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General meetings

Held at 7:30 pm on the
fourth Friday of each month
at the Newborough Uniting
Church, Old Sale Road
Newborough VIC 3825



This photo of a Koala, taken by David Stickney, won the People's Choice Award in the photo competition jointly held by our Club and Sale & District Field Naturalists Club in February.

Upcoming events

May general meeting: Friday 26 May

Fungi – Sapphire McMullan-Fisher

Excursion: Saturday 27 May – Fungi excursion to Henry Littleddyke Reserve and Wuchatsch Reserve with Jenny Rejske. Meet 10am Nyora public toilets.

Botany Group: Saturday 3 June – The Gurdies with Jenny Rejske. Details TBC.

Bird Group: Tuesday 6 June – Morwell area. Meet by 9:30am at the Firmins Lane Wetlands (entry from Firmins La).

June general meeting: Friday 23 June

Woodland Birds for Biodiversity Project – Dean Ingwersen

Excursion: Saturday 24 June – College Creek, part of the Cores and Links area. Meet 10am Martin Walker Reserve, Yinnar.

Botany Group: Saturday 1 July – Toorong Falls and Vesper, with Andrew Green. Details TBC.

Bird Group: Tuesday 4 July – Heyfield Wetlands. Meet at the hall near the wetlands by 9:30am.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2016-17

Thank you for your endorsement for a further two-year term as your president. As we have come to another AGM, it is time to reflect over the last 12 months and look at the events that marked it.

In recent months, the Club has hosted and co-hosted two major public events with the Sale and District FNC:

- A photographic competition and exhibition from 18-25th February
- A SEANA camp from 17-20th March

There will be more detail and reports on both these events in separate articles in the Naturalist but this report is an opportunity to thank all of you who were involved in the planning, organising and participating in these events.

They were both outstanding successes in my opinion and they were successful because of the willingness and cooperation of the members of our Club to take on responsibilities and jobs.

I was impressed with the teamwork of all those involved and I am proud to be the president of such a motivated and committed group.

Also, I would like to thank our committee for your contribution to the running of the Club throughout the year and for nominating for positions on the committee at our AGM.

I said last year that many of our committee members have occupied positions for extended periods and we are looking for new members to attend our business meeting to contribute to the running of the Club. What has impressed me is the number of younger people who have not only joined the Club, but taken on responsible positions in the Club. I would like to acknowledge the contribution that Tamara has made taking on the role of editor of the Naturalist, and Rose who has been elected as our assistant secretary.

Wendy has indicated that this will be her last year as our secretary, a position she has occupied for 24 years. It has been a remarkable achievement and contribution and we can't thank Wendy enough. She is already a life member of the Club.

It is with great sadness that we lost one of our longest serving members during the year. Mary Austin joined our Club soon after she moved to Churchill in 1975 and served on our committee for several years following her retirement. She was also a great contributor to the local community and was made a Life Governor of the Churchill Community Health Centre.

Both our membership numbers and financial position remain strong. We are also seeing an increase in the number of members attending our general meetings with an average of 29, which is encouraging. The most popular presentation was the talk by David and Liz Parer on 'Platypus – the Worlds Strangest Animal' following the launch of their recently published book. David and Liz are internationally recognised photographers and it was very satisfying that their talk was attended by 54 members and guests.

There was a good cross section of topics for the remainder of our general meetings. Botany was covered by a talk on the Strzelecki Gum by Harley Schinagl in March, and a talk by Carolyn Landon on Celia Rosser's work painting every species of Banksia in Australia. Her talk was followed by a related excursion to Celia's gallery in Fish Creek. In addition to platypus, we also had a talk on the rakali, or water rat, by Geoff Williams in August. We had two evenings of bird topics with 'Birds on French Island' by Martin O'Brien and 'Penguins at Sea' by Andre Chiaradia in February. There were also a couple of travelogues presented by members of our Club with David and Ken's talk about their trip to South Africa and my talk on the Birds of the Russian Far East in October.

We continue to visit a number of local parks and reserves on our Saturday excursions including Tarra-Bulga National Park, Uralla Reserve, Holey Plains State Park and Lyrebird Walk. Those reserves further away included Yanakie Isthmus, French Island and Phillip Island. Attendances were a little lower this year with an average of 11 members attending, and fairly low numbers during the winter months.

The Club's spring camp in the Otways and the summer camp in Lakes Entrance were both well supported. Our Club also co-hosted the autumn SEANA camp which was well-represented by our Club members.

The contribution of our Club members is an essential component to the smooth running of the Club. This year has been exceptional year with the planning and organising of two major events – the photographic exhibition and the SEANA Camp were held close together and placed heavy demands on several of our members.

Looking forward to this year, we will maintain our standard of interesting and knowledgeable speakers and I encourage you to continue attending our general meetings and excursions.

David Stickney

Flora and Fauna of French Island 26.11.2016

Martin O'Brien, a DELWP employee and member of the Friends of French Island (FOFI), presented an interesting talk on French Island with a focus on its flora and fauna and the work of members of the FOFI. He also led the excursion to the Island the following day.

French Island is part of the Mornington Peninsula and Westernport Biosphere Reserve. It has a permanent population of about 110 people and a part-time population of around 100. At 170 km² it is the largest coastal island of Victoria. It reaches a maximum height of 96 m above sea level at Mt Wellington, near its centre. Approximately two thirds (11,100 ha) of French Island is occupied by the French Island National Park. It also extends 150 m offshore from the mean high water mark right around the Island, which provides for around 960 ha of intertidal Park area. In addition, the French Island Marine National Park extends approximately 15 km along the northern shore of French Island, encompassing approximately 2,800 ha. It protects extensive seagrass, mangrove and mudflat habitats.

Habitats on the Island range from coastal mangroves and swamps, to heathland, grasslands and blue gum forests. In the north east and east, the coastal forest provides the best environment for bush birds. To the north, the mangrove, saltmarsh and the coastal tussock grassland is excellent Short-tailed Shearwater habitat. Honeyeaters from the Mornington Peninsula are frequently seen in the west coast woodland. Attempts are being made to encourage land owners to manage the freshwater wetlands for birds.

There are approximately 260 fauna species, 240 species of birds and 580 species of flora, including over 100 species of orchid (one that is an endemic Spider-orchid, and many of



White-bellied Sea-eagle (Martin O'Brien)

which are unique). Significant bird species on the Island include King Quail (one of four species of quail), Fairy Terns (which have recently returned and nest on the little islands off French Island) and the White-bellied Sea-eagle, of which there are at least three nesting pairs. These have been benefiting from the creation and expansion of habitat reserves. Freckled Duck have been recorded in the past decade but Orange-bellied Parrots have not been seen for ten years. There are no echidnas, possums or kangaroos but the Island hosts a healthy, chlamydia-free koala population. It has no foxes and is free of Phytophthora (Cinnamon Fungus) but rabbits, feral cats, feral goats, and sambar deer do pose a threat to the Island's biodiversity.

For the Saturday excursion, 24 members and friends met the French Island barge at Corinella, most having been driven down from the Valley in the Yinnar community bus by Jack Weerts. We were ferried across in two parties of 12, the maximum the boat was licensed to carry. During our 20 minute crossing we had excellent views of a White-bellied Sea-eagle at its nest, high in a tree near the shoreline. Due to the tides, we had limited time on the Island so were restricted to visiting two sites, neither being in the National Park.

We first walked through some revegetated areas to Long Point for views of the Fairy Terns on Ram Island, one of the FOFI's threatened species monitoring sites. Here the terns were readily seen through a spotting scope along with relatively huge Caspian Terns, Pied Oystercatchers and gulls.

We then took our bus to the ranger station where we had lunch. Aeroguard was certainly our watchword as there were hoards of mosquitoes to contend with. After some time birdwatching in the revegetated bush around the ranger station, we boarded our bus to meet the barge and catch the tide, in order to return to the mainland.

Our thanks go to Jack for his long day in the bus driver's seat and Martin for his talk and guidance on the Island.

Ken Savage

Photographic Competition and Exhibition 2017

The Club held its second photographic competition and exhibition in February 2017. Our first exhibition was held in 2010 and it marked the Club's 50th year anniversary celebration, and our second exhibition was to coincide with a SEANA camp we co-hosted with the Sale and District FNC. With this in mind, there were a number of differences to our first exhibition. Firstly, the competition was open to members of both Clubs and we had several excellent contributions from the Sale and District FNC. Secondly, we chose a much higher profile location to hold our exhibition – the old Traralgon Court House in the centre of Traralgon. Finally, the winning entries in each category were displayed at the Laurels Function Centre at the Sale racecourse during the SEANA camp, along with a slide show of the top 90+ entries.

Based on feedback from the public who visited the Court House, members of our Club and the attendees of the SEANA camp, the exhibition was a huge success.

At the start of the planning process we set out clear objectives:

- To engage with our local community
- To raise people's awareness of nature
- To enable people to appreciate the role of photography in recording the wonders of nature
- To attract new members to our Club

Although the process of measuring the success of the exhibition against these aims is subjective and problematic, there was much anecdotal support to say at least some of these objectives were achieved or would be achieved in the future.

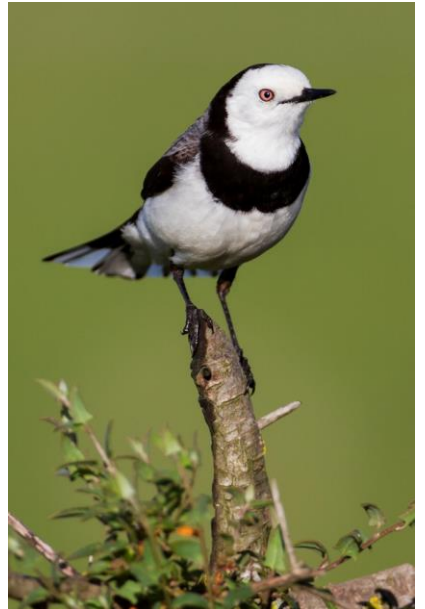
The exhibition was held between Sunday 19th February and Saturday 25th February. The judging of the photographs took place on Saturday 18th February and the exhibition was opened in the evening with the announcement of the winning entries for each of the 10 categories. We were very fortunate to have four outstanding judges with a long history of judging photographic competitions:

- Ian Bock OAM – a life member of the Melbourne Camera Club
- Tuck Leong – a member of the Australian Photographic Society
- Theo Van der Meulen – the secretary of the Latrobe Valley Camera Club
- John Topp – a member of both our field naturalist clubs

We are very grateful to all judges for spending the day with us, many of whom travelled some distance to attend the competition. We also thank Dean Sutton, Acting Regional Manager for Parks Victoria, who opened the exhibition.

There were over 250 photographs in the competition, divided into 10 different categories that covered the whole natural history spectrum – plants, birds, mammals, reptiles, insects, spiders, landscapes and many others.

There were 262 visitors to the exhibition, and each was asked where they live and how they heard about the event. The information collected was analysed by Jay, and revealed that most attendees came from the Latrobe Valley (83%) but a number came from interstate and overseas. The biggest source of information about the exhibition came from the sandwich board (33%) followed by the local paper (27%) and word of mouth (12%).



Overall winner – White-fronted Chat (Photo: Ron Greer)



David Stickney receiving his People's Choice Award from Phil Rayment and Ken Harris (Photo: Sally Court)

Planning for this event took over a year and involved many members of our Club, and we are extremely grateful for their contribution. The winner of the best overall photograph was Ron Greer from the Sale and District FNC and I was surprisingly successful in winning the People's Choice. We should also mention that Estelle came second in both these awards which was a remarkable achievement.

Our thanks go to all our contributors (25 in all), and congratulations to all winning and highly commended entries.

David Stickney

Number	Category	Winner	Highly Commended
1.	Trees	Val Walker (Sale FNC)	Helen Culjkovic Phil Rayment
2.	Flowering Shrubs	Phil Rayment	Val Walker (Sale FNC) Gill Bremner Jenny Porter
3.	Wild Flowers	Val Walker (Sale FNC)	Phil Rayment Colin Cook
4.	Orchids	Tamara Leitch	Matt Campbell Phil Rayment Estelle Adams
5.	Ferns, Mosses, Liverworts	Val Walker (Sale FNC)	Phil Rayment Estelle Adams
6.	Fungi (inc Lichens and Slime Moulds)	Matt Campbell	Estelle Adams (2)
7.	Birds	Ron Greer (Sale FNC) (also Winner in Show)	Tamara Leitch Ron Greer (Sale FNC)
8.	Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians	David Stickney (also People's Choice)	Phil Rayment Craig Boase
9.	Insects, Spiders and other Invertebrates	Suzanne Jones (Sale FNC)	Matt Campbell Ron Greer
10.	Landscapes and natural Formations	Estelle Adams	Tamara Leitch Val Walker (Sale FNC)

Garden Orb-weaving Spider - *Eriophora sp.*

I had a Garden Orb-weaving Spider residing on the outside of my kitchen window over the sink, so I had plenty of opportunity to observe it. It had a large orb-shaped web over the window which I destroyed when I cleaned the window, but I did not harm the spider I spotted hiding up under the metal lip on the top of the window frame.

It soon built another large, neat web and one hot day in early February, as I washed the dishes after lunch, I saw three march flies caught in the web, wrapped up firmly. As I was photographing them from a small step ladder outside, a huge march fly flew into the web and was instantly stuck. The spider appeared, watching it as it struggled in vain, then when it ceased its struggle, came down and attended to it. I presumed it was injecting its poison. The spider went back to its shelter while the march fly made little movements for a while.

When it was perfectly still, the spider returned and deftly wrapped it in its silk – too quickly for me to film the process. Within about 20 minutes the spider returned and spent a long time with its

mouthparts on the fly. Was it sucking out the juices? I later saw it come down and cut out one of the earlier caught flies, and sometime later there was only the last fly caught still in the web. The spider stayed up in its hiding place and didn't rebuild the web for a few days. No doubt it was quite full.



March fly caught by spider (Photo: Wendy Savage)



Fly wrapped in silk (left) and eggs apparently laid by the spider (right) (Photos: Wendy Savage)

In late April the spider was no longer to be seen, but there appeared to be a mass of eggs with spider web around it where the spider used to shelter. I have read that the adult spider only lives for 12 months, and the young spiders will hatch and disperse into the garden, so I'll have to watch carefully to see if I can witness the event.

Wendy Savage

CLUB SUMMER CAMP 2017 – Part 1

This summer camp was based at Lakes Entrance with excursions ably organised by Phil over two and a half days in the surrounding area, from 4 - 6th February. Most of the 24 people who came along stayed at the Lakes Jakaranda Holiday Units and the caravan park next door. Saturday started with Nyerimilang Heritage Park west of Lakes Entrance, then the afternoon was to the east visiting Lake Tyers SP and the Lake Tyers beach area. Sunday was a round trip through Kalimna West, Colquhoun State Forest (following Uncles Road and Old Colquhoun Road) and the Nowa Nowa area. Monday morning had a visit to the Mitchell River Silt Jetties on the way home.

Nyerimilang Heritage Park – Saturday morning

This historic house and property, 10 km west of Lakes Entrance, was purchased by the State Government in 1976. The property was selected in 1834 and the present house built early last century to support owners with wealthy lifestyles. The homestead has displays of natural resources and history and is surrounded by a large old garden and lawns used for picnics and events. Beyond are many and varied walks through the bushland and along the cliffs above the Gippsland Lakes. There were birds and plants aplenty, with a large farm dam, grasslands, salt marshes, a moist gully and coastal areas.

Below the formal garden, amongst the natural bush, an East Gippsland Garden has been developed by the Friends of Nyerimilang, the Australian Plant Society and Parks Victoria. This is where I spent my time botanising with Ken Harris and Baiba Stevens. It was hard to tell at times what had been planted and what was already there, as only some of the plants had labels, and they just looked like part of the bush. In most cases, even though specimens may have been



Blue Howittia (Photo: Wendy Savage)

planted, they could easily have been found in the area, so we compiled a list of what we saw for our plant database. Plants that I don't see often included Blueberry Ash *Elaeocarpus reticularis*, Shrubby Velvet-bush *Lasiopetalum macrophyllum* and Blue Howittia *Howittia trilocularis*.

Common Boobiella *Myoporum insulare* was plentiful, and we spent some time looking at the plants and deciding which ones were *M. insulare* and which were Sticky Boobiella *M. viscosum* as, according to our plant books, the first has smooth, thick leaves and purplish green drupes, whereas the second has finely-toothed leaves, sticky young growth and yellow drupes. However, on consulting the up-to-date online Flora of Victoria, *M. viscosum* is now only found in a few coastal areas of SA. The description for *M. insulare* states 'A very variable species with respect to stature and leaf morphology (size, shape and degree of serration). Populations containing individuals with distinctly different foliage forms are sometimes encountered.' Part of what was once classified under *M. viscosum* is now *M. petiolatum* and is found in western Victoria, but has a few isolated occurrences in Lakes Entrance and Wilsons Prom, so did we see it? We'll have to go back armed with this new information.

When I spotted a familiar garden plant, Plectranthus, I presumed it was introduced, but 'Not so,' said Ken Harris. It was Cockspur Flower *Plectranthus parviflorus*. It has fleshy, hairy leaves on long stems which die back each year. Its flowers are pale blue tubes on a tall stem. The one in my garden came as a cutting from Jean Galbraith's garden 'Dunedin' at Tyers, given to me by Ollie Archbold, the next owner who resurrected the garden. It has stunning, cheerful blue flowers in late winter.

At the lowest part of the garden was a wet area with pink-flowering Slender Knotweed *Persicaria decipiens* growing and a striking yellow-flowered plant new to me – *Ludwigia peploides* or Water Primrose. It has large, shiny, dark green alternate leaves along a stem with a single yellow flower on the end, rather like a large buttercup.



Water Primrose (Photo: Wendy Savage)

Wallaby Bush *Beyeria lasiocarpa* was another unfamiliar plant, and I was puzzled as my photos seemed to show red flowers instead of the white ones it should have, but I found they were the attractive sepals left after the flower petals had dropped. That evening Baiba and I puzzled over the identification of two *Ozothamnuses* we had collected and found they were *Ozothamnus adnatus* and *Ozothamnus argophyllus*. This latter species, commonly called Spicy Everlasting, had a distinctly spicy smell and is rare in Victoria, growing in the upper Tambo and Snowy River catchments, so clearly had been planted.



Wallaby Bush (Photo: Wendy Savage)

We gathered for lunch under the shady trees near the homestead before heading out for the afternoon excursions.

Wendy Savage

Lake Tyers State Park – Saturday afternoon

Lake Tyers State Park is approximately 20 km north east of Lakes Entrance and we spent some time exploring part of the park in the afternoon. Our planned walk was the Fern Loop Track into some old growth forest at the northern end of Lonely Bay. We were entering the quiet period for bird watching – at the end of the summer – and the afternoons were not the most favourable time, so the forest was quiet. Birds typical of this habitat were Grey Shrike-thrush, White-throated Treecreeper, Brown Thornbill and Lewin's Honeyeaters still feeding young.

The birding highlight was some brief views of a Rose Robin that was well sighted by David Mules. Rose Robins are dispersive and not very common, but are interesting birds. They breed in the wetter and coastal mountain forests and disperse inland and into Queensland in the autumn-winter. They are often tame and confiding but become very active when foraging. Our sighting was a male bird fortunately, but it was active and rarely still for more than a few seconds so we only had brief glimpses.

Our last stop for the day was the Lake Tyers Beach area, which gave us the opportunity to explore some of the vegetation along the top of the cliffs overlooking the beach. The coastal vegetation is described as clay heathland and contains more plant diversity than in other local areas. The dominant species were the Coastal Tea Tree, Coast Banksia and Black She-oak. The cliffs provided us with a 180 degree view of Bass Strait, with distant views of passing Crested Terns, Silver Gulls, a Great Cormorant and a lone Gannet near the horizon. The coastal heathland contained bush birds including Brown Thornbill, Yellow Robin, New Holland Honeyeater and very vocal Little Wattlebirds.

David Stickney

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The club welcomes Helene Campbell from Boolarra and Darryl Whitaker from Tanjil South. We wish you both a long and happy association with us.

REPORT ON BUSINESS MEETING 24.04.2017

Finance

Cash Management Trading Account: \$3,537.22 Term Deposit: \$16,847.05

Business Arising, Correspondence & General Business

- The Naturalist will now be sent to the National Library via an electronic link, not posted.
- Club spring camp at Chiltern 29 Sept – 2 Oct. We have booked out Caravan Park but there are not enough cabins for everyone. Others who wish to come are advised to try the motel (which still has rooms available but payment must be made on booking) or alternative accommodation. Ken has a contact in the Friends Group of the Chiltern-Mt Pilot NP who can help to plan excursions. Suggestions are welcome from other members.
- Money from the sale of lichen field guides has been deposited into LVFNC account by Simone Louwhoff. The funds are divided between our Club and Friends of Morwell NP.
- The Friends of Baw Baw and the Strzelecki Bushwalking Club have organised a talk on Wed 10th May by local historian Murray Ferguson, on the history of Tanjil Bren, including photos of the early days around the township and the western part of the Baw Baws.
- Yinnar South Landcare Group would like to buy a book on grass identification. We will offer some suggestions to Jay at the general meeting.
- Jay Duncan passed on a query from new Latrobe City Environmental Officer Sean-Paul Smith about species and communities listed under the *FFG* or *EPBC Acts* for the area. Also a query about threatened fauna in or near Morwell NP for Greening Australia who want to do a revegetation project further up Billys Creek. Tamara sent details of the species listed in those areas.

Conservation matters

- Mt Worth State Park: A property within the park boundaries is up for sale, and various groups are lobbying for it to be purchased by the State Government to add to the park. It has been suggested that our Club should write to support the idea, as well as individual members. Meryl will send a letter she has written, and the Secretary will adapt it into a letter from the Club.
- Cores and Links: Field trip attended by eight Club members. Phil has prepared a letter advocating that DELWP pursue the option to place the first stage handback parcel under Forest Park (Section 50) management. He urged them to move as soon as possible to seek Governor-in-Council approval for this under the *Forests Act 1958*. This option achieves an important level of protection and has the advantage of granting the same status as the nearby Gunyah Rainforest Reserve.

Guest speaker for June

Dean Ingwersen

Dean manages Birdlife Australia's 'Woodland Birds for Biodiversity' project. This project is focused on acquiring private land for conservation, as well as implementing recovery actions for threatened species such as the Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot.



Winter Members' Night

Various speakers

July's meeting is our annual Winter Members' Night, where club members can present a short talk (~10 mins) on any topic related to natural history. A projector is available for showing Power Point presentations or photos, if required. If you would like to present to the group on this night, please register your interest by emailing David Stickney at david.stickney@westnet.com.au.



Latrobe Valley Naturalist is the official publication of the Latrobe Valley Field Naturalist Club Inc. The Club subscription includes the "Naturalist".

Brief contributions and short articles on any aspect of natural history are invited from members of all clubs. Articles, including those covering Club speakers and excursions, would typically be around one A4 side in length, should not exceed 1,000 words, and may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Photos should be sent as an attachment and be a maximum of 1 megabyte in size.

Responsibility for the accuracy of information and opinions expressed in this magazine rests with the author of the article.

Contributions should be addressed to:

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Deadline for articles to be considered for inclusion in the next issue (July/Aug): 10 July 2017

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