



Newsletter of the  
Friends of  
**Baluk Willam**  
Nature Conservation Reserve

May 2017

Text & photos by Reiner Richter

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## January & February Activities

In January we weeded the open woodland area in the north-west of the reserve, south of Denham Rd. The open ground here allows for easier establishment of weeds and we see a lot of asparagus fern, sweet pittosporum and common ivy seedlings in particular.

In February the group weeded opposite the Orchid Rd car park where the drain flows into the reserve. This area attracts a lot of spear thistles and daisies.

## March Activity

In March we went along the southern break into notorious leech territory. The gully below the neighbour's dam is quite damp and attracts weeds.

The main species we tackled here on this day was inkweed, *Phytolacca octandra*. This is a large, woody herb with broad leaves typically 10 – 20 cm long. Flower heads are at the end of the branches and quite long, clustered with many small flowers. From these the seedpods develop into densely packed black berries.

We were able to pull out all the plants and collected the maturing seed heads for disposal.

At the end of work we admired a nice patch of bush as the local birds tweeted through the trees. This included the New Holland and white-cheeked honeyeaters and some insectivorous birds.

As we turned to head back to the car park we saw a beautifully colored lowland copperhead snake, *Austrelaps superbis*. Unfortunately it had spotted us first and fled before we could get better photos.



## April Activity

We revisited the area in the north-west of the reserve south of Denham Rd and, despite only a few months having passed since our last visit, we found many, mostly small seedlings of ivy, asparagus and pittosporum. We were all surprised at how much we found there to keep us busy.

## Spiders in Baluk Willam

Late summer is peak season for spiders and during the March activity in particular we saw several species. Spider webs and threads are a little annoying when walking through the bush at this time of year and the wiser people in a group will let someone tall go first to clear these obstacles.

Incidentally, in researching this section I discovered that the new book “A Field Guide to the Spiders of Australia” should be available this month from CSIRO Publishing:

<http://www.publish.csiro.au/book/6899/>

### *Eriophora ?biapicata*

We encountered a few “garden orb-weavers” in March, but this photo is of probably *Eriophora biapicata*, which is very similar to *Eriophora transmarinus* (previously *Araneus*). Their coloration and patterns are very variable, see the references below. Perhaps the new book might clarify any ambiguity.

[http://www.arachne.org.au/01\\_cms/details.asp?ID=1992](http://www.arachne.org.au/01_cms/details.asp?ID=1992)

<http://www.findaspider.org.au/find/spiders/105.htm>



## *Araneus bradleyi*

The “enamelled spider” is another orb-weaver with a variable pattern on its back. I have seen ones where the enamelled back is mostly yellow and mostly green but the most common form is as seen here in our reserve. They are common in south-eastern Australia in a variety of forest habitats.



*ventral view*

## *Araneus eburnus*

This is a small orb-weaver and not noticed as readily as *Araneus bradleyi*. These can be found throughout much of Australia.



## *Argiope keyserlingi*

Possibly the least common of the orb-weavers featured here is the most famous and easily recognized St Andrew's Cross Spider. They construct a denser cross of silk in their webs, presumably to help camouflage them. We saw two in the reserve on the day of the March activity.



*ventral view*

## Coming Up for 2017

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

### **Date & Time**

### **Activity**

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Sat 27 May 9:00AM – 12:00PM Regular working bee.

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Sat 24 June 9:00AM – 12:00PM Regular working bee.

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Sat 22 July 9:00AM – 12:00PM Regular working bee.

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### *Disclaimer*

I hoped you found this document useful as it takes me several hours each time. As I edit a new issue based on the previous file the computer retains the total editing time, which I said last time was 12 hours. It turns out that's the total editing time for all four issues up until then, so I exaggerated due to my ignorance.