

Castlemaine Naturalist

October 2021

Vol. 46.9 #502

Monthly newsletter of the
Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.



Sticky Boronia (*Cyanothamnus
anemonifolius* subsp. *anemonifolius*)
Photo by Jenny Rolland

COMING EVENTS

Monthly meeting: Friday 8 October, 7.30pm

by Zoom (see details for joining on the back page)

Speaker: Chris Timewell (Birdlife Australia) – “State of Box-Ironbark Woodland birds”. Joint meeting with Birdlife Castlemaine District

Chris Timewell has been a keen watcher and surveyor of birds for 25 years – with his ongoing hobby expanded into a career in conservation. In 2018, he joined the Woodland Birds team at BirdLife Australia – providing him with opportunities to undertake surveys and associated activities across south-eastern Australia. In this wide-ranging presentation, he will provide his perspective on the bird life of central Victoria – their population health and trends, associated survey programs, historical perspectives, knowledge gaps, surprise sightings and speculating on the future.

Excursion: Saturday 9 October – Nardoo Hills NB ALL DAY FIELD TRIP

SUBJECT TO COVID RESTRICTIONS FOR THE DAY

For our October excursion, we will be privileged to visit the Nardoo Hills Bush Heritage Reserve with Julie Radford. As we wander the hills, we will help Julie search for rare orchids, in particular the Robust Greenhood. We will finish at 3pm.

Meet: 8.15am at the Octopus, Duke St, opposite the Castle Motel, Castlemaine OR 9.45am in the car park at Jacka Park, corner Chapel St and Calder Highway, Wedderburn (toilet block here).

Note: the track into Nardoo Hills is a little rough, but a sedan can make it.

Bring: water, snacks, **lunch** and wear stout walking shoes (we will be walking over uneven ground).

The Field Trip will be cancelled in extreme weather conditions.

September Excursion – Chewton Bushlands

Following the welcome lifting of lockdown restrictions for regional Victoria, we were pleased for the September excursion to go ahead. Chewton Bushlands Association members Antoinette Birkenbeil and Wayne Hollis had arranged to show us three different facets of the area, starting in Kennedys Lane, off Harmony Way, with Margot Ryan and Steve Charman assisting. Ten club members attended so we split into two groups to explore the first area. The land near the start of Kennedys Lane is flat, on granitic sands. A reserve south of the road is managed by Coliban Water; here the trees have remained standing for at least 100 years: tall Yellow Gums and some fine Cherry Ballart. Many fallen trees and branches, some clearly very old, offer cover for insects and small animals.



Fallen timber – excellent wildlife habitat.
Photo by Peter Turner

The area is bounded by a disused channel and a fine tunnel entrance. Walking along the track beside the channel we saw and heard many birds, including an active group of Dusky Woodswallows (see bird list below). As we wandered back towards the cars, many Yellow Stars (*Pauridia vaginata*), a few Early Nancy (*Wurmbea dioica*), Tall Sundews (*Drosera auriculata*) and large patches of Nodding Greenhoods (*Pterostylis nutans*) were flowering.

We drove up Kennedys Lane to a second parking area, to explore the more typical Chewton Bushlands - hilly country with steep slopes. We walked down the Fire Trail, which descends into a valley between steeply sloped hillsides – one looking dry, one green.

Hardenbergia violacea was prominent; we were shown early flowers on Hill Flat-pea (*Platylobium montanum*) and we found two Twining Glycine (*Glycine clandestina*) plants clinging to rock faces. Our hosts encouraged us to return in a few weeks when the Tall Daisy (*Brachyscome diversifolia*) is in flower further up the hillside, along with orchids and other plants not yet in flower.



Woodland near the old Coliban channel
Photo by Euan Moore



Hardenbergia violacea
Photo by Jenny Rolland



Hill Flat-pea (*Platylobium montanum*
subsp. *montanum*)
Photo by Euan Moore

Returning to the cars, we drove down the Fire Trail and along past Chewton Bushland properties to Margo Ryan's place to view a pilot rehabilitation project around and in her dam. The Bushlands Association received a Community Grant from Council for this and to place 80 nest boxes on many properties, to improve habitat and environmental resilience. An encouraging way to end a stimulating afternoon. Our thanks to Antoinette and her colleagues for such a well-planned demonstration of the hidden treasures of their area.

Peter Turner



Twining Glycine (*Glycine clandestina*)
Photo by Euan Moore

Chewton Bushlands Excursion Bird List (Euan Moore)

| | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Australian Magpie | Galah | Varied Sittella |
| Australian Wood Duck | Grey Currawong | Welcome Swallow |
| Black-faced Cuckooshrike | Grey Shrikethrush | White-browed Scrubwren |
| Brown Falcon | Little Raven | White-faced Heron |
| Brown Thornbill | Long-billed Corella | White-plumed Honeyeater |
| Common Bronzewing | Mistletoebird | White-throated Treecreeper |
| Crimson Rosella | Olive-backed Oriole | White-winged Chough |
| Dusky Woodswallow | Red Wattlebird | Willie Wagtail |
| Eastern Rosella | Rufous Whistler | Yellow-faced Honeyeater |
| Eastern Yellow Robin | Spotted Pardalote | Yellow-tufted Honeyeater |
| Fan-tailed Cuckoo | Sulphur-crested Cockatoo | |
| Fuscous Honeyeater | Superb Fairywren | |

Nature in the Far South; a Journey to the Antarctic

Our September speaker was CFNC member Cathrine Harboe-Ree who spoke about the trip that she and her husband Brian Cutler made to the Antarctic Peninsula with Canadian company GAdventures in October-November 2018. After a brief stop in Santiago, Chile, and a trip to the coast at Valparaiso where they saw Peruvian Pelicans, Peruvian Boobies and South American Sea-lions, they flew to Montevideo where they joined their expedition ship, a comfortable and well stabilised former Danish ferry which carried 134 passengers plus crew and expedition leaders. During times at sea between landings, the passengers were treated to excellent presentations by sea mammal and bird experts, geologists, climatologists, historians, a photographer and an artist.

The first landings of the trip were on the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas), about 500km east of the South American mainland at a latitude a bit north of Macquarie Island. These islands are naturally treeless. They are home to a number of endemic species and sub-species of birds including several geese such as the Kelp Goose and the Upland Goose, the flightless Steamer Duck and the Striated Caracara. At least three species of penguin breed on the Falkland Islands. Cathrine showed us photos of a mixed colony of Southern Rockhopper Penguins and Black-browed Albatross.

From the Falklands the ship sailed in a south-easterly direction to South Georgia Island, passing on the way, Shag Rocks. These needles of rock provide roosting and nesting for 1000s of birds including Imperial Shags.

South Georgia is a relatively large island being approx. 180km long and up to 30km wide. The highest peak is nearly 3000m. The glaciers which cover much of the island extend to sea level. From the late 19th century until whaling ended in the 1960s, there were several whaling stations on the island. The largest, Grytviken is still occupied, today as a tourist center and museum along with the nearby British Antarctic Research base at King Edward Point. South Georgia is perhaps best known for the epic crossing of the island made by Sir Ernest Shackleton and two crew members as they sought help for the crew of the *Endurance* marooned on Elephant Island. Shackleton finally reached help at Stromness Whaling Station (now in ruins), and the successful rescue of the remaining men on Elephant Island by a Chilean naval vessel occurred in the following weeks.



Grytviken, South Georgia.
Museum and oil tanks.

In recent years there has been a major pest eradication program on South Georgia. This involved the eradication of rats that occupied much of the ice-free area, mice that were present at a couple of old whaling stations and small herds of reindeer that had been introduced by Norwegian whalers. The island was declared pest free in 2018 after several years without any pest animals being recorded. The results have been spectacular. Numbers of endemic South Georgia Pintail (a small duck whose

diet is mainly seaweed and marine invertebrates) and South Georgia Pipit (the only land bird on the island) have increased and they are recolonising their former habitats. Sea birds such as albatross, petrels and shearwaters are also increasing in numbers, although the rate of increase for the large albatross is slower given their much longer breeding cycle. Whales are uncommon around South Georgia, their numbers having not yet recovered from a century of whaling.

From South Georgia, Cathrine and Brian's trip continued south to the South Orkney Islands. A visit to Base Orcados, an Argentinian research station on Laurie Island gave an insight into the conditions of modern-day researchers living and working in the Antarctic. The visitors were the first to the base since the previous summer, breaking the isolation of the long winter. A major highlight here was the sighting of a Snow Petrel colony. This pure white bird is the only species to breed inland on the Antarctic continent.



Snow Petrel

It was then on to Elephant Island where in 1916 Shackleton's crew waited for rescue at the very inhospitable Point Wild. Their camp had been on rocks beneath towering cliffs with glaciers preventing movement from the immediate area. It was too rough to undertake the difficult landing when Cathrine and Brian visited, but they did have a distant view of the somewhat incongruous brass monument out on the rocks to Captain Pardo of the Chilean Navy vessel *Yelco* who commanded the rescue mission in 1916.

From Elephant Island it was on to the Antarctic Peninsula. After the abundance of wildlife at South Georgia, the number of species in this area is more limited. There are still lots of birds, particularly Adelie, Chinstrap and Gentoo penguins with their stone nests. Seals were abundant and passengers were encouraged to photograph their distinctive belly markings and upload to a citizen science project that tracks marine mammals using their unique skin patterns. It was too early in the season to see many whales, although some humpbacks had already returned to their summer feeding grounds.



Gentoo Penguins building their stone nest



Weddell Seal showing distinctive belly markings

Furthest south was reached at Cierva Cove on the Antarctic Peninsula, after which the ship turned north. At Deception Island the ship sailed into the caldera of an active volcano. In the past there had been a whaling station within the shelter of the caldera.

At this point the trip was cut slightly short as the ship made the run across Drake Passage ahead of an approaching storm front.

Their voyage ended at Ushuaia, Argentina, from where they had a brief trip into the Tierra del Fuego National Park and saw the Gondwanaland links with Australia, including *Nothofagus* or Southern Beech Myrtle.

Thank you Cathrine and Brian for a wonderful talk about a very exciting part of the world, complemented by superb photos of its abundant wildlife.

All photos by Cathrine Harboe-Ree

Euan Moore

Wednesday Wildflower Wander, Kalimna Park – 15th September 2021

Fifteen members and one visitor attended our first WWW for 2021, including several of our new members. Peter Turner led the convoy along Kalimna Tourist Rd to the start of the walk, where we parked by the northern most golf fairway. In two separate groups, we checked for wildflowers along the eastern slope of the track, then crossed the Tourist Road to return along the western slope following the first section of the Kalimna Circuit Trail. This loop walk ends by taking a track back to the golf fairway and the cars.

Notable on the eastern slope were the many Leopard Orchids, red, apricot and yellow coloured Downy Grevillia flowers and an extensive spread of Billy Buttons. The western side featured Rough Mint-bush and where we turned up the hill towards the golf course, extensive spread of Rough Wattle.



Rough Mint-bush,
Prostanthera denticulata

Flowering Plants:

Purple Coral Pea *Hardenbergia violaceae*

Billy Buttons *Craspedia variabilis*

Tall Sundew *Drosera auriculata*

Fairy Waxflower *Philothea verrucosa*

Creamy Candles *Stackhousia monogyna*

Early Nancy *Wurmbea dioica*

Leopard Orchid *Diuris pardina*

Pink fingers *Caladenia carnea*

Waxlip Orchid *Glossodia major*

Gorse Bitter-pea *Daviesia ulicifolia*

Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea *Daviesia leptophylla*

Downy Grevillea *Grevillea alpina*

Yam Daisy *Microseris walteri*

Slender Rice-flower *Pimelea linifolia*

Rough Mint-bush *Prostanthera denticulata*

Pink Bells *Tetradthea ciliata*

Rough Wattle *Acacia aspera*

Gold-dust Wattle *A. acinacea*

Spreading Wattle *A. genistifolia*

Peter Turner

Ed. Botanical names in the newsletter are in accordance with [Flora of Victoria \(rbg.vic.gov.au\)](http://Flora of Victoria (rbg.vic.gov.au))

Wednesday Wildflower Wander, The Monk – 22nd September 2021

There was a good roll-up and the weather turned on perfect conditions for our second wildflower walk. Having split into two groups to comply with restrictions, we ambled north along the track which loops around to become the ridge track heading south towards the summit. As is the case elsewhere, most plants were scattered and not well developed. Nevertheless, we found examples of the flowering plants listed below. Three isolated specimens in flower were all found on this track near its junction with the steep shortcut back down to the carpark: Urn Heath, Beard-heath, and Hill Flat-pea. There was no sign of Spider Orchids or Bluebeard Orchids, and oddly, no flowers of Fairy Wax-flower yet, indicating that it is still early for some species.

Though the Monk is not particularly known for birds, the low afternoon sun stirred a handful into action. The highlight was a Varied Sittella which perched atop a dead tree and burst into song.

| | |
|---|---|
| Gorse Bitter-pea <i>Daviesia ulicifolia</i> | Creamy candles <i>Stackhousia monogyna</i> |
| Slender Rice-flower <i>Pimelea linifolia</i> | Downy Grevillea <i>G. alpina</i> |
| Groundsel <i>Senecio</i> sp. | Tall Sundew <i>Drosera auriculata</i> |
| Black-anther Flax-lily <i>Dianella revoluta</i> | Hill Flat-pea <i>Platylobium montanum</i> |
| Pink Bells <i>Tetralochea ciliata</i> | Urn Heath <i>Melichrus urceolatus</i> |
| Waxlip orchid <i>Glossodia major</i> | Yam Daisy <i>Microseris</i> sp |
| Pink Fingers <i>Caladenia carnea</i> | Wiry buttons <i>Leptorhynchoc tenuifolia</i> |
| Leopard orchid <i>Diuris pardina</i> | Buttercup <i>Ranunculus</i> sp. |
| Billy Buttons <i>Craspedia variabilis</i> | Hovea <i>H. linearis</i> |
| Shiny Everlasting <i>Xerochrysum viscosum</i> | Common Beard-heath <i>Leucopogon virgatus</i> |
| Grey Everlasting <i>Ozothamnus obcordatus</i> | Early Nancy <i>Wurmbea dioica</i> |

Wattles: Golden, Gold-dust and Hedge

Noel Young



Waxlip Orchid,
Glossodia major



Stackhousia
monogyna



Gorse Bitter-pea, *Daviesia ulicifolia*

Observations (Wildlife, October 1943)

George Broadway

When I started trawling through these "Wildlife" magazines from the forties I expected to find lots of specimens identified, but I was surprised to find so many specimens being sent in time after time even after being identified and described perhaps several times. So it is by now quite exciting to come across a specimen which has not already been described previously. Unfortunately I am no longer able to get out and about as I once did and my garden does not seem to provide many specimens.

There was however quite a dearth of specimens this month, perhaps readers had been out looking at the wildflowers instead of insects and birds. This is what there was, and very little that is new.

The editorial referred to "Bird Day" which was held on different dates in October in various states. The editor, Crosbie Morrison, reminded readers that it was well over 100 years since John Gould had pointed out that Australia had a larger percentage of insectivorous birds than any other country. This should suggest to the logical mind that Australia must also have a large population of insects to sustain them.

Unfortunately many of our forebears were neither logical nor astute. They destroyed the forests which were the homes of the birds; they destroyed the birds themselves, some few for food, others in the mistaken idea that the birds were doing harm, others from sheer wantonness. Then they bemoaned the effects of the pests which descended upon them without seeking the cause of the trouble.

There were reports of commercial egg collectors operating in some country districts who were even enlisting the aid of school children.

Farmers were complaining of the lack of ammunition to shoot crows, hawks and Wedge-tailed Eagles.

Spiders

Narracoorte: Egg cocoon of the Goldenweb Nephila spider with the remains of beetles, bugs and maybe an earwig. The spider is a relative of the giant web builders which our soldiers are encountering up north.

Richmond: The insect that bit your father was a Tree Cricket, *Paragryllacris*. They have very powerful jaws and are partly carnivorous but do no harm other than giving a healthy nip – they have no poison or irritant to inject. In other words they are clean fighters and don't go in for poison warfare.

Cheltenham: An immature Lacewing fly probably brought into the house with some cut flowers as aphid is its principal diet. The attack by the ants is interesting; the ants obtain food from the aphid and probably recognized the Lacewing as the enemy of the aphid.

Canterbury: The yellow "worms" that are such favourites with the Willie Wagtails are wireworms, actually not worms but the larvae of the click beetle, the slender black one that gets up from lying on its back by the simple expedient of bending suddenly in the middle and so jumping up into the air. If they land "heads" they crawl away. But if "tails" they simply try again with a 50-50 chance of getting it right. They are

voracious feeders underground destroying garden plants and lawns so the Willie Wagtails are doing a good job.

Box Hill: Green Gum-tree Grasshopper, *Caedicia olivacea*. Not uncommon but well camouflaged so is seldom seen. (I haven't seen one for years). This species with the remarkably leaf-like green wing cases is best known for its high-pitched "singing" voice in the shrubbery, and it is something of a ventriloquist making it even more difficult to find.

Ballan: The insect was a wingless solitary wasp. In the adult state they do not eat much so are able to survive a long fast such as you describe

Birds

Darraweit Guim: The bird found dead was the Horsefield Bronze Cuckoo, *Chalcites basal*. It is protected in Victoria on account of its usefulness in destroying noxious caterpillars. It usually chooses as foster-parents for its young birds which build domed nests such as wrens. Several Cuckoos have been found dead recently showing no signs of violence.

Botanical

Melbourne: The Eucalypt with the leaves forming a complete disc around the stem is *E. perriniana*, the Spinning Top Gum. The disc is formed by two opposite leaves which join together and then break away from the stem allowing them to spin in the wind. (Costermans, p. 363)

Castlemaine: (E.B. Gardiner). Horehound is not native to Victoria, or to any other part of Australia but was once apparently grown quite widely and has managed to escape to become a weed. It was grown to make Horehound Beer and was used medicinally for Catarrh.

ANGAIR Nature Show - October

The ANGAIR Nature Show will be held online again this year. During October you can enjoy a wealth of articles and activities for all, with a special focus on the many threatened habitats and species of flora and fauna in the area:

[ANGAIR Nature Show](#)



“Leaky Landscapes” Online Symposium Friday 8th October.

Check [Biolinks Alliance](#) for details of the speaker program and how to register.

Dead Horse Gully walk brochure updated

Cathrine Harboe-Ree, Convenor, CFNC Publications working group

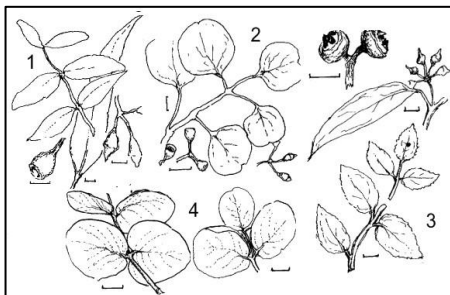
The Publications Working Group has updated the brochure called *A Walk in Dead Horse Gully, Norwood Hill*. This brochure, which was written by Ern Perkins and illustrated by David Parnaby, was last updated in 2013. Although the basic information in the brochure is still accurate, there have been a number of changes in the last eight years, and these have been incorporated into the revised edition.

The Dead Horse Gully walk is a short 650 metre loop walk in the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park. It starts and ends at the corner where Wheeler Street becomes Etty Street, in Castlemaine. It is a good introductory walk for the district, showing a wide range of trees, shrubs, flowers and other plants, as well as evidence of gold digging and its impact.

This illustration by David Parnaby, which is on the cover of the brochure, shows Yellow Gum and Red Box leaves and nuts, and Red Stringybark and Mealy Bundy leaves. These trees are all a feature of this walk.

The new brochure is now available on the CFNC website under the Info-Booklets tab:

<https://castlemainefnc.files.wordpress.com/2021/09/cfnc-dead-horse-gully-walk-sept-2021.pdf>. It will also be provided to the Castlemaine Information Centre.



Birds of Sutton Grange, September 2021 – Nigel Harland

Superb Fairywren
Red-browed Finch

Sulphur-crested

Cockatoo

Australian Magpie

Australian Raven

Laughing Kookaburra

Galah

New Holland Honeyeater

Long-billed Corella

Crimson Rosella

Striated Pardalote

Spotted Pardalote

Black-faced

Cuckooshrike

Grey Shrike-thrush

Eurasian Blackbird

Eastern Rosella

Welcome Swallow

Common Bronzewing

Red Wattlebird

Welcome Swallow

Grey Currawong

White-faced Heron

Horsfield's Bronze

Cuckoo

Fan-tailed Cuckoo

Eastern Spinebill

Yellow-tufted Honeyeater

Olive-backed Oriole

White-browed Scrubwren

House Sparrow

Seeing an Eastern Spinebill always brings a shiver to the spine!

Welcome Swallows have arrived in good numbers. Should I let them build nests around the house and clear up afterwards?

Nice to hear the Fan-tailed Cuckoo, I wonder where the eggs will be laid.

Not nice to see a House Sparrow, first for a long time.

First Olive-backed Oriole of the season.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Observations

Peter Turner



Golden Moths, *Diuris chryseopsis*
Top of CBG Fauna & Flora Reserve



Common Beard-heath, *Leucopogon virgatus*, with insect visitor. The Monk.

Cathrine Harboe-Ree

At our last monthly meeting, Cathrine alerted us to the current debate on the botanical name for our Leopard Orchid. *Diuris pardina* is now regarded as being restricted to far-east Victoria and NSW.



Diuris curvifolia ?



A *Pterostylis nutans* twin



Caladenia caerulea



Cyrtostylis reniformis

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club

COMING EVENTS

Monthly meetings will continue to be held on-line via ZOOM until further notice, commencing at 7.30pm. If you have registered for our previous webinar meetings you will be sent the link for registering with Zoom. If you have not joined before and wish to attend, please email Peter Turner at munrods1@inet.net.au

Our guest speaker will follow the usual 'observations' session when members can share recent interesting sightings with an option to show a photo or two. If you have photos to be shown please email JPEG file(s) to Euan Moore at calamanthus5@bigpond.com by Noon on the day of the meeting.

Excursions are held (subject to COVID restrictions) on the Saturday after the monthly meeting. Meet at the Octopus (opposite the motel in Duke St) for departure at 1.30pm unless otherwise advised.

Fri Oct 8 Meeting: Speaker - Chris Timewell (Birdlife Australia) "State of Box-Ironbark Woodland birds". Joint meeting with Birdlife Castlemaine District (see details on front page)

Sat Oct 9 ALL DAY Excursion: 'Nardoo Hills' with Julie Radford (rescheduled) (see details on front page)

Oct 22-25 – iNaturalist 'Great Southern Bioblitz'. Add your sightings!

Fri Nov 12 Meeting: Speaker - Phil Ingamells (VNPA) 'Fire and biodiversity'

Sat Nov 20 Excursion: 'Kalimna Park – prescribed burn impacts' with Karl Just

Fri Dec 10 Meeting: Members' night

Castlemaine Naturalist - email newsletter material to: newsletter.cfnc@gmail.com

* Deadline for the November edition: **29th October**

Club website (Webmaster: Ron Wescott) - <http://castlemainefnc.wordpress.com/>

Subscriptions for 2021 (Membership forms on CFNC website)

Ordinary membership: Single \$35, Family \$50

Pensioner or student: Single \$25, Family \$30

Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

2021 Committee

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