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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



Woolly Bird's Nest Fungi *Nidula niveotomentosa* observed during a fungi foray at Lyrebird Walk in May 2020 (Photo: Baiba Stevens).

Upcoming events

January general meeting (Zoom): 15 January – Summer members' night

Bird Group: 2 February – 5pm Boolarra private property (contact Joelle)

Club Summer Camp at Lake Tyers: 5-9 February 2021

February general excursion: 27 February – Sandy Point & Yanakie with Rohan Bugg

Botany Group: 13 February – Indoors, looking at plants from Summer Camp (details TBC)

Bird Group: 16 February – 9am EA Wetlands (contact Joelle)

Bird Group: 2 March – 9am Jeeralang area (contact Joelle)

Botany Group: 6 March – Mt Saint Gwinear (contact Wendy)

March general meeting: 26 March – AGM

March general excursion: 27 March – Dutson Downs

Botany Group: 3 April – 10am Uralla Reserve – plant survey following Pittosporum removal

Excursion to Tyers 29.02.2020

This February excursion to Tyers started with a short visit to the Jean Galbraith Flora Reserve, then continued on to Wirilda Environment Park.

We had heard that the Flora Reserve was in a bad state of neglect as the local Friends group that had looked after it in recent times had dwindled in numbers to such an extent that the reserve had, in December 2018, been handed back to Latrobe City to manage.

For some background to this reserve, it is worth quoting part of the entry in our own publication *The Nature of Latrobe* in which it is listed under the correct name of 'Jean Galbraith Memorial Wildflower Reserve'. It states:

"The noted naturalist Jean Galbraith, who lived in Tyers for most of her life, donated land in 1936 to preserve the flora of the area. This small reserve is located on Mt Hope Road in Tyers, opposite the family home featured in the book *Garden in a Valley*. Because of this, she was able to look after it until too frail to continue. After her death it was neglected for a time and became overgrown and infested with weeds. A committee of management is now working to restore the area to represent its original flora, label the plants and maintain access paths."

I found further information about the reserve on a website 'Walking Maps', which had been contributed by the Parks Tracks project, an initiative of the Latrobe City Council. It said:

"The Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists recorded an extensive list of flora in the Reserve in 1967, but over time, many species were impacted by weed invasion and a loss of interest in maintaining the site. This changed in 1999 when an enthusiastic group of residents in the Tyers township formed to resurrect the Reserve and highlight its botanical and historical significance. No doubt, this reawakening was partially triggered by the passing of Galbraith that same year. Funding from the National Heritage Trust and the Latrobe City Council has assisted the group's efforts, and the work continues."

A Club excursion to the reserve in March 2006 was written up in the Naturalist by me, and I described it as "a pretty, well-kept reserve, with its sandy paths and seats under the trees. The labelled plant species throughout make it a good place to learn about the local plants."

Our recent visit to the reserve indeed confirmed its sorry state. Overgrown with pasture grasses and weeds, most of the small plants and herbs had no chance to compete. I had printed a list of plants from our Club plant database which contained 62 species. The origin of this list is unclear, as it had the date 20 May 1905 on it, but this was before Jean Galbraith was born. I am presuming that a typo has occurred and it should be 1995, and 20 May 1995 was indeed a Saturday so it could have been a Club excursion. However, a search of our records revealed that the May excursion in 1995 was on 27th May to Glen Nayook. I can't think why we may have done a survey at the reserve a week earlier.

The 1967 plant list referred to above is in the Club records (recorded by Jean Galbraith) and it lists 49 species. There is a good correlation between the two lists. Neither list included weedy species such as the many pasture grasses we saw.

We only recorded 22 species, not including the weedy grasses, and nearly half of these were the trees and shrubs on the original lists. There were four species of eucalypt: Apple Box, Red Box,

Narrow-leaved Peppermint and Manna Gum. Acacias were Blackwood, Hop Wattle and Varnish Wattle. There were also shrubs of Tree Violet, Cassinias, Burgan and Hazel Pomaderris. Clumps of the hardy Mat-rush *Lomandra longifolia* and Saw-sedge *Gahnia radula* had survived. The paths were still there, but plant labels in most cases had no plants to match them – just weeds where the plant would have been. The many smaller herbs and orchids would be easily smothered by the thick mat of grass. Someone in recent times had attempted to clear grass away from a few small native plants and put guards around them.

Maybe a visit in the spring would reveal some of the many orchids and small flowers in Jean's list – Milkmaids, Waxlips, Greenhoods, Bird Orchids, Blue Stars, Sundews and so on. Of course, a small reserve surrounded by houses and gardens will always be hard to maintain. You only have to see what happens to a garden when it's left unattended for a few years. But I feel great sadness that such a significant reserve both historically and botanically has fallen into such decay. One positive note is that we understand that, as of early 2020, Latrobe City staff have encouraged a new group of locals to commence some rehabilitation.

Despite the overgrown state of the reserve, it did attract a number of birds, most notably parrots. Australia is the 'Land of Parrots', home to one sixth of the world's species, but they are often taken for granted. The gardens provided some good habitat for them. We could hear the screeching of the Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos, and the arrival of Gang-gang Cockatoos in the garden with their 'rusty door hinge' call. King Parrots also came into the reserve and Crimson Rosellas were feeding over the road. Tyers is a small township, but it is located next to Boola Boola State Forest and Tyers Park, encouraging parrots to move between this area and the reserve.

David Mules had the right idea by bypassing the Jean Galbraith Reserve and going straight to Wirilda early to catch the time of day when the birds are most active and it paid dividends. He had spent some time around the park and spotted an Azure Kingfisher, near



Yellow-tufted honeyeater (Photo: David Stickney)



Tawny Frogmouth (Photo: David Stickney)

the spillway, and a Rufous Fantail. David's observational skills came to the forefront when he announced there was a Tawny Frogmouth in a tree. It was about 10 metres up the tree and had to be pointed out to most of us because they have evolved to look like a broken branch. Equally surprising, David said they usually roost in pairs and sure enough he managed to find the other bird, which was even more obscured than the first one.

It was a beautiful day for a walk along the Wirilda Walking Track, also known as "Ollie's Track". It starts at the Tyers pumping station and ends at the Moondarra Dam, winding through open forests and generally following the meandering Tyers River through the Boola Boola State Forest and Tyers Park, however we only walked part of it today. The bird life was not prolific at this time of the day, but we were serenaded by Lewin's Honeyeaters and Eastern Yellow Robins. We were on the lookout for the Azure Kingfisher that David had seen in the morning, but the

river was obscured in many places. David decided the best option was to relax on the banks of the river, and we were rewarded with a sighting of a Sacred Kingfisher.

I continued along the track and was distracted by the number and diversity of butterflies. I took some photographs, as the easiest way to identify the species is to compare photographs with the pictures and descriptions in the guide books. Through this process I managed to identify Common Brown, Ringed Xenica, Meadow Argus and Common Grass Blue.



Meadow Argus (Photo: David Stickney)

An enjoyable day on our first general excursion so far in 2020.

Wendy Savage and David Stickney

A bird list for this excursion is available in Appendix I of the electronic version of this Naturalist.

Land for wildlife, not cats

In July 2013, I joined the DEPI Land for Wildlife scheme. The one hectare bush property in the Boola Boola (Tyers) foothills was assessed by Kylie Singleton as: "A Red Box dominated forest on a dry, north-facing slope. Dense shrubs in some places and open, grassy in other areas. Eucs are of similar age which suggests logging history, so very few hollows. Good birdlife present."

During the early months of 2020, there have been seasonal visitors, and native birds that call this area home. As more people in this neighbourhood of bush blocks feed the birds, it seems we have some new arrivals – Rainbow Lorikeets – and increased numbers of other species such as Sulphur Crested Cockatoos and Crimson Rosellas.



Saloop (Photo: Irene Proebsting)

The Crimson Rosellas and Satin Bowerbirds have been feeding on the *Einadia hastata*, also called Saloop or Red Berry Saltbush (thanks Tamara and Rose for helping with identification). This saltbush is a low, spreading groundcover and has very small red berries which I think the birds like to eat.



Crimson Rosella (Photo: Irene Proebsting)

Unfortunately there have been recent sightings of domestic cats in the vicinity – domestic, because one cat had a collar and purple bell which was supposed to warn the birds, however I doubt whether these bells do anything.



Roaming cat (Photo: Irene Proebsting)

On one of my almost-daily wanderings around the property (especially since the COVID-19 stay-at-home restrictions were put in place) I came upon the remains of one of the young Crimson Rosellas. I have since set up a cat trap and will wait to see whether I can entice the cat inside. Council has a cat curfew, however it only applies between 9pm and 6am, and a lot of damage can be done during the 15 hours they are allowed to roam. It's probably time to lobby for 24 hour stay-at-home curfew laws for all cats in rural residential areas, as



Rosella remains (Photo: Irene Proebsting)

these can be teeming with birds, possums and other wildlife, and cats can decimate them at an alarming rate.

Irene Proebsting

Lyrebird Walk fungi excursion 30.05.2020

This excursion was the first outing for the Botany Group since the COVID-19 lockdown rules caused the cancellation of our March and April excursions. A recent easing of the rules allowed 10 people to gather together outdoors, so we changed our planned indoor activity to an excursion to Lyrebird Walk to look at fungi. Following the rules, we aimed to keep 1.5 m apart as we walked the track looking at the abundance of different fungi – not easy when you all want to look at the same thing!

We walked around a loop from the carpark on part of the Lyrebird Forest Walk, including to the Coral Fern Gully and along the path beside the Little Morwell River. Fungi were abundant on all parts of the track, both near the creek and up on top of the hill in the drier areas.

The following descriptions have been contributed by some of the excursion participants.

Wendy Savage

The fungi we see in our forests are classified within two Phyla of the Kingdom Fungi: Phylum Ascomycota and Phylum Basidiomycota. We might also see Slime Moulds, but these are not fungi. The parts of fungi we see are the fruiting bodies, representing the sexual reproductive stage of a fungus.

The ascomycetes number over 60,000 described species worldwide and the basidiomycetes over 20,000 species. The spores produced in sexual reproduction of the ascomycetes are contained in sacs, called asci, while the spores of the basidiomycetes are held on basidia and are actively discharged when mature. These differences are seen only under magnification and might seem obscure to us, but they are regarded by taxonomists as sufficiently important to put the groups in separate phyla. Lichens are classified within the Kingdom Fungi on the basis of the fungal part of the lichen. The fungi incorporated into lichens are largely ascomycetes, with very few basidiomycetes

involved.

The list for our excursion has only three examples of ascomycetes: The bright yellow discs of a Yellow Earth Buttons *Phaeohelotium baileyianum* cluster in soil amongst moss or forest litter. The discs are about 10 mm in diameter and flattened or undulating. The stipe (stem) is very short, resulting in the discs resting on the ground. This species is possibly mycorrhizal with eucalypts. A similar yellow disc, *Bisporella sp.*, always grows on wood, not soil.



Yellow Earth Buttons (Photo: Margaret Rowe)

The second is *Chlorociboria aeruginascens* which causes the



Chlorociboria aeruginascens
(Photo: Tamara Leitch)

blue-green staining we notice on the inner layer of wood on small fallen branches. The tiny blue-green discs of the fruiting bodies are seen less frequently. Like tiny carpet tacks, they are usually less than 7 mm in diameter and each is held aloft on a 3 mm stipe. The blue-green stained wood produced by this fungus has been used as a veneer inlay on furniture known as "Tunbridge ware".

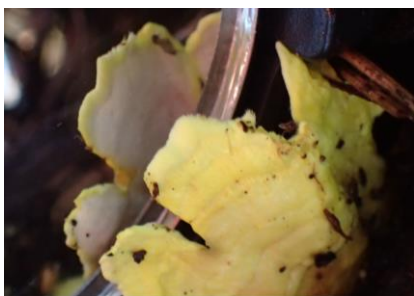
The third, Ochre Jelly Club *Leotia lubrica*, is no more than 50 mm tall. It grows in the leaf litter, often in small clumps. The stipe is yellowish, relatively thick, viscous and sometimes with tiny, scattered scales. The fertile heads are yellow, yellow-green or olive-brown, roughly globose, but characteristically convoluted.

Austeria citrea: This splash of bright citric-yellow amongst the litter is especially interesting. Genus *Austeria* (which means south) is found only in Australia and New Zealand. This restricted range is unusual among the fungi as they easily spread worldwide. The undersurface was white, and the description in Fungi in Australia, available on the FNCV website, reveals that it is covered with minute pores.

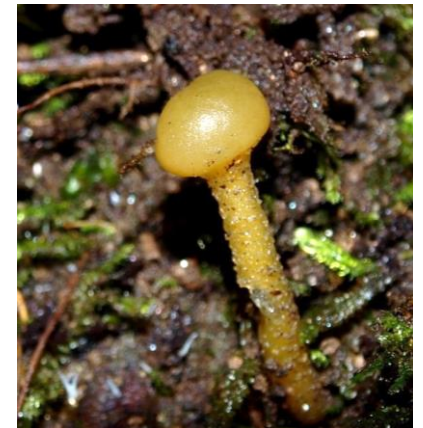
Cortinarius austrovenetus: *Cortinarius* is a large, globally-distributed genus, containing over 2,000 species. A common feature among all species in the genus is that very young specimens have a cortina (veil, or curtain) between the cap and the stem, hence the name. As the pileus (cap) expands, the fibres of the cortina disappear, usually leaving no trace. All members of genus *Cortinarius* produce rusty brown spores, which can stain the stipe and the gills.

C. austrovenetus can be recognised by the velvety olive-green pileus and the yellowish stipe and gills. This species contributes to the mycorrhiza of eucalypts.

Margaret Rowe



Austeria citrea (Photo: Margaret Rowe)



Ochre Jelly Club (Photo: Tamara Leitch)



Cortinarius austrovenetus (Photo: Margaret Rowe)

Clavaria amoena: This little club fungus grows singly or in groups, on the ground amongst leaf litter or moss, usually in damp, sheltered areas of eucalypt forest. The fruit bodies may grow up to 100 mm high and they are always bright yellow. The apices of *C. amoena* are rounded with slightly paler centres and the slimy clubs are brittle with white flesh.



Clavaria amoena (Photo: Lorraine Norden)

Tetrapyrgos olivaceonigra: This tiny species is usually found in loose colonies on dead twigs and small branches. The one we saw was on a fine, dead *Pomaderris aspera* branch. The white pileus is tinted blackish to bluish-green and has a pruinose (powdery) surface. It has a lateral stipe and appears to be hanging from the branch. The arrangement of the gills is interesting, and it has a white spore print.



Tetrapyrgos olivaceonigra
(Photo: Lorraine Norden)

Lorraine Norden

Mycena is one of the most common genera of fungi you will find in the bush, but identifying species proved very hard, so it was great to see that pictures I took from two fungi growing closely together were matching with two species on the FungiFlip. Next I searched for the same species on Fungi Map. Looking at pictures taken by others, I felt confident I was on the right track and uploaded my own observations, which were confirmed shortly thereafter.



Mycena albidofusca (Photo: Marja Bouman)

Mycena albidofusca: This species has a distinctive white, flattened top and a striate hood, convex to broadly conical. The stem is translucent brown. It often appears in clusters on leaf litter. According to Fuhrer, the species is widespread and locally abundant.



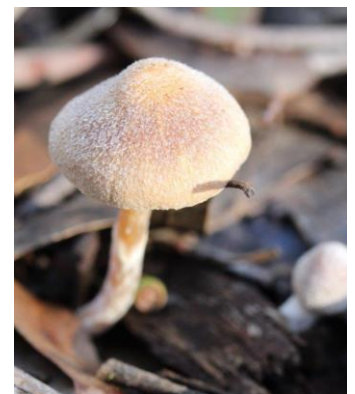
Mycena kuurkacea
(Photo: Marja Bouman)

Mycena kuurkacea: This species drew my attention because of the colour and the shape of the hood. The hood of the mature specimen was bell-shaped and had a beautiful red-brown colour. The slender stems produce a translucent red fluid when broken. The specimens I saw were on the forest floor, but it does apparently grow on decaying wood or bark.

We ignored lots of brown fruiting bodies as being too hard to identify, concentrating on the more distinctive ones. The identification of the first of the following three items was confirmed, and I am fairly confident about the other two.

Cortinarius fibrillosus (*Inocybe austrofibrillosa*):

When I closed in with my camera on this fungus I saw a hood covered in fibrils (hairs), which are white in this species. The hood has a cinnamon-buff colour and an acute umbo. The stem looks watery and also has white fibrils.



Cortinarius fibrillosus
(Photo: Marja Bouman)



Conocybe tenera (Photo: Marja Bouman)

Conocybe tenera: This fungus grows on herbivore dung. It has a bell-shaped, slightly striate cap with a little fringe. The gills are the same colour as the cap.

Inocybe fibrillosabrunnea: I found this little spiky fellow by accident when I was zooming my camera in on the yellow ascomycete next to it. This species has a shaggy appearance due to a brown cap matted with scales and fibrils. The gills are yellowish and the slender stipe pale reddish-brown, coarsely pubescent with tufts of minute fibrils.

Marja Bouman

Walking slowly along the beginning of the track, we were told to make sure we didn't miss the Woolly Bird's Nest fungi *Nidula niveotomentosa*. Of course, I expected a large structure like a small bird's nest, but I was astounded when I was shown minute fungi attached to a small, decaying branch on the side of the track. The structure of this fungus could barely be discerned without a hand lens or by enlarging a photo on a mobile phone. I was absolutely amazed at the beauty of them. The hairy, cup-shaped fruiting bodies of this fungus resemble tiny birds' nests that appear to be filled with ovoid brown 'eggs' (peridioles). These contain the spores which are released on maturity. The peridioles are not attached to the cup, as in other bird's nest fungi, but lie in a gelatinous matrix. The immature fruiting bodies are covered with pale brown caps that eventually fall off to reveal the peridioles.



Woolly Bird's Nest Fungi (Photo: Baiba Stevens)

After oooing and aaahing at this exciting find, we had a choice of either continuing along the loop to the carpark, or backtracking and then walking a short way along the track in the other direction. The first option was chosen, but it was suggested that we walk at a reasonable pace back to the cars, as several tummies were already rumbling. Of course, not all did as asked, so Joelle, Julie and I again lagged behind, as there were still beautiful specimens to observe and photograph.



Panellus pusillus (Photo: Baiba Stevens)

Julie stopped us near a fallen tree trunk and pointed out some tiny, creamy-white fungi growing in tiers. These were Little Ping-pong Bats *Panellus pusillus*. These fungi are polypores, having pores on the underside instead of gills. This species can be differentiated from other small, white, tiered fungi by the pores being relatively large and elongated. The short stem that attaches the body to the substrate certainly makes this fungus look like small ping-pong bats.

At a lower, damper section of the track, I spotted a fallen log hidden under tree-ferns, covered with a number of large orange brackets, curving upwards, many overlapping each other. The upper surface had bands of colours radiating outwards, starting from a dark brown in the centre, through various stripes of orange and cream, finishing with white on the

outer edge. Some specimens had a wavy edge. Unfortunately, I didn't look at the underside. I am quite confident that this fungus was Golden Curtain Crust *Stereum versicolor*.

On a drier part of the track, we came across a spherical ball, about 2cm in diameter. It was hairy on the outside, with different sized grey, roughly geometrical shapes surrounded by lighter grey hairy bands.



Puffball (Photo: Baiba Stevens)

This was possibly of the genus *Lycoperdon* or *Bovista* which can be hard to tell apart.

And finally we headed back to the carpark, to join the others enjoying lunch at appropriate distances!!

Baiba Stevens



Golden Curtain Crust (Photo: Baiba Stevens)

A fungi list and additional photos for this excursion are available in Appendix II of the electronic version of this Naturalist.

Latrobe Valley Naturalist is the official publication of the Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists 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.

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Thank you to everyone who contributed to The LV Naturalist in 2020. Best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a safe and happy New Year to all our members, their families and friends.

Deadline for articles to be considered for inclusion in the next issue (January/February): 22 January 2021

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APPENDIX I – Bird list for Jean Galbraith Reserve & Wirilda Environment Park 29.02.2020 (D. Mules)

Australian King Parrot	Grey Fantail	Silvereye
Australian Magpie	Lewin’s Honeyeater	Spotted Pardalote
Azure Kingfisher	Little Raven	Superb Fairywren
Brown Gerygone	Mistletoebird	Tawny Frogmouth
Brown Thornbill	New Holland Honeyeater	White-browed Scrubwren
Crimson Rosella	Pacific Black Duck	White-naped Honeyeater
Eastern Spinebill	Pied Currawong	White-throated Treecreeper
Eastern Yellow Robin	Red-browed Finch	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Gang-gang Cockatoo	Rufous Fantail	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
Golden Whistler	Satin Bowerbird	

APPENDIX II – Fungi list for Lyrebird Walk excursion 30.05.2020

<i>Austeria citrea</i>	
<i>Chlorociboria aeruginascens</i>	
<i>Clavaria amoena</i>	
<i>Clavulinopsis corallinosacea</i>	
<i>Collybia eucalyptorum</i>	
<i>Cortinarius austrovenetus</i>	
<i>Cortinarius fibrillosus</i>	
<i>Crudentomycena viscidocrudenta</i>	Ruby Bonnets
<i>Hygrocybe sp.</i>	Waxcaps
<i>Leotia lubrica</i>	Ochre Jelly Club
<i>Mycena albidofusca</i>	
<i>Mycena kuurkacea</i>	
<i>Mycena subgalericulata</i>	
<i>Nidula niveotomentosa</i>	Woolly Bird’s Nest fungus
<i>Panellus pusillus</i>	Little Ping-pong Bat
<i>Phaeohelotium baileyannum</i>	Yellow Earth Buttons
<i>Phellodon niger</i>	Black tooth
<i>Stereum versicolor</i>	Golden Curtain Crust
<i>Tetrapyrgos olivaceonigra</i>	

The following fungi have been put up on *iNaturalist* but their suggested identification has not been confirmed:

<i>Artomyces sp</i>	
<i>Clavaria sp.</i>	Purple coral fungi
<i>Conocybe tenera</i>	
<i>Inocybe fibrillosibrunnea</i>	

Lycoperdon sp. or Bovista sp.
Pholiota malicola
Ramaria sp.
Ramariopsis kunzei

Puffball
Orange coral fungi
White Coral Fungus

Note from Dr Sapphire McMullan-Fisher when asked about the above fungi we were not sure about:

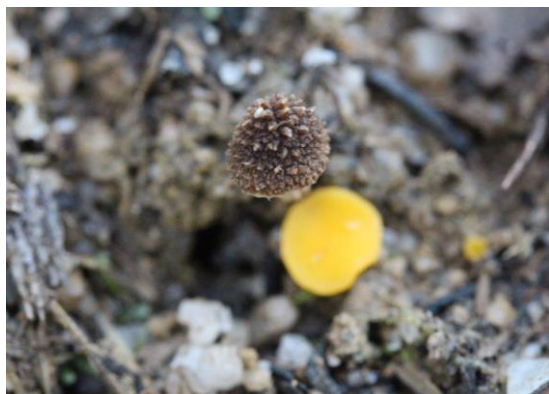
Probably a third to half of our local fungi don't have "good" names yet, and many are not recognisable just from photos alone, so whilst iNaturalist is great, many things will and SHOULD NOT be identified to species level.



Panellus pusillus (Photo: Baiba Stevens)



Cortinarius austrovenetus (Photo: Margaret Rowe)



Inocybe fibrillosabrunnea (Photo: Marja Bouman)



Leotia lubrica (Photo: Margaret Rowe)