Field Nats News No. 309

Understanding Our Natural World
Est. 1880

Newsletter of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc.
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July 2020

From the President

Welcome to the June FNN. I trust you are all still weathering the vicissitudes of restricted life in good health and good spirits. I must admit that the opportunity to engage with fellow naturalists on a field trip to photograph our amazing bio-diversity would be a most welcome change. There may be some opportunities to have excursions a little later in the year but the relaxation of regulations should not be confused with relaxation of safety controls. Any excursions will need to follow any applicable, strict safety protocols. These matters are currently being considered by Council.

When I think of high biodiversity, the insect Order Diptera immediately comes to mind. Flies have a large size range from minute gnats and tiny Free-loader Flies to large Bee Flies, Robber Flies and Bristle Flies. Some very tiny members of the Ceratopoginidae (biting midges) such as *Forcipomyia spp*, suck blood from the wing veins of other insects including lacewings. Free-loader flies (Milichiidae) are tiny, 1-2 mm kleptoparasites that steal food from other organ-isms including ants, mantids and spiders. Those in **photo 1 below** are stealing honey dew from meat ants as they collect it from plant hoppers. They are small-er than the heads of the meat ants.

(Continued on page 2)

Photo 1. Tiny, 1mm Milichiid, Free-loader Flies waiting to steal honey dew as *Iridiomymrmex* collect it from plant hoppers nymphs. **Photo: M. Campbell**

FNN 310 continues to ask you to share your observations and photos (see p 5 & 6)

Use joan.broadberry@gmail.com

The deadline is always 10 am., the first Tuesday of the month, July 7th.

(Continued from page 1)

Flies have evolved to occupy every niche imaginable across the globe, with an enormous diversity of forms and life habits. Their roles as pollinators, recyclers/decomposers and as a food source are inestimable. They are a major source of protein for many organisms throughout our ecosystems.

Photo 2. A Pelecorhynchid fly feeding on nectar. **Photo: A. McCutcheon**

Their adaptations and symbiotic relationships are also remarkable. An extreme adaptation can be seen in flies of the family Ephydridae which includes Brine Flies, Shore Flies and Alkali Flies. In particular, the Lake Mono Alkali Fly (*Ephydra hians*) thrives in California's Lake Mono which has a salinity three times greater than seawater in addition to a high alkalinity. *Ephydra* lives on the surface and dives beneath it with the aid of very dense, fine bristles or hairs over its body which allow it to produce small, diving bubbles of air. The flies also have water-resistant, waxy, cuticular hydrocarbons to protect them. They feed underwater on algae living in the lake. They lay their eggs in the water and the larvae feed on algae and bacteria. The enormous population of Alkali Flies around Mono Lake is a critical food resource for many visiting migratory birds. The lake is under threat from water diversions for human activities which is leading to increased salinity levels and possible ecological collapse. The sunscreen film from occasional human swimmers is a modern contaminant that can strip away the waxy coat, thereby increasing the risk of drowning for the flies. There are many things that we do, without a second thought, that have environmental consequences. When entire human populations are involved in such practices, control and management become difficult if not impossible.

Photo 3. The long proboscis is clearly visible. **Photo: A. McCutcheon**

We have many large flies in Australia and some of them, like the Tabanidae (March Flies) are not reluctant to practice their expert phlebotomy when we venture into their habitat. Many of them can be heard approaching from some distance on a still day. In fact, one of the most recognisable sounds of Summer in the Australian bush is the buzzing of March flies. Other times their presence is announced by expletives and a notable physical response by the surprised victim. When you see the long proboscis, it comes as no surprise that considerable pain may accompany a bite not to mention the ensuing reaction. However not every fly endowed with a long proboscis is a blood sucker. The large fly in **Photo 2** is thought to be of a likely new species of the family Pelecorhynchidae that are related to March flies and sit within the Superfamily Tabanoidea.

Their very long proboscis (**Photo 3**) is used to collect nectar from flowers. From the size of the proboscis we should be grateful for their presumed nectivorous habit. However, it should be noted that some species of the Tabanoidea can manage both feeding habits. The larval stages are believed to be predators of soft bodied invertebrates such as earthworms living in damp and marshy environments and eventually move to drier ground to pupate. These are not the only flies to have different feeding habits throughout the various stages of their life cycle. Many hover flies are nectivorous as adults while the larvae (**Photo 4 next page**) are rapacious predators of small insects such as aphids.

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)
Apart from extremely aggressive and persistent mosquitoes, there seems to be few flies in the garden during this cold weather.

I look forward to the warmth of Spring and the pleasant buzzing of flies. With all of the fungi about at the moment there should at least be some fungus gnats and heliomyzid flies such as *Tapeigaster spp* (**Photo 5**) to photograph.

Maxwell Campbell

Photo 4. A tiny aphid has its last kick as a hover fly larva literally sucks it dry**.**
Photo: M. Campbell

Photo 5. *Tapeigaster sp* (Heliomyzidae) sitting on a mushroom.
Photo: M. Campbell

Suggested reading:

Marshall, S.A. (2012), Flies, The Natural History and Diversity of Diptera. Firefly Books, USA.

CSIRO, (1991) The Insects of Australia (2nd Edition) Vol. I and II. M.U.P. Australia.

McAlister, E. (2017) The secret life of Flies. CSIRO Publishing, Australia.

Welcome
Welcome

Warmest greetings to these new members who were welcomed into our club at the last Council meeting*:*

Claire Deasey, Cameron Deasey, Patrick Deasey, Jodie Clarke, Kimberley Ure and Molly Farquharson.

bookshop@fncv.org.au

for any orders or bookshop queries.

If you don't have access to email, the FNCV office will pass on your message. Kathy will then be in contact with you.

Thanks to the editorial and layout team who put together FNN 309

Joan Broadberry
Wendy Gare
Sally Bewsher

Congratulations to the FNCV members who were recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours List

Dr Jeanette (Jan) Watson AM, for significant service to marine science and ecology and to professional associations.

Anne Payne OAM, for services to the community of Blackburn.

FNCV Facebook report:

16,411 followers (1145 new member applications pending).

Nature Quiz 3. Compiled by Barbara Burns

1. Name the bird pictured right. *Photo: Mark Smith.*

2. What was the topic of the 2019 FNCV Biodiversity Symposium?
3. What is a nudibranch?
   (a) A sea slug
   (b) A jellyfish
   (c) A sea cucumber
4. Who is the webmaster for the FNCV's website?
   (a) Max Campbell
   (b) Jurrie Hubregtse
   (c) John Harris
5. What to the initials DELWP stand for?
6. Which butterfly is larger, the Orchard Butterfly or the Dingy Swallowtail?
7. What is the food plant of the Imperial White Butterfly?
8. How many species of wombat are there in Australia?
9. What is the common name of the flower pictured right?

10. What is the common name of the snake pictured below which is widespread in Eastern Australia, although not often seen?

11. The word 'gastropod' comes from the Greek and describes snails and slugs. What is its meaning in English?
12. What is the approximate top speed of a dragonfly?
   (a) 20 km per hour
   (b) 35 km per hour
   (c) 50 km per hour
13. What is the common name for phasmids?
14. Which volcano is considered to have most recently erupted in Victoria?
   (a) Tower Hill
   (b) Mt Eccles
   (c) Mt Elephant
15. Name the largest Australian owl.

Answers: see p 5

loafers

Thanks to Carol Page

Win for Friends of Leadbeater's possum

The recent court case tested whether the Victorian State government logging agency VicForests, when logging in threatened Leadbeater's Possum and Greater Glider habitat should be exempt from the national Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act.

The judgement found that VicForests' past logging operations contravened the requirements of Victorian law, and that its future operations were also likely to do so. As such, it was also unlawful under the Federal EPBC Act and could not claim exemption.

More information: www.leadbeaters.org.au

https://theconversation.com/the-leadbeaters-possum-finally-had-its-day-in-court-it-may-change-the-future-of-logging-in-australia-139652?

SIG reports given at the last FNCV Council Meeting

Fauna Survey Group: Meeting, 3 March 2020: Reports were presented on the groups recent activities. Robin Drury showed some wildlife camera photos of animals from the Point Nepean survey. Of particular interest were White –footed Dunnart and Long-nosed Bandicoot. John Harris reported on the Hattah survey in February, where reptiles included Bearded Dragon, Spotted Burrowing Skink, Tree Dtella, Beaded Gecko, Marbled Gecko, Spiny-tailed Gecko, Burton's Legless Lizard, Mitchell's Short-tailed Snake, Coral Snake and Bandy Bandy.

The speaker for the night was Angela Sims from Macquarie University on 'Ecology of the Sulawesi Forest Turtle'. The Sulawesi Forest Turtle *Leucocephalon yuwonoi*, is endemic and monotypic and like many Asian turtles, 60% of which are endangered, comes under pressure from habitat loss and overexploitation. The research was undertaken in a known population in forest, small streams and plantations. The population in the study was estimated to be about 140 in 10sq km, and individuals had a core home range of about 5000 sq m. There were high numbers of juveniles but the survival rate is very low, with many of the turtles falling prey to dogs and pigs.

Surveys. Bael Bael NCR, 6-9 March 2020. This was our 4th trip to Bael Bael Grassland NCR and we were elated to record Plains Wanderers for the first time in this series of surveys, with 4 seen and 2 more heard. Parks Victoria has been managing the reserve carefully to improve the habitat for the Plains Wanderer, and this result is a tribute to the hard work. We also found good numbers of Curl Snakes and Fat-tailed Dunnarts this time. ***See full report pages 7-10***

R. Gibson

2020 Council Meetings: 22 June (**Note change**); 27 July; 24 August; 28 September; 26 October; 23 November.

Answers to Quiz 3.

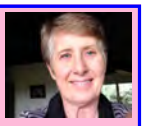
How did you do?

15

1. Regent Parrot
2. Environmental restoration
3. (a.) A sea slug
4. (b.) Jurrie Hubregtse
5. Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
6. Orchid Butterfly 55-65 mm. (The Dingy Swallowtail is 35-45 mm)
7. Mistletoe
3. Three: the Common Wombat, the Southern Hairy-nosed and the Northern Hairy-nosed Wombat.
9. Fringe Lily
10. Bandy Bandy
11. Gastropod means 'stomach foot'
12. (c) Up to 50 km per hour. Dragonflies are amongst the fastest flying insects in the world.
13. Stick insects.
14. (b) Mt Eccles
15. The Powerful Owl

From the editor

joan.broadberry@gmail.com



Can a members' photo page (or pages) be an ongoing feature of future FNNs?

There are many advantages to a wholly digital newsletter. Apart from the saving in costs of printing and postage and the obvious fact that it is in colour, it also means that we are not limited to twelve pages. One of the things I have been thinking of doing for a while is giving members a greater opportunity to share their photos. This section of FNN would differ from what we do now by placing the emphasis on images rather than words to highlight a natural history moment or story.

With the advent of high quality cameras on phones, my guess is that many of us are sitting on a veritable library of photos. I know I am. On the next page I have put together a page of shots I have taken over the last few weeks whilst walking in Westerfolds Park as an example. However, images can be in many forms. Some may be a sequence, many will be a single photo. Remember we are not able to publish images of children or to possibly infringe copyright by using someone else's work. Keep commentary to a minimum but it is good to know what we are looking at so please add scientific and/or common names whenever possible. It can also be useful to know where and perhaps when the image was taken.

Over to you members. The worst that can happen is that you will see many of my own photos in the next few months. The best is that FNN's photo page might become more popular than Facebook! ***Best wishes to all, Joan***

Use my home email: joan.broadberry@gmail.com

Can a members' photo page (or pages) be an ongoing feature of future FNNs?

I hope so, but it will be up to you. Please caption photos where you can with the scientific name and/or common name. If you can, resize large images. Maybe mention where the image was taken. Single photos welcome. **joan.broadberry@gmail.com**
(see also 'From the Editor' previous page)

My closest park is Westerfolds, Templestowe. It is bordered by the Yarra River which usually flows slowly, except after heavy rain. The photo of frog spawn was taken at an old dam site. The reptile is a Southern Water Skink, *Eulamprus tympanum* .With patience platypus can be seen in the river. Binoculars help but are not essential. **Photos: Joan Broadberry**

Fauna Survey Group

The Hunt for the Plains-Wanderer

Over the March Labour Day long weekend, it was time again for our annual FNCV/Friends of Terrick Terrick/Parks Victoria Grassland Fauna Survey at Bael Bael Grassland Nature Conservation reserve. This trip has become a staple of our survey calendar and now was in its fourth year. Our hopes were high that this time we would finally get to see a Plains-wanderer (PWs) face to face. The Ibis Caravan Park near Kerang hosted us again for a fourth year running.

Common Spadefoot Toad (*Neobatrachus sudelli*)
Photo: Andrej Hohmann

The day just before our survey Kerang and surrounds received their first big rain in months. Awesome news for nature and the farming community but it did mean that Bael Bael was inaccessible for a little while. The clay-based roads of the local area don't need much rain to become undrivable very quickly. So, we did what one naturally does when it rains, go frog hunting! The lignum scrub and Black Box swampland at Wandella Nature Conservation Reserve delivered us some very cute and chonky Common Spade Foots Toads and Eastern Banjo Frogs.

We also visited some of Kerang's many wetlands during the day. Most were dry but Lake Cullen contained water thanks to an environmental allocation. The lake boasted a spectacular array and number of wetland birds, way too many to count so we didn't even attempt this impossible task.

Eastern Banjo Frog (*Limnodynastes dumerilii dumerilli*). **Photo: Asha Billing**

Keying out Eastern Stripped Skink (*Ctenotus orientalis*). **Photo: Asha Billing**

Amongst the salt bushes along the bank of the lake we made two surprise herpetological discoveries: Samphire Skinks (*Morethia adelaidensis*) and Eastern Stripped Skink (*Ctenotus orientalis*). We think there is a good change that Lake Cullen is a new location for both species. While there are neighbouring populations of the Samphire Skink, the nearest Eastern Striped Skink population is recorded at about 50 kilometres away in NSW on the other side of the Murray River and about 80 kilometres away in Victoria.

Vehicle with roof mounted lights.
Photo: Malcom Brown

Saltbush Morethia Skink (*Morethia adelaidensis*). **Photo: Noel Billing**

Our scouting expedition on Saturday revealed that the roads had dried out enough for us to access the reserve. So, Saturday night it was onto the main game. Fortified with a BBQ dinner, we descended locust-like onto the reserve to sate our need for grassland critters. At the reserve we split up into four teams to cover more of the reserve. Based on their local knowledge the Parks team directed each car to a paddock with good biomass conditions for Plains-wanderers. Plains-wanderers are a goldilocks species, they want their grass just in the right way, not too much nor too little.

For our survey method we were driving predetermined transects in the paddocks while

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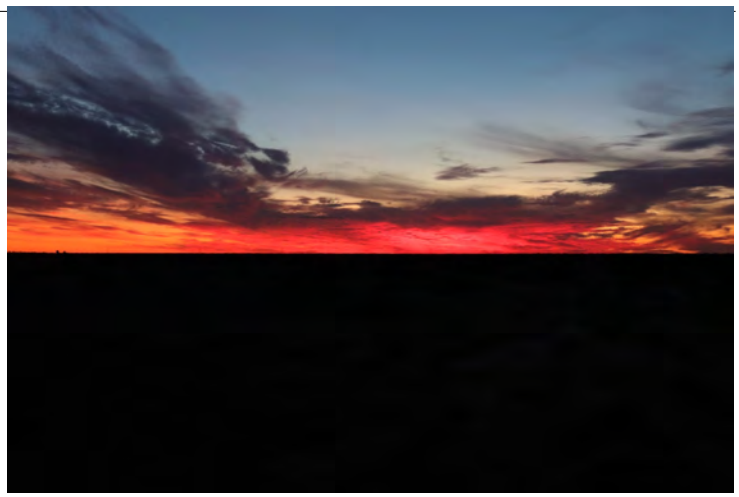
spotlighting out of the car. With the help of GPSs and Avenza maps the cars travelled along predetermined transects at about 7kms an hour, while the team inside strenuously looks out for any vertebrates. Each team consisted of four people in one car: one driver, one scribe, and two spotters. Thanks to the powerful roof lights Parks fitted to each car one could see for up to 20 meters from the car. **(Photo previous page).** All of this is a somewhat unusual method for us at the Fauna Survey Group, but I like to think that we have got the hang of it over the years.



Arriving before night fall at the reserve meant that we were privy to the spectacular sunset that seem to be a magical given on the plains. With the excitement building we set off. It did not take long at all for our efforts to be rewarded. A male and a female; a pair, within ten minutes! Success straight off the bat. Our spirits were soaring. And as our spirits were soaring so were the airwaves with our good news and, one might add, an appropriate amount of gloating to the other three teams.

Banded Lapwing (*Vanellus tricolor*) in spotlight. **Photo: Andrej Hohmann**

Our excitement never really waned from that point on for the rest of the weekend. It had no reason to. The reserve was positively slithering with Curl Snakes (65) and bounding with Fat-tailed Dunnarts (28). 35 more Curl Snakes were recorded than in last year's survey and 21 more dunnarts than last year. And of course, Plains-wanderers. We saw four in total and possibly heard another two. The two additional possibly PWs depend on how far their calls could have travelled on the night we heard them. Finding more PWs also meant that it gave almost everyone participating in the survey a chance to see them.

These are by far our best results to date. Finding this many Plains Wanderers is great news for the species. PWs are considered number one globally as birds for Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered (EDGE). A thousand or less are thought to remain in the wild. To put that into perspective we may have encountered around 1% of the entire global population on our survey! Encountering this many PWs is a good indication that the condition of the reserves fulfills the habitat requirements of the species, which is fantastic news and a great affirmation of all the hard work Parks Victoria have been putting into the reserve. Only about 0.5% of the Northern Plains Grassland remains and that which remains is heavily threatened by weed and pasture grass invasion. Grasslands like Bael Bael thus need active management for them to still serve as a home for PWs and other critters.

Over the years the staff from the Cohuna and Echuca office have been put in a mountain of work looking after the reserve with fencing, biomass management, and weed control. This in part has been realised through the specifically created position of Grassland Ranger (Tim Schwinghammer) and Grassland Project Officer (Ben Hodgens). Tim and his Parks colleagues from Science and Management Effectiveness Team (Mark Antos, Darren Baldyga, and Naomi Davis) co-organised this survey with

(Continued on page 9)

Female Plains-wanderer. **Photo: Andrej Hohmann**

In Situ Female Plains-wanderer. **Photo: Robert Irvine**

(Continued from page 8)

Half the survey team. From L to R standing Mark Anderson, Jenny Spence, Audrey Dickins, Asha Billing, Brenna Billing, Robin Drury, Bruce Edley, and Naomi Davis. Seated L to R Robert Irvine, Elizabeth Newton, Ray Gibson, and Andrej Hohman.

Photo: Tim Schwinghammer

us so it was particularly rewarding to have them out there with us when we found our birds.

We are excited to analyse our four trips worth of data and see what this can reveal about how Bael Bael is tracking over time. And I for one am already looking forward to next year's survey.

Big thanks to all the participants from the Field Nats, Friends of Terrick Terrick and Parks Victoria for making the survey happen.

Cheers,

Andrej Hohmann

Booms its mating call,
the plains wanderer stands poised.
Grass sways in the breeze

(Michael McBain/ Andrej Hohmann)

Curl Snake (*Suta Suta*). **Photo: Asha Billing**

All animals were caught and handled in accordance with the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria's standard operating procedures and research permits under the Wildlife Act 1975 and National Parks Act 1975.

Fat-tailed Dunnart Dunnart (*Sminthopsis crassicaudata*). **Photo: Asha Billing**

Fat-tailed Dunnart (*Sminthopsis crassicaudata*)

Photo: Raymond Gibson

More photos p10.

Tessellated Gecko (*Diplodactylus tessellatus*) another grassland denizen. **Photo: Asha Billing**

The team hard at work actively searching for reptiles. **Photo: Asha Billing**

Bael Bael Grassland Nature Conservation Reserve **Photo: Asha Billing**

Curl Snake (*Suta Suta*) Juvenile.

Scorpion under UV light. **Photo: Asha Billing**

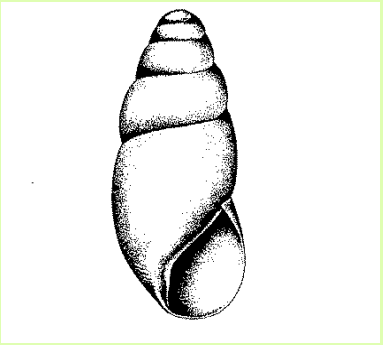
Tiger Beetle at Bael Bael GNCR Salt Pan. **Photo: Bruce Edley**

Wolf Spider with Babies on board. **Photo: Elizabeth Newton**

Members' news, photos & observations

We are now relying more and more on member photos and natural history observations. Please share with us what you have noted in your daily life, travels or garden. Email: joan.broadberry@gmail.com by 10 am the first Tuesday of the month.

Cochlicopa lubrica in Benalla



The note by Max Campbell in the May newsletter about finding tiny snails of *Pupoides sp*. in his garden reminded me of a similar find in Benalla. On 10th May I stepped out the front door and found a tiny snail on the path immediately in front of me. I immediately recognised it as *Cochlicopa lubrica,* a species introduced from Europe. The shell is a glossy dark brown colour and too small for me to photograph. The figure herewith is from Smith and Kershaw's Field Guide to the Non-Marine Molluscs of South-East Australia, 1979, where it is named *Cionella lubrica.*

In June 1980 and again in April 1981 I found a great number of this species at my previous residence in Benalla. Again, they were first seen on my front door step. At that time I had no idea what they were and handed a specimen to Brian Smith, the then curator of invertebrates at the Museum of Victoria. He was quite excited at the find and promptly arrived at my place to collect some more. He noted that this was only the third time the snail had been recorded in Victoria (or Australia?), and that none of the other records were within hundreds of kilometres of Benalla. Those specimens were near my front door for a few weeks after which they disappeared, never to be seen again.

The latest find is about 2km from my former home. I do not think the shell has come from there but I suspect that it has arrived attached to newly-purchased plants for my garden. The shells of this species are only 4 – 6mm long, and so not likely to be seen by your average gardener. It may well be quite common although rarely observed.

Alan Monger

Collembola or Diplura

I opened my compost bin today (it is a former worm farm bin that I use as a small elevated compost bin) and inside the lid was a mass of tiny white invertebrates. It rained last night so the air was very humid inside the lid and the bin. I guess they are either Collembola or Diplura. Attached is the still photo of these creatures.

Val La May

Little Whip Snake (*Parasuta flagellum*)

Found in the You Yangs

This is the first time I've ever observed this small, distinctive snake which was the highlight of the day. It was not much more than 30cm long, so not as big as the 45cm that they can reach. Little Whip Snakes give birth to live young and feed on lizards and frogs.

Being nocturnal is probably why this species is not often observed.

Reiner Richter

Grass-carrying Wasp *Isodontia auripes*

I first noticed the straw in the dead Acacia holes on the 4th April and a contact has since kindly identified them as Isodontia referencing https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/25522039

The Isodontia adults feed on nectar and have a role as pollinators.
As you know the current pollinator count is highlighting the importance of pollinators. https://wildpollinatorcount.com/
Wild Pollinator Count dates for 2020 are Autumn**: 12 – 19 April,** Spring: **8 – 15 November.**
See Whitehorse Council page https://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/gardens-for-wildlife then
https://www.ppwcma.vic.gov.au/what-we-do/sustainable-agriculture/beneficialinsects/

These Isodontia are unlikely to be a hazard to people in the park as The Field Naturalists' Association of Canberra article below states that "the Grass carrying Wasps are solitary and not aggressive and don't defend their nests. They will sting only if seriously threatened."

A quick search on the web shows recent Canberra Field Naturalist June 2019 ISSN: 1836-2761
http://fieldnatsact.com/sites/default/files/Natter%20June%202019.pdf and a USA video.

Ed. Below are some stills taken from the video. **Ruth Ault**



A Recently Described Cicada from Warburton *Yoyetta abdominalis*

On field trips we occasionally find organisms that can't be identified readily and sometimes these turn out to be undescribed species.

On a Terrestrial Invertebrates Group field trip to Warburton in January 2020 Faye Campbell found a small brownish cicada with orange markings on its tail (photo right). I posted images of this cicada on the citizen science website, iNaturalist and tentatively identified it as *Yoyetta abdominalis*. David Emery, a cicada enthusiast and expert, added a comment that it was an undescribed species and a paper formally describing it had been submitted for publication.

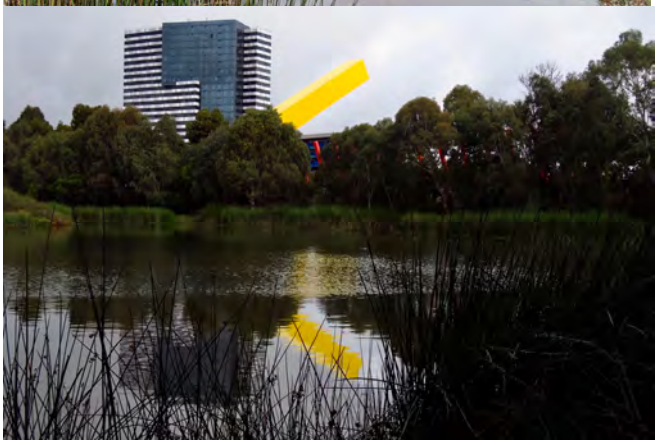
A female Clicking Ambertail, Warburton Jan.2020 **Photo: J. Eichler**

David is one of three authors of a paper, published in March 2020, that describes and names this cicada *Yoyetta robertsonae* or Clicking Ambertail. The known distribution of *Y. robertsonae* is the central and southern tablelands of NSW, the ACT and Victoria. The paper comments that large populations can be common along watercourses such as the Yarra, which is where this specimen was found. David Emery subsequently provided a species level identification of the iNaturalist observation following publication of this paper.

This example highlights the value of iNaturalist as a tool for recording our field trip observations, having identifications confirmed or corrected and receiving taxonomic updates.

John Eichler

Trin Warren Tam-boore; a marvellous Melbourne nature spot.



Royal Park's 170 hectares make it the largest area of parkland in inner city Melbourne. It is also one of the oldest, being set aside as a reserve in 1845. Royal Park combines the Zoo and a number of sporting grounds with extensive plantings of native vegetation and many mature trees.

Trin Warren Tam-boore (Bellbird Waterhole) is a wetland located in the north-west corner of the park. The name comes from the indigenous Wurundjeri people. 'Trin warren' is 'bellbird' and 'Tam-boore' is 'waterhole'. I visited recently and was tremendously impressed by the innovative environmental and conservation programs I found there.

The wetland consists of two linked ponds over about five hectares of land. One is an S-shaped treatment wetland, the other a larger storage wetland. The treatment wetland acts as a natural filter **(Photo above, top),** where specially selected Australian native plants, microscopic organisms and sunlight contribute to clean polluted storm water through natural biological processes. The treated water then flows under the road to the storage wetland which is used to irrigate areas of Royal Park. The overflow goes into Moonee Ponds Creek. Trin Warren Tam-boore was completed in 2006 and upgraded in 2008. It achieves three environmental goals in one hit: storm water run-off from the surrounding suburbs is cleaned, a rich variety of habitats is available for wildlife and recycled water can be delivered for use in the park. Incidentally, a great view of the yellow pillar on Citylink, known as *The Cheese Stick*, can be obtained from the path around the edge of the storage pond. (**Photo above).**

Naturalists will find Trin Warren Tam-boore a rewarding place to visit. It has been described as one of the best birding locations close to the city. The waterholes, tree cover and plantings attract many bird species. I first went there because of reports of the presence of Swift Parrots. I was not lucky enough to see them, but my bird list was over 30 including an Australasian Grebe, (**Photo left).** It was heartening to find good populations of White-plumed and New Holland Honeyeaters, now rare in suburbia. The area is also a great place to spot frogs, reptiles and insects. An adjacent rocky hillside (once a rubbish tip) has been specially set up for the conservation of White's skink. *Egernia whitii.* which I hope to see on a later visit.

Australasian Grebe

Trin Warren Tam-boore is about 4 kilometres north of the city. It is easily accessible by car with four hour parking, (and toilets) available off Oak St. Parkville. It can also be reached via a ride or a short walk along the Upfield bike path that connects to Royal Park station (the zoo station) and the tramline. Do yourself a favour and check it out.

Joan Broadberry (*all photos J. Broadberry*)

'The Third Tree' More discoveries of *Auriscalpium* sp. 'Blackwood'

Normally, at this time of year the FNCV Fungi Group would be out on frequent forays, including to Blackwood (west of Melbourne) where they discovered the rare Stemless Earpick Fungus (*Auriscalpium* sp. 'Blackwood') in 2005. In most years since, the fungi has appeared again, but were only ever observed on the same tree trunk, a Narrow-leaved Peppermint (*Eucalyptus radiata*), 'the first tree'. I have attended several forays there in the last 10 years, but unfortunately these elusive fungi were not present on each of these occasions. Many autumns being quite dry, they eventually appeared later in the season, (after the forays), in some of these years.

Blackwood, being about as far on the other side of the city as my home is to the east, I have spent more time in local areas instead. I thought the forests around Silvan and Gembrook could be suitable but never had any success until last year when I stumbled across a good colony in Olinda, 'the second tree'. Some FNCV members formally searched several hundred nearby trees over two days without further success.

Being brown and small, typically around 10mm across, (but I've measured them up to 25mm), they aren't easily seen unless you are within a few metres and on the right side of the tree They mostly grow on the shady side. Additionally, they don't appear for very long if rains aren't reasonably continuous, drying to nothing within a couple of weeks. The bark on which they grow seems to need to be spongy and wet. **(Photos I and 2**)

When searching there are problems of being deceived by other fungi that look similar at first glance. *Pseudohydnum gelatinosum* is fairly common on trunks of Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) where it develops grey-topped, gelatinous sporing bodies to around 5cm. However in Kurth Kiln Regional Park there are some on *Eucalyptus radiata* that forms smaller structures with a browner top (but the spines are still white). **(Photo 3)**

3. *Pseudohydnum gelatinosum* at Kurth Kiln

Small *Resupinatus* can also be misleading when sighted from a distance. *Resupinatus cinerascens* (usually larger), *Resupinatus subapplicatus* and *Resupinatus* aff. *merulioides* can form similar colonies on gum tree trunks, but they are easy to distinguish from *Auriscalpium* when inspecting the under-side. **(Photos 4 and 5)**

Another site regularly visited for FNCV fungi forays is Mortimer Nature Trail in Bunyip State Park near Gembrook. I believe that was where I went on my first foray with the group. Interestingly it was here where, on a tree immediately beside the track, I found the third known colony of *Auriscalpium* sp. 'Blackwood' on 5th May this year 2020, 'the third tree'. Admittedly it wasn't in the wet gully where most of the foray time is spent but it is still an area frequented by fungi enthusiasts. It has also been found in Kurth Kiln Regional Park this season.

My understanding is that the description is close to being published, so these *Auriscalpium* may soon have a formal specific epitaph (species name). In Australia it seems to help being given a conservation status, if a species has been named and properly described. It is unfortunate that it has taken fifteen years. It is only in the past two years that more than one colony was known. Before that it would easily have qualified as Critically Endangered, the highest ranking before being considered extinct.

Reiner Richter

1. *Auriscalpium* 8th April, 2020

2. The same *Auriscalpium* 15th April, 2020

4. *Resupinatus* aff. *merulioides* from above.

5. *Resupinatus* aff. *merulioides* from underneath.