vegetation beside Distillery Creek during the morning.	GFNC
Victorian Smooth Froglet		05/04/14	Yaugher. Calling during the morning from saturated leaf litter.	TP
		25/04/14	Lake Elizabeth. Calling from beside the lake during the morning.	SI, TP

Other

Short-finned Eel	1	03/03/14	Eclipse Creek, Meredith, about 100 m downstream from the Whinray Road bridge. Resident in a tyre in a shallow, groundwater-fed pool, one of 13 tyres that I removed, legacy of a flood. It tried to slither through thick grass, so I picked it up and returned it to the pool.	CC

Turtle nest at Serendip

During a regular monthly bird-count at Serendip Sanctuary, Gordon McCarthy, Mary-anne Thorpe and Geoff Gayner found a burrow in the hard gravel path leading to the Teatree Hide. There were 6–7 eggs in a 90 mm deep hole; the eggs had been uncovered possibly by a rat. One egg was partly broken at one end. The egg-shells were reasonably solid, but appeared reptilian rather than avian. They were white, ovoid/elliptical, 29 mm long and 18.6 mm wide.

The nest and eggs were most likely those of an Eastern Snake-necked Turtle, a species not uncommon at Serendip Sanctuary.

Observers

AS, Alex Shackleton; CB, Carole Barwick; CC, Colin Cook; CF, Chrissy Freestone; EWt, Echidna Walkabout Tours; GFNC, Geelong Field Naturalists Club; GG, Geoff Gayner; GL, Grace Lewis; GMc, Gordon McCarthy; MAT, Mary-Anne Thorpe; SI, Shona Innes; SMc, Stuart McCallum; TP, Trevor Pescott; WCo, Wendy Cook; WCKC, Wendy, Colin & Kristin Cook.

Eastern Snake-necked Turtle nest, Serendip Photo: Trevor Pescott

Eastern Tiger Snake, Old Melbourne Rd . Photo: Trevor Pescott

OBP surveys

Bellarine Peninsula 2014

From the 2013–14 breeding season 36 juvenile Orange-bellied Parrots were banded at Melaleuca, SW Tasmania. In addition there were at least 3 juveniles that were not banded. It will be fascinating to see how many of these birds turn up on the mainland in the months to come, along with the 24 released captive-bred birds.

The survey dates for this year have been publicised and are printed here for your convenience:

17–18 May
26–27 July
13–14 September

If you'd like to take part in these surveys, please contact Craig (details inside back cover). They provide a great opportunity to get out and enjoy (and survey) habitats that we don't often get into.

Craig Morley
Bellarine Peninsula Orange-bellied Parrot Working Group Co-ordinator

Next fauna survey

Grasstree Nature Reserve, Torquay

We have been asked by Surf Coast Shire to undertake an extensive fauna survey of Grasstree Park Nature Reserve near Torquay. They are currently removing woody weeds and doing other works to give the reserve better protection against encroaching urbanisation. They are also interested in similar surveys in other small reserves.

While they have extensive lists of both native and exotic vegetation, their lists of birds and other fauna are far from comprehensive. We did some survey works there in 2006 and there are other bits of information on mammals and reptiles, and also birds.

Of interest was the discovery of a Little Wattlebird nest with two well-developed young in the reserve on 18 March 2014.

Thursday 8 May: meet at the carpark at the reserve, Torquay Road (Surfcoast Highway) at 1.00 p.m. to set the Elliott traps.
Friday 9 May: meet as above at 8.30 a.m. to check the traps.
Saturday 10 May: meet as above at 8.30 a.m. to check the traps and conduct a **bird survey.**
Sunday 11 May: meet as above at 8.30 a.m. to collect the traps.

I hope we will also have the Club's cameras in place to check at the weekend.
Contact: Trevor 5243 4368 ppescott@optusnet.com.au

Distillery Creek fauna survey
10–13 April 2014

All trapping is undertaken in accordance with our DSE Permit 10006519 and WSIAEC Permit 27.12
GPS 55 246405E, 5741031N, alt 42 m

...Trevor Pescott

Distillery Creek is a branch of Painkalac Creek in the Eastern Otways. The picnic ground where the survey was centred is on the north side of the Airey's Inlet–Bambra Road, about 2.5 km north of the coast. It gains its name from an illicit still that used water from a well sunk into the headwaters of the creek. Several walks leave from the car-park at the picnic ground, the longest leading to Currawong Falls.

Our trapping was centred on a short nature walk near the car park, in wet sclerophyll forest with a canopy of Red Ironbarks, Mountain Grey Gums and Manna Gums, a mixed understorey and various sedges and ferns as a ground cover.

Elliott traps

A total of 40 small Elliott traps were set in 4 lines each of 10 traps:

E1–E10 were set between the track and the creek near the first footbridge.

E11–E20 were also set between the track and the creek, north of the old road.

E21–E30 were set 'uphill' of the track, north of the old road.

E31–E40 were also 'uphill' of the track, north of the old road.

All traps were baited with the herbivore standard mix of peanut butter, golden syrup and oatmeal; a small wad of Dacron was placed in each trap as bedding, and the traps were placed in plastic covers to keep the inside of the traps dry.

The traps were set on 10 April, checked each morning at 8.00 a.m., and collected on 13 April.

Results

11/04/14	E3 Agile Antechinus, female wt. 21 g
	E5 Bush Rat wt. 91 g
	E6 Bush Rat wt. 98 g
	E12 Agile Antechinus, female wt. 17 g
	E15 Bush Rat wt. 151 g
	E33 Bush Rat wt. 79 g
12/04/14	E4 Bush Rat wt. 84 g
	E7 Agile Antechinus, female wt. 20 g
	E 9 Agile Antechinus, male wt. 30 g
	E10 Bush Rat wt. 119 g
	E34 Bush Rat wt. 82 g
13/04/14	E13 Agile Antechinus, male 30 g
	E26 Agile Antechinus, female wt. 20 g
	E28 Bush Rat wt. 75 g

Comments

Agile Antechinus *Antechinus agilis*: a total of six were caught, four females with weights of 17–21 g and two males, both 30 g in weight.

Bush Rat *Rattus fuscipes*: a total of eight were caught, weights from 75–151 g.

The traps were not re-set when an animal had been caught to reduce the chance of re-trapping the same one on consecutive nights; thus we had a total of 103 trap-nights.

Most of the animals were caught in the traps E1–E20, i.e. the traps set between the nature track and the creek; perhaps this was a damper environment more favoured by the mammals although there were only subtle differences in the vegetation between the sides of the track.

Harp traps

With night temperatures forecast in the low teens, it was decided to set the two harp traps. This was done on the night of 10/04/14, but not in the following nights as rain was likely to fall.

Results

Little Forest Bat *Vespadelus vulturnus*: 1 female and 1 male caught.

Southern Forest Bat *Vespadelus regulus*: 1 male caught.

Lesser Long-eared Bat *Nyctophilus geoffroyi*: 1 female caught.

Other fauna

Short-nosed Echidna: some old diggings noted.

Southern Brown Tree Frog: several heard calling.

Common Brown Butterfly: many females flying.

Thanks

To Parks Victoria for permission to carry out the survey in the Great Otway National Park.

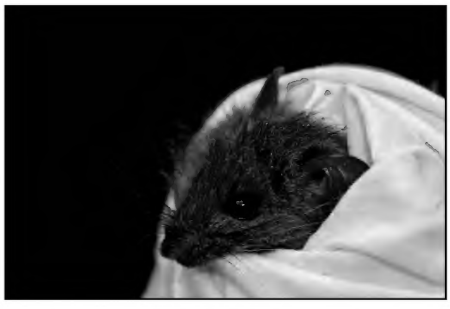
To all who helped setting, checking and collecting the traps, in particular Alison Watson, Charlotte Martin-Taylor and Chrissy Freestone.

Trevor and Chrissy weighing the fauna. Photo: Alison Watson

GFNC excursion: Distillery Creek
13 April 2014
Leaders: Alison & Phil Watson

...Charlotte Martin-Taylor & Alison Watson

Despite a wet week, there was a very good turnout for the excursion, and the GFNC met on a bright, warm day at the Distillery Creek Picnic Ground at the fringe of the Otways behind Airey's Inlet. Distillery Creek was named after an illicit distillery found at the site in the late 1880s.



Bush Rat, Distillery Creek.
Photo: Chrissy Freestone

After catching Bush Rats and Agile Antechinus in the mammal trapping survey in the morning, the group set off on the 1.5 km Nature Trail circuit which was a level easy walk, with the hope of seeing Powerful Owls which had been spotted in the area previously. As we took a moment to read the signs along the trail, lots of bird song and calls could be heard in the treetops that dominated the first half of the walk. These tall trees are a key feature of the area, and are predominantly Red Ironbark and Mountain Grey Gum. A red fungus from the *Mycena* genus was the first stop on the circuit which after some debate was identified to be a Ruby Bonnet fungus.

Further along the track, we found a late-flowering Hyacinth Orchid. Although Button-quails were not seen, there was a great deal of evidence that they are in the area in the form of their circular scratchings in the soil.

The group became separated with some members trailing behind recording plants and fungi, so the members that were ahead decided to take a little detour to allow the group to catch up. Here we found one of the highlights of the morning, Crested-Shrike-tits. With all the excitement amongst the group members watching the Crested Shrike-tits, we almost missed the koala which was quietly sitting in the tree directly behind us. Unfortunately, no Powerful Owls were spotted and the group concluded that the koala, which was fairly small, would not be there if the owls were in the area as they are quite capable of taking a small koala.

Doubling back on our detour and heading off along the creek we left the Red Ironbark forest behind us, and the dominant trees were the Mountain Grey Gums in the second half of the circuit. Other highlights included Eastern Yellow Robins, White-throated Treecreepers and a group of Grey Fantails on the track at the front of the group.

As we headed back to the picnic ground, the environment became damper with Swamp Gums as the dominant vegetation. Walking along the boardwalk we retraced our steps past the site where the Elliott traps were placed for mammal trapping, and two Laughing Kookaburras could be heard producing their distinctive call. We stopped for lunch at the picnic ground where we had met previously in the morning.

At lunchtime an attractive day-flying moth landed on our picnic table and was identified as family Arctiidae, *Anestia ombrophanes*, the Clouded Footman. In the afternoon eight of us set off along the Ironbark Gorge walk, finding more small, flowering plants along the side of the track. Colonies of Greenhood orchid leaves were appearing. We had impressive views of the steep cliff on the other side of the gully, and as we crossed the bridge at the head of the gorge we stopped to listen to the chorus of frogs and enjoyed the picturesque series of ponds of water. The frogs were identified as Victorian Smooth Froglets.

Further down the track smaller pools of water were serving as an afternoon bathing area for a collection of different species, honeyeaters, thornbills and a juvenile Eastern Spinebill. A variety of ferns and mosses were observed all along this track which followed the creek back towards the picnic area. A large rock fallen from the cliff above provided interest. There were a couple of deep holes in the side which we wondered about—were they natural or not? On the edge of one was a snail, not the Otway snail, or the garden variety.

The pace increased on the way back but we halted again to photograph amazingly attractive Ghost Fungus growing at the base of a large eucalypt. A most enjoyable day, lots to see and great company.

Distillery Creek

	Bird list
Painted Button-quail	Evidence of platelets along Nature Trail.
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Heard calling as they flew past.
Crimson Rosella	Seen at several sites.
Laughing Kookaburra	Seen and heard.
White-throated Treecreeper	Seen and heard at many sites.
Superb Fairy-wren	A few in thick undergrowth.
White-browed Scrubwren	A few in thick undergrowth.
Striated Thornbill	Small group drinking from waterhole.
Brown Thornbill	Seen and heard at many sites.
Spotted Pardalote	A few heard.
Eastern Spinebill	Seen and heard at many sites.
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	A few heard.
White-eared Honeyeater	Seen and heard at many sites.
Red Wattlebird	Seen and heard at many sites.
New Holland Honeyeater	Seen and heard at many sites.
Crested Shrike-tit	Pr observed for some time, gleaning invertebrates from tree bark.
Golden Whistler	Several seen incl ad M.
Grey Shrike-thrush	Several seen.
Australian Magpie	Some along the park boundary.
Pied Currawong	Several seen.
Grey Fantail	Many seen.
Eastern Yellow Robin	Seen and heard at many sites.

Plant list, Distillery Creek

Botanical name	Common name
Ferns	
Adiantum aethiopicum	Common Maidenhair fern
Cyathea australis	Rough Tree-fern
Pteridium esculentum	Austral Bracken
Grasses	
Austrodanthonia caespitosa	Common Wallaby Grass ✓
Poa sp.	Tussock-grass
Tetrarrhena juncea	Forest Wire-grass
Rushes, sedges & allies	
Gahnia sieberiana	Red-fruit Saw-sedge ✓
Lepidosperma elatius	Tall Sword-sedge ✓
Lilies, irises & grass-trees	
Dianella admixta	Black-anther Flax-lily ✓
Lomandra longifolia subsp. *longifolia*	Spiny-headed Mat-rush ✓
Orchids	
Acianthus pusillus	Mosquito Orchid ✓bud
Dipodium roseum	Rosy Hyacinth Orchid ✓
Pterostylis sp. aff. *parviflora (Sth. Vic)*	Brown-tipped Greenhood ✓
Pterostylis nutans	Nodding Greenhood, leaves
Dicoteledons	
Acacia mearnsii	Black Wattle
Acacia melanoxylon	Blackwood
Acacia mucronata subsp. *longifolia*	Narrow-leaf Wattle
Acacia verniciflua	Varnish Wattle ✓bud
Acacia verticillata subsp. *verticillata*	Prickly Moses ✓bud
Acrotriche serrulata	Honey-pots
Astroloma humifusum	Cranberry Heath ✓
Bursaria spinosa ssp. *spinosa*	Sweet Bursaria ✓
Cassinia aculeata	Common Cassinia
Cassytha glabella	Tangled Dodder-laurel
Cassytha melantha	Coarse Dodder-laurel
Clematis aristata	Mountain Clematis
Coprosma quadrifida	Prickly Currant-bush
Correa reflexa var. *reflexa*	Common Correa ✓
Derwentia derwentiana subsp. *derwentiana*	Derwent Speedwell, fruit
Dichondra repens	Kidneyweed
Drosera whittakeri subsp. *aberrans*	Scented Sundew
Epacris impressa	Common Heath ✓
Eucalyptus aromaphloia	Scent-bark
Eucalyptus cypellocarpa	Mountain Grey Gum
Eucalyptus obliqua	Messmate Stringy-bark
Eucalyptus ovata	Swamp Gum
Eucalyptus tricarpa	Red Ironbark ✓
Eucalyptus viminalis	Manna Gum
Euchiton involucratus	Common Cudweed ✓
Exocarpus cupressiformis	Wild Cherry (Cherry Ballart)
Geranium solanderi	Austral Crane's-bill ✓
Goodenia ovata	Hop Goodenia ✓
Helichrysum scorpioides	Button Everlasting ✓
Hibbertia fasciculata var. *prostrata*	Bundled Guinea-flower
Hydrocotyle hirta	Hairy Pennywort ✓
Indigofera australis	Austral Indigo
Kennedia prostrata	Running Postman
Lagenophora gracilis	Slender Bottle-daisy ✓
Leptospermum continentale	Prickly Teatree
Olearia argophylla	Musk Daisy-bush
Olearia lirata	Snow Daisy-bush
Olearia phlogopappa var. *phlogopappa*	Dusty Daisy-bush
Ozothamnus ferrugineus	Tree Everlasting
Persoonia juniperina	Prickly Geebung
Plantago varia	Variable Plantain ✓
Platysace heterophylla var. *heterophylla*	Slender Platysace ✓
Pomaderris aspera	Hazel Pomaderris
Pomaderris ferruginea	Rusty Pomaderris
Prostanthera lasianthos var. *lasianthos*	Christmas Bush ✓
Pultenaea daphnoides	Large-leaf Bush-pea
Senecio linearifolius	Fireweed Groundsel
Senecio minimus	Shrubby Fireweed
Stellaria pungens	Prickly Starwort
Spyridium parvifolium	Dusty Miller
Wahlenbergia sp.	Bluebell ✓

✓ = flowering

Ghost Fungus *Omphalotus nidiformis* Photo: Alison Watson

The Big Walk

From the trees to the sea—travelling the Barwon River

26–29 May 2014

Stage One: Lake Elizabeth to Birregurra

The aim is to walk the length of the Barwon River from its source near Lake Elizabeth to the sea at Barwon Heads.

Day one (26 May) and Day two (27 May)
The Ridge near Lake Elizabeth to Forrest, walking on public land. Anyone can join in and do as much or as little as you like.

Day three (28 May) and Day four (29 May)
Forrest to Birregurra walking on private land. For this stage of the walk bookings are essential as numbers are strictly limited and conditions apply.

Please ring Jennifer to register: 5288 7144.
Upper Barwon Landcare Network Newsletter

Out and about: Land Planarians, an ongoing learning project

…Valda Dedman

Among the lowest animals, nothing has so interested me as finding two species of elegantly coloured true Planarians, inhabiting the dry forest.

Charles Darwin was writing to his friend John Henslow, on 23 July 1832, from Brazil. Up to that point Darwin had only known planarians that swam in the sea or in freshwater, but he had found these ones when out on a hunting trip with an old priest. He had written in his diary in June, *It differs from those (marine) I have seen in the narrowness of body and not being much flattened; in the well marked crawling surface or foot and in the beauty of colours and in manner of crawling... Who could ever suppose the soft pulpy body of a Planaria could withstand the action of the sun?* Later, as the *Beagle* continued on its voyage, he was to find more. He could hardly believe what he had seen. On 15 August 1832 he was again writing to Henslow, *I have to my astonishment found two Planaria living under dry stones*.

Altogether he found twelve terrestrial species, nine in South America, one in New Zealand, which he lost, one in Mauritius which he did not have time to examine and one *beneath decayed trees in the woods of Van Diemens Land*, which he named *Planaria Tasmaniana*. (Today it is *Tasmanoplana tasmaniana*.) It only occurs in Tasmania. These land planaria fascinated him and he went on to write a paper about them.

There was just the one Australian species described in 1844. Then, in 1874 Henry Nottidge Moseley visited Sydney, when the ships of the Challenger expedition called in on their way home. He found three more species, at Parramatta and Camden, and described them in 1877, adding a new genus *Coenoplana*. J.J. Fletcher and A.G. Hamilton added 16 new species in two genera, many from the Blue Mountains. They kept them for study and learned much about them, but modestly admitted they still had a great deal to learn about their habits.

During the 1890s interest in the Australian (and particularly Victorian) species grew, largely due to the efforts of Arthur Dendy. He arrived in Melbourne in 1888 as assistant to Professor Baldwin Spencer, the recently appointed Professor of Biology at Melbourne University, and soon joined the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, becoming Vice-president for 1893–4. He was only in Australia for six years and New Zealand for nine, but his influence was enormous. He coined the term *cryptozoa* to describe the light-abhorring animals found under logs or stones in damp dark situations. Under his leadership, field naturalists of the day enthusiastically looked for, and found, land planarians when out on excursions, and sent him specimens. During his lifetime he published 22 papers on them and created 79 new taxa. Many people collected specimens for him, among them J. Bracebridge Wilson, headmaster of Geelong Grammar, who sent 16 specimens of *Geoplana munda* from the Otway forest. Charles Brittlebank sent *Rhyncodemus simulans* from Myrniong, which became the type specimen.

Others followed. Baldwin Spencer was writing about them in 1890; Thomas Steel described species from Tasmania and Western Australia (he also collected in the eastern Otways); then there is a gap from the 1920s until Leigh Winsor in the 1970s onwards.

Darwin at least knew something about planarians when he found the land-dwelling species. I had seen bright yellow ones at Pollocksford which I called platyhelminths. I knew practically nothing about the very sticky black worm-like creature that had been found just inside my front door and unfortunately swept up. I managed to identify it as a planarian, but it was too damaged to survive. A few days later Helen Schofield sent me photos of a 'worm' she had found in indigenous potting mix on 13 March. It had bits of bark stuck to it, was shiny black above, with a light brown stripe and a bright blue underside. By this time I knew what it was, *Caenoplana coerulea*. And, like Darwin, I have found that Land Planarians are very interesting animals.

Land Planarians are long, narrow, non-segmented, soft-bodied terrestrial worms, often brightly coloured with one or more stripes running longitudinally. They are hemispherical in cross-section with a rounded top and a flat underside, the creeping sole, on which they move. The sole may be ciliated, ridged or non-ciliated. They range in length from two to 30 centimetres and live in damp dark places, are carnivorous hunters and feed by night. They have two orifices on their underside; the mouth (with a protrusible pharynx) which is more or less towards the middle, and the gonopore, through which sperm passes from a penis, and fertilised eggs emerge. They are bilateral (same on both right and left sides), but have no specialised circulatory and respiratory organs. Oxygen and nutrients pass through their bodies by diffusion. They have a strong musculatory system that helps them move and capture prey.

They are carnivorous, eating other invertebrates and even earthworms and snails, and if given the chance, quite large and unusual creatures. Dendy wrote: *Mr C. Frost informs me that on one occasion when out collecting he placed a living land Planarian with a live Cicada and that when he opened the box again to show the Cicada to a friend he found the insect quite flat and empty, all the inside having been sucked out by the Planarian*.

The planarian inserts its cylindrical pharynx into the outer skin of its prey. It does this by a combination of very strong muscular movements aided by powerful enzymes, which go on to liquefy the prey's internal organs. These are then swept into the gut by the action of cilia and/or muscles. Most Land Planarians have chemical sensory organs in the anterior part of the body, such as sensory pits and epidermal folds, which serve as chemical radars for detecting their food.

They move on a slime track, and the stickiness of my specimen came from a mucous covering. *They move with an even, gliding motion, which I believe to be largely due to the action of the numerous cilia on the ventral surface, for I have seen a minute fragment of the worm, snipped off with a pair of scissors, gliding away over a smooth surface by itself (*Dendy 1891). It is unusual for the creeping sole to have no cilia. *Nelipoplana*, the Bare-footed Planarian, occurs in the Otways.

They prefer shaded, damp situations, and come out to hunt by night, but are sometimes seen (as was my specimen) in the daytime. Fletcher and Hamilton occasionally found them crawling on a wet day across the road, and once on a blade of grass exposed to sunshine. Dendy also found *Geoplana sugdeni* crawling about in broad daylight, once on a stone near the top of

Mt Macedon, in a decidedly dry situation. However, without moisture they soon dry up and die, as I found through ignorance. My worm became quite hard and could not be revived.

Even the best of us are sometimes careless.
Though they evidently dislike exposure to strong light, yet sometimes when the tin in which we kept them has been incautiously left uncovered for a short time they have braved the consequences in their efforts to escape. Some have got right away, while others were found by following up their slimy tracks, a few feet off, dried up on the table partly through the dust on it. (Fletcher & Hamilton 1887)

They are hermaphroditic, that is, they contain both male and female reproductive organs. The size, shape and position of these varies across genera. They are found breeding in the autumn and winter months. Dendy observed a pair of *Geoplana mediolineata* mating: *They were lying beneath a log in such a manner that the posterior portions of their ventral surfaces were applied together, the tail of the one pointing in the opposite direction to that of the other. The genital atrium in each, once expanded to form a sucker and the two suckers being applied together, held the worms in position. The orifices of both male and female copulatory organs were in each case somewhat protruded and it follows from the position of the animals that the male opening of the one must come into contact with the female opening of the other and vice versa.*

There are no external male and female openings. Sperm enters the body cavity of both planarians and is first stored in a 'bursa', then conveyed through a duct to the ovaries. Surplus sperm may go to the gut and be 'eaten'. Fertilised eggs are enclosed in a cocoon made from sclerotin secretions in the copulatory apparatus, and are expelled through the gonopore and laid on the substratum to which they may be adhered by cement or viscid secretions. They are oval or round and pea-like. Occasionally the cocoon is expelled through rupture of the dorsum as in *Lenkunya*, and the body wall repairs may be seen as irregularities in the longitudinal stripes. The cocoon is often bright red when first laid. Over the following couple of days the colour will darken due to a chemical process called quinone tanning, which results in an impervious shell that resists desiccation. Three to six juvenile flatworms will hatch after about five weeks.

Blue Planarian Photo: Helen Schofield

They can also reproduce by fragmentation. Darwin experimented with his Tasmanian specimens: *Having cut one transversely into two nearly equal parts, in the course of a fortnight both had the shape of perfect animals. I had, however, so divided the body, that one of the halves contained both the inferior orifices, and the other, in consequence, none. In the course of twenty-five days from the operation, the more perfect half could not have been distinguished from any other specimen. The other had increased much in size; and towards its posterior end, a clear space was formed in the parenchymatous mass, in which a rudimentary cup-shaped mouth could clearly be distinguished; on the under surface, however, no corresponding slit was yet open.* He subsequently lost these specimens in the tropical heat.

Dendy wondered if planarians were inedible or distasteful to birds, so he tasted them himself and *found that the mere application of the tongue to the slimy surface of the animal was sufficient to produce an extremely unpleasant sensation, something like that caused by putting a piece of velvet or a lump of alum in the mouth*. Then he threw a living *Geoplana spenceri* to a number of hens. *The hens, not being native birds, would, of course, not recognize the worm, and they at once attacked it, broke it up and took it in their mouths. Instead, however, of swallowing the pieces they dropped them again.*

There are 815 species worldwide. The Australian region has probably about 300 species, but only 125 are described, in 29 genera. There are many gaps in areas surveyed. There are nine introduced species, none of which pose an ecological or commercial threat in the Australian region (Winsor 2003). Some Australian species are regarded as 'alien invaders' overseas. They are divided into two families, the Geoplanidae, which have many small eyes (occasionally none) and the Rhyncodemidae, which have only two larger eyes. The introduced species *Bipalium kewensis* belongs to the family Bipalidae, which is distinguished by its shovel-like head. Taxonomy is in a state of flux. New genera are being erected (including *Arthurdendyus*) sometimes including a mix of parts of old ones and there is yet to be widespread DNA analysis.

The Australian species appear to be divided into northern and southern groups. In the southern group a number of species is often found together in the same microhabitat, four or five together, but some times up to nine. How food is partitioned is unclear, but it must be abundant. Different species associate together in the warm drier woodlands and plains from those in the cool wet highland areas. Those in the north are solitary. Distribution is primarily limited by the availability of moisture.

Some species are very rare. *Thosteelia mesobovi* is known only from one spot on the north coast of Tasmania. There are some disjunct distributions. *Lenkunya* (aboriginal word for beautiful) probably dispersed to Tasmania before Bass Strait existed. *Caenoplana coerulea* exhibits a clinal variation in size; those in the north are smaller than southern specimens. Some of Fletcher and Hamilton's 1888 species from Hartley Vale have never been found again, probably because their habitat has changed. Land Planarians can serve as indicators of pristine or disturbed habitats. We do not know the effects of fuel reduction burning on species diversity or numbers. And climate change has not even been considered. Some gardeners regard them as pests because they are known to eat earthworms; however, *C. coerulea* has been found devouring the introduced pest Portuguese millipede. It is also known as a 'tramp' species' having been introduced to New Zealand, Norfolk Island, USA, Britain, Spain and Paris.

In 1915 Dendy wrote: *It is curious that so few Australian zoologists have concerned themselves with the study of the Land Planarians. This is the more to be regretted inasmuch as the opportunities for collecting these animals are rapidly passing with the clearing of the bush.*

That statement is true a century later. As field naturalists we have the opportunity of getting out into the bush and looking under logs and stones and recording what we find. During the club's Floating Islands fauna survey of 7–10 November 2013 a brown-striped yellow flatworm was found and identified by Dr Leigh Winsor from a photo as *Artioposthia howitti obsolete* complex. On the Bowerbird website he identified a very similar, but lighter coloured, specimen of this species sighted on 24 November. There is much to be learned about our Land Planarians.

Helen Schofield provided the Blue Planarian photos that inspired this article.

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This PhD thesis is a most complete description of Australian and New Zealand species, a marvelous source of information. Even a perusal of the glossary gives you some idea of the complexity of these 'simple' animals.

www.bowerbird.org.au/projects/1633
This site has been set up by Museum Victoria and Atlas of Living Australia to share and deliver biological sightings to a broad audience. It contains many projects, including one on Flatworms. You can send in a photo for an ID and the 'guru' Leigh Winsor will make an insightful comment.

www.darwinproject.ac.uk

What's up

...Dean Hewish

In March this year, Spaceweather.com posted an announcement that Brazilian astronomers had discovered something controversial in the outer Solar System and would make a press release the next day. I was intrigued. What could it be? An alien battle fleet perhaps?

The announcement was nearly as surprising. Brazilian astronomer Filipe Braga-Ribas and his team were observing the asteroid Chariklo, which orbits the Sun between the orbits of Saturn and Uranus. They were measuring the light from a distant star as the asteroid passed in front of it, an event known as an occultation. Such events are useful as they allow astronomers to calculate the size of Solar System objects. The surprise came when the light of the star was dimmed several times, meaning there were other objects present in the vicinity of the asteroid. A few double asteroids have previously been discovered and one asteroid has been found to be emitting jets of gas, but after considerable study, involving astronomers around the world, it was concluded that the asteroid had rings around it. Two rings were identified.

We know that the giant planets, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune, all have rings of small ice and rock particles orbiting them. The rings of Saturn are the most spectacular. Those orbiting the other giant planets are narrow and not very dense. The rings around Jupiter are no denser than cigarette smoke.

Chariklo is the smallest object known to have rings. The rings are about seven and three kilometres wide respectively, and are placed 391 kilometres and 405 kilometres) from the centre of the asteroid. They seem to be composed of water ice and are very reflective. How they formed is still unknown. Perhaps they are material thrown off when Chariklo was hit by another object. It is remarkable that such a small object can have a stable ring system. It would certainly need to be unusually round and smooth for an asteroid and have a uniform gravitational field that would not disrupt the ring particles too much. Without doubt, the asteroid will be closely watched in the future.

Another recent surprise announcement involving rings came from a photograph taken by the Cassini spacecraft orbiting Saturn. The image shows a knot of material at the edge of one of the rings. It is possible that the ice and rock particles that make up the ring are clumping together and are perhaps even in the process of forming a new moon. Only time will tell.

Geoffrey R Mathison

In early April, Geoff Mathison died suddenly at Winchelsea. Geoff was a Life Member of the GFNC and highly respected by all who knew him. Geoff joined the GFNC in 1961 and was a popular and active member, with involvement in various conservation activities, excursions and surveys. He was GFNC President in the 1970s and a dedicated committee member. We pass on our condolences to Lauris and the extended family.

A more detailed description of Geoff's life and his involvement with the GFNC will be published in June.

Butterfly report

...Valda Dedman

The butterflies returned, first the female Common Browns, and some Yellow Admirals and other browns, followed by the Common Grass-blues and the Greenish Grass-darts and finally some Jezebels.

The Butterfly Photo Prize of the Month Award must go to Craig Morley for his remarkable picture of a Common Grass-blue that landed on an open-winged male Cabbage White. You can tell it was a male, because another photo showed that there was only one black spot on each upper wing (the females have two). What did it think it was doing? Perhaps the Grass-blue saw things differently from us. Male Cabbage White upperwings reflect ultraviolet light.

Cabbage White and Common Grass-blue at Geelong Botanic Garden. Photo: Craig Morley

Yellow Admiral, Geelong Botanic Garden. Photo: David Tytherleigh

Observers: BL, Barry Lingham; CMo, Craig Morley; DHe, Dean Hewish; GL, Grace Lewis; GMc, Gordon McCarthy; LPh, Loraine Phelan; MHe, Marilyn Hewish; TF, Tom Fletcher; VWD, Valda Dedman.

Greenish Grass-dart	31/03/14	69 North Valley Rd Highton. Sunning on leaf, 4.15 p.m., 1 photographed.	VWD
	12/04/14	54 Woodlands Drive Ocean Grove. 1 or 2 in garden, 12, 13, 14 April.	TF
	25/04/14	Geelong Botanic Gardens. 2.	BL
Imperial Jezebel	05/04/14	Bences Rd, West of Long Forest. 1.	MHe, DHe
	17/04/14	At least 6 around mistletoe & tops of trees.	TF, GMc
Cabbage White	12/04/14	Eastern Park, Geelong, stormwater harvesting lagoon. 1 male photographed.	CMo
	14/04/14	Newtown. At least 6 flying through garden.	CMo
	25/04/14	Geelong Botanic Gardens. Several.	BL
	27/04/14	Lily St, Hamlyn Heights. 1+.	GL
Common Brown	29/03/14	69 North Valley Rd Highton. 1 female, flying and resting in sun. First for a month. Had damage to rear wing, 2.40 p.m., photographed.	VWD
	29/03/14	Long Forest Happy Valley carpark. 10–15 females.	MHe, DHe
	05/04/14	Lake Merrimu Picnic Ground. Females. 5–6	MHe, DHe
	06/04/14	You Yangs western plantation. Several females.	MHe, DHe
	06/04/14	Brisbane Range, incl. Durdiwarrah and Steiglitz. Very common, mostly females.	TF
	11/04/14	Bacchus March, along Lerderderg Rd. 1 female.	MHe
	13/04/14	Southern Lerderderg Gorge. 1 female.	MHe
	19/04/14	Long Forest, Happy Valley carpark. 1 female.	MHe, DHe
	25/04/14	Geelong Botanic Gardens. 3 females.	BL
	26/04/14	Moggs Creek. Only females present, mainly in sedge/grassy areas near hilltops.	BL
Meadow Argus	29/03/14	Long Forest, Happy Valley carpark. 1 feeding at flower of Moonah *Melaleuca lanceolata*.	MHe
Australian Painted Lady	30/03/14	Wandana Heights. 1 flying through garden.	LPh
Yellow Admiral	12/04/14	Geelong Botanic Gardens. 1 photographed.	CMo
	14/04/14	Newtown. 1 flying through garden.	CMo
	22/04/14	Corio St, Geelong. 1 seen flying west along street.	GL
	25/04/14	Geelong Botanic Gardens. 2, 1 photographed sipping from flower.	BL
	27/04/14	Lily St, Hamlyn Heights. 1 sunning itself and generally wandering around front garden, not feeding.	GL
Long-tailed Pea-blue	25/04/14	Geelong Botanic Gardens. 1.	BL
Common Grass-blue	06/04/14	You Yangs Western Plantation SE section. Several in an area of grass and carpet weed.	MHe, DHe
	06/04/14	Woodlands Estate, Ocean Grove. Present around garden in early April.	TF
	12/04/14	Eastern Park, Geelong, Stormwater harvesting lagoon. 1 photographed when landed on top of Cabbage White! Then both flew off.	CMo

Recent Plains-wanderer surveys and monitoring in north-central Victoria—David Baker-Gabb Bird Group meeting, 17 April 2014

…Dean Hewish

Plains-wanderers are unique. They are unrelated to other inland bird species on the continent and are the most important bird in Australia when it comes to conserving global evolutionary distinctiveness. They are currently ranked 4th most important among 9993 recognised bird species in the world.

The Northern Plains are the last remaining stronghold of this critically endangered species in Victoria. This area is the second most important region for the Plains-wanderer in Australia, after the NSW Riverina district, 200 km to the north. Since European settlement approximately 95% of native grasslands on Victoria's Northern Plains have been lost to cultivation and agricultural intensification. Eighty percent of suitable native grasslands found on the Northern Plains in 1993 had been cultivated when resurveyed just seven years later. The birds have been recorded in inland arid areas of central-western Queensland and north-eastern South Australia but may no longer survive in these areas.

Critical habitat for Plains-wanderers is sparse native grasslands on red soils. The birds eat a diverse range of seeds and insects and maintain a home range of about 9 hectares. They occur in discrete 'islands' of suitable habitat and are sedentary if their native grasslands are not greatly altered. Juveniles disperse at least 40 km from their birth location. Plains-wanderers live for up to 10 years in captivity and can breed in their first year. Females lay a clutch of 2–5 eggs in spring. The eggs and young are cared for by the males and between two and four chicks are raised. Females sometimes pair again with another mate after laying the eggs. If summer rains occur they can breed a second time. Plains-wanderers fail to breed in drought years as overgrazing damages grassland structure. They also fail to breed in wet years because of excessive grass growth and inadequate grazing.

Although the Plains-wanderer's range covers a vast area, the bulk of grasslands are not suitable for them because of high grass density or cultivation. Plains-wanderers are now nearly extinct in coastal south-eastern Australia, a former stronghold, though birds are still recorded infrequently on the plains between Geelong and Melbourne. The main threat to the species is habitat loss due to cultivation. Plains-wanderers disappear from severely overgrazed or overgrown paddocks and do not return. Plains-wanderers may undergo population declines of 80% or more in poor seasons. In the past, drought-breaking rains have induced the arrival of new Plains-wanderers at formerly occupied sites. The Victorian government has purchased some of the best examples of the remaining 5% of native grasslands as reserves over the last 20 years. DEPI established a Bush Tender program for native grasslands in the region in 2008. Plains-wanderer surveys and monitoring of the Bush Tender properties and other grasslands began in 2010.

David carried out monitoring of Plains-wanderers on the Northern Plains in Victoria. From 18 properties surveyed in 2010, repeat monitoring was planned for 9 highly suitable properties. Three more grazing properties had to be added to the monitoring rounds in 2011–2014 because of prolific rain and excessive grass growth. In 2010, 33 Plains-wanderers with 73% juveniles were recorded. In 2011 the count was 27 Plains-wanderers with 27% juveniles (mostly on the 3 'new' properties). By 2012 only 6 Plains-wanderers and no juveniles were found, declining to one Plains-wanderer and no juveniles in 2013 and 3 Plains-wanderers and no juveniles in 2014.

An international review of 57 studies on habitat selection by grassland birds found grassland structure rather than plant species was overwhelmingly the most important attribute. In the survey area, from 2010 to 2011 there was a 90% decline in availability of suitable habitat due to excess rain and prolific grass growth. From 2011 to 2012 there was a modest 10% recovery in structural suitability and a further 10% recovery from 2012 to 2013. Despite this partial recovery in grassland structure, Plains-wanderer numbers continued to decline. Following the recent historically high rainfall events there were booms in locust, rodent, quail and rabbit numbers leading to much higher predator numbers. With Plains-wanderer population numbers very low and predator numbers very high, the predators may also have had a severe impact on Plains-wanderers during 2011–2012.

Regular monitoring of Terrick Terrick National Park recorded similar declines to the rest of Victoria's Northern Plains. From high numbers and evidence of breeding recorded in 2010, only four birds have been found since then.

Plains-wanderers have been monitored twice a year in the NSW Riverina since 2001. From high counts in 2001, numbers plummeted by 70% in the 2002 drought. Minor partial population recoveries were observed in 2004, 2008 and 2010 but numbers declined further during the very wet years of 2011 and 2012.

In May 2013, over 13 surveys from moving vehicles found no Plains-wanderers in Diamantina National Park (in western Queensland) and surrounding areas. Only patchy areas of suitable habitat were found. This result suggests that there has been no mass movement of NSW and Victorian Plains-wanderers to this formerly suitable location. There have been no recent surveys for Plains-wanderers in southern Victoria, but there have been 4 confirmed records in the last 5 years from on and around the new 15 000 ha Western Grassland Reserve on the plains between Melbourne and Geelong.

It is important to keep grazing at the correct level on Victoria's Northern Plains. Controlled burns on a few paddocks in reserves should be undertaken with close monitoring. If these measures are taken, hopefully the Plains-wanderer numbers will recover. Plains-wanderer surveys planned for the Western Grassland Reserve have been cancelled recently because DEPI no longer considers them a sufficiently high priority. These surveys must be reinstated, together with annual monitoring and ongoing advice to the reserve's managers.

Bird observations
March–April 2014

...John Newman & Barry Lingham

Autumn is an exciting time for the Bellarine Peninsula and Otways region as we witness the expected bird movements that characterise this time of year. Pelagic albatrosses and wintering White-fronted Terns have started to make an appearance off our shores. Huge numbers of Fluttering Shearwaters have also been sighted off shore. Endangered Hooded Plovers have formed significant post-breeding flocks while the wintering New Zealand-based Double-banded Plovers occupy our beaches and lake edges for a few months every autumn and winter. Osprey and White-bellied Sea-Eagle continue to make occasional appearances to the delight of local observers. A Square-tailed Kite recorded at Harrison's Track in the Gum Flats area was a real rarity for our area. Gang-gang Cockatoos have well and truly moved into our suburbs now after summer breeding in the mountains and Swift Parrots have arrived on cue from Tasmania to start their winter foraging at their preferred yellow gum habitat in Ocean Grove.

The autumn-winter dispersal of robins and honeyeaters has been widely recorded this month. Rose, Pink and Flame Robins have all been observed at various locations, and Red-capped Robins at Long Forest are present again. Yellow-faced and White-naped Honeyeaters have been observed moving throughout the area in noisy flocks, heading north as they do every autumn.

Lake Lorne continues to provide refuge for very high numbers of Freckled Ducks. A suburban White-headed Pigeon was a complete surprise to the observer and raises questions as to its origin—wild bird or escapee? Geelong records of this bird are extremely rare, although records into eastern Victoria have become more common in recent years.

Observers:
AD, Andrea Dennet; AHi, Andrea Haigh; AHn, Angus Hartshorn; AM, Anthony Mitchell; AW, Alison Watson; BL, Barry Lingham; BML, Bernie Lingham; CFr, Chrissie Freestone; CGr, Claire Greenwell; CHB, Carole Hamilton Barwick; CMo, Craig Morley; DG, Dennis Greenwell; DE, Deborah Evans; DHe, Dean Hewish; DTy, David Tytherleigh; GD, Guy Dutson; GGt, Geoff Gates; GP, Graham Possingham; HP, Hugo Phillipps; JCrr, Jennifer Carr; JDg, Jeff Dagg; JN, John Newman; JPo, Jenny Possingham; KC, Kay Campbell; LBr, Lance Breguet; LMn, Lachlan Manly; MHe, Marilyn Hewish; NMa, Neil Mansfield; PMe Peter Menkhorst; PT, Peter Turner; PW, Phil Watson; RGa, Rob Ganly; RT, Rosemary Turner; TFl, Tom Fletcher; SN, Sophie Naylor.

Species	No.	Date	Comment	Observers
Freckled Duck	251	11/04/14	Lake Lorne. Large group roosting under willows, on branches or on shoreline of central islands.	BL
Black Swan	1800	23/04/14	Lake Connewarre. Delta (1460); Estuary (340).	GD
Australian Shelduck	230	23/04/14	Lake Connewarre, delta.	GD
Australasian Shoveler	2	01/4/14	Pollocksford. Farm dam. Pr. 1st record of sp at location for observer.	SN
Blue-billed Duck	44	13/04/14	L Wurdiboluc. Scattered across the lake.	JN
Australasian Grebe	2	21/04/14	Eastern Park, Holt Rd storage ponds. Adults moulting into winter plumage. First sighting here for over 8 months.	DTy
Great Crested Grebe	33	13/04/14	L Wurdiboluc. Scattered across the lake.	JN
Tawny Frogmouth	2	27/04/14	Newtown, Barwon River. Roosting in Casuarina tree.	CFr
White-faced Storm-Petrel	1	03/04/14	Pt Lonsdale. Dead bird, badly damaged, on Ocean Road, Point Lonsdale. Approx 150 m inland from beach.	TFl, GD
Shy Albatross	6	20/04/14	Queenscliff, between Queenscliff and the Rip. Birds floating around our fishing boat.	TFl
Fluttering Shearwater	c1000	16/04/14	Pt Impossible. Offshore. Many.	GD
Australasian Darter	16	25/04/14	Balyang Sanctuary. 3 M (1 feeding young), 2 F, 3 fledglings perched; 5 nestlings, 3 being fed by M; 3 juveniles.	RT, PT
Cattle Egret	60	27/04/14	Drysdale, McLeods Holes. In roost on E bank. Flocks up to 18 flying in.	TFl
	6	19/04/14	Ocean Grove, Shell Rd, opp Freshwater Lake area. With Galloway cattle.	JCrr
Nankeen Night-Heron	18	12/04/14	Eastern Park. In usual roost.	CMo, DTy
Royal Spoonbill	35	14/04/14	Lake Connewarre, delta. Max no. Fewer on 06/04, 07/04/2014 (25 incl adult with 2 dependent begging juvs).	GD, CMo, GD
Eastern Osprey	1	15/04/14	Connewarre. Minya winery. Overhead at the billabong island.	TFl, HP
	1	05/04/14	Queenscliff. Flying along shoreline, offshore from Black Lighthouse.	AHn
Square-tailed Kite	1	23/04/14	Anglesea Heath, Harrison Tk. Flying above tree-tops and disappeared over ridge-line.	AM, KC
Black Kite	4+	11/04/14	Drysdale. At least 4 (possibly up to 7) birds hawking over the tip. Build up of numbers on Bellarine over past year.	BL
	1	26/04/14	Marcus Hill, Bellarine Hwy. Hawking over the road.	JN
	50	31/03/14	Otway Ranges. Gathering late in day (30°C) nr burn-off. Not previously seen at location by observer.	per DE
Grey Goshawk	1	24/04/14	Newtown, Fairmont Rd. White morph.	CMo
	1	21/04/14	Torquay, Surfcoast Hwy/Messmate Rd crossing. Dead by roadside. White morph.	JN
	1	28/04/14	Torquay, Grasstree Pk. Large bird disturbed from perch in Gum tree. White morph.	GGt
Wedge-tailed Eagle	7	01/04/14	Mt Rothwell. Young birds, with honey coloured feathers. A verbal report of 14 Wedge-tails in the same paddock a week previous. Many rabbits in paddock.	JDg
Little Eagle	1	26/04/14	Pt Lonsdale, Queenscliff Portarlington Rd. Eagle gave repeated yelps as pursuing birds harassed it.	JN
Black Falcon	1	18/04/14	Hamlyn Heights. Over Ring Road, nr Midland Hwy.	JDg
Peregrine Falcon	1	15/04/14	Connewarre. Minya winery.	TFl, HP
Brolga	2	27/04/14	L Connewarre. Opposite Taits Point.	AW, PW
Buff-banded Rail	1	26/04/14	Torquay. Foraging at edge of reedbed in flooded area of ephemeral Jan Juc creek.	GGt
Black-winged Stilt	50	21/04/14	Moolap Saltworks. Resting beside levee bank with several Banded Stilts.	DTy
Pacific Golden Plover	1	06/04/14	Lake Connewarre, delta.	GD; GD, CMo
Red-capped Plover	34	03/04/14	Freshwater Lake. One pair had 2 non-flying young.	TFl,GD
Double-banded Plover	49	16/04/14	Pt Impossible, beach.	GD
Black-fronted Dotterel	6	22/03/14	Jerringot Wetland. Grp of 5 resting/ feeding on exposed western shoreline.1 on southern shore.	DTy
Hooded Plover	18	22/04/14	Thirteenth Beach, 30W. Post-breeding flock incl 4 juvs (2 fledged from Pt Lonsdale/Collendina).	per AD
	15	22/04/14	Thirteenth Beach, 30W. To E. Post-breeding flock incl 5 juvs.	GD
Common Greenshank	28	21/04/14	Moolap Saltworks, eastern ponds. Resting rear of salt pan pond.	DTy
Red-necked Stint	c100	03/04/14	Freshwater Lake.	TFl, GD
	c50	16/04/14	Pt Impossible, beach.	GD

Species	No.	Date	Comment	Observers
Painted Button-quail	1	16/04/14	Ironbark Basin.	AM
White-fronted Tern	6	15/04/14	Pt Addis. Offshore.	AM
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	50	24/04/14	Grasstree Park. Flying SW at 4.45 p.m.	CGr, DG
	c22	28/03/14	Highton. Flying over in WSW direction—presumably same flock as previous day.	RT, PT
	25	19/04/14	Mt Duneed, Mt Duneed Rd. 400 m W of Surfcoast Hwy. Loose flock flying low to NW.	CMo, DTy
	20+	24/03/14	Pt Lonsdale, Over the golf course and trees nearby.	CHB
Gang-gang Cockatoo	8	30/03/14	Highton, Roslyn Rd. Flying over road heading south.	JN
	20+	27/04/14	Newtown, Barwon River. Feeding on gum nuts in flowering eucalypt.	CFr
	25+	13/04/14	Queens Pk, Queens Pk Bridge. Flock; poss 30, perched in trees. Also 6–8 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos perched.	PMe
Galah	98	14/04/14	Bellbrae. Voraciously tearing up & eating(?) on local football ground; 6.00 p.m.. Examination did not reveal their food but they had left great patches of dead turf lying loosely on bare earth.	RGa
Long-billed Corella	80	23/03/14	Eastern Park. Digging/feeding on grass roots.	DTy
Musk Lorikeet	6	13/04/14	Corio, Kanooka Dv. Checking out a hollow then fighting with Rainbow Lorikeets trying to keep them out of same hollow. The Rainbows used this hollow last breeding season.	JDg
Australian King-Parrot	12	06/04/14	Wensleydale. 12 birds inc 6+ imms; a big flock for my yard	JN
Indian Ringneck	1	22/03/14	Balyang Sanctuary. Still present.	PT
Swift Parrot	4	15/04/14	Ocean Grove, Yellow Gums Estate. Autumn return.	AHn
Blue-winged Parrot	1	03/04/14	Freshwater Lake.	TFl, GD
	7	16/04/14	Ironbark Basin, 1 feeding; 6 flying overhead.	AM
	53	14/04/14	Lake Connewarre. S shore.	GD
	30	16/04/14	Pt Impossible, Karaaf Saltmarsh. Feeding in N section.	GD
Powerful Owl	2	16/04/14	Ironbark Basin.	AM
Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	1	23/04/14	Anglesea Heath, Harrison Tk.	AM, KC
	1	16/04/14	Ironbark Basin.	AM
Speckled Warbler	2	23/03/14	Long Forest, Happy Valley Tk.	MHe, DHe
	1	20/04/14	You Yangs, SE from stockyard car park.	AHn
Weebill	1	07/04/14	Bacchus Marsh, Grey St. Calling; arrival; an autumn-winter visitor here.	MHe
Eastern Spinebill	2	06/04/14	Eastern Park, GBG.	JCrr
	1	21/03/14	Highton, Jewell Place. Feeding on Grevillia flowers. First sighting this year here.	RT, PT
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	280	07/04/14	Lake Connewarre, Belchers La. Flying to end of shelterbelts then out across lake to NE and E. 6 flocks.	CMo, GD
	100s	26/04/14	Moggs Creek, In flowering Ironbarks.	BL, BML
	present	07/04/14	Moolap, Bellarine Hwy/Bellarine Rail Trail crossing. Small flocks of 6 heading E.	TFl
	10	16/04/14	Pt Impossible. Overhead, flying to E.	GD
White-eared Honeyeater	3	23/03/14	Long Forest. First record here for season; autumn-winter visitors in this area.	MHe, DHe
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	3	27/04/14	Brisbane Ranges NP, Stony Ck picnic ground. Foraging in eucalypt and calling.	CFr
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	2	24/04/14	Pt Henry, Alcoa wetlands and environs. 1st record of sp at location since 2006.	RGa
Little Wattlebird	2	06/04/14	Ocean Grove NR. Rare visitor to this site.	JCrr
Red Wattlebird	100s	26/04/14	Moggs Creek. In flowering Ironbarks.	BL, BML
Crescent Honeyeater	many	26/04/14	Moggs Creek. In flowering Ironbarks. Many calling from several sites.	BL, BML
White-naped Honeyeater	5+	07/04/14	Lake Connewarre, Belchers La. 1–2 within large flocks of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters.	CMo, GD
	many	26/04/14	Moggs Creek. In flowering Ironbarks. Groups of up to 20 at several sites.	BL, BML
	40	16/04/14	Pt Impossible. Overhead, flying to E.	GD
Varied Sittella	5	19/04/14	Anglesea, Coogoorah Pk. Small flock flew across creek. Black caps observed.	CMo, JN, DTy
Golden Whistler	1	03/04/14	Bacchus Marsh, Grey St. Also on 05/04; a coloured male calling; autumn-winter return here.	MHe
	1	26/04/14	Newtown, Fairmont Rd. Grey bird hd (plaintive whistle) and seen in garden. Partial song heard 15/04, 16/04.	CMo
Pied Currawong	2	14/03/14	Waurn Ponds.	NMa
Grey Currawong	1	25/04/14	Balyang Sanctuary.	RT, PT
Rufous Fantail	1	21/03/14	Eastern Park, GBG. Along the GBG camellia walk.	JPo
	2	23/03/14	Eastern Park, GBG. Flying/feeding in tree canopy and ground with grp of approx 6–8 Grey Fantails. One paler in overall colour—possible juvenile. 3 on 28/03. 1 on 31/03. 1 imm. On 12/04.	DTy, GP, RT, PT, CMo
	1	29/03/14	Pt Lonsdale, Emily St/Santa Monica Bd. Adj scrub. Also 1 on 04/04.	CHB
Grey Fantail	2	28/03/14	Geelong West, Keeble St. 1st record of sp at location for observer. Also 04/04 (2).	AHi
	1	21/03/14	Highton. First passage bird for autumn.	JN
	1	23/03/14	Long Forest, Tasmanian subsp. *albiscapa*.	MHe, DHe
	1	29/03/14	Newtown, Fairmont Rd. Heard. 1st record of sp at location for autumn for observer.	CMo
	1	23/03/14	Wensleydale. Tasmanian subsp. *albiscapa*.	JN
Australian Raven	1	30/03/14	Lorne. Near fishermans co-op. Throat hackles noted and distinctive call.	TFl
Restless Flycatcher	2	06/04/14	You Yangs, Eastern Paddock.	MHe, DHe
Scarlet Robin	2	22/04/14	Distillery Ck, Currawong Falls Tk. M and F together.	CFr
Red-capped Robin	1	23/03/14	Long Forest, Happy Valley Tk. M singing.	MHe, DHe
	1	29/03/14	Long Forest. Calling	MHe
Flame Robin	1	27/04/14	Bellbrae, Portreath Rd. M regularly visiting bird bath during past fortnight.	AW, PW
	3	16/04/14	Buckley Falls, River Gum Dr. 2 Ms, F. Along fence-line. Earlier record for observer; sighted in May 2013.	LBr
	5	14/04/14	Connewarre, Stacey Rd/Belcher La cnr. Adj paddocks; SE. On 07/04/2014 1 brown bird with 'warm' tonings on breast; poss 1st winter M.	GD
	6	16/04/14	Curlewis. On farm fence. 2M and 4 brown birds.	JCrr
	1	04/04/14	Lake Victoria, Pt Lonsdale.	CHB
	1	14/04/14	Long Forest, Bences Rd west of Long Forest. Coloured male.	MHe, DHe
	1	05/04/14	Long Forest, W of Long Forest at Bences Rd.	MHe, DHe
	1	16/04/14	Ocean Grove NR. Male.	GD
	10	16/04/14	Ocean Grove NR. 3M and 7 brown birds.	JCrr
	10	06/04/14	Pt Impossible, Karaaf Saltmarsh. 2 coloured Ms.	GD
	2	13/04/14	South Geelong. M and brown bird.	DTy
Rose Robin	1	02/04/14	L Connewarre. Taits Pt viewing area. F. Unusual on Bellarine Peninsula.	DTy
	1	31/03/14	Ocean Grove NR. Bird seen near the west dam.	LMn
Pink Robin	1	16/04/14	Eastern Park. GBG. Brown bird flew from undergrowth to tree. In company with single Grey Fantail.	DTy
	1	22/04/14	Ironbark Basin. Brown bird.	AM
Bassian Thrush	1	16/04/14	Distillery Ck. Currawong Falls Tk. Foraging on ground.	CFr
	1	03/04/14	Ironbark Basin.	AM
Mistletoebird	c10	06/04/14	Freshwater Lake.	TFl, GD

Mid-week Bird Group excursion

Private Property, Gnarwarre

Thursday 22 May 2014

Leaders: Sophie, Annabelle and Tom Naylor

'Carcoola' is a property in Gnarwarre at the base of the Barrabool Hills, bordered by the Barwon River, approx. 10–15 minutes west of Fyansford. There is a medium-sized lake reserve providing safe habitat for birds where we will begin the morning. We will then drive through paddocks down towards the Barwon River.

Meet: 9.00 a.m. at 110 Nobles Road, Gnarwarre. Nobles Rd is off Pollocksford Road, which runs between Barrabool Rd and Hamilton Hwy. (*VicRoads* 93 D4)

Enter the driveway on right hand side and park your car in the left paddock. The track through the farm is only suitable for 4WD, so we may need to car pool depending on the vehicles present on the day.

Bring: Binoculars, wet weather gear, hat, warm jacket and walking shoes (gumboots are recommended if the weather is wet), sunscreen, water. We will have morning tea on a sandy stretch by the river where a collapsible chair may be preferred.

Contact: Sophie Naylor 0408 522 460

The future of the Moolap Saltworks

Bird Group

Thursday 15 May 2014

A major re-development proposal threatens the future of the Moolap Saltworks as a significant site for shorebirds and waterbirds.

At the May meeting of the Bird Group, members of the GFNC Save Moolap sub-committee will provide information and highlight the significance of the site within the local, national and international context. A presentation prepared by members of the sub-committee will be shown at this meeting. It is intended to use this presentation to display the importance of the Moolap site to the broader community. This has caused a change to the program for the May Bird Group meeting and Rob Ganly will now give his presentation 'Going North with the Australasian Wader Study Group' at the 18 September Bird Group meeting.

Thanks to Rob for offering to swap and present at another meeting so this important information can be brought to your attention.

There will also be time at the May meeting to discuss future directions for the GFNC Bird Study Group and record submission/etc.

Craig Morley, Bird Group and the Save Moolap sub-committee

Boneseed pull at the You Yangs

Saturday 24 May 2014

Time: 9.30 a.m.–3.00 p.m.

The last section to the road up to the Saddle car park is now by 4WD only. Please be on time if you require transport up this section to the car park.

While we have managed to keep the top of the hill amazingly clear, we have some sections downhill from the West Walk that need some work.

In addition, at our last working bee, 9 months ago, we cleared three plots of mature boneseed in which we intend to study the regrowth of boneseed over the coming years. If you can help us in this endeavour, your assistance and enthusiasm will be greatly appreciated.

Where: Follow the GFNC signs on Great Circle Drive to Rockwell Rd. The gate will be unlocked, please close after entering. Proceed to the 'T' intersection and phone Rob if you require a ride to the Saddle car park. **Do not** attempt this section in a conventional car.

Bring: Gloves, eye protection, sturdy footwear, long trousers, all-weather clothing, morning tea & lunch, sun protection & water. (Some gloves and protective glasses are available if you do not have your own.)

Contact: Beforehand—Deborah Evans (03)5243 8687 or Rob (03)5241 1951, after hours.
On the day—Rob Beardsley 0418 534 075 or Claire Greenwell 0408 108 992 to arrange transport for the last section to the Saddle.

GFNC Excursion

There will be no regular Sunday excursion this month, as May is packed with other exciting events. As well as the SEANA campout in Marysville which some of you will have already been to, we have OBP surveying and of course boneseed pulling, as well as the normal cadets, fauna surveying and Mid-week Bird Group outing—something for everybody!

Mailing roster
May: Chrissy Freestone
June: Joan & Tibor Korn

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General Meeting Minutes	Vacant		
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Cadets	Jeff Dagg	0419 551 847	gfncadets@gmail.com

Coming events

MAY 2014

2-5 SEANA campout Marysville
6 General Meeting: Craig Morley—Wildlife of Madagascar
8-11 Fauna survey
15 Bird Group: The future of the Moolap Saltworks
17-18 Orange-bellied Parrot Survey—Craig Morley
No excursion because of other activities
21 Cadets: Meeting
22 Mid-week Bird Group Excursion
24 Boneseed pull—You Yangs

JUNE 2014

3 General Meeting: Lindy Lumsden—Bats: fascinating creatures of the night
5-8 Fauna survey
10 Plant Group: Wider Geelong Flora Lecture: Neil Macumber—West Australian Wildflowers
15 Excursion: Fungi survey Geoff Lay/FNCV
18 Cadets: Meeting
19 Bird Group: Meeting
26 Mid-week Bird Group excursion

The closing date for the next magazine will be Monday evening 26 May 2014.

Early lodgement of articles (small & large) would be a great help—late copy may not be accepted.
Photographs—digital as .jpg and slides or prints for scanning—
to the Editor Lorraine Phelan: lphelan@bigpond.com.au

GFNC meetings are held at Geelong Botanic Gardens Friends Room, and start at 8.00 p.m.

Entrance is at the intersection of Holt Rd and Eastern Park Circuit in Eastern Park.
[*Melway* 452 G4]

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