

WPSQ December – January Newsletter

This morning, five channel-billed cuckoos were outdoing each other screeching vociferously in the ironbark above the neighbours' house. It wasn't clear to me whose nest they were intending to cuckold, or if they were lamenting the fact that suitable nests were becoming less common with the gradual removal and death of large trees. I felt for the neighbours subject to this insistent din.



Channel-billed cuckoo



Koel

In the distance, a single koel was calling with similarly insistent repetition, but with a more refined and melodious sound, most likely the call imitated by centuries of people living in this land we now call "Australia" when they took up the "cooee" as a great way to indicate one's presence over a long distance.

Still quite loud, but not so penetrating or repetitious, the call of a grey shrike thrush seemed designed to take my attention away from his mate who was vigorously demolishing a large flying insect on the ground a short distance ahead of me – possibly a mantis with cerise edging on its wings. *Bird Photos Allan Briggs in "Birds of the Dawson", available in Taroom and Theodore.*



Rainbow struggling to form in storm clouds over green paddocks

Patchy falls of rain over November and December have provided growth to chew on for nature's insect bird food, and nectar to sip for this season's hatchlings. Grubs I'd not noticed before demolished every leaf on a native jasmine almost overnight, and then disappeared – presumably to form a cocoon in the leaf litter and out of sight. Then there was a string of quite tiny hairy grubs heading across my driveway for the ancient denhamia in the same head-to-tail procession that is common with the "itchy grub" also known as "bag shelter moth" or "procession moth". These were much slimmer and shorter, but I didn't test whether they were "itchy" or not. They were much faster and more cooperative in getting back to their line when it was broken than were the larger variety, apparently helping each other stay on track.



Grey shrike thrush

Calling on scientists for help, I identified, among the moths coming to the kitchen light, the one who builds those "bag shelters" in brigalow trees, out of which the hairy "procession moth" processes when its "bag shelter" gets overcrowded.

"Bag shelter" moth



The "iNaturalist" App. can be used to help identify plants and animals from photographs. Once an identification has been confirmed by two scientists, that sighting will be entered into a data base that will help naturalists to map more accurately where the various species have been found. We are hoping to be able to learn more about using this App. during the year.

We're also hoping to visit a windfarm site next month, as we're keen to know what they're doing to manage erosion, habitat loss, and weed infestation among other things.

Theodore will be holding a Centenary celebration 28-30 June to mark the turning on of the lights in the township in 1924. Our Branch may be able to participate in that event in some way to draw attention to our native wildlife including the platypus, and to birds to be seen in the Dawson Valley that are highlighted in the Castle Creek Bird hide and in the book commissioned by our branch, "Birds of the Dawson" by Allan Briggs.

The Branch offers its best wishes to all for 2024, along with a suggestion for something we can all do to help save wild lives:-

Snip Rings for Wildlife

From Australian Wildlife Society used with permission

Help protect Australia's wildlife by snipping through ring-shaped items such as plastic rings, rubber bands, hair ties, loops of facemasks, and plastic dome-shaped lids, in their entirety, before disposing of them.



Each year, thousands of birds and semi-aquatic, air-breathing species such as platypus, turtles, and water dragons are strangled, obtain significant injuries, and often die horrific deaths from discarded litter, including ring-shaped items. Wildlife often becomes entangled in ring-shaped items that wrap around their beak or muzzle, preventing them from eating.

These items can also tangle up their feet, wings, or fins, limiting their movement. Young animals can become trapped in these items, and as they grow, these items cut into their flesh, sometimes amputating limbs or killing the animal.

Photo – Pacific Black Duck <https://www.darlingrangewildlife.com.au/>

But together, we can make a difference and save countless animals from the dangers of these items. Let's show the world the power of collective action. Put scissors in the glove box, and #SnipRingsforWildlife – because every snip counts! You can access photos, links, resources, and images via this link [Asset Bank & Guide](#) Ann Hobson , Secretary upperdawson@wildlife.org January 2024.