



Newsletter of the
Friends of
Baluk Willam
Nature Conservation Reserve

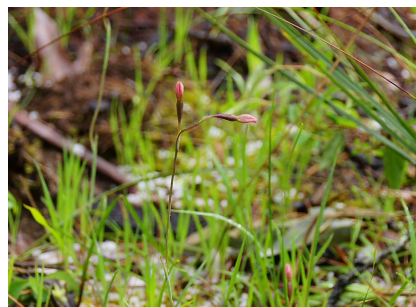
January 2017

Text & photos by Reiner Richter

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October Activity

It was a cold morning and we only did a little bit of weeding before it was time to set up the cameras with the help of Ian & Robin from the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria. That's of course when it started hailing on us! I took these photos afterwards, including the sun-orchid that seems hopelessly out of season.



November Activity

We reviewed some of the footage the cameras collected but it was not an exciting task so we soon went off to tackle the *Watsonia* in the gully north of the Orchid Rd Loop.

It was labour-intensive but we applied Glyphosate to both sides of most of the leaves by hand. I returned in early January to find we were fairly successful and most plants appeared dead (we missed some up the top). Compare this photo with that from the October bulletin.



Results of Camera Monitoring

Years ago I had seen ground disturbance in the north-east gully and thought it may have been caused by bandicoots. For this we were able to borrow some cameras from Parks Victoria and set them up with the help of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria (see above). Until we set the cameras up I didn't realise that the FNCV had already set up an extensive network of cameras in a previous trial a year or so earlier.

While setting up it was discussed that the digging up of the ground was likely to be done by echidnas and indeed the cameras did record these monotremes on several occasions. Wallabies were often recorded, usually a female with a large joey that was often seen exploring by itself. A male is also filmed mating with that female. In all the results yielded no significant species, but interestingly we recorded no deer either.

Here are the results of the 3 cameras that were set up:

Camera 1

Date	Time	Species	Comments
24/10/16	11:27:00	wallaby	
26/10/16	05:27:00	wombat	
26/10/16	07:03:00	wallaby	
29/10/16	04:39:00	fox	defecating
29/10/16	09:25:00	fox	
29/10/16	12:54:00	small bird	
29/10/16	19:16:00	wallaby	
30/10/16	10:47:00	wallaby	joey in pouch
30/10/16	15:51:00	wallaby	
01/11/16	07:50:00	wallaby	
01/11/16	09:47:00	wallaby	
01/11/16	12:45:00	wallaby	
02/11/16	10:31:00	wallaby	
03/11/16	09:44:00	wallaby	
04/11/16	07:33:00	small bird	
04/11/16	02:01:00	small bird	
04/11/16	17:12:00	wallaby	
05/11/16	06:03:00	fox	
07/11/16	05:35:00	wallaby	
07/11/16	06:04:00	blackbird	
07/11/16	08:30:00	wallaby	
07/11/16	13:01:00	small bird	
09/11/16	07:00:00	wallaby	
09/11/16	07:46:00	wallaby	
09/11/16	14:57:00	echidna	
09/11/16	19:12:00	wallaby	
09/11/16	22:29:00	wallaby	
10/11/16	09:09:00	wallaby	
10/11/16	10:19:00	wallaby	with joey roaming
11/11/16	13:38:00	echidna	

13/11/16	05:38:00	wallaby	
13/11/16	10:31:00	wallaby	
14/11/16	12:42:00	wallaby	
15/11/16	06:01:00	wallaby	
15/11/16	06:46:00	wallaby	
15/11/16	18:41:00	cat	possibly pregnant
16/11/16	02:43:00	wombat	
16/11/16	07:26:00	wallaby	
17/11/16	09:30:00	small bird	
18/11/16	06:57:00	wallaby	
18/11/16	07:31:00	wallaby	
18/11/16	16:17:00	wallaby	
19/11/16	08:18:00	wallaby	

Camera 2

Date	Time	Species	Comments
22/10/16	12:12:00	small bird	
23/10/16	10:17:00	small bird	
23/10/16	14:30:00	superb fairy wren	
23/10/16	21:59:00	small mammal	
23/10/16	23:22:00	ringtail possum	
24/10/16	04:06:00	small-medium mammal	
24/10/16	13:51:00	superb fairy wren	
24/10/16	16:28:00	small bird	
25/10/16	02:56:00	small-medium mammal	
25/10/16	16:54:00	superb fairy wren	

Camera 3

Date	Time	Species	Comments
22/10/16	17:06:00	fox	
23/10/16	14:59:00	superb fairy wren	
25/10/16	00:57:00	wombat	
28/10/16	03:57:00	brushtail	
29/10/16	09:50:00	wallaby	
29/10/16	23:23:00	wombat	
30/10/16	12:24:00	wallaby	
30/10/16	12:49:00	wallaby	
03/11/16	02:50:00	brushtail	
03/11/16	14:39:00	echidna	
03/11/16	23:00:00	wombat	
04/11/16	07:56:00	wallaby	

06/11/16	05:09:00	?insect flying	
06/11/16	17:50:00	wallaby	
07/11/16	05:45:00	wallaby	
07/11/16	09:07:00	wallaby	
07/11/16	17:52:00	wallaby	joey
08/11/16	16:23:00	wallaby	with joey
09/11/16	07:05:00	wallaby	
09/11/16	22:46:00	brushtail	
10/11/16	11:33:00	wallaby	
10/11/16	22:02:00	wombat	
11/11/16	04:59:00	wombat	
13/11/16	16:33:00	wallaby	
15/11/16	21:09:00	brushtail	
16/11/16	16:09:00	wallaby	joey
16/11/16	17:32:00	wallaby	mating
18/11/16	03:47:00	wombat	
18/11/16	08:06:00	wallaby	
19/11/16	09:35:00	wallaby	with joey



defecating fox



pregnant cat



wallaby joey

Updated Flora Species List

Last year we were contacted by David Lockwood, a botanist who seems to have frequented the reserve, and offered some of his services. Unfortunately we can't get funding for formal surveys but he was kind enough to off an updated list of species. Dr Graeme Lorimer originally provided a list of species gathered during his surveys 15 years ago and we had added a handful of species that he did not record (mainly orchids).

I haven't updated the online list in years because I was having trouble with the software I wrote to automatically generate the web page from the CSV file. David's contact motivated me (eventually) to reinvestigate this, and it turned out to be easier than expected to fix (mainly I forgot how to use my own software). So now the new list is up via the link below.

Note that there are a few orchids not on the list because of uncertain or dubious identification. We have **387** verified species!

<http://fobw.rnr.id.au/FloraSpecies.htm>

Summer in Baluk Willam

The reserve is well known by botanists for its diverse flora and a popular place for orchid enthusiasts. However summer is a quiet time for orchids here – I took a group through recently and found only three species in flower – four if you count *Microtis*. ☺ [One October](#) I saw 20 species in flower in a day! However summer is a great time for insects (and other cold-blooded animals) so there is always something interesting to find.

Here is a discussion of some of the insects I observed during a visit on 15 January, 2017.

Odonata: Damselflies & Dragonflies

This order of insects has aquatic larvae, so Baluk Willam is not a breeding site for them as we have no real permanent or other suitable water habitat for them. Being winged adults however they can and do travel around and they need hunting and resting habitat as well, for which an open forest like this one is quite good. Because the nearby water bodies are mostly artificial dams, we only get common species passing through.

Like with many things, the more species you have the healthier your habitat is. They are also great to have around – mosquito larvae are a favourite food of larvae and the adults catch flying insects, including annoying bush flies.

When these insects emerge from the water and hatch they are initially fairly plainly colored (teneral) however the dark and pale patterns can already be used to identify species. They initially need somewhere safe to rest and dry out properly and then to hunt for small, flying insects.



♂ *Austrolestes leda* (teneral)

***Eristalinus punctulatus*: Native Drone Fly**

Eristalinus (Lathyrophthalmus) punctulatus is a hoverfly (family Syrphidae) and quite common in Victoria (but not as common as some of the smaller ones). If you can get close enough to one, it's quite easily recognisable by the many dark spots on its eyes. There are a few other species in this subgenus that are overall similar in pattern (along with spotty eyes) but they are darker. This one is a male – you can tell by the holoptic eyes. For many fly genera this is the case, where the eyes do not meet at the top of the head in females but do for males. The wet spring (well, relative to recent years) must have been good for them as I have never seen so many.



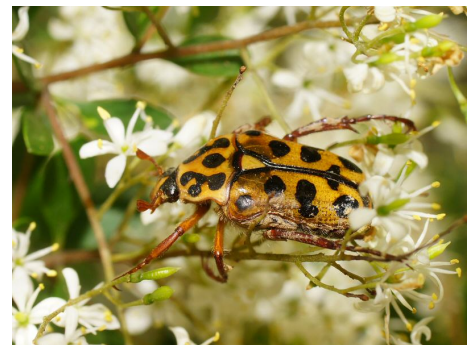
***Scaptia auriflua*: Flower Feeding March Fly**

Most march flies (or horse flies – family Tabanidae) are unpleasant members of the bush, happy to sting your calves as you try to compose a photo of an orchid or other subject during summer. Like their fellow Diptera, the mosquitoes, the females need to drink blood for the development of their eggs. *Scaptia (Scaptia) auriflua* is different – they only feed on nectar. In addition to not stinging they are also quite attractive. They aren't very common but I observed two on this afternoon.



***Neorrhina punctatum*: Punctate Flower Chafer**

Apart from bees and flies, many beetles also feed on flowers. One of the larger ones, fairly common and easily recognisable is the scarab *Neorrhina punctatum* (family Scarabaeidae).



***Castiarina bella*: A Jewel Beetle**

Jewel beetles (family Buprestidae) are often attractively marked with bright reds and yellows. There are about 1200 species in Australia, 450 of them in the *Castiarina* genus. Most larvae bore through roots and remain underground and the adults usually feed on flowers (including nectar and petals). Often they are easy to identify, like *Castiarina bella*, which only has two groups of marlings. I have difficulty identifying some others with similar groups of yellow splotches.



Coming Up for 2017

Remember that activities are cancelled during extreme weather conditions, including declared days of Total Fire Ban.

Date & Time	Activity
Sat 28 January 9:00AM	Regular working bee.
Sat 25 February 9:00AM	Regular working bee.
Sat 25 March 9:00AM	Regular working bee.

Disclaimer

I hoped you found this document useful or interesting (or both). It took me about 12 hours to prepare and I am not doing much proof reading so there are probably errors (grammatical, taxonomic, you name it).