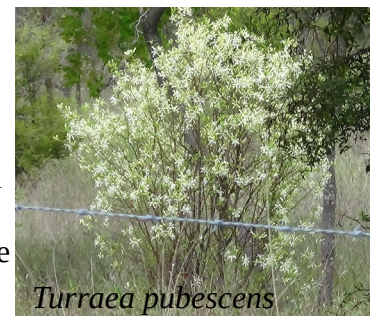


## Upper Dawson WPSQ August Newsletter

The morning skies have been bronze so often before sunrise – sure sign of dry and dusty air. Usual for August, but tough, and dangerous for fire after so little rain this year. Birds are conserving their energy for places closer to water, it seems. Lots in town and along the river. Raptors are out in more numbers than usual, and I think the thornbills and other migrants have either gone on their journeys or fed the very numerous currawongs who eventually seem to have headed off with the unseasonably hot days in the third week of August.

**The River** - We continue to be concerned that ‘treated’ water from SANTOS gas extraction is fed into the Dawson Catchment, as water sampling is showing an increase in levels of boron where the discharge occurs. Platypus Watch again sampled Dawson water this year for platypus eDNA.

**Observing Nature** - In late July, a single Native Witch Hazel (*Turraea pubescens*) in the scrub suddenly decided to go it alone and cast off all its leaves. A week later, a change in the weather brought 16mm of rain. This is a pattern I notice with these plants. They seldom all do it at the same time, and always just before rain. Several days later, this leafless shrub was a mass of creamy-white blossom. The brown honeyeater (*Lichmera indistincta*) visited briefly while the blossom was still fresh. After that, it was left to the butterflies.



*Turraea pubescens*

The weather remained balmy, and perhaps the butterflies were “barmy”, coming out in the middle of “winter” when an errant frost could still descend on us. Around mid-morning, the competition for sipping sites on the Witch Hazel became intense. The large orange Monarch /Wanderer (*Danaus plexippus*) would alight on an outer blossom, only to be ‘buzzed’ and then chased off by a Clearwing Swallowtail (*Cressida cressida*). Returning at another spot, sometimes the Wanderer would snatch a sip before the chase continued. Meanwhile, smaller butterflies, like the Yellow Albatross (*Appias paulina*) would sneak in on lower branches where it was harder for the big fellows to get close, sacrificing solar-powering sunlight for safety.



*Cressida cressida*

Next day, there wasn’t a Clearwing or Monarch in sight, as a large black and yellow butterfly had the field all alone until a gang of four Lesser Wanderers (*Danaus petilia*) mobbed in. So it went, a winged battle for very rare nectar most of August. I guess there’ll be eggs on the leaves of the various native vines that’ll be chewed up shortly and the cycle will start again.

**Branch Activities** - After the delightful sculptures of Lake Dunn in May, our next venue is to be Possum Park on the 26<sup>th</sup> August, where Upper Dawson members and allies hope to enjoy the history and surrounds of the facility, sleep overnight, and go searching on Sunday the 27<sup>th</sup> for any wildflowers that may be found along nearby roads.

**Community Event** - At our coming AGM in late October, our guest will be the wetland scientist Maria VanderGragt whose DES team has been studying the upper Dawson Wetlands, including the paleoecology of Lake Murphy. All members of the community are invited to this presentation, details of which will be in next month’s newsletter. Our unique wetlands are also key habitat for our birdlife, described in the book “Birds of the Dawson” by Allan Briggs and containing maps directing to good local birding sites for visiting “twitchers” who may want to stay another night in Taroom and Theodore. These books are now available from local outlets for \$18 per copy.

A concise field guide to the  
**Birds of the Dawson** \$18



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