



The Whistler

Newsletter of the Ringwood Field Naturalists Club Inc.

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From the Editor's desk

Looking back at some previous editions of the Whistler, I noticed in April 2017 we had just come through a summer with no days above 40° - a feat that we've just achieved again as we see off another "classic" La Niña summer – high rainfall in December, high humidity levels, and high overnight temperatures. All very hot and sticky! Spare a thought for NSW and QLD though, for while we've been uncomfortable, they've suffered through torrential rains and devastating floods.

The brighter news is that this COVID-19 thing seems to be letting us get back to normal. Or at least the "new normal" – social distancing, no hugs or handshakes, RATs and PCRs all-round, and moving from knowing of someone who's *had* COVID, to keeping track of friends and family who've had it for the xth time. A lot of (working) people still haven't returned to offices, and for many, that seems like a thing of the past. Good riddance I say – I much prefer my sleep in and 30 second commute.

As the Club returns to our normal programming, we've run excursions so far this year and our meetings are back at Federation Estate. It will take some time to organise external speakers to visit us again, but in the meantime, our members have risen to the occasion and provided the Club with excellent talks. Many thanks to our members giving talks.

Jack Airey
Editor



You could easily get lost in the reeds around the lagoons at Coolart, especially when you're distracted by so many birds! Here are some of our members on the February excursion, gathered on one of the viewing platforms.

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

Out and About

Corinella Cemetery and Foreshore

Saturday 13th November 2021

Leaders: Hazel & Alan Veevers

Despite a wet weather forecast, 21 members braved the conditions to attend the first club excursion for 6 months. Covid lockdowns had caused the cancelation of outings during that period. We assembled outside the ancient Corinella Cemetery, known for its spring wildflowers and for the bush-walk through its preserved natural areas. At the top of a nearby tree, a Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo posed for photographs whilst, in the distance, the calls of a Fan-tailed Cuckoo and a Grey Butcherbird could be heard. Inside the cemetery there were still plenty of flowers in bloom, despite heavy rain on the previous two days. Members were still able to appreciate what a botanical gem the place is. Unfortunately, the threatened rain began to fall as members walked beside the gravestones observing many weather-beaten floral specimens. A walk was taken through the adjacent bushland where the ancient trees were much admired. On leaving the woodland walk the rain eased, and there was great excitement when a White-bellied Sea-Eagle flew overhead.



Striated Pardalote (ED)



Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo (RN)

CORINELLA CEMETERY

A Resting Place of Tranquility and Peace surrounded by Natural Bush and Wildflowers

History

The first site for Corinella Cemetery was noted "to be temporarily reserved from sale" by the Governor in Council on 17th May 1872.

Tombstones were formally appointed on the 15th April 1878, with their first meeting held on 21st May 1878.

Rules and Regulations of the Corinella Cemetery were submitted by the Lands and Survey Office and approved by the Government in Council on 20th May 1878.

The first Burials were: John De Cornett (Chairman), Henry Hamber (Secretary), George Clinch, Henry H. Bergmeier and Patrick Quinlan.

Remnant Vegetation

The cemetery contains valuable remnants of diverse local native plants. Many species of wildflower and native grass species of the Corinella Cemetery and all three some areas may appear changed. Mutual concern is required to allow all species the opportunity to flower and set seed as part of their natural cycle.

Management

The Trust is very conscious of its responsibility to protect and nurture the threatened wildflower and native grass species of the Corinella Cemetery and all three some areas may appear changed. Mutual concern is required to allow all species the opportunity to flower and set seed as part of their natural cycle.

Over-cultivation and mowing increases the introduction of weeds and threatens the existence of these wonderful wildflowers.

All these plants shown on the board grow here:

1. Pale Cuckoo (Crocodylus pallidus) - Cuckoo is common and the first to appear on landscape and is the first to appear in the area.
2. Mistletoe (Banksia lanuginosa) - The first to appear in the area.
3. Titled Blue Lily (Thalictrum lanuginosum) - This plant is very rare and is the first to appear in the area.
4. Native Iris (Phacelia lanuginosa) - This plant is very rare and is the first to appear in the area.
5. Blue Spotted (Chamaecrista lanuginosa) - This is a tough, drought-tolerant plant, growing in open, sunny, rocky soil, only to flower in the autumn.
6. Guinea Flower (Chamaecrista lanuginosa) - This is a tough, drought-tolerant plant, growing in open, sunny, rocky soil, only to flower in the autumn.
7. Hooded Green (Chamaecrista lanuginosa) - This is a tough, drought-tolerant plant, growing in open, sunny, rocky soil, only to flower in the autumn.
8. Tiger Plant (Chamaecrista lanuginosa) - This plant is very rare and is the first to appear in the area.
9. Common Heath (Chamaecrista lanuginosa) - This plant is very rare and is the first to appear in the area.

LOCATION UNKNOWN

LOCATION KNOWN

Cemetery Safety: Beware of Snakes, Bats and Wasps.

White Stinging Grass Be Resistant!

White Stinging Grass is a very common and aggressive weed in the cemetery. It is a very tough, drought-tolerant plant, growing in open, sunny, rocky soil, only to flower in the autumn.



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

We then drove in convoy into the township and parked by the rotunda overlooking the foreshore. After lunch a spotting scope was set up on the jetty and, as it was low tide, a variety of waterbirds could be seen. These included a Royal Spoonbill, Great Egrets, Australian Pelicans, Black Swans and numerous Pied Oystercatchers.



Sooty Oystercatcher (ED)

Rain again threatened as we drove up to Settlement Point to take the short walk on the headland. Those who did it were rewarded with spectacular views over Westernport Bay from two well-placed lookouts.



Pacific Gull (ED)

Surprisingly, many members had never visited Corinella or its cemetery before. Everyone agreed it would be well worth a return visit, probably earlier in Spring and, hopefully, with better weather!

By Hazel & Alan Veevers
(Additional photos Eleanor Dilley and Roger Needham)



Corinella Headland



Little Pied Cormorant (ED)



Lake Mountain

Saturday 15th January 2022

Leaders: Eeva & David Hewitt

Despite an unpromising weather forecast of a 70% chance of rain, 20 members gathered in the Lake Mountain car park at 10:30am. We were slightly disappointed when the early sun was obscured by low cloud, but we set off on the trek to the Camp via Echo Flat and Helicopter Flat. It took us well over 15 minutes to negotiate the first 100 meters because of the explanatory garden planted near the main resort building.

Since our last Club visit – in 2016 by my reckoning – there has been a massive regrowth of understory plants and trees. Many of the Alpine Ash seedlings are now well over 5 meters high and the Snow Gum thickets are practically impassable. In some areas where we saw Mountain Hickory Wattle seedlings there are now well-established trees. The distant views are, however, still dominated by dead Mountain Ash.



The wild-flowers along the Echo Flat Trail were most impressive with dramatic displays of Cascading Everlasting (*Ozothamnus secundiflorus*), Dusty Daisybush (*Olearea phlogopappa*), Trigger plants (*Stylidium armeria*), a number of different peas, Alpine Mint-bush (*Prostanthera cuneata*) and many others. Further up the path we saw the Kerosene Bush (*Ozothamnus cupressoides*), and then at Helicopter Flat a number of Mauve Leek Orchids (*Prasophyllum alpestre*) and Slender Snow Daisies (*Celmisia pugioniformis*). Along the path edges there were significant areas of the ground-covering Creeping Fan Flower (*Scaevola hookeria*) and the Delicate Bush Pea (*Pultenea tenella*). A special find was a small patch of Sky Lilies (*Herpolirion novae-zelandiae*). Everywhere we were entertained by masses of small orange moths (*Chrysolarentia stereozona*).



Ozothamnus secundiflorus



Olearea phlogopappa



Stylidium armeria



Chrysolarentia stereozona



Podolobium aslpestre

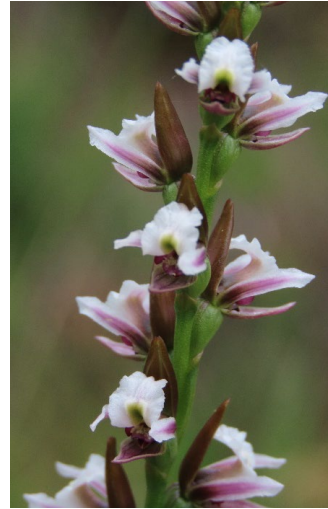


"... to further the study of Natural History in all its branches"

Along the way we had several glimpses of Flame Robins, as well as many Crimson Rosellas and a few Silvereyes.



Pterostylis montecola



Prasophyllum alpestre

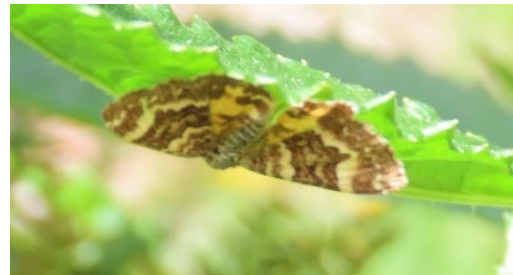
It was after 1:30 by the time we got back to the Car Park for lunch. We decided that it might be too challenging to tackle the Summit climb, so instead did the much shorter Leadbeaters Walk where we were lucky to find some of the last-flowering Balm Mint-bush (*Prostanthera melissifolia*). We also saw a Gang Gang Cockatoo and had a good look at a Macleay's Swallowtail Butterfly as well as a slightly different orange moth (*Chrysolarentia polycarpa*). We then finished the day at the Boardwalk where we were excited to find a significant number of Large Mountain Greenhoods (*Pterostylis montecola*)

Note: The plant names are all taken from The Lake Mountain Field Guide 2019.

By David Hewitt



Herpolirion novae-zelandiae



Chrysolarentia polycarpa



Prostanthera melissifolia



Veronica derwentiana - Derwent Speedwell

Insects seen on the Lake Mountain excursion – photos by Carol Page



Leioproctus launcestonensis



Clitemnestra



Sapromyza



Tabanidae



Pseudopantillius australis



Chauliognathus sydneyanus



Eristalis tenax



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

Coolart Wetlands

Sunday 13th February 2022

Leader: Jack Airey

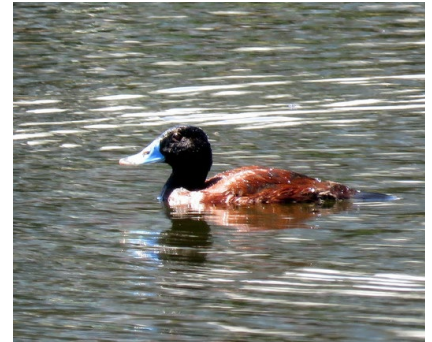
On a balmy February morning, 24 members and 1 guest gathered in the car park at the Coolart Wetlands and Homestead in Somers. Heading around the side of the homestead and into the wetlands, our first stop was at the double storey bird hide overlooking the Luxton Lagoon. The water level was excellent, providing good vantage points to see some of the residents, including Blue-billed Ducks, Musk Ducks, Hoary-headed Grebes and Black-fronted Dotterels, among other more common wetland species.



Black-fronted Dotterel



Hoary-headed Grebe



Blue-billed Duck

Leaving the bird hide behind, we headed towards the walking track around the other lagoons, which also had good water in them. In the grassland on the way to the main lagoon, we saw large numbers of European Goldfinch, which perched on the wire fences before flying across the paddocks in large groups – it was quite the spectacle. The main lagoons are quite overgrown with rushes, so spotting waterbirds can be challenging. We didn't have any problems however, spotting a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles and Brown Goshawks, with all 4 raptors soaring high above us at the same time.



Brown Goshawk



Little Wattlebird

Passing around the lagoons and across Merricks Creek, we headed onto the beach where we spotted several Red-capped Plovers, who were/had been nesting in the sand dunes, according to the signs erected on the beach. Not lingering too long, we headed back into the bush along the Woodland Walk, where we saw good numbers of woodland birds including Little and Red Wattlebirds, Spotted Pardalotes and Tree Martins. We then had lunch in the Homestead grounds under the big shady trees.

After lunch, we had a short drive to a "secret" wetland in Balnarring – Balbirooroo Community Wetlands – not many members had been here or even knew it existed, yet it's quite a nice walk around a small (but productive) wetland. Here we saw almost as many species as we had seen at Coolart in a much shorter time, including Black Swans, Australian Shelducks and White-face Herons on the farthest lake, with Eastern Yellow Robins, Red-browed Finches and White-plumed Honeyeaters in the surrounding bushland.

After the walk we said our fair wells and members headed off. The total bird tally for the day was 54 species.

By Jack Airey



Member's Articles

RFNC AGM at Jumping Creek, 10th November 2021

As a pair of Kookaburras fed their noisy brood in a nearby eucalypt hollow, members of RFNC met for a picnic tea together beside the shelter at Jumping Creek Reserve, emerging from the longest lockdown to attend the delayed AGM last November, with a newly elected Committee, fresh ideas and a cautious hope for a brighter future.

By Judith Cooke



The Kindness of Strangers

Jack and I had an exchange of email messages recently citing the person who most influenced us on our field naturalist journey. Cecily Falkingham.

I remember Cecily giving me a lift to Coolart on my first Bird Observers Club of Australia outing in the early 1980s. Graham Pizey was the ranger at Coolart and had just published his Field Guide to the Birds of Australia. I have never forgotten how I appreciated Cecily's kindness. The bird that impressed me that day was a Darter, with its vicious beak but different to a Cormorant.

I was thrilled to re-discover Cecily some 40 years later when I first came to a RNFC meeting.

Jack's memories are as follows:

Before I joined the club I went on a "bird walk" in the Mullum Mullum Valley led by a notable local birdwatcher – Cecily Falkingham. It was the first ever group walk I attended and didn't know very much about birds, but I do remember two things – how lovely and helpful Cecily was and seeing a big flock of Red-browed Finches. A couple of weeks later I turned up at my first RFNC meeting and who did I sit next to – none other than a notable local birdwatcher – Cecily Falkingham!

Thank you so much Cecily.

By Nicky Zanen

Geology of Corinella

The Corinella Older Volcanic Province, in currently adopted nomenclature (previously known as the Older Volcanics), is contiguous and contemporaneous with the Flinders Older Volcanic Province.

Along the shoreline around Settlement Point are traces everywhere of the area's distant past, lying within the dynamic and ever-changing margin between land and sea. Before the earliest days of human habitation, around 50 million years ago - the Oligocene Epoch of the Tertiary (Palaeogene) Period - molten rock welled up from within the Earth's crust to form the extensive shore platforms and coastal cliffs visible today. The presence of numerous small cavities or vesicles in boulders and cobbles of basalt is evidence of bubbles of gas trapped in the rock as the fluid lava solidified.



Even as the rocks cooled and were exposed to the atmosphere, they were subjected to the ongoing influence of surface processes, wind, water and temperature changes, causing weathering and decomposition of the rock to more stable components. These processes have produced examples of onion-skin or spheroidal weathering patterns, iron-rich buckshot gravel, soil profiles developed on upper surfaces of lava flows, and chemical alteration to basaltic clay.

On the south side of the point, the spectacular cliffs formed by successive lava flows are composed almost entirely of deeply weathered basaltic clay rising to a height of 15 metres, some of the highest in the region. A narrow strip of modern, unconsolidated, sandy beach deposits lies along their foot. This is recognised as a site of State significance for studying and interpreting the history of Holocene sea levels.

In the Northern Precinct, the contact between the lava and the overlying coarsely current-bedded sediments of the Baxter Formation outcrops as a monoclinical ridge and the lithology and structure of this feature controls the alignment of the coastline.

By Judith Cooke

Finding *Ctenopteris*

Since becoming interested in ferns, I have mainly concentrated on trying to find the 42 or so local fern species that can be found on Mt Dandenong and the nearby ranges. By the time of the Club's fern excursion to Mt Dandenong in August 2019, I had reduced my "must find fern list" from 42, down to eight. At the top of this shortened list was *Ctenopteris heterophylla*, commonly known as Gypsy Fern. It was the only species of *Ctenopteris* listed for Victoria. According to my copy of Flora of Melbourne, this small but interesting fern could be found growing on moss covered trees in wet sclerophyll forest. Information was also given that Gypsy Fern was restricted in Greater Melbourne to a somewhat ill-defined area that included Sherbrooke Forest.

As all of my attempts to find Gypsy Fern had come to nothing, I suspected that it was probably an uncommon and rarely seen fern. Discouraged, I had more or less given up on finding Gypsy Fern, when luck unexpectedly came my way.

The July 2020 announcement that the second Covid-19 lockdown was to be implemented with a 5km travel restriction, prompted me to make good use of my last day of unrestricted travel. I decided to drive up to Sherbrooke Forest and go for a walk down to Sherbrooke Falls and Adele Gully. Arriving at O' Donohue picnic ground, I quickly realised that many Melburnians had had the same idea as me. Much of the Hillclimb track from the falls down to Adele Gully had been trodden into a muddy quagmire. Under these conditions, I struggled to stay on my feet, and progress down the track was slow.



Hillclimb track between Sherbrooke Falls and Adele Gully

Not far from the falls, I noticed a mature Blanket Leaf Tree growing next to the track. Mountain Helmet Orchids were growing in moss that covered much of the tree trunk, so I decided to stop and check if any of the orchids had flower spikes. However, the orchids were forgotten when I noticed some small epiphytic ferns that were also growing on the tree trunk at about eye level. Sensing that I might have found Gypsy Fern, I checked the soral arrangement of a fertile frond against a drawing in my fern book. It was Gypsy Fern, and on subsequent visits, I have found it growing on a couple of other Blanket Leaf Trees, but out of reach for examination purposes.



Gypsy ferns growing on the trunk of a Blanket Leaf Tree



A fertile frond of Gypsy fern, showing the soral arrangement



So I had found a *Ctenopteris* - or had I?

Further research for this article revealed that *Ctenopteris heterophylla* is now *Notogrammitis heterophylla*. For the record, there are seven species of *Notogrammitis* in Australia, with four species in Victoria. Of the four Victorian species, the most often encountered is Common Finger Fern. The botanical name for this fern has changed from *Grammitis billardieri* to *Notogrammitis billardieri*. Outside of Victoria, Gypsy Fern can be found in Tasmania and New Zealand. A Vicflora map shows Gypsy Fern as being concentrated in several areas across Southern Victoria, from the Otways to Far East Gippsland.

By Graham Thomas

References:

- Flora of Melbourne, S.G.A.P. Maroondah Inc 1991
- Australian Ferns and Fern Allies, Jones / Clemesha 1976
- Vicflora Website

A walk at Churchill National Park

A visit to Churchill National Park on the 31st of January 2022 brought back many happy memories. In the 1980s when my children were at kinder, I used to visit the park regularly. Over 40 years it has changed but also stayed the same. It still carries a high weed load, especially the increase of heath along the man tracks.



The vegetation has increased substantially – the powerlines were probably newly erected around that time, and now the understory has recovered and grown dense.

I remember seeing a White Goshawk on the powerlines one of my visits, and on another occasion a Mistletoebird. There was always a good variety of birds. On an outing with a keen eyed birdo we saw a Tawny Frogmouth right there in the carpark. I've never been able to find them there again.



Silvereye dinner

During this visit in 2022 I saw Magpies, Red Browed Finches, Grey Shrike Thrush and a group of hungry Silvereyes having a feast on ripening blackberries. In the distance I could hear an Olive Backed Oriole.

The weeds are still of concern. I thought I could see boneseed on the other side of the canal; just a couple of plants but when you see the disaster which has occurred in the You Yangs, these need to be gotten rid of urgently. Only thing was, I couldn't get to them. Further on I saw *Billardiera heterophylla* which used to be known as *Sollya heterophylla*.

Thank goodness it had gotten cooler because I was still feeling the effects of the heat and just wanted to sleep all day. This walk, of only half an hour, was totally invigorating.



Solanum prinophyllum

By Nicky Zanen



Appendix

Corinella Cemetery and Foreshore bird list – 44 species

Compiled by Hazel & Alan Veevers

Black Swan	Straw-necked Ibis	Noisy Miner
Australian Wood Duck	Royal Spoonbill	Spotted Pardalote
Spotted Dove	Little Pied Cormorant	Striated Pardalote
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	Little Black Cormorant	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	White-bellied Sea-Eagle	Golden Whistler
Australian Pied Oystercatcher	Laughing Kookaburra	Grey Shrike-thrush
Sooty Oystercatcher	Galah	Australian Magpie
Masked Lapwing	Crimson Rosella	Grey Fantail
Silver Gull	Eastern Rosella	Little Raven
Pacific Gull	Rainbow Lorikeet	Eastern Yellow Robin
Australian Pelican	Superb Fairy-wren	Welcome Swallow
White-necked Heron	New Holland Honeyeater	Common Starling
Great Egret	Little Wattlebird	Common Myna
White-faced Heron	Red Wattlebird	Common Blackbird
Australian White Ibis	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	

Lake Mountain bird list – 13 species

Compiled by Eeva & David Hewitt

Crimson Rosella	White-eared Honeyeater	Eastern Whipbird
Eastern Rosella	Pied Currawong	Fantailed Cuckoo
Gang-gang Cockatoo	Red Wattlebird	Superb Fairy-wren
Grey Fantail	Flame Robin	Silvereye
Spotted Pardalote		

Photos of *Thelymitra pauciflora* from the FJC Rogers Reserve, the normal form and a white specimen. (Judith Cooke)





Coolart and Balbirooro Wetlands bird list – 54 species (total)

Compiled by Jack Airey

Coolart Wetlands		
Blue-billed Duck	Black-fronted Dotterel	Eastern Spinebill
Musk Duck	Masked Lapwing	Grey Shrike-thrush
Australian Wood Duck	Silver Gull	Grey Fantail
Grey Teal	Spotted Turtle-dove	Magpie Lark
Chestnut Teal	Musk Lorikeet	Australian Magpie
Pacific Black Duck	Eastern Rosella	Little Raven
Hoary-headed Grebe	Laughing Kookaburra	European Goldfinch
Little Pied Cormorant	Superb Fairy-wren	Welcome Swallow
Australian White Ibis	Spotted Pardalote	Tree Martin
Wedge-tailed Eagle	White-browed Scrubwren	Silvereye
Brown Goshawk	Brown Thornbill	Common Myna
Dusky Moorhen	Red Wattlebird	Common Blackbird
Purple Swamphen	Little Wattlebird	
Red-capped Plover	New Holland Honeyeater	40 species
Balbirooro Wetlands		
Black Swan	Eurasian Coot	White-plumed Honeyeater
Australian Wood Duck	Black-fronted Dotterel	New Holland Honeyeater
Chestnut Teal	Masked Lapwing	Eastern Yellow Robin
Australian Shelduck	Spotted Turtle-dove	Grey Fantail
Pacific Black Duck	Rainbow Lorikeet	Willie Wagtail
Australasian Grebe	Eastern Rosella	Magpie Lark
Little Pied Cormorant	Spotted Pardalote	Australian Magpie
White-faced Heron	White-browed Scrubwren	Red-browed Finch
Australian White Ibis	Brown Thornbill	Welcome Swallow
Straw-necked Ibis	Red Wattlebird	Common Starling
Swamp Harrier	Noisy Miner	32 species