



The Whistler

Newsletter of the Ringwood Field Naturalists Club Inc.

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Issue No. 51 – April 2021

Reg. No. A9601
ABN 29 099 297 169

ISSN 2207-4333
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From the Editor's home office

So here we are, we've made it to 2021.

Our last edition of the Whistler was April 2020 - we had just held our March meeting and a few members headed to the Bellarine Peninsula for a weekend away. We were about to put all Club activities on hold while this new COVID thing got sorted out.

Fast forward 12 months and we are only now just getting the Club back up and running, with a few outdoor meetings and excursions being run this year - the February excursion cancelled due to a snap lockdown. We're holding our April meeting at Federation Estate, which is a big step forward. Fingers crossed.

No-one could have ever envisioned a year like 2020 and the "new normal" - lockdowns, outbreaks, quarantines, travel restrictions, curfews, and compulsory face masks. Least of all the toilet paper shortages! For myself and other member's family members, working from home has become the new daily rhythm - I haven't set foot in a corporate office since March last year (not that I miss sitting on a train for 2 hours a day).

On a sombre note, the Club was deeply saddened by the loss of two members, Lynn's mum Pam, a 20-year member, and Ray's beautiful wife Cathie.

The Club will soldier on, steadily heading back towards normal operations, all within the regulations of the COVIDSafe environment.

Jack Airey
Editor



We all know that the best birds are often seen in the carpark of an excursion location. But did you know that sometimes you don't even have to get out of the car? This Scarlet Robin was admiring himself in my car mirror at the Gurdies recently.

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"... to further the study of Natural History in all its branches"

President's Report – 2019-2020

Well, the year started with lots of promise. We had some great speakers and wonderful excursions. Unfortunately, this came to an abrupt halt after our March General Meeting with the lockdown imposed by the COVID. Not only did this curtail our attendance at General Meetings but also shut down our weekend get-togethers, whether a half day or full day excursion or a weekend away.

Our Committee took a while, but we finally moved with the times, later in the year, and started to meet again by Zoom. From here we just kept ticking it over. The Committee was especially concerned that, as a Club, we had been very restricted in providing members with the opportunity to get value for their last year's subscription. As such it was agreed that we should set the fee for the year at \$15, with the option of a donation to the Club of up to another \$15 for those who wished to do this. It now remains to ratify this at the AGM. Thanks to all on the Committee for their efforts and contributions during the year.

On a positive note, we were still able to share our observations and photographs with one another through our monthly bulletins. Unfortunately, this was only available to those with email. As restrictions eased, reports and photographs came, not from backyards and nearby reserves but, from further afield. Thanks to all who contributed to this bulletin.

On a sad note, we lost current and past members - Life Member Christine Gray in January 2020, Lynn's mother Pam Faragher, who was active with the Club for 20 years, and 15-year member Cathie Wall in November 2020.

Thanks also to all the members as well for their patience with our inability to gather either indoors or outdoors. Although we don't know when the restrictions will ease sufficiently to allow us to resume our normal routine, we will try to set up normal weekend excursions.

Peter F Rogers
President



Member News

Vale – Cathie Wall

Members were saddened to hear of the passing of one of our favourite members, Cathie Wall. Cathie had many months of ill health and never gave up fighting her illness and enduring treatment after treatment, hoping to get through it all. This was not to be, and she passed away at home with Ray at her side in November.

Cathie had been a member since 2004, joining her husband Ray who had joined a few years earlier. Cathie was a friendly person who had time for everyone. She would make sure she spoke to many members at each meeting or excursion. A very caring person, she would 'hang back' to make sure everyone was doing ok on walks, chatting along the way.

When she joined the group, Cathie said she knew very little about natural history, but she gradually picked up lots of information and loved using her camera to record what she discovered.



Her loss is felt deeply by all who knew her. I feel privileged to have known Cathie and will miss the times we have shared together. We send our love to Ray and family, and to her special friends, who are missing her deeply.

By Alison Rogers

Vale - Pam Faragher

Pam joined the RFNC in 1995/96 and was a regular member until 2015/16 when ill health prevented her from attending meetings. She will be sadly missed.

A note from Pam's daughter Lynn Smith.

My mother, Pam Faragher always enjoyed the RFNC and spent many a happy time at the excursions and meeting nights. Mum always took notes at the meetings and was keen to extend her knowledge. She was especially thrilled that there was another mother/daughter team.



Pam Faragher, Dorothy Elder, Moira Minty (l-r)

Mum talked me into joining the RFNC as the group was very friendly and welcoming to all. How very true! Mum was particularly fond of botany and geology. She loved discussing the plant names with many members including Marion, Alison and Peter. She was great friends with Moira Minty, Dorothy Mahler and Noel Schleiger, as well as Cecily and Reg Falkingham.

Mum also enjoyed the SEANA weekends away and meeting all the Field Naturalist members from other clubs. She made many friends and enjoyed seeing them twice a year at SEANA and catching up with all the news.

By Lynn Smith



Out and About

Baluk Willam Nature Conservation Reserve

Saturday 16th January 2021

Leader: Jack Airey



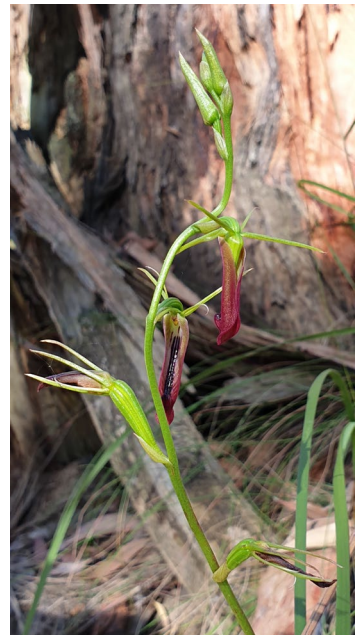
Rosy Hyacinth Orchid

After our COVID-enforced Club shutdown for most of last year, it was great to be able to get together with members for an outdoor meeting in January. We followed this with an excursion to the Baluk Willam NCR the following weekend.

We had visited Baluk Willam in January 2019 and followed a similar plan for this excursion, meeting at the Belgrave Heights tennis club to carpool down to the reserve. The weather was not very inspiring at all with heavy rain early in the morning - even while driving to the meeting location - but the day turned out very pleasant for the 15 members who attended.

We walked the carpark loop track first and found the usual orchids – a couple of Rosy Hyacinths (*Dipodium roseum*) and several patches of Small Tongue Orchid leaves (*Cryptostylis leptochila*), with a few plants flowering.

We then moved the cars up Courtney’s Road and walked the northern loop track. Here we saw more Small Tongue Orchids (*Cryptostylis leptochila*) and found several Large Tongue Orchids (*Cryptostylis subulata*). Seeing both species of *Cryptostylis* near each other is very beneficial for members to be able to compare them and see the differences.



Large Tongue Orchid

Completing the loop walk, we found a couple of Onion Orchids (*Microtis* sp.) in the same spot we found them last time. Members were getting hungry, so we headed back up to the tennis club for lunch, which concluded the morning’s activities. Everyone agreed that it was wonderful to be able to have excursions again, enjoying the bush and each other’s company.

By Jack Airey

Members enjoying Baluk Willam’s bushland

Orchids

- Small Tongue Orchid *Cryptostylis leptochila*
- Large Tongue Orchid *Cryptostylis subulata*
- Rosy Hyacinth Orchid *Dipodium roseum*
- Onion Orchids *Microtis* species

Butterflies & moths

- Common Brown *Heteronympha merope*
- Ringed Xenica *Geitoneura acantha*
- Marbled Xenica *Geitoneura klugii*
- Triangle Moth





"... to further the study of Natural History in all its branches"

Point Cook Coastal Park

Saturday 13th March 2021

Leaders: Hazel & Alan Veevers

Despite a wet and windy weather forecast 14 members met at the Beach Picnic Carpark where they were greeted by warm weather and a pleasing number of small bushbirds such as Superb Fairy Wrens and Willie Wagtails. A Whistling Kite was heard calling before the members drove off towards the Homestead Area. En-route the convoy paused to watch a Black-shouldered Kite hovering over a nearby paddock. There was also a short stop at a wetland alongside a housing estate. Here several species of waterbirds as well as dragonflies were seen. A charm of European Goldfinches flitting around in a nearby tree provided a colourful sight.

After parking at Cheetham Wetlands Carpark members walked down the main drive towards the old homestead. A Brown Falcon was identified in the distance perched at the top of a huge old pine tree and shortly afterwards an Australian Hobby was seen, also perched on the very top of a tree. On reaching the shore, where it was low tide, many birds were congregated, some feeding in the shallows and others reclining on rocks waiting for the tide to turn. Those feeding included Pied Oystercatchers and White-faced Herons. Crested Terns and both Pied and Little Pied Cormorants were perched on the rocks. A flight of Pelicans was much admired as they flew majestically overhead. Members then walked along the shore towards Point Cook, observing a variety of shells and other interesting items washed up from the marine sanctuary. Many more birds were seen resting on the rocks at the Point before members cut back inland to the cars before returning to the Beach Picnic Area for lunch.



A. Pelican, Crested Tern, Pied & Little Pied Cormorant



Pied Oystercatcher

Checking the weather forecast on mobile phones it was discovered that the rain was not far away, so a quick visit was made to the small, new, wetlands near the RAAF Lake Carpark. It was noted that not a single bird could be seen on the huge salty lake and it was thought that it might now be too salty to support marine life. However, the new wetlands provided good habitat for several bird species including Australian Reed-Warblers, Little Grassbirds and a family of Australasian Grebes. After a brief vote of

thanks members returned to their cars, just as the first drops of rain began to fall, thankful that they did not need the change of clothing that many of them had brought. A total of 39 bird species was recorded on a most enjoyable day.

By Hazel & Alan Veevers
(Photos by Eleanor Dilley)

Australian Pelican





Member's News & Articles

Knox City Council Australia Day Awards

Citizen of the Year - Christine Ellis

Congratulations to our member Chris Ellis, for becoming Knox City Council's Citizen of the Year 2021. Chris was nominated by the Lion's Club where she has been a member for 22 years.

Congratulations Chris for a well-deserved award recognising all the efforts you have made and continue to make in the Knox area.

By Alison Rogers

The Council's citation:

Christine Ellis (Chris) was nominated by Geraint Gardner from the Lions Club Branch of Knox for her commitment and service to the local community.

Chris has been an active member of the Lions Club of Wantirna and now the Lions Club Branch of Knox for over 22 years.

During this time, Chris has been the local 'mints' lady, servicing many shop owners with fundraising mints. She has also been involved with making hundreds of laundry bags and care packages for serving members overseas, organised care packages for women who have had to leave their homes due to family violence, and in recent times, Chris has made and sold more than 600 face masks, raising \$3000 for the Lions Club.

Chris' commitment to the Knox community is multifaceted. She has been involved in presenting awards to students from local schools, cooking sausages at numerous fundraising sausage sizzles and assisting with lawn and garden maintenance for her neighbours. Chris is also well known for her annual Christmas lights display and for selling Lions Christmas cakes from her front yard.

It is this commitment that resulted in Chris being awarded the Melvin Jones Award; the Lions Club's top award for work within the community.

Geraint concluded his nomination by stating that one of Chris' weaknesses is her inability to say "no" and her desire to always put the needs of others first. It is this devotion to the community that makes Chris a worthy recipient of the Citizen of the Year Award 2021.





". . . to further the study of Natural History in all its branches"

Phillip Island in January

Like most people who frequent Phillip Island, I find it a Naturalist's paradise.

The bird list slowly grew on a recent holiday down there with the family. We travelled to all the places where birds are likely to be in numbers:

- the circuit drive around from the Penguin parade area, going in a loop around the coast, stopping at all the small bird-viewing ramps on the way,
- Swan Lake is always worth a visit including the bush birds on the walk into the lake area yielding twenty-four birds. We saw the Musk Duck elevating its fan-shaped tail feathers and slapping the water, perhaps practising for the breeding season, the throat pouch on the male bird clearly visible. Two Wedgetail Eagles flew over the walkway setting many of the birds into a frenzied flight,
- Oswin Roberts Reserve, a lovely walk with plenty of birds,
- Shearwater Estate is a must for any bird watcher. A long board walk surrounds the lakes and if done in the early morning can be very rewarding. We are always surprised at how quiet it is despite the nearby housing estate,
- Red Rocks beach is worth visiting with the possibility of seeing Hooded Plovers.

But the highlight of my day was two beautifully-patterned spiders!

The first one was *Austracantha (Gastercantha) minax* (the Spiny or Jewel Spider) often found in coastal areas and woodlands. They can vary in coloration depending on the area that they are found. The other was the very common Garden Orb-weaving Spider (*Eriophora biapicata*). The pattern on the upper surface of the abdomen is like a beautiful aboriginal painting making it well camouflaged in the foliage. Male and female are similar.

Garden Orb-weaving Spider



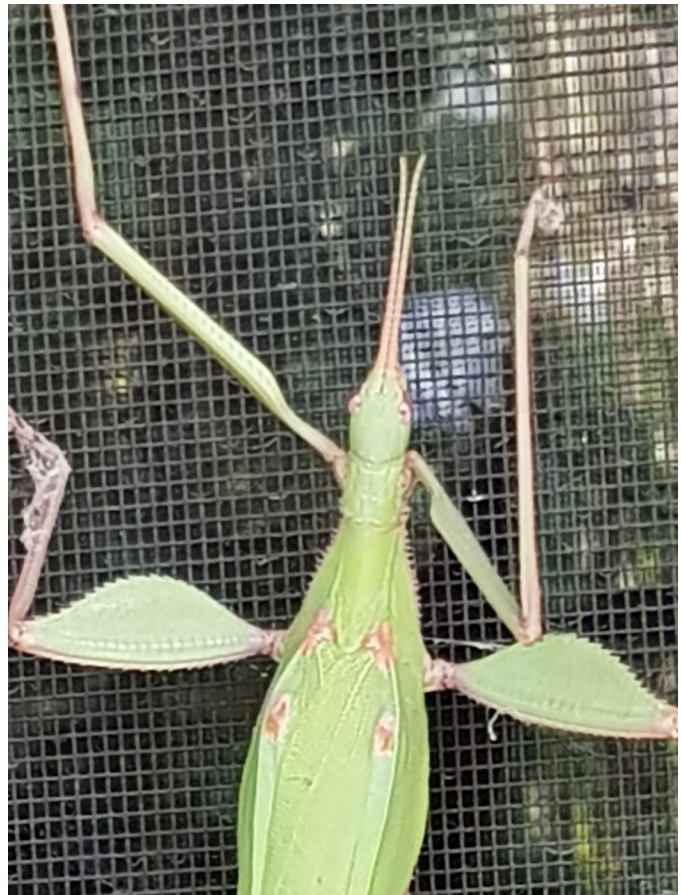
Any bird watching excursions can yield interesting, insects, spiders, reptiles etc and a two-hour walk can easily extend into four hours or more - my family no longer take me seriously when I say I will be back in two hours!

By Cecily Falkingham

The Children's Stick Insect

During a visit to Yarrowonga in February, this Children's Stick Insect (*Tropidoderus childrenii*) landed on the flyscreen next to the window I was sitting at one evening. It gave me quite a fright. It stayed there overnight and disappeared later the next morning. There were Superb Fairy Wrens flitting around in the morning and I wasn't sure if they attacked the Stick Insect or if it flew away. These insects are generally popular as pets, but it may have been a local as it was still within its distribution zone which includes Victoria.

By Nicky Zanen





Appendix

Baluk Willam Nature Conservation Reserve bird list – 17 species

Compiled by Jack Airey

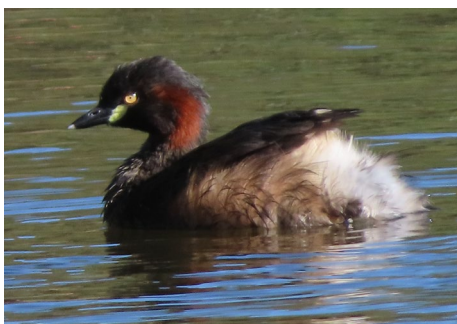
Australian Wood Duck	Superb Fairy-wren	Grey Shrike-thrush
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Fantail
Rainbow Lorikeet	Red Wattlebird	Pied Currawong
Eastern Rosella	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Australian Magpie
Laughing Kookaburra	Eastern Yellow Robin	Grey Butcherbird
White-throated Treecreeper	Golden Whistler	

Point Cook Coastal Reserve bird list – 39 species

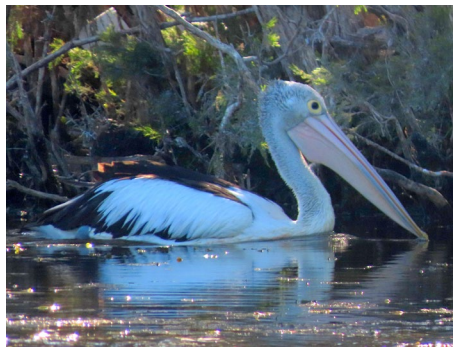
Compiled by Hazel & Alan Veevers

Black Swan	Crested Tern	White-plumed Honeyeater
Pacific Black Duck	Australian Pelican	Yellow Thornbill
Grey Teal	White-faced Heron	Brown Thornbill
Chestnut Teal	Australian White Ibis	Australian Magpie
Hoary-headed Grebe	Little Pied Cormorant	Willie Wagtail
Australasian Grebe	Pied Cormorant	Little Raven
Rock Dove	Black-shouldered Kite	Magpie Lark
Spotted Dove	Whistling Kite	House Sparrow
Crested Pigeon	Australian Hobby	European Goldfinch
Purple Swamphen	Brown Falcon	Little Grassbird
Dusky Moorhen	New Holland Honeyeater	Australian Reedwarbler
Australian Pied Oystercatcher	Superb Fairy-wren	Welcome Swallow
Silver Gull	Red Wattlebird	Common Starling (I)

A trio of Aussie birds taken at the March outdoor meeting at Jells Park by Judith Cooke.



Australasian Grebe



Australian Pelican



Australasian Darter