

GEELONG
NATURALIST



Quarterly magazine of the Geelong Field Naturalists Club

In this issue...

Identifying bird calls with AI

**Wangaratta multi-day excursion
highlights**

Revitalising Jerringot Wetland

**Visiting Porronggitj Karrong on
the Barwon**

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The GFNC respects, studies and explores the land, skies, waterways, plants and wildlife of our region, Wadawurrung Country.

**GEELONG
NATURALIST**
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The magazine provides a channel for Club members and others to share and communicate their knowledge and research on natural history.

SUBMISSIONS

Submissions of a scientific nature or as informal contributions are welcome and will be due on **1 March** for the March issue. Email to naturalist@gfnc.org.au

Guidelines for contributors can be downloaded from www.gfnc.org.au/about-us/publications

COVER IMAGE

The cover image of a Turquoise Parrot was taken by Pete Sullivan on 13/10/25 at Wangaratta during the GFNC campout (see pp. **9–11** for the full report).

SEANA Camp 27 to 29 March 2026

The club is hosting the autumn 2026 SEANA camp. A small organising group (Graham Possingham, Bernie and Barry Lingham, Deborah Evans, and Phil and Alison Watson) is working through the details, and we will be looking for volunteers to help make it a success. We will lead a suite of excursions in the Geelong region.

SEANA is the South East Australian Naturalists' Association Inc. and we are one of 19 member clubs, almost all in Victoria. Member clubs run two camps each year, with around 90 people attending each time. We last hosted in 2016. You can find out more on their [website](#).

Jane Morrow is our new Secretary

Jane has volunteered to be club Secretary, and the Committee confirmed this in October. Handover is underway. We're still

looking for someone to take on the role of Treasurer. With the AGM in April, now is the time to consider whether you'd like to help the club run smoothly. It's not high finance and these days almost all is done online. Talk to me or Chris White if you want to know more.

65th Anniversary Celebration

On the afternoon of 11 April 2026, we are planning an event to celebrate our 65th anniversary, to be held at the Grovedale Community Hub. We last held something similar in 2011 for our 50th. Jane Morrow and Silvana Benacchio are leading this. You (and past members) will receive an invitation. There will be a small cost to cover catering and hall hire.

Members' Personal Information

The Committee has reviewed the club's need to collect and hold personal data of members. We've decided that we no longer need to ask for full mailing or residential addresses, just suburbs to help us

understand where members live. We'll also just ask for a single preferred phone number (mobile or landline). For past members we will retain only their name and the period during which they were a member. This limited information will be kept for one year following the member's departure. We will of course keep full address information for those of you without access to email.

You'll see that change when you receive the 2026 renewal notice and contact detail check in January. We will also clean up our spreadsheets and MailChimp records. For most of you our primary contact method is email, with phone as backup, so if either of those details change, please email the club as soon as possible. It's worth noting that we don't give out member's contact information to others who ask, we just pass on the request.

Graham Possingham

Update on *An Atlas of the Birds of the Geelong Region*

Craig Morley, *Geelong Bird Report* editor

It's been a huge project focusing on 1.3 million individual records of 340 bird species over 8 years with maps, graphs and photos, and detailing more than 400 species across a broader period including a review and re-assessment of the occurrence of many species across the recording region which covers 10 Local Government Areas.

All the species notes have been peer-reviewed by experts in their field, including Danny Rogers, Richard Loyn, Steve Debus, Grainne Maguire, Birgita Hansen, Inka Veltheim, Dan Weller, Dean Ingwersen and Peter Menkhorst. Peter has also kindly written the Foreword.

There'll be something in it for everyone, in fact, anyone who is interested in the birds of our region. For example all records of vocal mimicry across the *Geelong Bird Reports* 1984 to 2016 are

reviewed. Can you guess the species recorded mimicking the highest number of species? And there's much, much more with many new and interesting insights about the birds of this fascinating region.

It's currently with the desktop publisher.

We look forward to it being freely downloadable as a PDF in the new year from our GFNC website.

Great Southern BioBlitz

October 2025—results and highlights

Rod Lowther

The Great Southern BioBlitz (GSB) was held in October this year and it was encouraging to see many club members participating. The club has been involved with GSB since its launch five years ago.

The top six contributors for the Geelong project, both in number of observations and species recorded, were Susan Kruss, Graham Possingham, Lorraine Phelan, Andrea Dennett, Jenny Possingham and Janine Duffy. The top 10 observers contributed 64% of the observations recorded during the four-day event. For the Surf Coast Project notable contributors were Jeff Giddins, Sam Beddome, Pete Crowcroft, Susan Kruss, Emma Yearwood and Alison Watson. Thanks to everyone

who contributed. Some of the observations marked a 'Fav' by participants can be seen via this link: [Popular Observations](#).

Participants submitted observations from more than 220 locations, with both City of Greater Geelong and Surf Coast Projects showing a very respectable placing in the tables given our population sizes compared with league leaders.

As a group we have been participating in BioBlitzes since 2020. At this time we first became aware of the potential of iNaturalist to record nature in a simple way using the versatile system that has become available for use across multiple IT platforms. The first City Nature

Challenge (CNC) was a highlight for many as it was the first major introduction to a competitive BioBlitz event. The first CNC happened when we were all in lock down during the COVID epidemic and limited to venturing within a five km radius of where we lived.

Since then, we have been involved in 12 BioBlitzes, submitting a total of just over 47,000 observations. For each BioBlitz, a project was established with a standard area to enable direct comparisons between the various events and to follow participation trends.

These 12 BioBlitzes are recorded in an umbrella project which can be viewed here: [GFNC BioBlitz Events iNaturalist](#). By clicking on each BioBlitz event, you can see

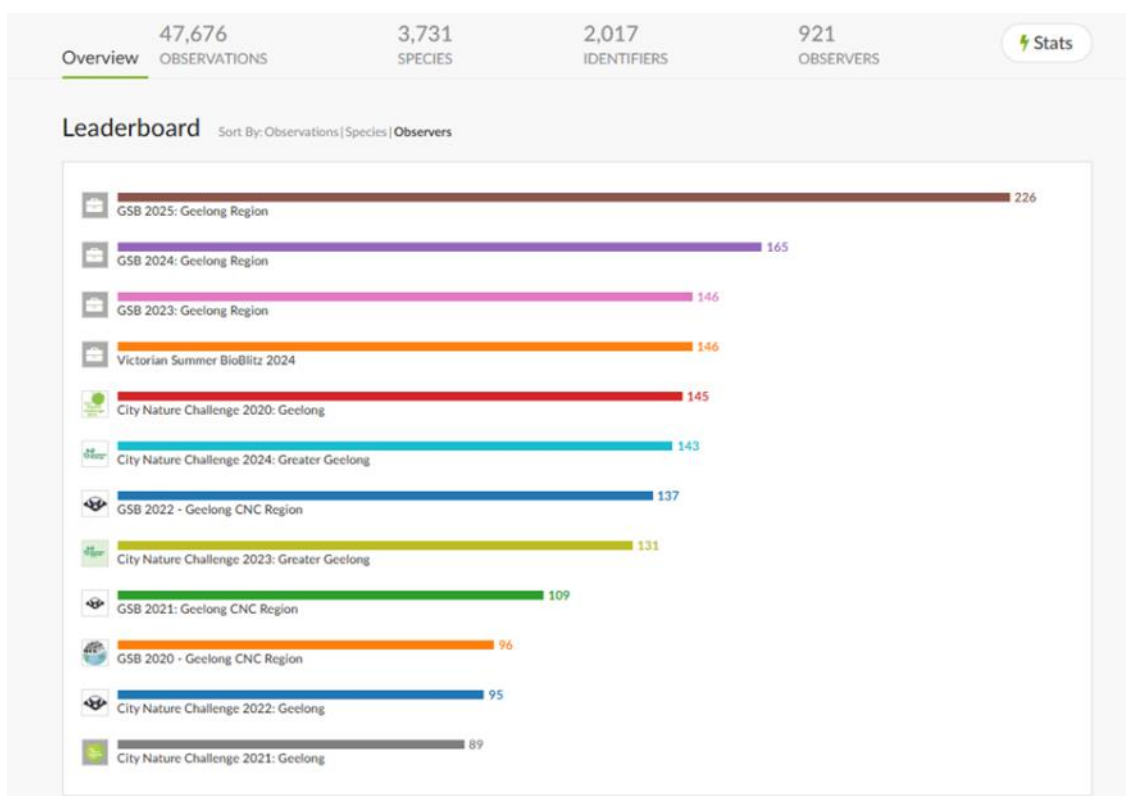


Figure 1: Growth in the number of observers who participated in iNaturalist GSB and CNC events from 2021–2025

and review the details about that particular event.

While our best BioBlitz in regard to number of observations and species remains the 2022 GSB, the highest number of observers participated in this latest BioBlitz

(see Figure 1). This indicates the steady rise in people becoming aware of iNaturalist and venturing out into the bush to make observations.

In 2026, the next BioBlitz is the CNC occurring over the ANZAC

long weekend. Let's see if we can nudge the 2022 GSB off its spot!

Click and join the Bioblitz project here: **[City Nature Challenge 2026: Greater Geelong iNaturalist](#)**.



The BirdWeather PUC

Richard Alcorn and Margaret Alcorn

The BirdWeather PUC (Portable Universe Codec) is a compact, AI-powered device that records bird calls and identifies the calls using the BirdNET neural network. You can use the PUC at home or in the bush. It is not expensive.

The PUC is accompanied by an app that you install on your phone that gives you a real-time list of the species that it has recorded along with the location and time of the recording. On the app you can also see a daily, weekly or all-time listing of all detections. If you are in any doubt as to the accuracy of any detection you can replay the call and decide for yourself. We have a PUC at our home in Ocean Grove, purchased in February 2025, and estimate that it correctly identifies around 99.5% of detections.

You can listen to any recording made by any PUC which has shared its data publicly on the **[BirdWeather web site](#)**. For example, to review the recordings of all Swift Parrots detected by our PUC (PUC-11443) in 2025, filter the list of recordings on the **[Explore Data](#)** page of the BirdWeather web site with Species=Swift Parrot,

Station=PUC-11443 and Time Range=1 Feb 2025 to 31 Jul 2025. You can also download publicly available data for further analysis.

The PUC runs day and night, never gets tired, and is extremely good at distinguishing bird calls from other sounds. The BirdNET neural network is completely consistent in its identifications, can identify most birds in the world by call (which is a greater capability than any single person) and will continue to improve rapidly over the next few years.

The sound recordings collected by thousands of PUCs and similar devices around the world will shed much light on numerous questions regarding the occurrence, movements and vocalisation patterns of birds. We suggest that this immense capability can be harnessed by members of the club, individually or collectively, to answer questions of local interest to us in the Geelong region. For example: How many Pacific Koels visit Geelong each year? Which lorikeets visit Yellow Gum Reserve when the Yellow Gums are in flower? When in the season do Eurasian Skylarks start and finish



Photo: **[Shop BirdWeather PUC](#)**

singing? The questions are endless.

Our PUC has already shown us that at least one Swift Parrot *Lathamus discolor* was present in Ocean Grove in every month from March until July in 2025 (see Figure 1). Swift Parrots migrate from Tasmania to the mainland in autumn and return in spring, with some passing through Ocean Grove. We commenced recording bird calls on our PUC on 2 February 2025, and between then and the end of July the PUC recorded Swift Parrots on 50 occasions and on 20 different days. Over the same period, we personally heard (and often also saw) Swift Parrots on 13 occasions and on 11 different days. Undoubtedly the PUC

recorded more Swift Parrots than we did because it was outside and listening all the time and stayed at home rather than going shopping or indulging in overseas and interstate trips.

It is curious that the PUC failed to detect Swift Parrots on several occasions when we clearly heard a Swift Parrot whilst at home. We do not know the reason for this, but since the PUC only identifies

one species in each nine-second soundscape, it is possible that other species were calling more prominently at the time.

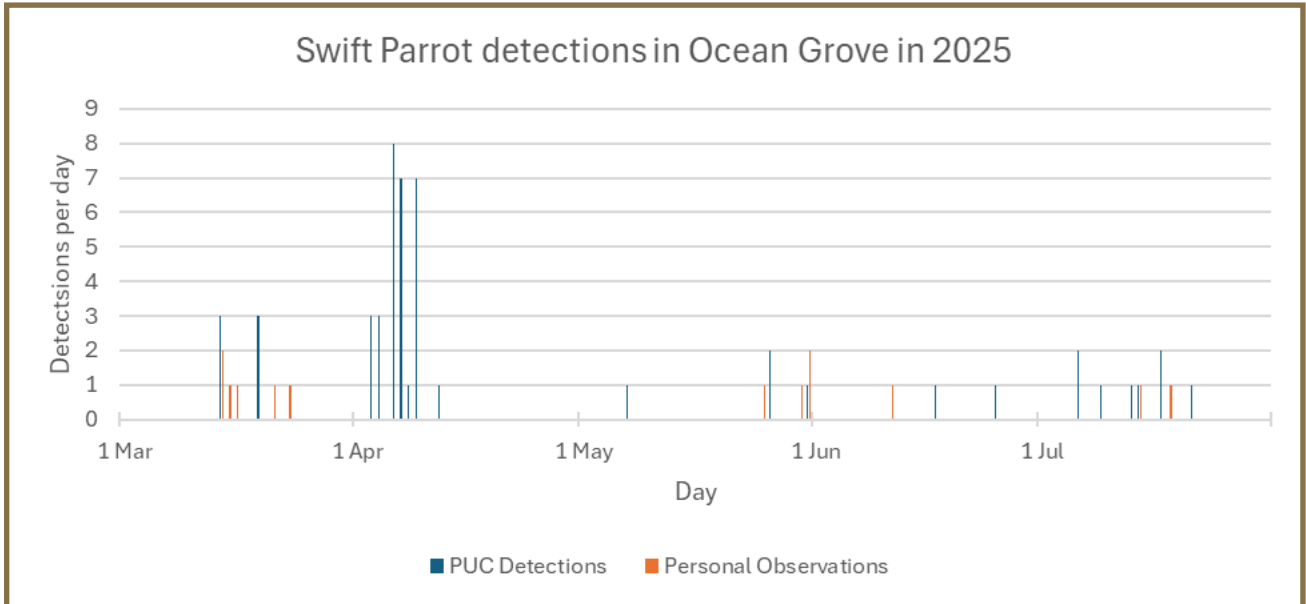


Figure 1: Detections of Swift Parrot at 60–64 Goandra Drive, Ocean Grove over the period 2 February to 31 July 2025 by a) PUC-11443 and b) personal observations by the authors



Swift Parrot
Photo: Adam Fry [ML64252731](#)

Sweat bees

Wendy Cook

Late one September afternoon, I walked across a small patch of native grassland, enjoying the flowers, especially the Golden Moths. These indigenous orchids have a slightly compressed

appearance, with one yellow petal above another, and one spreading outward on each side. Delicate dark brown markings highlight the base of each petal and are visible deep within the flower. A few of

these orchids had an insect with its head inside the flower. Each visitor had a petal to rest on and a sheltering petal roof. None of them moved. They were males of a kind of native bee known as sweat bees

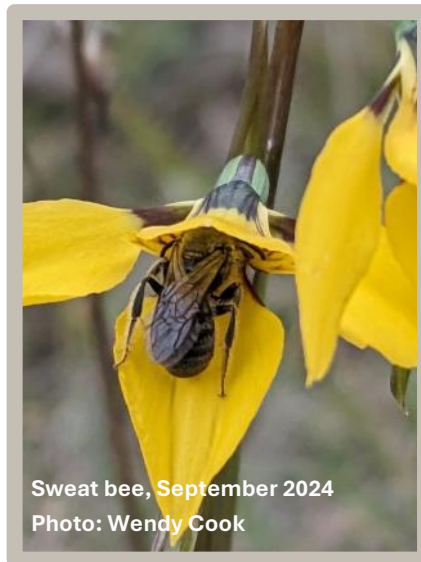
(*Lasioglossum* sp.), and they had settled in for a good night's rest.

These sweat bees, like many of our native bees, live a solitary life unlike the more familiar European Honey Bees. They are also smaller, and mostly black with only faint stripes visible on their abdomen. Males sometimes gather at night, and I have seen small groups nestled into a spacious daisy flower. Females live separately to the males, and spend their nights in burrows. They may use an abandoned hole or dig their own, or make their home inside a hollow stem, such as a reed. Some sweat bees construct a chimney-shaped turret of earth above their entrance hole. This can stop soil from falling into the burrow, keep out water if there is flooding and make it harder for unwanted visitors to find the hole and enter. It may also help to regulate the temperature inside and allow the female to leave her scent so that she can more easily locate her home.

The burrow is not only for night-time accommodation, but also a place to rear the next generation. As they are solitary bees, there is no queen bee in charge, and no worker bees. Sometimes sweat bees share a burrow but live independently. All females can mate and lay eggs. Burrows are commonly a vertical hole with side chambers. In these, eggs are laid, individually or in small groups. Each egg is provided with sufficient food to keep the young bee fed. In the chamber, it will hatch as a grub, moult several times and when it is full-sized, spin a cocoon. It will emerge as an adult bee and leave the burrow to begin its own adult life. The food which

the mother bee provides for her young is a mixture of pollen and nectar from flowers. All sweat bees eat these, the nectar supplying carbohydrates, and pollen yielding fat and protein. They also need salt and minerals, and one source is human sweat. The bees may land on arms or legs to collect it, which is the reason for their name.

Sweat bees are quite furry, so while foraging in flowers, a large amount of pollen attaches to their legs and body. This is transferred to other blooms the bee visits. In this way, sweat bees are highly effective pollinators. There are



many different species of sweat bees. Some can use a technique known as buzz pollination, required for flowers in which the pollen is difficult to release. The bee holds the flower by biting it, then works its flight muscles without moving its wings. This causes the flower to vibrate in a manner which allows pollen to escape. The bee makes a different buzzing sound while pollinating flowers in this way. Another type of native bee, the blue-banded bee (*Amegilla* sp.) has a different way of buzz pollinating flowers. Instead of holding them in its jaws, it taps

its head on the flower's anthers 350 times a second, releasing the pollen. Buzz pollination is required to pollinate some indigenous flowers and some crops, such as tomatoes. European Honey Bees are unable to do this.

Sweat bees and blue-banded bees are two types of native bees that I have seen locally. I have probably seen others but have not been able to identify them. There are two thousand or more species of native bees in Australia, but they are not as well-known as European Honey Bees. While the majority live a solitary lifestyle, some build their nests close together, and a few have communal nests with a queen bee. Some are furry while others shine with metallic colours. They pollinate flowers, but few make honey. Like many other animals, they are suffering from loss of habitat and poisoning by pesticides. We can help them by growing native plants in our gardens, with flowers all year round. Patches of bare ground and dead wood gives them places to burrow. Watch the flowers in your garden or in the bush, to see which insects visit them, and if any of them are native bees.

Previously published in Meredith and District News, November 2024.

References

[What is pollination and why is it important?](#)

[Buzz Pollination: The Secret Dance of Australian Native Bees](#)
[From A to Bee: Australian bees need our help, but which ones?](#)

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Jerringot Wetland tree planting day

September 2025

Rod Lowther

On a beautiful September morning, 15 club members gathered at Jerringot for a special occasion—a day dedicated to environmental stewardship and community remembrance. The purpose was twofold, firstly to conduct a working bee involving mulch spreading and tree planting and secondly to formally open the newly modified bird hide.

The City of Greater Geelong had provided a delivery of native wood chip tree mulch that the group spread over an area of about 400 sq m. Weeding and general rubbish and tree branches were first removed to prepare the site. The group then prepared the ground for planting 15 tube stock. This consisted of Silver Wattle *Acacia dealbata*, Woolly Teatree *Leptospermum lanigerum* and River Bottlebush *Callistemon sieberi* near the approach to the bird hide, while Tall Sedge *Carex*

appressa and Basket Sedge *Carex tereticaulis* were planted immediately in front of the new bird hide ‘wings’ or side walls. This will achieve the overall objective of making the bird hide a much more inviting place to visit and watch the birds out in the wetland pond.

The new side walls were designed to reduce disturbance as people approach and enter the bird hide. They were built by club member Brad Ferrier who employed ‘Surefoot’ fittings to hold the walls in place. These fittings raise the side panel some 40 mm off the ground, allowing water flow under the structure during flooding. This also reduces any impact on the soil and therefore any First Nations cultural artifacts that may be present.

The original bird hide was constructed in the 1980s by club Life Member Graeme Tribe who passed away in 2021. The robust

design and his use of thick planks have helped it to remain a sound structure some 30 years later. A placard honouring Graeme’s building of the bird hide and his overall contribution to the club has been installed. Wilma Tribe joined us for morning tea and we took the opportunity to formally open the refurbished bird hide. We also honoured other club members who unfortunately have died over the last ten years. Their names were read out, and we recalled our interactions with them at club events, reminiscing about our friendships. We then took a moment of silence to remember Graeme and those others who are no longer with us.

A further planting day is scheduled for April 2026, and we hope many can attend to help. It will be interesting to see how these September plantings have grown over the summer.



Club members spreading mulch



Barry and Bernie Lingham with Wilma Tribe in front of the bird hide showing the new memorial sign



Graham and Jenny Possingham remove a dead tree stump

Photos: Rod Lowther

Excursion report

Porrongitj Karrong and Ovoid Sewer Aqueduct

21 September 2025



Aerial image of the Ovoid Sewer Aqueduct
Photo: Courtesy of Barwon Water

Deborah Evans

This excursion was the first time in recent years that we have visited the west side of the aqueduct structure and the first time we hadn't gone in summer. We nearly didn't manage to get there as the area had been waterlogged for some months—not really surprising as it's on a flood plain. However, we managed to get past the wettest sections of the track, with those who had not read the excursion notice carefully enough regretting not having brought their gumboots as requested!

We met at the Tanner Street entrance and after the usual preliminaries and welcome from our leader, Greg Robinson, Head of First Nation Values at Barwon Water, we heard a summary of the history of the aqueduct from Barwon Water's Stakeholder

Relations Lead, Kate Vallence. Greg then led us down the waterlogged track through lignum to the river. We followed the path round the river for a short distance, as Greg explained proposals for the 66-hectare flood plain site.

Ovoid Sewer Aqueduct

Constructed between 1913 and 1915, the aqueduct enabled gravity-fed transport of sewerage to the outfall at the sea at Black Rock, with Geelong being one of the first regional Victorian cities to implement plans for the construction of a sewerage system. It was an early use of reinforced concrete using the Considère system with its architecture derived from the Firth of Forth Bridge in Scotland. The aqueduct was added to the

historical, scientific (technical) and aesthetic significance to the State of Victoria. (Barwon Water)

Unfortunately, structural problems had started to appear as early as the 1920s, and repairs were not able to cope with the ongoing deterioration of the spiral reinforcing bars and the chemical processes causing the concrete to expand and break off. The aqueduct was replaced by an underground pipe to the east in 1992. However, given the heritage listing and the safety issues of falling concrete blocks, Barwon Water continued research on preservation techniques for many years, with the structure fenced off from the public as a safety measure in 1995 (Barwon Water). Currently the site cannot be accessed by the public for walking or canoeing under the spans of the aqueduct that cross the river.

Eventually after extensive engineering research, the decision was taken by Barwon Water to apply for a permit from Heritage Victoria to remove four of the 14 spans of the aqueduct so that the river and an area along the riverbank could be safely opened up to the public. The permit was granted in November 2020. However, once the detailed



Top: Ovoid Sewer Aqueduct

Right: Concrete decay

Photos: Courtesy of Barwon Water



Victorian Heritage Register in 1991 as a place of architectural,

planning to remove these four spans was conducted, further technical research concluded that there was unfortunately not going to be a safe way to remove these spans, and a new permit application to Heritage Victoria to safely demolish the whole structure with significant recognition of the heritage values was submitted in September 2025 (Barwon Water).

Exploring the cultural and environmental values of the site

The aqueduct sits on an area of parkland now designated as Porronggitj Karrong meaning 'Place of the Brolga'. As part of exploring opportunities for opening the area to the community, Barwon Water has been working together with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners to identify the Aboriginal cultural values of the river and area. Extensive environmental research on both the existing and original flora and fauna has also been conducted. A Community Reference Group (which includes a GFNC representative) was also established in 2020 to consider the various options for the aqueduct and the site and to guide the future Interpretation

Plan for the site. (Barwon Water 2025)

As we walked down to and then along the river, Greg filled us in on some of the environmental research being undertaken and on plans under development for coping with some of the environmental problems and ways of opening up the area for public access. The area would have had salt tolerant vegetation before construction of the weirs on the Barwon. However, although still subject to flooding, the area has been extensively grazed in the past. As a result, there are now introduced weeds as well as rabbits, and extensive growth of Tangled Lignum *Duma florulenta* covering much of the area to the west of the aqueduct, choking out other species. Other plants we noted were Coarse Dodder-laurel *Cassytha melantha* growing over some bushes and trees; Common Reed *Phragmites australis* and Water Ribbons *Cycnogeton procerum* in a shallow wetland; the yellow flowering Variable Groundsel (Fireweed) *Senecio pinnatifolius*; in the saline areas, Australian Salt-grass *Distichlis distichophylla* and Beaded

Glasswort *Salicornia quinqueflora* ssp. *quinqueflora*.

Given the site's name we were hoping to see Brolga, which have been seen there, but no luck this time. We did, however, see **32 bird species** and had some stunning observations of birds of prey with Wedge-tailed Eagle, White-bellied Sea Eagle and Little Eagle all in view at one point. It was also encouraging to see a number of 'crayfish' holes along the track as we had seen on our 2016 excursion and to hear frogs, including Eastern Common Froglet, in a number of places where small wetlands occur.

Our thanks to Bernie Lingham for the plant list and Graham Possingham for the bird list, and to Greg and Barwon Water for helping to organise the excursion and giving us an overview of future plans for the parkland.

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Learning about Porronggitj Karrong
Photo: Lynn Bunning

Excursion report

Multi-day trip to the Wangaratta region

10–13 October 2025

Barry and Bernie Lingham, Jeff Dagg, Graham and Jenny Possingham

Introduction

The decision to locate this year's campout at Wangaratta was an inspired choice.

The town is well worth visiting, with a conveniently located caravan park on the Ovens River just a short walk from the centre (Painters Island Holiday Park). The surrounding area offers many diverse habitats, plants, and wildlife.

We explored a range of interesting sites which are outlined in this report.

1. Friday morning: Hamilton Park community

This small community 4 km north of Glenrowan is near the southern end of the Warby Ranges in the Warby-Ovens National Park. Graham and Jenny led us through the local bushland reserve and nearby roadsides, which included stunning patches of massed flowering Bulbine Lilies *Bulbine bulbosa*, and proved to be good birding locations. A walk along the roadside next to an avocado farm enabled us to see two special birds—one beautiful Turquoise Parrot and several Double-barred Finches. During the morning **38 species were observed**. We also recorded two reptile species: **Robust Ctenotus** and **Southeastern Morethia Skink**. It was a great start to the weekend.

2. Friday afternoon: around the Holiday Park and Ovens River

Many birds were easily observed from the campground, including Noisy and Little Friarbirds, and White-throated Gerygones. A

Yellow-bellied Water Skink was observed sunning itself on a walkway.

Grey-headed Flying Foxes were noted on an evening walk.

During the campout, we did several walks along the adjacent Ovens River, adding to our bird tally of around 40 species from this area over 3-4-days.

3. Saturday morning: Chiltern and Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park, including Bartley's Block, Lake Anderson, Frogs Hollow, Honeyeater Picnic Area

Jeff Dagg has visited this area many times and he led us on this outing. The area around Chiltern is visited by bird enthusiasts from all over the world in the hope of finding some of the bush birds that can be found in the Box-Ironbark forests. The best time to visit is when the trees are in full bloom.

Yellow-bellied Water Skink, Wangaratta
10/10/25

Photo: Bernie Lingham



Above Left: Flowering patch of Bulbine lilies, Hamilton Park 10/10/25
Photo: Bernie Lingham

Above Right: Purple Beard Orchid, Bartley's Block, Chiltern 11/10/25
Photo: Lorraine Phelan

Even with limited amounts of blossom, there was still a wide range of birds noted. Species included Black-chinned and Fuscous Honeyeater, White-browed Babbler, Olive-backed Oriole, Red-capped Robin, and Turquoise Parrot. For

Fuscous Honeyeater, Spring Creek
Picnic Ground 12/10/25
Photo: Pete Sullivan



Above Left: Red-bellied Blacksnake,
No 1 Dam, Chiltern 11/10/25

Photo: Graham Possingham

Above Right: Spurwing Wattle, Spring
Creek Picnic Ground 11/10/25

Photo: Lorraine Phelan

more details of birds observed see
the main [eBird trip report](#).

While birdwatching, we also
documented notable plants along
our walk. At Bartley's Block,
Purple Beard Orchid *Calochilus
robertsonii* and Dusky Fingers
Caladenia fuscata were flowering.
We saw Mountain Grevillea
Grevillea alpina, Sticky Everlasting
Xerochrysum viscosum,
Small-leaf Parrot-pea *Dillwynia
phylicoides* and False Sarsaparilla
Hardenbergia violacea at several
sites. The first 'Blue' *Thelymitra*
sp. was found at Frogs Hollow.
Honeyeater Picnic Area, however,

stood out for its diverse range of
flowering plants, **all recorded on
iNaturalist**.

4. Saturday afternoon: No 1 Dam and No 2 Dam, Chiltern area

These two wetlands are
located south of Chiltern
and provided us with a good
opportunity to observe more
ducks and other waterbirds.

The
**Red-bellied
Blacksnake**
we saw at No 1
Dam was a
bonus. No 2
Dam had
adjacent
bushland
habitat, and
additional

birds were recorded, including
both dark and light morph
White-bellied Cuckoo-Shrike,
Peaceful Dove, Eastern Shrike-tit
and Diamond Firetail. For more
bird details see the main [eBird
trip report](#).

5. Sunday morning: Warby-Ovens National Park area–Ryans Lookout, Wenhams Camp, Spring Creek Picnic Ground and Tower Road

Exploring the Warby Ranges
allowed us to admire the diverse
habitats and abundance of
wildflowers found there. While
waiting for the full group to arrive
at Ryans Lookout we had time to
record Leopard Orchids *Diuris
pardina* and Midget Orchids
Pterostylis mutica, as well as
impressive specimens of
Queensland Grasstrees
Xanthorrhoea glauca ssp.
angustifolia.

Wenhams Camping area kept the

plant and bird enthusiasts busy.
**Twenty-eight bird species were
recorded**, including Pallid
Cuckoo, Restless Flycatcher,
Speckled Warbler, plus both
Western and White-throated
Gerygones, and White-winged
Trillers.

We recorded **27 plant species**,
including Slender Pimelea
Pimelea linifolia, Nodding Blue Lily
Stypandra glauca and Twining
Glycine *Glycine clandestina*.
Spring Creek Picnic Ground was
set amid granite outcrops. Several
interesting plants we saw there
included Spurwing Wattle *Acacia
triptera*, Small Vanilla-Lily
Arthropodium minus and several
patches of the very small Midget
Orchid *P. mutica*.

The stop along Tower Road
allowed us to see Sun Orchids;
Salmon Sun Orchid *Thelymitra
rubra* and some 'Blues' *Thelymitra*
spp. in bud, as well as many
patches of the lovely Nodding
Blue Lily.

6. Sunday afternoon: Killawarra Forest Camp

We moved away from the granite
country once we entered the
Killawarra Forest. This site is
Box-Ironbark habitat with great
birding and interesting vegetation
to look at on the main loop trail.
We had wonderful views of a
Speckled Warbler and young
Red-capped Robins. Plant
highlights in this location included
a range of wattles, Hooded
Caladenia *Caladenia cucullata*
and Willis's Cut-leaved Daisy
Brachyscome willisii.

We split up into smaller groups in
the late afternoon. Some
members visited Pine Gully which

afforded fine views; a large stand of White Cypress-pine *Callitris glaucophylla* and a Leaden Flycatcher. Others visited the trail head of Sunrise Track for good views of Turquoise Parrots.

7. Monday Morning: Nason Springs Track

Nason Springs Track leads to a gate at the edge of Warby-Ovens National Park. Beyond the gate, the road is open to walkers as it winds uphill over granite country. It was a great spot for viewing a range of bush birds including Turquoise Parrot, Restless Flycatcher, Hooded Robin (breeding), Mistletoe Bird, Dusky Woodswallow, Magpie-lark, Superb Fairywren and Diamond Firetail. A large **Lace Monitor** was basking several metres above the ground on a bough of a dead tree.

8. Winton Wetlands: Humphries Hill, Greens Hill, Mokoan Hub, Dam Wall, Duck Ponds

Lake Mokoan was created by the construction of a dam in the 1970s. For various reasons, notably the shallowness of the lake leading to high evaporation losses and frequent drying out, the dam was breached. In 2010 the Winton Wetlands Committee of Management was formed to restore the site and to create a series of smaller wetlands and other resources such as bike paths at the remaining Winton Wetlands reserve site. (DEECA Winton Wetlands: Project Overview).

Recent dry spells led to the water edge of the main lake being several hundred metres from the main shoreline in many

places, limiting the number of waterbirds we saw. We stopped at Humphries Hill to locate the resident Grey-crowned Babbler and roosting Nankeen Night Herons and at Greens Hill for White-breasted Woodswallows, plus a Rufous Songlark (and an **Eastern Bearded Dragon**).

After lunch at the Mokoan Hub zone, we visited the Dam Wall and Borrow Pits zone before stopping at the Duck Pond on our return. These two wetlands provided a range of waterbirds plus another **Red-bellied Black Snake** that swam across one section.

Combined campout bird list

We observed **119 species of birds in total**, with 24 lists recorded from 22 locations. The most diverse and notable site visited was Nason Springs Track, with **37 species** observed in a short 100-minute exploration. The area around the Holiday Park was also worthwhile, with 38 species seen over 4 days, with a mix of bush, river, and farmland habitats.

Rufous Whistlers were almost everywhere particularly in the Warby Ranges. The piping call of Scared Kingfishers was also heard

at many sites, with at least five individuals near the caravan park. White-plumed were the most widespread Honeyeaters, although Red Wattlebirds and Noisy Friarbirds were very vocal at a few sites. Eastern Rosellas were the most common parrot/cockatoo and Weebill the most widespread of the Acanthizidae (Thornbills, Gerygones etc).

Conclusion

As well as exploring the region's best natural areas we also enjoyed the chance to meet and socialise at dinner at a nearby restaurant, a BBQ dinner at the campground and for five o'clock drinks and snacks each day!

Many thanks to all of those who assisted in various stages of the planning and management of the activities during the campout. Everyone who attended enjoyed the chance to learn more about the natural history of the Wangaratta region. Sharing the activities with like-minded people who appreciate nature added to the pleasure.

Reference

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) **Winton Wetlands: Project overview.**



Above: Hooded Robin, and Right: Speckled Warbler, Nason Springs Tk. 13/10/25
Photos: Pete Sullivan

Bird Group excursion report

Moggs Creek

25 September 2025

Pete Sullivan

On the morning of the excursion I woke before dawn to the sound of a very strong wind blowing and a forecast of 17 degrees with up to three mm of rain. I lay in bed thinking it was less than ideal birding weather so I did not expect a very big turnout for the excursion. However by 9.00 a.m., 26 eager participants had arrived at the Moggs Creek Picnic Area carpark, ready to go birding. The wind had dropped and there was no rain in sight on the weather radar. Things were looking good.

The first bird we heard calling was a Fan-tailed Cuckoo. An Australian King-Parrot also caught our attention before we started walking the two km Circuit Track.

Not long into the walk we started to hear and see numerous Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, White-naped Honeyeaters and Gang-gang Cockatoos high up in the tree canopy.

After the first creek crossing, the narrow track began a gradual rise in elevation until we were level with the canopy of the tall trees growing by the creek below. The rise in elevation of the track brought us much closer to the birds in the tree canopy. Some of the birds observed on this section of the track included Spotted and Striated Pardalotes, Brown and Striated Thornbills and Eastern Spinebills. We also heard a Forest

Raven in the distance.

I had walked the Circuit Track in late July and again in early August and on both occasions I saw a Powerful Owl perched in the same location. I was very hopeful that we would see the owl on today's excursion but unfortunately it was not to be.

Our attention was soon directed to several Gang-gang Cockatoos that were just above the path. We all had good clear views and the photographers in the group were busy taking photos from this vantage point. While we were watching the Gang-gangs a flock of nine Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos flew by and a Koala was spotted sleeping in the fork of a tree. A Little Wattlebird was sighted soon after.

Many in the group lowered their gaze from the canopy to the ground, where they observed several species of orchid and other spring flowering plants.

After crossing the creek a second time, we made our way back to the picnic area for morning tea.

The Circuit Track took us two hours and 10 minutes to complete and we observed 30 bird species on the way.

After morning tea, we set off on the Oceanview Track. This track was a gentle uphill gradient passing



Gang-gang Cockatoos
Photo: Pete Sullivan

through a drier vegetation community with a grassy understorey. A controlled burn had recently been conducted in the area so there was a lot of regrowth vegetation.

As time was getting on, we decided to take the option of a short cut to reduce the length of this walk. After observing a large patch of grass-trees that were just beginning to come into flower we started to make our way back towards the picnic area.

On this section of the excursion, we saw 15 bird species which included Wedge-tailed Eagle, White-eared Honeyeater, Laughing Kookaburra, Gang-gang Cockatoo and White-throated Treecreeper.

On completion of the Oceanview Track, many of us stayed for an enjoyable social lunch in the picnic area.

Links to the complete bird lists can be found below.

[Moggs Creek Circuit Track](#)
[Moggs Creek Picnic Ground](#)

Bird Group excursion report

Woolloomanata and Hovells Creek

23 October 2025

Brad Ferrier

Once again we were fortunate to revisit *Woolloomanata*, a family run farm. They have cooperatively allowed us access for many years; for this we are very thankful. We entered the property via Sandy Creek Road.

By having the opportunity to visit places and record our observations in apps like eBird, we can collect vital temporal (time) and spatial (place/location) data that contributes to the ongoing study of birds. All we have to do as bird observers is accurately identify the species and count the number of individuals present.

Woolloomanata often piques peoples' interest and attendance on the day of 22 keen members and visitors was very good. The group, laden with binoculars, basic cameras and some serious equipment with long-range lenses, made their way slowly south, listening and scanning the vegetation for birds.

A total of 56 species of birds were seen by our group. We were delighted to find Rainbow Bee-eaters, a few Jacky Winters, a Mistletoebird and a few Red-browed Finches. Striated Pardalotes displayed right in front of us in the woody skeletal trees giving their unmistakable 'chip chip' calls. Cuckoos and honeyeaters were heard and Willie Wagtail, Grey Fantail and Magpie-lark observed. Brown, Striated and Yellow-rumped Thornbills kept us entertained. Nectar-loving lorikeets such as Musk and Purple-crowned screeched as they flew overhead. Australian and Little Ravens kept us on our toes when distinguishing their calls.

A highlight for the day was observing and getting quite close to a White-winged Chough that was sitting on an impressively large mud nest. The size and construction of the nest was fascinating and remarkable. Many attendees took valuable photographs of this lovely scene.

Only a few waterbirds were present on the Hovells Creek dam which was undergoing remedial desilting work.

The day's highlight, I think, was the interaction of a Black Falcon, a truly majestic stealth hunter, with other birds of prey.

Lunch was a communal affair near the dam. A few of us stayed half an hour longer than the main party and were lucky enough to see White-winged Trillers.

A link to the complete bird list can be found below.

[Hovells Creek, *Woolloomanata* \(restricted access\)](#)



Rainbow Bee-eater



White-winged Chough



Musk Lorikeet

Photos: Richard Kumnick

Fauna observations report

September–November 2025

Barry Lingham

Listed below are selected observations and comments about unusual species, species out of normal range or exhibiting interesting behaviour, selected from observations made during the winter months of 2025.

Observations were sourced from the GFNC **iNaturalist Fauna Project**.

MAMMAL SPECIES	LOCATION AND NUMBER OF SIGHTINGS
Eastern Short-beaked Echidna	Meredith area (1,1,1); Ocean Grove Nature Reserve (OGNR) (1); Modewarre area(1)
Koala	Moggs Creek (1); Staughton Vale (1,1); Meredith area (1)
Eastern Grey Kangaroo	OGNR (1)
Swamp Wallaby	Batesford (1,1)
Red Fox	Geelong Botanic Gardens (1); Barwon estuary (2)

REPTILE SPECIES	LOCATION AND NUMBER OF SIGHTINGS
Lowland Copperhead	Grovedale (1); OGNR (1)
Blotched Bluetongue	Anglesea (1)–first record for the season 14/10/25
Common (Eastern) Bluetongue	Barwon River (1)–first record for the season 30/9/25
Robust Ctenotus (Striped Skink)	Moorabool River, Moranghurk (1)
Weasel Shadeskink	Newtown (1)
Jacky Lizard	OGNR (1)

FROG SPECIES	LOCATION
Brown Tree Frog	Highton
Common Eastern Froglet	Calling across the region, especially after rain
Spotted Marsh Frog	Calling across the region, especially after rain
Eastern Banjo Frog	Reedy Lake
Southern Bell Frog (Growling Grass Frog)	Reedy Lake; Point Richards Reserve

Comments on fauna observations

Eastern Grey Kangaroos have appeared recently at the OGNR, raising concerns that, if they establish a population within this enclosed reserve, they could breed quickly and overgraze the reserve during droughts, leading to major habitat loss.

The Red Fox has caused devastation to many small indigenous mammal species. They are well-adapted to semi-urban

life as seen by their presence in Geelong’s Eastern Gardens and in the mangroves at Barwon Heads.

Weasel Shadeskinks (as named on iNaturalist) are also well adapted to urban zones with the majority of local observations occurring in Geelong or coastal townships. Jacky Lizards can also be seen in townships, but they are more at home in woodlands such as the OGNR. If you see a dragon lizard in the Anglesea area, check if it is a Jacky Lizard or a Mountain

Dragon. The latter species has more spikes, especially along the edge of the tail, as shown in this photo of a **Mountain Dragon** on iNaturalist.

On the recent GFNC trip to Wangaratta we saw several reptiles rarely observed near Geelong. They included **Red-bellied Black Snake, Lace Monitor, Robust Ctenotus, Southeastern Morethia Skink, Yellow-bellied Water Skink, Eastern Bearded Dragon.**

Butterfly observations report

September–November 2025

John Newman

Springtime is finally here and the butterflies have begun to appear after a long cold winter of anticipation. As the tables below show, butterflies have been recorded from four of the five families we have locally, the only one missing being the ‘swallowtails’ or Papilionidae which have only occasional representation locally.

	Number of records	Number of species
September 2025	43	9
October 2025	101	17
November 2025	82	12
TOTAL	226	19

Butterfly Family	Number of records	Number of species
Skippers	35	4
Whites	50	3
Browns	115	5
Blues	26	7
TOTAL	226	19

There have already been some lovely highlights so far in our region. The **Forest Brown** *Argynnis cyrila* appears very early in the season, the first of the ‘browns’ from family Nymphalidae. Several were seen in the forested hills behind Aireys Inlet, coinciding with the early appearances of the **Varied Dusky-Blue** *Erina hyacinthina* and more than a dozen of the stunning **Bright Copper** *Paralucia aurifer*. This last species is dependent upon the Sweet Bursaria *Bursaria spinosa* plant, and many were in the vicinity of a large occurrence of

young *Bursaria* plants, making the most of the bright sunshine. Males can congregate in high numbers called leks, waiting for females to emerge.

The **Caper White** *Belenois java* is another of our early season butterflies, migrating south from the breeding areas of native capers in Queensland and New South Wales, utilising spring winds. They are therefore a transient species with no local breeding. Some years we see many and some years only a few but our local observers have submitted over 20 records so far this spring. Scarce local species

that are harder to come across have also been recorded, notably the **Silky Hairstreak** *Pseudalmenus chlorinda* in Enfield and **Heath Sand-Skipper** *Antipodia chaostola* in the Anglesea district. This last species has a very short flight time in spring only and is dependent on *Gahnia* sedges for its caterpillar development. The adult butterfly is fond of *Leptospermum* and *Pimelea* flowers, usually seen flying close to the ground. The first male **Common Browns** *Heteronympha merope* have been seen, with females emerging

closer to Christmas. **Imperial Jezebels** *Delias harpalyce* have begun emerging from their scarlet red pupal casings on local mistletoes, dazzling with their red, yellow and black colouring.

Some adult butterfly species only have a narrow flight time—they appear, mate, lay eggs and disappear all in one brief time span that may number only a few weeks and that is their entire life span for that season. Others such as **Australian Painted Lady** *Vanessa kershawi* and **Yellow Admiral** *Vanessa itea* appear early in the spring and continue to be seen over the entire season right

through until late autumn so records are regular and widespread.

The timing and number of records for many species can be highly influenced by weather, temperature and rainfall so that in a ‘good year’ when larval food plants on which the caterpillars depend can be abundant, adult flying butterflies are seen in good numbers. The opposite is true if there is a poor year of plant growth and few adults pupate. Some species can delay emerging from the pupal casing if conditions are unfavourable. Cold days see adults resting unobtrusively with

minimal flight time and so records are few. It appears to have been a very cold start to our current season and butterfly numbers and species are fewer than anticipated so far.

If we consider that the number of people recording and identifying butterflies is increasing annually, especially with the growing popularity of iNaturalist, looking at the number of species in our regions and the number of records submitted, it appears that this 2025 spring season is indeed one of those ‘poorer’ years.

	Number of records	Number of species
Spring 2025	226	19
Spring 2024	463	34
Spring 2023	425	30
Spring 2022	410	27
Spring 2021	240	25

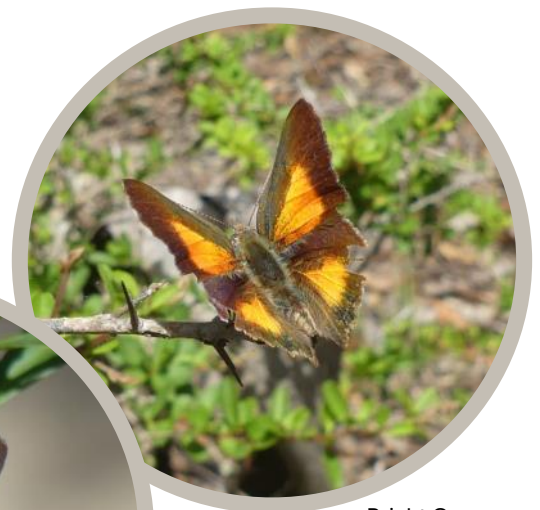
So, keep looking when you are out in the streets, the bush, the paddocks, the dunes and anywhere nature pulls you and keep the butterfly records coming.



Forest Brown



Varied Dusky-Blue



Bright Copper

All photos taken at Painkalac Dam, October 2025

Photos: John Newman

Invertebrate observations highlights

July–September 2025

Rod Lowther

Despite the cooler weather, we added **425 observations** and 17 new species during this three-month period, bringing the GFNC Invertebrates Collection to a total of **34,000** observations and **2,595** species. It's difficult to know whether the 17 represent species newly observed during the quarter, or perhaps more likely, if they are the result of more precise identifications made on previously submitted records. The process of refining identifications within the Collection is continuous and demonstrates the value of recording species in nature, as expert review or new data can provide fresh insights.

Many insects are dormant during the winter months or at the egg stage awaiting warm conditions before hatching and starting their life cycle as nymphs. Some insects, segmented worms and other classes of invertebrates, stay active in dark damp places continuing to decompose organic matter. Turning over logs and rocks in the bush is a good way of finding these creatures.

Myriapods have segmented and, typically, more than 20 sets of legs. The Myriapoda subphylum consists of four classes: Centipedes, Millipedes, Symphylans and Pauropoda.

There are about 13,000 identified terrestrial species—but in reality, there are likely to be many, many more yet to be discovered! What is known is that damp forests support a wider range of species than grasslands, while deserts and arid regions have fewer species overall.

The table below shows the number of species recorded in iNaturalist for Australia, Victoria and our local area. Compared to identifying species by examining specimens or analysing DNA profiles, this group lacks enough experts who can accurately identify organisms from photographs.

Taxa/Location	Australia	Victoria	Geelong BioBlitz Region	GFNC Collection	Collection This Quarter#
Myriapods	155	58	22	15	10
Centipedes	59	29	10	10	6
Millipedes	90	26	10	4	3
Symphylans	4	2	2	1	1
Pauropoda	2	1	0	0	0

Table 1: Number of Myriapod species recorded in iNaturalist by select geographic areas and the GFNC Invertebrates Collection

So, what **Myriapods** did members see and record this quarter.

Firstly, it's worth stating that the most common member of this taxa group **was not recorded**, but it would have undoubtedly been seen very often. It is of course the introduced species commonly

called **Portuguese Millipede** *Ommatoiulus moreleti*. This millipede was originally native to the Western Iberian Peninsula, where during the 1800s it spread to Europe, including France, the UK and Italy, and as a result of increased trade spread further to the Atlantic Islands, Cape Town

and other areas in South Africa. The species was first observed in South Australia in 1953. Without any natural enemies it has become an invasive pest with an Australian range that includes Perth and surrounds, Victoria and areas of southern NSW.



The most frequently observed species in our group is the **Orange-footed Centipede** *Cormocephalus aurantiipes*. Found across Eastern Australia as far north as Brisbane, it typically reaches 100 mm in length. Slight colour changes exist depending on where it is observed, but in Geelong it generally has a dark orange or grey body but always displays distinctive lighter coloured orange feet. Being a nocturnal predator, it feeds on insects and other small invertebrates.

Two other centipedes from the same genus were also seen during the reporting period. **C. esulcatus** was observed on two occasions in the Anglesea heathland. It is very similar to the Orange-footed Centipede but has greyish green feet. It is a solitary creature living in plant litter, soil and rotting wood.



The third species observed was **Westwood's Green Centipede** *C. westwoodi*. It is similar in behaviour to others in this genus but has a grey dark metallic coloured body, often bookended with a red head and rear end. It likes forest areas along the coast, north to the Sunshine Coast and in Tasmania where it is stated to be the largest centipede on the island state (the other two previously mentioned species are not found there) (Koch 1983).

The genus Scolopendra is commonly called **Giant Centipede**. Three species live in Australia; the most widespread is *S. morsitans* **Red-headed Centipede**, mainly found in arid areas with limited sightings near Mildura river land in Victoria. The next most common is **S. laeta** and its range extends across southern Victoria, including the Brisbane Ranges, reserves at Bannockburn and Inverleigh. The species can grow to 130 mm, and its dark body displays some banding, particularly two red lateral strips on the upper body.



We have many records of the **Australian House Centipede** *Allothereua maculata* in our Collection. Interestingly none were observed in urban areas but instead seen around coastal forest areas and the Brisbane Ranges. Maybe it is a creature that is very good at not being detected since it lives in damp areas without ventilation where it predares other arthropods. It has dark markings covered in small hairs and can grow to a maximum length of 25 mm.

While we did not see any Portuguese Millipedes this quarter, an observation was recorded from the same family: Julidae. This family consists of 260 genera across multiple subfamilies and identification is not possible from photographic evidence alone.





Centipedes in the **Geophilidae** family are relatively easy to identify as a group; they all are quite thin and look almost worm like with lightly red coloured translucent bodies. These creatures have been recorded under logs in parts of the Brisbane Ranges.

An observation in the genus **Hanseniella** was recorded. This is the most common genera of the Scutigrellidae family, primarily being soil-dwelling herbivores which decompose organic matter. This creature has a distinct separation between head and neck with relatively long antennae. It is probably quite common if you were to look for it in the right environments.



Family **Siphonotidae** is a group from a subclass that has been described as 'fungivorous', feeding on living or dead fungal matter. This observation shows a creature with a light-coloured stripe running along its body that seems to be a common feature in many of the Millipede observations in this family.

The final species recorded this quarter is one from the genus **Somethus**, a member of the Paradoxsomatidae family, commonly called **Paradoxical Keeled Millipedes**. Photographs in iNaturalist suggest it travels across habitats having been sighted on wood, soils and vegetation. The body of members of this genus appear to be quite robust with slightly bulbous segments.



Thanks to all the GFNC Invertebrates Collection members for your contributions this quarter. With improving weather and warmer temperatures, we hopefully will see the emergence of more insects over coming months.

References

iNaturalist, Species Reference Pages.

Koch, L. E. (1983) 'Revision of the Australian centipedes of the genus *Cormocephalus* Newport (Chilopoda: Scolopendridae: Scolopendrinae)', *Australian Journal of Zoology* 31:799–833.

SEANA Camp

Ballarat

October 2025

Alison Watson



South East Australian Naturalists' Association Inc.



Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat

It was another wonderful get together of familiar faces and new ones too. The weekend began with us gathering in the Pax Hill Scout Camp hall for registration, then a tasty dinner and a very interesting talk from Nicole Kearney, Manager of the Biodiversity Heritage Library, Australia about their collection of all nature related articles.

On Saturday morning we visited a Trust for Nature property at Smythesdale—idyllic in the sun. Then a tour of the sustainable house with many excellent features for bushfire protection, including window flaps and a roller door. Under the floor a water bladder holds run-off from the sloping roof, with gutters at floor level. We travelled across to Enfield in the afternoon for some short walks featuring orchids, including many Bird Orchids. I was inspired by a beautiful tree covered with many lichens and mosses glowing in the sun beside a small ephemeral pool. Later we found more Spider Orchids, Wax-lips, Pink Fingers, and at the top of Beacon Hill which is kept clear with regular slashing, we were amazed at the masses of flowering orchids and grassland plants. The endemic Enfield Grevillea *Grevillea bedggoodiana* in shades of red, orange and yellow was delightful to observe.

We were back in time for the meeting at the golf club, followed by a fabulous dinner and talk by Richard Weatherley about the history of his family property *Connewarren*, Mortlake and the regeneration over time. He also shared his experience as a wildlife artist. On Sunday we visited Mount Beckworth, an area we had not visited before. Here were so many orchids; swathes of blue Sun Orchids, some Rabbit-ears, Wax-lips, Bearded Orchids and a few pink Sun Orchids—a great place to return to and perhaps walk some of the tracks. There was lots of camaraderie as we photographed orchids and the 'tiny things' with the leadership of Roger Thomas who the previous night was revealed as the 2025 recipient of the Natural History Medallion Award.

We stayed at Clarkesdale Bird Sanctuary which many people visited over the weekend and we enjoyed the peaceful environment, the stars at night, the birdlife and walks.

Thank you to Ballarat Field Naturalists for a wonderful weekend.

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