



# DUBBO FIELD NATURALIST & CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.

*Fostering interest, knowledge and enjoyment in natural history and conservation since 1977*

[www.dubbofieldnats.org.au](http://www.dubbofieldnats.org.au)

## FIELD NOTES

July 2010

### GUEST SPEAKER AND FIELD TRIP INFORMATION

#### JULY SOCIAL MEETING

**Tuesday 20 July. 7.00pm supper for 7:30 meeting start**

Western Plains Cultural Centre, Wingewarra Street. Speaker: Anne Holst of the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service, 'The New Toorale Station Conservation Area'. Please bring a plate to share for supper. All participants welcome.

*Meeting Contact: Kerry Palmer 0427 480 440*

#### JULY FIELD TRIP: GOONOO CONSERVATION AREA

**Sunday 25 July**

Meet at Western Plains Cultural Centre (Gipps St side) 9:00am and travel by convoy to Dick's house, just east of the corner of the Brocklehurst-Eumungerie Road and Mogriguy Road (at 9:30am). Expect to see many great flowering wattles, with a chance at other interesting winter inhabitants of Goonoo. Visitors welcome.

*Trip leader: Dick MacFarlane 6888 5656*

#### AUGUST 'BIRDS AND BOTANY' FIELD TRIP: GOONOO

**Goonoo State Conservation Area, Friday 13<sup>th</sup> August .**

Meet at the Cultural Centre (Gipps St side) at 9am. Should be a few orchids and nesting birds. Bring morning tea/lunch, binos, hat, water etc.

*Trip Leader: Janis Hosking 6887 2692*

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#### AIMS OF OUR SOCIETY

- *To foster interest, knowledge and enjoyment in natural history, particularly in the Dubbo Region*
- *To speak out on environmental and conservation issues, particularly those affecting our area*
- *To achieve these aims by meetings with lectures, discussions and field trips.*

## CONTACTS:

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hi All!

We welcome new members Erlina Compton, Ray Doyle and Shirla Wall, all of Dubbo. Shirla has recently published a delightful picture book: *'Look! Up in the Sky! Its A Bird...'*, intended as a children's introduction to some of our local native birds- all photographed by Shirla too! Erlina was our guest speaker on *Biodiversity Projects* at last month's social meeting (see report on page 4).

This Society is proud to have become the first member organisation of the Australian Wattle Day Association. Our Society's name is now on their 'About Us' Web page; <http://www.wattleday.asn.au> -a great website resource- and a picture of our **Wattlegrove** in Dubbo is featured on the current events page; <http://www.wattleday.asn.au/wattle-day-events-1> The Wattle Day Association are planning a big celebration in this Centennial Year of Wattle Day, 1910 – 2010.



The committee continue to investigate presentations and speaker options for our proposed **Environmental Forum at WPCC on Saturday 11 September 2010**. Last year's *Education for Environmental & Cultural Sustainability Forum* was well supported. This year we are looking at a 'Water' theme with our forum and provide an enjoyable experience for all with some activity based sessions. Do contact me if you would like to be involved or lend a hand.

A matter of concern that was raised, again- at the recent farmers market information stall was the soil erosion at Sir Roden Cutler Park, West Dubbo. This steep sloping site was noted as bare of all vegetation during the Macquarie Blue Festival event in November last year. The project is not a good reflection on timely rehab of unprotected soils and an appalling lack of responsibility & management of public open space. Some community members have attempted to report the matter to the NSW 'Pollution Line' – only to be referred to Dubbo City Council. DFNats have also written to Council, following our April Birds & Botany field trip along the Tracker Riley Walkway and as yet have received no response.

Just for interest, I recommend interested people check out the excellent Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch Newsletter Winter 2010:

<http://www.act.waterwatch.org.au/Files/Newsletters/winter2010.pdf>

Cheers Kerry ☺

## EDITOR'S CORNER

Since starting this newsletter editor gig I've often thought the best thing about it are the member's contributions. Arriving in every form including handwritten letters, typed notes, emails and via hand delivered USB drives (though I've not received one by mobile txt yet!), these little gems often tell memorable stories of encounters with our wonderful flora and fauna or give an insight into how others relate to them. Please keep them coming— send to [contact@dubbofieldnats.org.au](mailto:contact@dubbofieldnats.org.au) or post to the Field Nat's P.O. box above.

The other great thing about being editor is that I get to spread information to the membership. With that in mind — I'd welcome feedback at any time on the content that is presented. Was it interesting? What do *you* want to know about? Is it too technical, or not technical enough?

## FIELD TRIP REPORT

### JUNE FIELD TRIP TO MOUNT ARTHUR — Report by Janis Hosking

Six Dubbo Field Nats and two Kiwis turned up at Mt. Arthur Reserve near Wellington. The day was overcast and cloudy— but no wind, so it was good for walking.

After a quick cuppa, we headed off up the Apex Nature Trail heading for Ningana and Binjang Lookouts. The first Europeans to see the Wellington Valley and the area which is now the Mr. Arthur Reserve were 13 men of an exploration expedition led by Lt. John Oxley around 18<sup>th</sup> August 1817. We had it much easier, with the good road up to the top and the track that was dug and marked for us.

Not a lot of birds were seen or heard. About half way along the Apex Trail we came across some Glossy-black Cockatoos feeding in the *Casuarina stricta*. We stopped for several minutes watching them feed and then walked on. Some of the other birds were: Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Fantail, Eastern Yellow Robin and White-throated Treecreepers.

The track was a bit steep and rocky in several places, but taking our time we all made it back to the car park in one piece. Only a couple of plants were in flower, one being Snowy Mint bush *Prostanthera nivea*. *Hardenbergia violacea* was also seen with a few flowers and the *Hibbertia obtusifolia* was quite covered in flowers.

After making our way back to the car park we drove down the hill a short way to a picnic spot for lunch. Dick's car had mechanical issues but the NRMA were going to fix it the next day and tow it back to Dubbo. So the day ended well after all!

## MEMBER'S CONTRIBUTION

### LOOKING AT AUSTRALIAN FAUNA — Ron Davis, Newcastle, DFNCS Life Member

For many years now, I've been involved with overseas refugees coming to Newcastle. They come from refugee camps in many different countries. But in German camps, and in Kakuma Refugee Camp in northern Kenya, containing Southern Sudanese, Ugandan and Ethiopian refugees, it seems the story goes around that "Australia is FULL of snakes, crocodiles, and sharks and they all try to EAT you !"

A while back, I suggested to a Yugoslavian refugee that we could go for a walk in the bush with his family. He looked at me wide-eyed in horror – "But what about the SNAKES ?!" I explained to him that in over 40 years of bush-walking, I had only seen a few, and they usually got out of your way when they heard you coming.

I took a family of four Sudanese girls to Newcastle's large well-known Blackbutt Reserve "to look at the kangaroos and emus". They were impressed with them, and with the curlews and other birds, and with the wombats and koalas, but they insisted on having their photos taken beside the glass-fronted enclosures of a large Diamond Python and a Carpet Python – apparently to show how brave they were being so close to a SNAKE !

The most recent family I am helping is a father and two boys aged 9 and 11 from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Again, I took them to Blackbutt Reserve. They looked at the emus and the kangaroos, but didn't appear to be all that interested. The ducks and the swans with their cygnets raised a bit more enthusiasm. The koalas were all asleep anyway. But the EXCITEMENT when they saw these two snakes ! All sorts of questions were asked, and they spent a long time peering through the glass at the pythons – which DID peer back at them and move around and poke their tongues out ....

Then there was another family from the Congo – a man with two girls aged 6 and 9 – instead of asking "Do they eat you?", the man kept asking the question, as we looked at yet another animal : "Can you eat THEM?" But he didn't ask that question when we got to the snakes !



So... can you eat them? (Photo: R. Davis)

## SPEAKER REPORT: JUNE SOCIAL MEETING

### CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES IN THE WESTERN CMA AREA: Erlina Compton

Report by David Sergeant

The Western Region of NSW is an area of low rainfall, poor soils, large distances and few people. In this situation, the vegetation is very susceptible to overgrazing and the provision of watering points for sheep and cattle has led to an increase of kangaroos and wild goats at the expense of the vegetation. Most of the land is owned by the Crown and leased to landholders.

The Western Catchment Management Authority (CMA) has programs to preserve and restore the ecosystems of the region. Many plants and small animals are listed as endangered. This large region contains many different plant communities, such as the Black Box (*Eucalyptus largiflorens*) on heavy alluvial flood-prone soils.

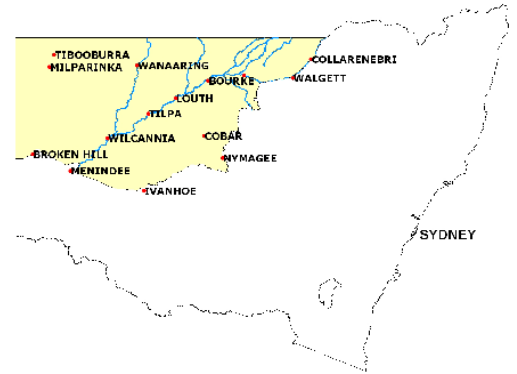
The first step for the CMA has been to map the whole region with respect to geology, soils and vegetation. From this survey some plant communities can be seen as priority areas for protection and management. The highest level of protection involves fencing to exclude grazing.

On a larger scale, management agreements are made with willing landholders and in-perpetuity conservation agreements can be established. There are also special projects such as protecting malleefowl sites and projects with the Aboriginal community.

The work requires a lot of time in the field to collect data and to increase the cooperation of landholders. It is thought that progress is being made.

D.S. 24/6/2010

Editor's note: For those interested in further reading, the Western CMA's website is <http://www.western.cma.nsw.gov.au>



## CLUB ACTIVITY REPORT — FARMER'S MARKET STALL

### FARMER'S MARKET STALL — report by Kerry Palmer

Dubbo Field Nats joined with Macquarie RiverSmart to celebrate its 1st birthday on 'World Environment Day', 5 June at the Dubbo Farmers Market. World Environment Day is aimed to stimulate awareness of the environment and enhance political attention and public action.

We met many interesting folk from far and wide and discussed a range of subjects & issues. Macca the Platypus was a big hit with big & little kids! Thank you to all who lent a hand including Shona, John & Laura of Riversmart.

Dubbo Field Nats fully support the RiverSmart initiative; **Gateway to the Marshes Eco-cultural Trail**. The Feasibility Study is completed and Stage 2 of this concept is to develop a tourist 'product' focussed along the Macquarie River, extending from Lake Burrendong to the Macquarie Marshes, taking in the communities of Wellington, Dubbo, Narromine and Warren. Further information can be obtained at [www.riversmart.org.au](http://www.riversmart.org.au)



Kerry and RiverSmart's Macca at the Farmer's Markets (Photo: S. Whitfield)

## MURRAY DARLING BASIN NEWS

Report by Tim Hosking

The Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) held a public community information session on Australian Government water related policies and programs at the Dubbo RSL Club on Friday 18 June 2010 from 2pm to 5:30pm.



The speakers in the community information session were senior representatives from DEWHA and the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA, formerly the MDB Commission). The three speakers outlined key activities within the Australian Government's \$12.9 billion 'Water for the Future' initiative including

- the **water 'buyback'** - purchase of water entitlements from willing sellers across the basin including the Macquarie. The NSW buybacks have now mainly ceased, with DEWHA continuing to purchase water.
- the **irrigation scheme modernisation** investments—'irrigation infrastructure' project which will seek to help the irrigation industry adjust to less water. Half of all water 'saved' will be returned to the river in the form of water licences to be owned by DEWHA.
- the **'Proposed Murray Darling Basin Plan'**, being prepared by the MDBA, which should be on exhibition within a few months. This plan has a number of components, but a key part is the *'Sustainable Diversion Limits'*, to be set in the plan—which will specify a proportion or volume of water that must be returned to the environment (river/Marshes). This adjustment will partly be met by the buybacks and the share of water from the irrigation modernisation projects.

The presentations were followed by an open question and answer session. A range of questions were asked from a range of sources (State and Local Govt, irrigators, landholders).

These are shaping up to be highly significant changes for our rivers and irrigation communities—restoring a relatively large amount of water back to the river. It would well be worth grabbing the Proposed Basin Plan when it comes out for a read. More information can be found at: (DEWHA) <http://www.environment.gov.au/water> and (MDBA) <http://www.mdba.gov.au/>.

## AUGUST FIELD TRIP INFORMATION— THE MARSHES

The August field trip (21 & 22 August) will be a campout to the **Macquarie Marshes**—for those considering attending, please note the information below. More details (including an itinerary) in the August newsletter.

- The fieldtrip will be a combined trip with the Orange Field Nats.
- We will be staying at 'Willie Retreat'. Willie is on the corner of the Warren-Carinda (bitumen) road and the Gibson's Way (unsealed) 110km north of Warren. Willie offers a range of accommodation options including camping, cabins/caravans or bunk beds in the shearers quarters. <http://www.willieretreatmacquariemarshes.com.au>
- We will have meeting times at Saturday (morning, midday) and Sunday (morning) to cater for day trippers. Note that it is about 2.5 hrs drive to Willie from Dubbo via Warren.
- Please feel free to book at Willie yourself, or Tim can do it on your behalf.
- **RSVP to Tim Hosking at [tim.hosking@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:tim.hosking@environment.nsw.gov.au) regardless so he can determine numbers.**



Expect to see some very interesting areas! (Photo: T. Hosking)

## CLUB ACTIVITY REPORT — BIRDS AND BOTANY

### TRIP TO DUBBO BIODIVERSITY GARDEN, 11 June — Report by Beth Sergeant

The five Nats. who braved the frost were fortunate to meet the Council's curator of both the Elizabeth Park gardens, Ron Watson. A man who loves his work, even though a good deal of involves battling, or forestalling, young people - who naturally have to climb the only hill in sight. Sadly, they often leave their mark: vandalism.

The various young wattles and eucalypts are doing so well that the garden no longer gives a view of the city. We noticed ironbarks, mallees and the taller acacias growing very well. A planting of endangered species didn't fare so well, and Ron is replacing them with hardier species such as dianellas. Some natives have arrived under their own steam - I fancy a *hovea* is one. Others which had been planted have reproduced, in particular a varnish wattle.

Down below the mound, the grassland looked impressive with lots of kangaroo grass (*Themeda*), but Ron has problems with introduced *Paspalum* and African lovegrass.

On the mound, two wattles were in flower, *Acacia deanei* and *subulata*. Other wattles we saw were *A. cardiophylla*, *cultriformis*, *decora*, *implexa*, *lineata*, *penninervis*, *triptera* and *verniciiflua*. It was hard to believe that the first plants were only established in 2002. One clump of dianella I noticed, well up the hill, looked as if it had been there always. Hardenbergias were also thoroughly at home.

As happens in the bush, plants which die may be left standing. On the flat a white box which fell over is now sending up several vertical limbs.

The garden is a credit to Ron and his volunteer helpers. I'm sure he could use more of them.

Janis Hosking also writes:

*I had never been to the garden before and was pleasantly surprised. It will be a place to visit in the spring (isn't everywhere!). The contrast between the gardens was so noticeable. One is ordered and neat, the other untidy and scruffy, like the bush! It was a very pleasant, if cool, way to spend the morning.*

*Birds we saw: Magpie, Noisy Friarbirds-feeding on blossom, Magpie Lark, Eastern Rosellas, Blue-faced Honeyeaters flying around the Park, Yellow-throated Miners, Welcome Swallows- flying over the Japanese Garden, Superb Fairy-wrens, Pied Butcherbirds, Rainbow Lorikeets, White-plumed Honeyeaters, and Red Wattlebirds. White Ibis were feeding in the Park as well.*

## THE GREAT DINGO DEBATE COMES TO DUBBO

Anyone catch the to-and-fro in the Daily Liberal lately about a recent sighting of Dingoes near Dubbo? Central West Livestock Health and Pest Authority (LHPA) has indicated that wild dogs have been identified by movement-activated infra-red cameras on forest and private land near Mendooran and Mogriguy.

In a recent Daily Liberal article, Dubbo resident Craig Heading defends the pure blood Dingo, article link, here: [Article](#)

It is believed that the Dingo has been locally extinct for around 50 years — should they be protected, or eliminated to protect sheep production?

Most sheep attacks are believed to be from mixed breed dogs/dingoes, and there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that Dingoes can assist in environmental health by suppressing rabbit, cat and fox numbers in the landscape. See 2007 'Cosmos' article here: [Article](#).



## AROUND THE MEMBERSHIP

There's lots going on at the moment! Various interesting tidbits from around the membership:

**JOSEPH BANKS AND THE FLORA OF THE EAST COAST EXHIBITION: Dubbo Regional Gallery. Now until 8 August.** This exhibition features coloured engravings of Sydney Parkinson's original drawings which recorded the coastal plants collected by Sir Joseph Banks and Dr. Daniel Carl Solander on Capt. James Cook's first voyage around the world 1768-1771. An excellent exhibition that is well worth a look for all interested in natural history.



**Central West CMA INFFER process:** Adam Hook, Catchment Officer of the CMA has provided us with an update on the INFFER process—the Dubbo local workshop and the main strategy workshop were attended by several Dubbo Field Nats:

- The community workshops went very well with a total of about 350 important natural assets identified by the Central West Community at the 12 workshops held across the catchment. Local Government and State Agencies in the Central West were also given a chance to tell us what their priority assets were in a couple of workshops following the community nights.
- Since then we've been sorting through the data and digitally mapping the assets that were nominated at the workshops. A big task that has been completed.
- Recently the Central West CMA held a workshop with a number of "expert theme teams" to look at all the assets nominated and come up with a list of priority assets. The CMA is currently gathering information and considering the shortlist of assets for potential investment down the track. All assets that were nominated by the community will remain on the long list asset register and could one day be targeted for investment.
- The Central West CMA's aim is to report back to the community eventually with a draft Catchment Action Plan as well as a list of assets that have been prioritised for investment. This should also enable community groups or members to look at where their nominated asset has got to in the whole process.

**DFNCS Website Updates:** The Field Nats website continues to grow—new additions include recent newsletters, the Birds in Backyards brochure and new front page.

See our 'hit count' on the right for the last six months. Web search 'bots' would be a large proportion of these - but even if only 50% of hits are real people, that's between 70 and 150 visitors per month to the site.

**Riverbank Nesting Boxes:** Elsie Howe has been in contact with Dubbo City Council about the nesting boxes near Sandy Beach. Lynton Auld, Manager, Landcare Services replied with the following information:

- The nest boxes were constructed and installed as a 'Green Corps' project.
- These boxes were a trial and have met with mixed results. Boxes are attracting an array of wildlife, including possums, parrots, ducks, kookaburras and bees, they are also however offering Starlings a nesting source in these urban sites.
- Feral bird exclusion technology is available and will be utilised shortly. At the same time, all boxes will be examined for security of installation and construction. Faulty boxes will be removed with a view to future repair. There has been a delay in this process with Council pursuing the purchase of its own high lift work platform ("cherry picker"). Once this machine is on board and staff adequately trained we expect substantial cost savings for nest box installation, inspection and repair.

Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits
Jan 2010	146	247
Feb 2010	157	262
Mar 2010	314	464
Apr 2010	251	399
May 2010	298	618
<b>Jun 2010</b>	175	290
Jul 2010	0	0
Aug 2010	0	0
Sep 2010	0	0
Oct 2010	0	0
Nov 2010	0	0
Dec 2010	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1341</b>	<b>2280</b>

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## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**July 20 Social Meeting:** Speaker: Anne Holst, NSW NPWS, *Toorale Station*

**July 25 Field Trip: Goonoo Conservation Area:** Wattles on display!

**July 29 Committee Meeting:** Thursday 7:30pm Contact Kerry M: 0427 480 440

**August 1 National Tree Day:** Wattle Grove Working Bee

**August 17 Social Meeting:** Speaker from Little River Landcare about their projects

**August 21/22: Macquarie Marshes Campout:** Dubbo Field Nats & Orange Field Nats

**September 1: National Wattle Day —** <http://www.wattleday.asn.au/>

**September 11** (Saturday) DFNCs Environmental Forum, Western Plains Cultural Centre

**September 26** celebrating World Rivers Day, RiverSmart 'Macquarie Blue' event



More detail on above events will follow in future Field Notes Newsletters... If you want to find out more about what's going on, or get involved - join now!

## NOTES FOR MEMBERS

### **CHANGE TO START TIME OF WINTER SOCIAL MEETINGS**

The temperature and light means we have opted to start the social meetings with **supper at 7pm**. The regular meeting will commence at the normal time of 7:30pm. Feedback to the committee welcome.

### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS SOUGHT**

Interest is sought from the membership for additional Committee Members and in particular, an 'Activities Officer'. This is a proposed new position to focus on field trip organization and planning. Please contact a committee member to discuss.

### **GUEST SPEAKERS & FIELD TRIP LEADERS WANTED**

If you know of someone, somewhere, doing something extraordinary, contact them and ask if they would like to present their story or host a field trip. Contact the committee with any ideas.

### **FIELD NOTES CONTRIBUTIONS**

If you have any articles, photographs, comments, letters or suggestions you would like to make, then send them in! Submission deadline is last Thursday of each month.

Please remember that the newsletter is edited by the efforts & time permitting of dedicated volunteers!

The Editor, PO Box 1171, Dubbo, NSW 2830 or Email : [contact@dubbofieldnats.org.au](mailto:contact@dubbofieldnats.org.au)

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### **DFNCS SOCIAL MEETINGS:**

THIRD TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH. **Supper 7:00pm, Meeting 7:30pm**

Venue: Kurrajong Room, 1st Floor Community Arts Building

Western Plains Cultural Centre, cnr Gipps & Wingewarra Streets, Dubbo

### **MONTHLY DFNCS FIELD TRIPS:**

Usually the SUNDAY FOLLOWING SOCIAL MEETINGS.

Occasionally DFN&CS hold special events & field trips, of which further details are advised in our the members' newsletter, "*Field Notes*".

### **'BIRDS AND BOTANY FIELD TRIPS:**

EVERY SECOND FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH

Pending interest at the monthly social meeting or field trip.

