



DUBBO FIELD NATURALIST & CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.

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

www.dubbofieldnats.org.au

FIELD NOTES

December 2010

GUEST SPEAKER AND FIELD TRIP INFORMATION

JANUARY FIELD TRIP: MT. KAPUTAR NATIONAL PARK, NARRABRI

Friday—Sunday 28/29/30 January 2011. Details inside!

Trip leader: Janis Hosking 6887 2692

**THE COMMITTEE WISHES YOU AND YOUR
FAMILIES ALL THE BEST FOR THE FESTIVE
SEASON.**

SEE YOU IN 2011!



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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:

**Dubbo Field
Naturalist &
Conservation
Society Inc.**

PO BOX 1171,
DUBBO, NSW 2830

contact@dubbofieldnats.org.au

OFFICE BEARERS 2010:

PATRON

Terry Korn PSM

PRESIDENT

Kerry Palmer
0427 480 440

contact@dubbofieldnats.org.au

VICE PRESIDENT

Rob Taylor

CORRESPONDENCE SECRETARY

Janis Hosking

MINUTES SECRETARY

Joan Rheinberger

TREASURER

Gisela Wallace

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Tim Hosking

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Len Wallace
Dick McFarlane
Craig Arms

RECORDS OFFICER

Craig Arms

records@dubbofieldnats.org.au

WEBSITE OFFICER

Tim Hosking

[webmaster@
dubbofieldnats.org.au](mailto:webmaster@dubbofieldnats.org.au)

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Recent Rainfall in the Central West caused flooding of similar proportions of 1990 event, causing subsequent damage to many with stock and property losses. In this region the State Government has declared the local government areas of Coonamble, Dubbo, Warren, Narromine, Gilgandra, Wellington, Parkes, Warrumbungle and Mid Western Regional natural disaster areas allowing financial assistance to flow to affected communities.

Fortunately premature assumptions that we would have to start the Wattlegrove from scratch (!) are unfounded. See later in this newsletter for **photos** taken at the Wattlegrove as the river peaked & post flood -it appears all those plants that couldn't breathe under the prolonged submerge are the ones that gave up.

Now that the flood waters have subsided, we can make an informed decision and consult among our membership regarding availability for a little post flood attention. We are thinking sometime in late January.

We propose to plant groundcovers –endemic natives of course- and perhaps some mulching too. The low maintenance nature of the site is a priority.

I propose that we confirm any arrangements by 10 January 2011 to facilitate Council lending a hand to this aim. So please do contact us at contact@dubbofieldnats.org.au if you can help out to assist in restoring the Wattlegrove to its former glory. Feel free to pull any pesky weeds that may emerge in the interim when you visit the site- but do take care.

As some of you are aware, the proposed Mosaic Mural Project upon the old Pump Station piers has stalled to due to the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC), being the owners of the structure, and their lack of support for the project. However there are more behind the scenes discussions taking place & we hope there will be a brighter outcome – with more love ! in the New Year. A local Artist is very keen to engage & has developed a design inspired by Wattles.

As Dubbo Field Nats is traditionally in recess December/ January we will all be taking a well earned break- from our paid **and** voluntary commitments.

My sincere gratitude to the awesome efforts of the committee and all our passionate members for their contribution toward the aims of our society this year.

Peace to all at Christmas time.

Cheers Kerry ☺



A scan of Kerry's shirt, worn to the Council LEP session. Classic!

EDITOR'S CORNER

Thank you to all contributors for your efforts this year to bring interesting stories, questions and information to the membership. I look forward to receiving many more excellent contributions next year. Best wishes for the festive season!

WATTLE GROVE STATUS

A location dear to the heart of Field Nats is the Dubbo Wattle Grove at the railway bridge.

After an inspection following the floods I can report the grove has survived relatively intact. We've lost some of the lower-growing plants and a fair few of the plants planted in August, however the core of the grove is OK.

The committee may try to organise a weekend cleanup in January—stay tuned!



FIELDTRIP INFO—28/29/30 JANUARY CAMPOUT TO MT KAPUTAR

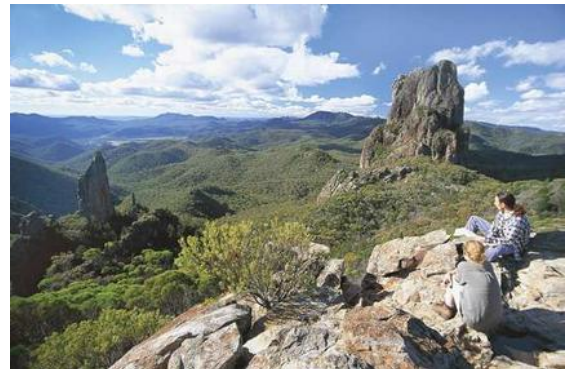
Info for the planned January Campout is as follows:

Mount Kaputar national Park is located on the edge of the NSW north west slopes, centred on the Nandewar Range. An area of 775ha around the summit of Mt. Kaputar became a reserve for public recreation in 1925. The reserve has grown and now covers an area of around 51,000ha.

There are lots of good easy walks and lookouts, some wheelchair accessible, and nearly all with great views.

Main Campsite:

We will be camping at Bark Hut campground. Fees apply. It is an unpowered site but has showers and gas or electric BBQs.



Alternative Accommodation

For those who wish Dawson Springs campground has 3 self-contained cabins available for hire. Bookings are essential and should be made NOW through the NPWS Narrabri Area Office. PHONE: 6792 7300. Several people may wish to share a cabin. You will have to take your own linen and bedding. A minimum booking of two nights is required.

Access:

The roads are suitable for 2WD vehicles, but the road is steep and winding and not suitable for caravans.

Other Info:

Campers must bring their own FIREWOOD! BBQs are supplied in campgrounds.

RSVP:

If interested please let me know by phoning 6887 2692 or emailing glossyblack@crt.net.au. We will probably travel separately but I will need to know who is coming.



Some excellent photos taken at Noosa by Jayne Bleechmore

Left: Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo enjoying a Banksia

Right: Pandanus. Minds out of the gutter, folks!



CHRISTMAS PARTY REPORT

A great time has had by all at the Field Nat's Christmas get-together at Arthur & Janis Hosking's house.

The weather and company were superb!

Field Nats enjoying the Christmas food and Spirit! ...and beer, wine etc etc
(Photo: T. Hosking)



MARSHES UPDATE

by Tim Hosking

While some people might be sweating about the recent rains, there are others that you won't find complaining—those trying to arrest the decline of the Marshes.

Just thought I'd update those who have an interest in the place and/or attended the August Marshes trip.

With the flood peak past and dam still well over 100%, discharges down the river will continue to be at a level qualifying for a 'fresh' with some overbank flooding. These are critical for ongoing floodplain health.

Currently there are several waterbird colonies present in the Marsh, including a Straw-necked Ibis colony of some 15,000 nests (private lands, shown in attached photo), Intermediate Egret/ Great Egret/Nankeen Night Heron colonies in inundated Red Gum forest (both public and private lands) and plenty of other activity from waterfowl like Magpie Geese, ducks, herons and cormorants.

Prior to the November rains the season was shaping up to be a one-in-ten year flood, now its more like a one-in-twenty, and certainly useful for revitalising a number of areas that have been parched since 2000.



Straw-necked Ibis colony in the Monkeygar Swamp Reed-bed, about 15,000 nests strong. (Photo: Dr. T. Ralph)

MEMBER'S CONTRIBUTION

Gone Batty? Read these books for more info—by Elsie Howe

I doubtless wasn't the only Nat who was intrigued by the talk about micro-bats given by Marc Irvine at our September meeting. I certainly hot-footed it into town the next day to Macquarie Regional Library, to see if they had anything by Churchill, the presumably current Australian expert in the field, from mention Marc made of the latest bat classification by this author.

And yes, *Australian Bats 2nd ed (2008)* was there, and borrowable – and (did I tune out at the wrong time during Marc's talk?) I was surprised to discover that Churchill is a *woman*. And what an engaging and readable book Sue Churchill has created.

Not only stacks of facts, excellent colour photos and illustrations to aid identification (OK, penis length is one criterion for some species, don't say I didn't warn you!) but also the sort of 'in the field' anecdotes with which Nats empathise.

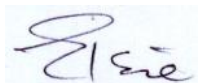
Sue must be endlessly ferreting around in the most unlikely of man-made places to locate roosting bats, as well as natural sites such as caves, which Marc mentioned. I thought of the explanations our own Harold Grant must have given during his seed-collecting career, when folks came across him up a ladder in the middle of nowhere!

For instance, for the Lesser Long-eared Bat, *Nyctophilus geoffroyi* (a preserved specimen of which visitor to our meeting, Bill Robinson, brought along, which he'd found dead in a drum on a property out near the airport at the end of last summer) Sue notes that she has 'found them roosting inside a rolled-up canvas swag and in Fairy Martin nests' (which Marc had also mentioned as bat roost-sites). She continues 'they also roost under piles of bricks or in old hanging clothing.' Presumably, remote abandoned buildings are the sort of sites in which we can anticipate Sue to unexpectedly pop up!

Sue goes into detail about equipment and technique for catching, measuring and safely releasing bats, and the various bat detectors which can aid identifying many (currently not all) Australian species. It's fascinating comparing the frequency-readouts printed in the book, taking on board the complex habitat-related echolocation methods employed by various bat species.

If that's not enough for your 'batty' interests, Steve Parish's *Bats*, in the *Wild Australia Guide* series, is also on the library shelf. Another good read. Only 96 pages, as opposed to Churchill's 255, so a good starter, certainly for junior Nats.

Enjoy your discoveries along the bat trail – including reading about the 16 micro-bat species which Marc told us are currently listed as occurring within a 100km radius of Dubbo. Certainly hope we get Marc back at a later date to give us further insights into the world of bats!



NOVEMBER FIELDTRIP REPORT—GEURIE RESERVE

by Tim Hosking

Over 15 people were met at the Geurie Cemetery in warm though fine weather by Phil Purcell, NSW DECCW Archaeologist, who proceeded to talk about the local Aboriginal History and relationship with resources, water and each other. Phil talked passionately about the need to appreciate and learn about the recent and not-so-recent history of Aboriginal occupation and use of the land.

Following the talk, those keen for a wander did indeed wander across the creek and into the 'quarry' part of the reserve.

There were plenty of great flowering shrubs and forbs, such as the attractive and diverse *Swainsona galegifolia* (Smooth Darling Pea) and *Dichopogon fimbriatus* (Nodding Chocolate Lily).

Some great birds were seen and heard, including the White-bellied (Little) Cuckoo-Shrike, Shining Bronze-cuckoo, White-browed Babblers and we were greeting back at the cars with the best look at a stunning male Mistletoebird you'll ever get. The whole place was full of vocal Rufous Songlarks and Peaceful Doves as expected for that time of year. In all, a great turnout for the last fieldtrip of the year.

MURRAY DARLING BASIN PLAN GUIDE MEETING REPORT

by Cilla Kinross, Central West Environment Council

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority has prepared a Guide to the proposed Basin Plan and has held a series of community consultations to explain the contents of this guide to interested persons.

I (in my capacity as chair of the Central West Environment Council) attended the meeting at Dubbo on 4th November, along with Bev Smiles (Secretary, CWEC & Inland Rivers Network), Jane Paul (Orange Field Naturalist & Conservation Society), plus a few members of Dubbo Field Naturalists and members from Coonabarabran. Most of the other attendees (perhaps 4-500?) appeared to be Macquarie irrigators, but there was some representation from Australian Floodplain Graziers Association and the horticulture and grape industry from the Mudgee and Orange areas.

My first impression was that the meeting had been hijacked by a group with white tee-shirts with 'Save the Murray' emblazoned on them. I was amazed that there were some many environmentalists at the meeting! However, after asking one tee-shirt wearer to describe their main goal and it turned out that they were irrigators who want the barrages removed from the mouth of the river, so that the lakes are flooded with salt water and there will be no more need to send fresh water down the Murray to flush out the salt. They maintain these lakes always were salt and should be returned to their 'natural' state, but I think the jury is still out on that one.

The other rather startling picture that greeted us was a series of posters opposing the MDBA's plan, which were adorning the area below the stage where the MDBA presenters were sitting. It was almost as if the MDBA had placed these there themselves or had at least endorsed them, but presumably they had been erected by the irrigators and the panel just decided to put up with them.

The panel then outlined the major features of the plan and clearly stated that water reductions proposed (3 -4000 g/L pa) were at the lower end of the range needed to restore the key ecosystem processes and environmental assets of the basin (3000-7600 g/L pa). The reason for this was that the authority considered that the economic pain of reducing water at the higher end of the range would be so great as to be in breach of the new Water Act (which was the catalyst for the Basin Plan). Furthermore the reductions would come from Commonwealth water buy-backs and efficiencies facilitated by the relevant states.

After a comprehensive introduction to the plan, it was time for questions. I put my hand up straightaway; however, it took some 40 minutes before I was able to pose a question. Bev had the same problem. I'm not sure if this was misogyny or redneckery, but it was annoying, especially as so many of the voluble participants were politicians. I asked whether the authority had any plans to undertake any economic modelling on the benefits that a healthy ecosystem with clean and plentiful water would bring to those rural industries depending on them eg tourism. This brought a response that this modelling (as with much of the other socio-economic forecasting) was still on the books.

Behind us were sitting some very voluble irrigators, to whom I spoke after the meeting. It was interesting that, after calming down, that they agreed that more water needed to go back to the environment, but clearly didn't agree that it was their livelihoods that should be threatened. I guess only when the river has turned into a ditch will it be realised that not only should be sharing the environment with the other species, many of which are threatened with extinction in the basin, but that communities are also dependent on a healthy river basin.

[*editor's note: copies of the guide to the plan are available at the MDBA website, here:*

<http://www.thebasinplan.mdba.gov.au>]

INTERESTING RECORDS LAST MONTH (NOVEMBER 2010)

A quieter month , with some interesting birds and a new big area of *Rulingia procumbens* to keep the monthly list ticking over.

Please send records to the Records Officer at records@dubbofieldnats.org.au

Note: Pr = pair; dy = dependent young; y = young; n = nesting

Species	No.	Date	Location	Observer	Notes
BIRDS					
Common Koel	1	3/11/10	Pine Hill Drive	Janice Hosking	Uncommon summer migrant
Peregrine Falcon	2	06/11/10	Cooreena Road	David Geering	Rare resident.
Brush Cuckoo	1	14/11/10	Cumboogle	Craig Arms	Rare summer visitor. <i>Previous records date back to pre-1970.</i>
Magpie Goose	19	14/11/10	Backwater Cowal, Tullamore Rd, Narromine	David Geering	Rare Visitor
Great Egret	10	14/11/10	Backwater Cowal, Tullamore Rd, Narromine	David Geering	Rare Visitor. Wetlands and Dams.
Plumed Whistle-duck	~60	14/11/10	Farm dam, 5km east Narromine	David Geering	Uncommon. Possibly resident in limited areas
King Parrot	1	12/11/10	Pine Hill Drive	Janice Hosking	Uncommon resident. Woodlands and urban areas.
White-browed Woodswallow		12/11/10	Macquarie River	Janice Hosking	nest building in a River red gum
Dollarbird	2	12/11/10	Macquarie River	Janice Hosking	Inspecting a hollow in River Red Gum
Little Button-Quail	1F	16/11/10	Tim's Front Yard (South Dubbo)	Tim Hosking	Rare. Possible resident. Possibly under reported
Azure Kingfisher	2	16/11/10 onward	Butlers Falls	David Geering	Rare resident. Watercourses
PLANTS					
<i>Rulingia procumbens</i>	10+	3/11/10	Goonoo SCA	Janice & Tim Hosking	Restricted in area, from Gilgandra to Dunedoo to Dubbo. It likes disturbed areas, hence it has been found after the fires in Goonoo quite widespread. It has a tiny white flower, flowering at the moment. It has glossy green leaves a bit like Holly in appearance and spreads across the ground.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

January 28/29/30 : Summer campout— MT. KAPUTAR NATIONAL PARK, NARRABRI
Trip Leader: Janis Hosking See inside for details.

February 15: first Social meeting of 2011!

March 15: DFN&CS Inc Annual General Meeting



NOTES FOR MEMBERS

CALL FOR SOCIAL MEETING RAFFLE ITEMS

Gisela has indicated our stocks of social meeting raffle prizes is running low—if anyone has any items they could donate to be raffle prizes please let her know, or better yet—bring them to a social meeting.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS FOR 2011

Please give some thought as to whether you are willing and able to get more involved in your Club by becoming a committee member. Current members would happily discuss what's involved.

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. Send to: The Editor, PO Box 1171, Dubbo, NSW 2830 or Email : contact@dubbofieldnats.org.au

NOTE: THIS SOCIETY GOES INTO RECESS DECEMBER – JANUARY *for a well earned break*



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.

