



NEWSLETTER: JUNE 2020

This is our first (hopefully last) Covid-19 lockdown edition. The year started promisingly with birding outings, speakers and excursions in February and March. Because of the Easter break our April excursion was moved forward a week so that it was scheduled before the birding outing and meeting for that month. On April 4th we were scheduled to travel to Pt Nepean National Park, but unfortunately we never got there. Or, as it turned out, fortunately, because the weather was atrocious that day. What is unfortunate is that we have not been able to get together from then to the time of writing, and we don't know when our next opportunity will come—but it will at some point.

So this newsletter is a bit thin for group activities. To make matters a little worse, the one speaker we did have, our member Heather Ducat, was going to hand over some

photos of her trip to New Caledonia, to go with the newsletter report, at our next meeting, which never happened. So Judy's report of Heather's talk will have to be unadorned in this edition of the newsletter. Hopefully we can have a special feature of her wonderful photos in a later edition.

Nothing daunted, several of our members have submitted reports of individual nature activities, and these make up the bulk of this edition of the newsletter. My thanks to all who contributed.

Due to an initiative by Tania Hattingh we now have a Facebook page. It can be accessed at Peninsula Field Nats. Thank you Tania.

New Caledonia – an ancient slice of Australia **Heather Ducat, March 11, 2020**

This is Heather's 18th talk to us, and every talk has been fascinating, well researched and with brilliant photos.

In 2018 Heather and husband Robert spent 3 weeks in New Caledonia. New Caledonia is on the Tropic of Capricorn, 1200km east of Bowen, and west of Fiji. The main island is 450km long, with a mountain spine. The weather in summer is humid, and June to September is the coolest time. Because of the prevailing winds, the east coast gets 2000mm of rain per year, and is rain forest, while the west coast gets 1000mm per year, and is coastal plain with dry tropical forest. The mountainous spine has higher rainfall again. The barrier reef which surrounds the island is the second largest in the world, second only to Australia's.

Geological history: 200 million years ago Gondwana started to separate, and by 80 million years ago New Zealand and New Caledonia were still joined together by a ridge. By 65 million years ago New Caledonia had settled into its current position and configuration.

New Caledonia is not volcanic, and 1/3rd of the rocks are ultramafic, which is a metamorphism of upper mantle rocks from the Earth's core and some oceanic crust. Ultramafic rocks are a startling red/orange, with high levels of minerals such as magnesium, chromium, nickel and iron, with low nutrients and toxic soil. The northern area of Grande Terre (the main island) is limestone, and Isle of Pines has an ultramafic core ringed with limestone.

Vegetation: New Caledonia has 3344 species of plants, 80% endemic, which is twice as many plants as New Zealand. The combination of unusual geology and extreme isolation has created the high rate of endemism. There are no

Eucalypts, lots of Paperbarks, 3 endemic Grevilleas such as *Grevillea gillivrayi*, and 46 species of conifers (compared to Australia - 35, and NZ - 17). In the conifers there are 5 species of Agathis, 3 of Callitris, 7 of Podocarpus, 6 of Dacrydium, 3 of Libocedrus, and 14 Araucarias, which New Caledonia is famous for. In the rest of Gondwana, scattered among South America, Australia, Norfolk Island and New Guinea, there are 6 species of Araucarias, such characteristic and widely planted trees as the monkey puzzle, Bunya pine and Norfolk Island pine. The Isle of Pines, a large island south of Grande Terre, and popular tourist destination, has groves of Cook's pine, *Araucaria columnaris*, which are tall and narrow. *Araucaria muelleri* is named after Ferdinand von Mueller, who surveyed and collected there. There are 5 endemic species of Agathis (Kauri) in such a small country, compared with 15 species in the rest of the Pacific (Australia, NZ, Philippines and Malaysia).

There are 200 species of orchid, many endemic to New Caledonia. Familiar genera to us are Dendrobium, Pterostylis, Thelymitra and Caladenia, all with local species, and unfamiliar are genera such as the beautiful *Eriaxis rigida*.

Birds: of the 102 species 26 are endemic. These include the Kagu, a flightless bird the size of a chicken, known as the Ghost of the forest, the only one of its genus and family, and endangered by rat predation. The famous New Caledonia crow is supposed to be the most intelligent bird in the world.

Leach's Giant Gecko, at 40cm long, is the largest gecko in the world.

Human history: Melanesians colonised the islands 3500 years ago. Captain Cook discovered and named the islands in 1776, then in 1853 the French annexed the islands as a colony. It was a penal colony for 30 years, and the Melanesians (Kanakas) revolted against French rule from 1878 onwards, without success. In 1946 it became a French overseas territory, and the independence movement is still ongoing. Timber harvesting and mining are the major economic activities, apart from tourism.

After New Caledonia, Heather and Robert went on to Vanuatu to see the live volcano there, which is constantly erupting.

Footnote: The Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne has a New Caledonia section, with some New Caledonia Araucarias, as well as their extensive Araucaria collection in the rest of the gardens.—**Judy Smart**

**Australian Plants Revealed:
65,000 years of traditional plant use and 250 years of science
Maroondah Federation Estate Gallery, Ringwood
14th March**

This was one of two exhibitions staged by Australian Plants Society Victoria to mark 250 years since the arrival of James Cook in the Endeavour. The other was held at Karwarra Australian Native Botanic Garden in Kalorama.

them were elsewhere on this occasion, and reportedly Black Wallabies have been sighted there. After a walk and lunch we continued to Ringwood.



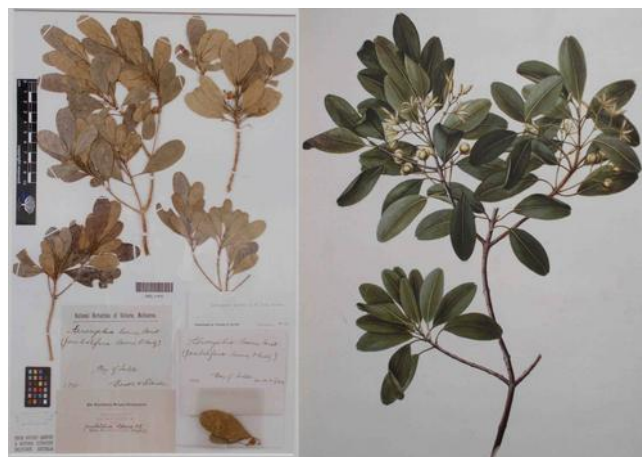
Banksia serrata herbarium specimen

The exhibition in Ringwood showed six of the actual specimens collected by Banks and Solander in 1770 (duplicates given to the Victorian Herbarium), together with 31 photographic reproductions of other specimens, and several watercolour paintings based on the drawings of Sydney Parkinson, the artist who did not survive the voyage.

The specimens included Saw Banksia *Banksia serrata*, collected at Botany Bay in 1770, one of four banksias collected on Cook's voyage, and named in 1782 by Carolus Linnaeus the Younger (denoted by 'L.f.' after the name). *B. serrata* is the type species for the genus Banksia, as it was the first to be named. The specimens held by the Melbourne Herbarium are known as iso-lectotypes, meaning duplicate specimens of the type specimen. The name '*Banksia*' had in fact been published in 1775 by the Forsters, father and son naturalists on Cook's second voyage, referring to what we now know as *Pimelea*. This led to some challenges to the naming, with alternative names offered by Kuntze (*Sirmuelleria serrata*) and Britten (*Isostylis serrata*) which were ultimately rejected. Interestingly, the specimen label includes Britten's alternative name, but not Kuntze's.

We chose this one for our excursion because it promised some of the actual plant specimens collected by Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander on Cook's voyage, as well as exhibits highlighting traditional plant use before the arrival of Europeans. As it happened we just got our excursion in before the Covid-19 lockdown—many events were being cancelled that weekend but the websites gave no indication that these exhibitions had been closed down so we decided to press on.

However, since the exhibition didn't open until noon we decided to spend the morning at Blackburn Lake Sanctuary before visiting the gallery. The Sanctuary comprises 26 ha of bushland surrounded by suburbia, and includes a lake 5 ha in area. There is an impressive bird list, although most of



Acronychia laevis: herbarium specimen and painting

It is an interesting insight into the machinations of the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature (ICBN) that the name *Pimelea* was first used in an unpublished manuscript, attributed to Solander, from Cook's first voyage; this name was ignored by the Forsters when they re-named species that had already been named as *Pimelea* by Banks and Solander, using the generic name *Banksia*. Linnaeus the Younger re-named these species under the generic name *Passerina*, and used Solander's name for what we now call *Banksia*. Later Gaertner re-applied Solander's name to the *Pimeleas*.

We were able to see Banks' specimen of *Acronychia laevis*, Hard Aspen, together with the painting by Frederick Polydore Nodder from Parkinson's drawing. This specimen was collected in what Cook called the 'Bay of Inlets', roughly between Rockhampton and Mackay on the central Queensland coast. The name was bestowed by the Forsters from a specimen collected in New Caledonia—so Banks' specimen is not the type specimen. Nodder was an 18th century British botanical artist engaged by Banks.

The exhibition also detailed aboriginal use of plants, together with examples of artefacts made from them. For example the above mentioned *A. laevis* (belonging to the Rutaceae or citrus family) provided an oil with anti-microbial and anti-fungal properties. *Banksia serrata* was used for a sweet drink; the cones were used to transport fire; needles tools and weapons were made from the wood

and flower spikes were used as hair combs, scratchers and scrapers. Other plants were used for food, weaving, weapons, tools, and medicinal purposes. Artefacts on exhibit included dilly bags, digging sticks, baskets and a Marngrook (football).



Marngrook (Aunty Betty Norman). All photos by Lee Denis

Outside the Gallery we were quite taken with the carvings made from Cypress trees that were there when the Gallery was built.—**Lee Denis**

Velimir Dragic: Observation and identification

At first I thought it was a green ladybug (the kind I had never seen before) because it was of a similar shape and size.



However, I came across information that there are no green ladybugs. The only exception is one species which is pale green and without dots when it finishes the pupa stage, but after 24 hours it turns yellow and gets spots. I decided to put the beetle in a container and checked on it the next day but there was no change.

So, it was not a ladybug (Coccinellidae family) after all.

I kept looking into what it could be, and in the end, I found (I'm pretty sure, at least) that it was a Lilly Pilly beetle *Paropsides calypso* of the Chrusomelidae family from the order Coleoptera.

As I was rearranging my geological collection in the garage during the pandemic, I came across an unidentified specimen of something that looks like a fossil. My note said that the specimen was found in the sand beneath marlstone cliffs at Sorrento Ocean Beach in February, 2019.



All photos by Velimir Dragic

The specimen is 15 cm long and its slightly elliptical

diameter is 1.5-2 cm. Its inside is agatized, and the outside consists of a crystallized layer of quartz sand.

I rejected the possibility that it's a crinoid or petrified lightning fulgurite. The dilemma remains whether it's a trace fossil burrow or fossilized tree root.

If I had to guess I would say that it is a fossilized tree root (most likely Mangrove tree).

I would appreciate any suggestions and further opinions in order to achieve a correct identification.

How do Far Eastern Curlew Use Western Port?

In 2019 on a farm at Yallock Creek, the Victorian Wader Study Group (VWSG) caught a group of Far Eastern Curlew with the purpose of fitting satellite transmitters to three of them, to better understand both their local movements and their migration. This was done as part of a national project under the umbrella of the Threatened Species Recovery Hub, part of the National Environmental Science Program. It was a very exciting time for the team. The transmitters are strapped to the back of the birds and carry their own little solar panels to recharge the tiny batteries.

that year so it made its way back down the coast to Western Port and remained there for the rest of the year.

These birds were part of a national study as mentioned earlier and the birds from Broome, Queensland and Darwin combined with 'ours' to produce some great data and better understanding of refuelling sites and breeding areas for Australian-bound curlews. They are off on their migration again for 2020, unperturbed by the current coronavirus disruption we are experiencing. —Rog Standen

What came out of the study from a local perspective was the valuable confirmation of what was seen through field observation. The birds that were caught at their high tide roost on a small beach at a Yallock Creek farm, continued to return to that site to roost after venturing across to the large expanse of mudflat between Stockyard Point and The Gurdies. This is unsurprising as those mudflats are ideal for the feeding period when they are exposed, but there is no room to roost out there when the high tide arrives because the area is fringed with mangroves. The curlews, like other waders, need open areas to roost so they can keep an eye out for predators.



Local movement by three Far Eastern Curlew (2019).

Occasionally one of the three birds carrying trackers would go and have a look at French Island, but clearly, they preferred to stick with their usual habitats. The curlews are the most-timid of the waders and will be disturbed by any approach by people when many hundreds of metres away. This probably explains why the beaches at the farms are suited to them. The birds do not get disturbed. However, these beaches are very small and like many other areas, will be susceptible to rises in sea levels, thereby threatening their safe roost.



Returning bird (green) battles the cyclone and returns to Western Port (2019)

Birding at Karkarook Park 2nd March

[Eleanor, Heather, Leanne, Velimir] 4; 16-20°C
Meet 10:00 at the Karkarook car park
Karkarook Park is a metropolitan park in Melbourne; an artificial wetlands and lake created by extracting sand between 1997 and 2001; it is located on Warrigal Rd in Moorabbin. Fishing is possible, with Redfin perch and Rainbow trout fishing is possible. Bird count 29.—**Velimir Dragic**

Bird List For Karkarook Park 2nd March 2020	
Australian Wood Duck	Spotted Turtle-Dove
Pacific Black Duck	Rainbow Lorikeet
Grey Teal	Musk Lorikeet

Chestnut Teal	Superb Fairy-wren
Little Pied Cormorant	Red Wattlebird
Pied Cormorant	Noisy Miner
Little Black Cormorant	White-plumed Honeyeater
Great Cormorant	Magpie-Lark
White-faced Heron	Willie Wagtail
Purple Swamphen	Australian Magpie
Dusky Moorhen	Little Raven
Eurasian Coot	Red-browed Finch
Masked Lapwing	Welcome Swallow
Silver Gull	Common Myna
Rock Dove	

Vale Chris Chandler

It is with great sadness that Chris Chandler lost his battle with cancer and passed away on the 29th April. His passing is a huge loss to conservation on the Mornington Peninsula. He died peacefully in South Australia surrounded by his family.

Chris grew up on French Island and he gained a phenomenal knowledge of the flora and fauna and history of the Island. He knew every inch of French Island and had a photographic memory for every small detail. He inspired so many people and his passion for French Island and Western Port knew no bounds.

He was generous in sharing his vast knowledge to those around him and was tenacious in working towards protecting the environment he was so passionate about. He was a key figure in the Friends of French Island group and held several key committee positions.

He will be greatly missed by the many conservation groups that he was involved with as a key figure in the fight against inappropriate development.

On a personal level I have known Chris since he was a young boy roaming French Island and even then he had such a thirst for knowledge and the natural environment he grew up in fostered his curiosity. The Mornington Peninsula community will miss him greatly.—

Bett Mitchell

Spiderlings on the move

When returning from our daily walk this week, Ang and I were walking beside a high cyclone fence that for a section had strands of spider web flowing out from it. There was only a zephyr of a breeze but the direction meant the strands were coming across the footpath and were the perfect height to come across my face!

After doing a form of the limbo for the section of fence where they were, we continued on our walk home. However, on removing my hat I found a couple of tiny spiders crawling around on it and I realised the web was a collection of individual strands from a group of spiderlings that had become caught on a metal fence rather than a bush.

So, after taking a few snaps of the two on my hat, back I

went with my camera and found a number of the little fellows crawling along the top of the fence.

What species they are I have no idea and even the family is difficult to know, but going by what I can tell of their eye pattern they are from the wolf spider (Lycosidae) family.

That is, they appear to have two prominent forward-facing eyes on the top row along with an eye on either side of them on the sides of the head, with four eyes on the bottom row that face forward. The spiderlings are so small it was hard for me to get photos clear enough to be sure of this.

The carapace looks smooth and uniformly dark, but with a faint shadowing set of lateral bands emanating from the

mid-line and they have variable shades of cream/brown legs and a mottled coloured abdomen.

It was a shame to see their hopes of finding a new home thwarted by the fence, but maybe it doesn't matter so much if they are wolf spiders as they don't make webs, but instead stalk their prey (thus the prominent eyes).

Whether they relaunched themselves or headed down to find a home among the grass I'll never know.

Even in these difficult times we are faced with, there are still fascinating encounters to made with our natural world.— **Rog Standen**



Spiderling on top of cyclone fence. Photo by Rog Standen

Birding at Seaford Wetlands 4th May, 2020

Our club activities have been on hold for quite a while now but I have still been out walking and riding in my local area, watching for the arrival of the Flame Robins. I 'phoned Velimir and informed him that I would be EXERCISING on Monday 4th of May, starting at Austin Rd. at 10 a.m. In addition to my raincoat, I would have binoculars and a notebook. We would comply with requirements of social distancing and essential activities and stay in our local area, as I live at the northern end of Seaford Swamp and Velimir lives near the southern end, no car travel required.



Great Egret. All photos by Heather Ducat

After four days of cold, wet and very windy weather, Monday dawned with cool, overcast conditions, only occasional drizzle and fortunately no wind. Last week in fine sunny weather the path that runs along three sides of the swamp has been very busy with people walking and so many bike riders that it looks like the Tour de France pack—in slow motion. Luckily for us the drizzle kept most people indoors on Monday.

Since the beginning of March my raingauge has recorded 242mm and water levels in the swamp are the best for years. Over summer the lagoon at Austin Rd. dried up completely, the central area of water was substantially reduced and only the north-east lagoon maintained a good level, with the assistance of an artificial flow.

At Austin Rd. birds included Welcome Swallows, Purple Swamphens and Chestnut Teals, one pair with a family of nine chicks. A Little Grassbird was heard but not seen; they rarely venture from the shelter of the thick reeds. We started along the eastern side and into the large area between the path and Old Wells Rd. where revegetation a few years ago now provides a varied habitat of open grass, bushy understorey and some taller trees. Here we were delighted to see a flock of between 30 - 40 Red-browed Finches feeding on the ground. Little and Red Wattlebirds, New Holland Honeyeaters and White-plumed Honeyeaters were busy in the flowering Banksias; Spotted Pardalote were heard in the canopy of mature eucalypts.



Revegetation area near Wells Road.

We returned to the path, scanning the fence and short grassy areas but no Flame Robins were seen. We did not climb the gate to access the central track as there is currently a fox control program under way and soft-jaw traps have been set. Near the north-east lagoon we encountered a council ranger who told us that he had seen Flame Robins in the central area -- four males and some females. The usual suspects were seen along Eelrace Creek: Coots, Great Egret, Cormorants, Black Ducks, Dusky Moorhen and another family of Chestnut Teals, four chicks—just a snack for the lazily-circling Swamp Harrier.

The unusual sighting for the day was 3 or 4 Grey Currawongs, listed as 'Rarely Present' on the official species list. I have only seen them a few times in the 45 years that I have lived here. Our day finished on a high note (literally)

with the raucous calls of a group of Musk Lorikeets feeding in flowering eucalypts.

Our total number of species for the day was 36. It was delightful to be doing something normal. We paused on the only hill in Seaford -- it overlooks the central lagoon and enjoyed morning tea, then went our separate ways for lunch; it may have been pushing our luck too much if we'd had a picnic. We felt like naughty children, off the leash. The 8km loop of the swamp certainly was ample EXERCISE for the day. I 'phoned Judy to ask if a group of two members qualifies as the official club birding survey for May, YES!

I'll keep my eyes peeled for robins and anything else unusual. —**Heather Ducat**

Bird List For Seaford Wetlands 4th May 2020			
Black Swan	Dusky Moorhen	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Currawong
Pacific Black Duck	Eurasian Coot	Red Wattlebird	Little Raven
Chestnut Teal	Masked Lapwing	Noisy Miner	Red-browed Finch
Hoary-headed Grebe	Silver Gull	White-plumed Honeyeater	European Goldfinch
Little Pied Cormorant	Spotted Turtle-Dove	New Holland Honeyeater	Welcome Swallow
Little Black Cormorant	Crested Pigeon	Magpie-Lark	Little Grassbird
Great Egret	Rainbow Lorikeet	Willie Wagtail	Common Blackbird
Swamp Harrier	Musk Lorikeet	Grey Butcherbird	Common Starling
Purple Swamphen	Eastern Rosella	Australian Magpie	Common Myna

Graeme Rigg: Ronald Court Backyard Rangers

Had two of the granddaughters stay over for the past three weeks and to keep them occupied we have been doing Backyard Rangers where we venture into the backyard to see what we can find. Usually in the miniature world as we

don't have a large backyard. The birds that visit our bird bath are magpies, wattlebirds and noisy minors. However the miniature world has been slightly different.



Common Bark Moth Looper larvae



Hakea Moth larvae



Grapevine Moth larvae



Leaf Curl Spider



Common Bark Moth



Tobacco Looper. All photos by Graeme Rigg

Australian Bird Names A book review (of a sort)

'Look at all those crows!'
'They're not crows, they're ravens.'
'What's the difference?'

Ever been in one of those conversations, on either side? Well, according to a new book*, the difference is that a committee decided to call one a crow and the other a raven. Apart from that, the terms are interchangeable. The list of breeding resident Australian birds includes two crows and three ravens—all belong to the genus *Corvus*, and their allocation to raven or crow is 'pretty arbitrary'. One of the familiar species in southern parts, the Australian Raven, was named by John Gould 'White-eyed Crow', because he thought that, of the corvids found in England, it was closer to the Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*) than the Raven (*Corvus corax*). He thus named it *Corvus coronoides* meaning 'crow like a carrion crow'.

The book covers all birds on the Australian list (including vagrants) and gives the derivation of the scientific name, the author of that name, and a list of common names that have been used in the literature. It also gives a potted history of the Australian bird list, beginning in 1913 with the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union. The list in this book follows the list of the IOC (not the Olympic Committee, but the International Ornithological Committee) since at the time of writing the book (2018) the latest list being produced by Birdlife Australia was still in preparation (the Working List of Australian Birds (WLAB) was released in August 2019).

The book describes the development of the bird names we know today, which is to say, the names bestowed on them by Europeans (a very few aboriginal names have been adopted). European colonists the world over tended to name new things after familiar things—think of the number of geographical names that start with 'New'. So Australian birds were labelled magpie, lark, shrike, robin and thrush regardless of their affinity—or in most cases, lack of it—with Old World birds. These common names became too entrenched to be overturned; for example the Magpie of England is a Corvid, whilst that of Australia is a Butcherbird, called a Magpie because it is black-and-white. The compromise has been to label the local bird 'Australian Magpie'. The Pied Currawong (also in the Butcherbird family) has variously been named by ornithologists including White, Latham and Gould a Crow, Crow-shrike, Roller, Magpie and Mutton-bird, before the indigenous name(s) provided the basis for the name we know it by today. Its scientific name refers to another English corvid, the Jackdaw.

Most bird enthusiasts who are not scientists will know only the common name, so in the interests of communication a standardisation of common names for birds is desirable. A cockatoo by any other name would squawk as loud (to misquote Shakespeare), but if you want to talk about it then the person you're talking to would have to know it by that name as well; if you want to find information about it you

will probably need to know the accepted name. Many birds have a number of commonly-used names, often regionally based. The Magpie-lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*) is often called a Mudlark or a Peewee, for example (there is a list of other common names recorded for this bird that I have never heard). The intent of lists such as WLAB is to standardise the names used so that any reader can immediately understand which bird is being referred to by its common name. In scientific papers it is usual to state the authority (e.g. WLAB) being followed in the bird names used.

Ian Fraser and Jeannie Gray



AUSTRALIAN *Bird* NAMES

ORIGINS AND MEANINGS



Second Edition

The book also gives some histories of the people involved in the naming of Australian birds, with names like Gould, Latham, Horsfield, Lewin and White. John Latham, an English doctor, described and named about 60 species of Australian birds starting from the time of Cook's voyage, although he worked from skins, drawings and notes and possibly never saw a live Australian bird. He fairly indiscriminately used terms such as 'creeper', 'warbler' and 'manakin' without regard to relationships between them; most of his names are no longer in use. He is credited with first use of the term 'honeyeater'.

John Gould is a well-known name; he travelled extensively in Australia and named many birds, although many of his names do not survive because the birds had already been

named by someone else—according to the rules of priority, the first scientific name given must be the accepted name; and because he tended to use his generic name as the common name, making for some tongue-twisters that were never likely to be adopted. The Mallefowl *Leipoa ocellata* ('eyelet egg-leaver') was given by Gould the common name Ocellated Leipoa!

Scientific names, following the binomial convention of a genus name followed by a species name, systematised (though not invented) by Linnaeus, are generally based on some characteristic of the bird. For example *Biziura lobata* is the scientific name for the Musk Duck. *Biziura* comes from Greek, meaning 'straw-tail'. *Lobata* refers to the flap under the male's bill. In the case of the Musk Duck, both the scientific and common names are aptly descriptive of characteristics of the bird, but this is not true for all bird names. The derivations of some names are obscure, while others were given in error—for example the Kookaburra has the scientific name *Dacelo novaguineae*, because the namer wrongly believed that it came from New Guinea. Incidentally this is another of the birds for which the common name comes from an aboriginal language, although anglicized. Far Eastern Curlew (the 'Far' recently applied to distinguish it from the eastern race of the Eurasian Curlew) was named *Numenius madagascariensis* by Linnaeus because he thought the specimen came from Madagascar, when it most likely came from Makassar in Sulawesi.

Some of the common names in the IOC list are a bit unusual—for example, the Scarlet Honeyeaters that were

common on the Peninsula a few years ago are called Scarlet Myzomela, direct from the generic name (WLAB uses the former term). Other names used for this bird have included Sanguineous Honeyeater (Gould), Sanguineous Creeper, Cochineal Creeper, Blood-bird and Hummingbird!

For me the book, while providing fascinating information on the naming of Australian birds, also left me thinking that perhaps the names we give things are not that intrinsically important, especially at the level of pedantry where the 'correct' name of a bird can be 'Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo' (IOC), 'Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo' (WLAB) and 'Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo' (Handbook of the Birds of the World). There are policies behind the use of hyphens and capitalisation of the word following the hyphen but for the non-professional birdwatcher it's probably not worth getting into. Certainly it is preferable if the name gives some information about the thing being named, but since this is often not the case anyway, with some names in fact given in error—there are even cases of typos in the original publication of the name becoming the 'correct' form under the rules—perhaps we should not get quite so pedantic about it.

For a proper review of the book see Virgil Hubregtse in the Victorian Naturalist 136(6) p213, December 2019.—**Lee Denis**

* *Australian Bird Names. Origins and Meanings*, by Ian Fraser and Jeannie Gray, 2nd Edition, CSIRO Publishing 2019

Rain brings the millipedes inside

The introduced Portugese Millipede (*Ommatoiulus moreletii*) has again been visiting inside our house after the fantastic rains we have experienced over the past couple of weeks.



Immature Portugese Millipede on the inside carpet. Photo by Rog Standen

As vegetarians, they usually mind their own business out in the garden, but after good rains they tend to try and find a

more comfortable place to live. As one of the few millipedes attracted to lights, this means they get drawn to homes and they seem to be able to find access to the inside through what must be tiny little gaps. The number I have found in our place says to me that there are a few gaps to be plugged to make it better insulated as well as keeping the millipedes out.

The millipedes cannot bite or impact on humans, do not eat anything inside the house and will generally just die after they get inside. When disturbed, they either thrash around like a crazed snake, or curl up in a tight coil to keep their softer underparts protected by the hard exoskeleton.

As the millipedes mature, they go through a series of moults, maybe up to seven to nine moults in their first year. It is reported that they often eat the moulted shell, a very energy efficient mechanism. The one I photographed on the carpet that stimulated this article, has 41 segments, each with two pairs of legs on each side of the body, resulting in 164 legs, not quite the thousand that the name implies. Interestingly, millipedes and centipedes are both myriapods, which comes from the ancient Greek: murias = ten thousand, pod = foot. When mature, after about two years and after 10-11 moults, they have 50 segments and are ready to reproduce.

The Portugese millipede has a smooth, cylindrical body and has a pointed tail, unlike the rougher, nobbly cover of native species like polydesmid millipedes. The polydesmid species only have about 20 segments.

Fortunately, while we have had an individual visit us every night or so, we have not had a population explosion as can sometimes occur after the first autumn rains. Maybe they are following the self-isolation rules too!—**Rog Standen**

Desert Ash

As I walk around Mt Eliza streets and reserves, I notice an explosion in the number of Desert Ash (*Fraxinus angustifolia* ssp *angustifolia*) seedlings and young trees. They were once widely planted in gardens as a hardy and fast growing tree. They're not planted much anymore, but there are thousands of them in gardens all over the Peninsula. They are great self-seeders, and people who don't pay much attention to their gardens are wondering where that 3 metre high tree came from. They don't remember planting it, because they didn't. The seed will have blown in from a tree up the road, and before they know it, it's metres high and just where they didn't want it.

I see dozens of seedlings every day in my suburb, in nature strips, drains, road verges and front gardens, sometimes half a dozen in one garden. As they quickly reach 10 – 12 metres in height, if unchecked they create a terrible nuisance, and will be expensive for home owners to remove.

They are a real problem in public spaces and bushland, running rampant and choking out the competition from native trees and shrubs. I see them popping up near the beach even. They are listed on Mornington Peninsula Shire's Weed brochure, along with our old enemy *Pittosporum undulatum*, which looks benign by comparison.

Keep an eye out for these ferals, and pull them out quick before they get too big to remove! If you have a Claret Ash, *Fraxinus angustifolia* 'Raywood', the brilliant autumn foliage tree, you don't need to worry, as it is a sterile, harmless and beautiful tree. —**Judy Smart**



Photo by Judy Smart

Peninsula Field Naturalists Club Inc

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month with a field trip the following Saturday. Further information and current Programme of Activities can be found at our website.

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