

## Upper Dawson WPSQ April Newsletter

Compiled by Ann Hobson

It's 'autumn', and a dozen apostle birds, masters of confusion, are flitting from branch to branch in the mid-canopy of a bauhinia, feeding on small insects and chattering among themselves. In the lull before the gusty south-easterlies start tossing the leaves, the canopy is alive with their seemingly random movements, their raucous cries reaching a crescendo whenever they notice a butcher bird, and zero in to chase it away.

By midday, on the ground, the hairy "itchy" grubs of the "procession" or "bag" moth are on the march to new premises, as their old suspended home bursts open, blowing itchy hairs in the wind to irritate an unlucky passer-by.



Confusion

reigns when the security of the long head-to-tail line of very hairy caterpillars suffers a breach and an individual diverts from the course, ← only to be followed by all who are behind it.



A late entrant in the great trek, however, seems instinctively able to follow the leader, until close examination reveals



that there's a fine thread running from the vanishing procession to its starting point – a sort of mono-rail to guide the late starter. Sometimes the diverted 'train' heads off in the wrong direction. Sometimes, its leader happens to intersect with the trail of the originals, and can rejoin their course. I wonder if the numbers of these insects are in decline along with the populations of all insects world wide? Not good news for the birds.

Bouyed by the south-easterly, three wedgetail eagles wheel and soar high in the sky over the valley, where cleared paddocks provide a more open view of prey on the ground. If the present La Nina pattern changes to El Nino later in the year, as some forecasters think may happen, there could be slim pickings for our feathered neighbours as well as for all primary producers, hunters and gatherers. Drying grass could make the danger of wildfires much worse, taking a toll on native wildlife as well as on agricultural operations.

Work is continuing on the proposed bird guide for residents and visitors to the Dawson Valley.

Our next outing is to be to Lake Dunn in the Barcaldine-Aramac area on the weekend of 27-28 May. Visitors are welcome to join us as we enjoy the amazing sculpture trail around the Lake and the company of those who enjoy the great outdoors and seeing new country. Please contact Margery on 0448 931 338 or email [upperdawson@wildlife.org.au](mailto:upperdawson@wildlife.org.au) if you'd like to come.