

FRIENDS OF BRAESIDE PARK NEWSLETTER

May 2010, no. 3



BRAESIDE PARK

Life and death in spider world	2
Wednesdays with the A Team	2
Activities calendar	3
Bird Group report	4
Banding bantering	4
Nursery news	5
Park report	5

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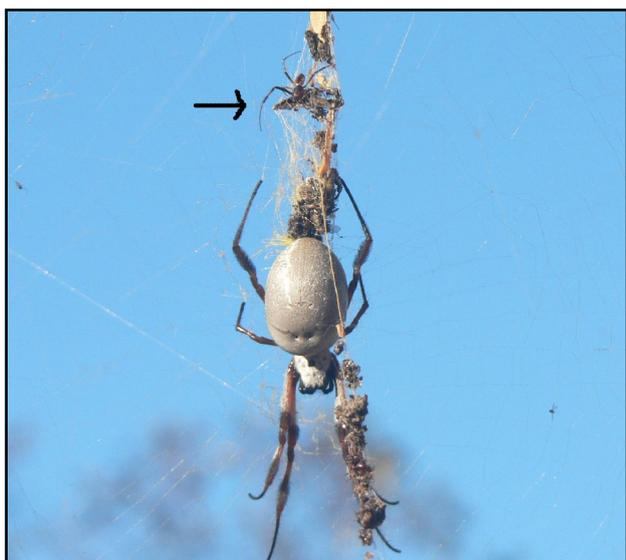
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Life and death in the spider world—a Gluepot tale

From the editor

I spent April volunteering at Gluepot Reserve, a Birds Australia property in the South Australian mallee. The bush there is liberally festooned with large webs of the Golden Orb Weaver spider (*Nephila edulis*). A female *Nephila* also built her web at the end of our kitchen block. I frequently admired the web, glistening gold in the morning sun.



Golden Orb Weaver, arrow shows male above the female.
Photo: VL

One busy morning with visitors coming and going, I noticed a much smaller male Golden Orb Weaver just above the female, strumming the web with his front legs. The spider mating ritual! I'd never witnessed this drama before. Would the male be able to seduce the giant female and escape unharmed after 'doing the deed'? I watched transfixed, but unfortunately the day's schedule did not permit staying for the whole slow process.

The next day, the male spider was nowhere to be seen; presumably he had been one of the female's snacks during the previous day.

Two days later the female had deposited overnight a large egg mass in the lower corner of her web; evidently the male had succeeded in mating. I checked the eggs daily for the next fortnight, but they hadn't hatched. Unfortunately my stay at Gluepot came to an end before the eggs hatched.

I've no doubt that the spider's eggs did eventually hatch and a new brood of Golden Orb Weavers was added to the Gluepot spider population. A large price for the little male to pay, but worth it in the spider world.

Wednesdays with Ernie's 'A Team'

By Bev Bancroft

Our group has spent a very busy three months:

Grasslands

Volunteers have mowed, removed weeds and planted over 1,200 indigenous grasses.

Fencing

Two mornings were spent fixing rabbit holes in fencing of the Heathland adjacent to the Red Gum Trail.

Heathland

Time has been spent ring-barking *Acacia longifolia* etc, removing weeds and spraying herbicide on the prolific Bridal Creeper seedlings.

Salinity site

Guards and frames have been collected in readiness for this year's community planting.

Car parks

Car parks have been tidied & mulched.

All of the above and a delicious morning tea too. Come join the "A" team - extra help is always needed. Meet at the Park Office at 9am.

FIRST COMMUNITY PLANTING DAY Saturday 29th of May

9.00am to noon.

Morning tea provided.

Follow the arrow signs to planting site

Thanks To The Helpers
Those who helped produce the newsletter:

Elsie Anderson
Bev Bancroft
Ian Parsons
Park Rangers

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Friends of Braeside Park

ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

Activity	Time/Day	May	June	July
Committee Meeting	4th Tuesday , 1.00pm at the Visitor Centre	18	5 July note change	27
Community Projects Weekday	9:00 - 12:00 noon Wednesday at the Park Office	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30	7 14 21 28
Plant Propagation Nursery Facility	10:00 - 12:00 noon 1st Sat & Mon 3rd Wed & Sun Also every Wed. from 1:00—3:00pm	1 3 16 19	5 7 16 20	3 5 18 21
Seed & Cutting Collection Meet at Robin Car park	10:00 - 12:00 noon The Fri. before the 1st Sat. of the month	30th April	4 June	2 July
Water Quality Monitoring Meet at the Park Office	9:00 - 12:00 noon 3rd Tues	18	15	20
Community Projects Weekends	9:00 - 12:00 noon, follow the signs Morning tea provided	Sat. 29th Planting Day	Sun. 27th Planting Day	Sat. 31st Planting Day
Special Activities		Sun. 16th Community Garden Open Day		Sat. 10th Dean Smith Natural History Displays Visitor Centre 2:00 –3:00pm Gold coin donation

The Red-rumped Parrot—at home in the suburbs

From a report by Alan Lill in VicBabbler, no.85, Dec. 2007

As part of a Monash University study on the ecology of recent urban avian invaders, Professor Lill's team included the Red-rumped Parrot, a resident of Braeside Park. Conducted in urban parks, the study recorded species of plants the birds used as food and also for breeding habitat.

Surprisingly, this parrot feeds mainly on exotic plants in Melbourne. A ground-feeding bird, the Red-rump was observed eating 13 plant species, 12 of which were exotics. Seeds of grass and herbs formed 78% of their diet, with 11% being herb buds. Four exotic plants comprised 71% of the diet: annual bluegrass, kikuyu, knotweed and chickweed.

The parrots mainly occupied sites with tall eucalypt trees. These sites also had more dense canopy and fewer exotic trees than sites that were not occupied by the parrots.

We are fortunate to have these lovely birds, shown in the photo by John Chapman, breeding in our hollow Red Gum trees.



Braeside Park Bird Group Survey Report

By Ian Parsons, Convener of the Bird Group

The Bird Group consisting of Bev Bancroft, Val La May, Ian and Margaret Langdon, Claire Pullen, David Stabb have cheerfully carried out a survey of the Park's wetland birds at fortnightly intervals for some years and I wish to thank them for their efforts.

Due to climate effects, the wetlands are now in some trouble, with low water levels and excessive reed growth in the water, and along the levee banks of the ponds. Low water levels may be partly relieved by a recent effort, funded by the Friends of Braeside Park, whereby the silt accumulation blocking the entrance of the Dingley Waterway, which provides water to the wetlands, has been dredged. After recent rain, a very substantial flow resulted.

Unfortunately, the reeds removed in the dredging process have rapidly regrown and need further treatment. Due to low bird numbers and the state of the track around the western side of the wetlands, it has been decided to change the survey to once a month until the water, and then the birds, increase.

Summary of bird surveys from Nov 2009 through April 2010

During this period, an estimated total of 3359 individual birds were observed. The bird seen in highest numbers on a single day was the Silver Gull, at 222 individuals. (Who had to count them all?) The highest number of bird species was observed during December and January, ranging from 51 to 34 species per survey. April was the least productive month, with only 73 individual birds of 19 species being observed.

Some highlights include Musk Duck in November, Darter in February and March, a Buff-banded Rail in February, and a Collared Sparrowhawk in December. The reeds and bush surrounding the wetlands usually yield some bush-birds, but no Robins were seen during this period. The Grey Fantail put in a few appearances, as did the Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike (in December). Full survey results are available by contacting Ian Parsons on 9598 6401.

Banding Bantering

From the report by Malcolm Brown

(A small group of bird-researchers meets regularly in the Park's Heathland to capture and band bush-birds. This is Malcolm's summary of the findings for their May mist-netting session.)

Only eight birds caught on Saturday the 8th of May but the recent rain has been good to the Park and it may be a promising spring.

Mist-netting results were as follows:

- 2 White-browed Scrubwrens
- 4 Superb Blue Fairy-wrens, two of which were re-traps,
(8 months and 1 year ago)
- 1 Eastern Spinebill
- 1 Brown Thornbill

Pleasing to have a couple of recent re-traps and it's always good to get a Spinebill.

The next mist netting session will be on Saturday the 14th of August. In the mean time have a good winter.



Eastern Spinebill in Braeside Park.
Photo: J. Chapman

Nursery News

By Marj Seaton

Seed collecting

We are mostly collecting cutting material at present. There is seed available for *Eucalyptus prioriana* but not a lot else. On a walk through the Heathland, Greenhood Orchid leaves can now be seen, and the Correas are in full flower. Throughout the Park, the rust coloured male flowers of Black She-oak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*) add colour to the carparks and heathland. In the damper spots, moss and *Crassula* hug the ground.



Correa in flower in the nursery.
Photo: M. Seaton

Plant stock

We have lots. Much of our stock is comprised of grasses and the Knobby Club-rush (*Ficinia nodosa*) but there are also wattles, Red Gums and allocasuarinas ready to go for the planting season coming up. The Wednesday project group has already started planting in the grasslands.

Hardening off

We are juggling plants in an attempt to harden them off before planting. Our current area is small but we are hoping that the irrigation and tables for the second hardening off area will be ready soon.

Open Day

The Community Garden Open Day was held at the nursery on May 16th. Visitors on the day enjoyed nursery tours and a Waterwatch demo.

Volunteers

We now have a new time for nursery work: every Wednesday afternoon from 1:00 to 3:00pm. Please come along, inspect our facilities and the community garden, perhaps even buy a plant or two. You will be very welcome and can try your hand at pricking out if you wish.

Marj Seaton

Park Report—

From Ranger in Charge Des Lucas' monthly reports

Park improvements

By November, three barbecues in the picnic areas will be replaced as well as ten picnic tables. Fifty new seats will be installed along trails. Vegetation regrowth along the recently-cleared swale into the wetland has been sprayed. Mulch has been spread in the plant beds as needed.

Bird Hide maintenance

Plant growth between the Hide and the wetland has been reduced and the pond in front of the Hide deepened. Bird numbers have subsequently improved.

**The first community planting is on
Saturday 29th of May,
from 9am to noon.
Morning tea provided.**

Follow the arrow signs to planting site.

Corporate volunteer activities

Staff from Cadbury will be in the Park on several occasions doing fence construction and plant guard removal.

Pest animal program—rabbits

Rabbit numbers are still high; further options for control are being trialled.

Wetland works

Thanks to the Friends group for funding the clearing of the wetland inlet swale. Due to the improved flow of water, the water level in the wetland has risen 250mm so far. It is hoped that with good winter rain the wetland may fill.

Grants

Potential projects for grant applications for 2010-2011 include: more rainwater tanks for the nursery, Burgan control consolidation and plant interpretive labels.