

HFNC Hawkesdale Recreation Reserve and Railway Reserve excursion 21 April 2013

Rod Bird

A good day was had by the attendees, Dave & Lyn, John & Glenys, Rod & Diane, Craig & Amanda, Hilary & George (with Albert & Lennard), Ross, and Karen Simpson (her first meeting with our group).

Hawkesdale Recreation Reserve

We met Fiona Talbot (Hawkesdale resident) and her two young charges at the Hawkesdale Recreation Reserve and she introduced us to the golf course, the Aborigine scar tree (a large Manna Gum) in the SE corner (GPS 38-06-50/142-20-15), and the giant Manna Gum near the entrance.

Photos below show the giant Manna Gum as it was in 1976 (Photo 1) and as it is now (Photo 2). Some concern was expressed that if a fire swept through the area it would probably kill the tree, since there has been an enormous accumulation of shed branches and litter around its base. Consideration should be given to dragging the fallen branches away from the butt and raking away some of the shed bark.

The golf fairways were lined with mostly Cypress or Pines and the fairways do not appear to have been managed in recent years. The report to GHCMA on Flora & Fauna assessment of the Racecourse and Recreation Reserve (2012) by *Ecology Australia* in 2010-11 stated that 164 native plant species occurred, of which 22% were significant for the Volcanic Plains, State and or National levels.

We walked around the course observed that the native grassland species were invaded in parts by pasture species and that the grazing regime presently in force will not help in that regard. The native species need to be protected from grazing from about November through to March, to allow them to set seed. Any grazing that is done should occur outside those months but not be continuous or too heavy. The grazing in early to mid spring would assist in reducing the seed set of the pasture grasses.

Pasture hay had been fed on the course and that should not be permitted, since it will introduce weed seeds to the reserve. Restoration of the native vegetation would be aided by removing Cypress and Pines that line the fairways, replacing them with Manna Gum, Blackwood and Silver Banksia (with local seed).

We inspected the swamp paddock to the north and were impressed with the clumps of *Poa* tussocks, *Juncus* and sedges. However, this paddock has been heavily grazed and that has depleted the native species. Also, a drain has taken water from the site and consideration could be given to blocking that at several points. The swamp itself could be greatly improved if a low bank mound (perhaps 1 m high) was constructed along the fenceline on the bottom edge, using mud taken from the swamp. That would increase the area of swamp flooded and help retain more water in summer in parts of it. We saw a pair of beautiful Flame Robins as we walked back to the car park.

Hawkesdale Recreation Reserve Birdlist

Welcome Swallow
Whistling Kite
Black-shouldered Kite
Little Raven
Australian Magpie
Grey Fantail
Flame Robin

Brown Thornbill
White-plumed Honeyeater
Rufous Whistler
Eurasian Goldfinch
White-faced Heron
Australasian pipit
Long-billed Corella

Koroit-Penshurst Railway Reserve

Following our picnic lunch at the Recreation Reserve we drove NE to the Koroit-Penshurst Railway Reserve. We located several stands of *Banksia marginata* (Silver Banksia) along that corridor. This plains form was once widespread on the basalt plains in our area but confined now to only a few spots, including Yatchaw.

There was a fine stretch of *Acacia melanoxylon* (Blackwood), along with *Acacia pycnantha* (Golden Wattle), *E. viminalis* (Manna Gum), *E. ovata* (Swamp Gum) and some *Bursaria spinosa* (Sweet Bursaria) and *Exocarpos cupressiformis* (Cherry Ballart).

Photo 1. Hawkesdale Manna Gum in Sept. 1976



Photo 2. Hawkesdale Manna Gum in Apr. 2013



Photo 3. Hawkesdale Manna Gum in Apr. 2013



Photo 4. Hawkesdale Rail Res. Silver Banksia, Apr. 2013



At our first stop on encountering the Silver Banksia (Photo 4 – note also the wide firebreak) we also saw a fine stand of Western Australian eucalypts (*E. occidentalis* or *E. cornuta*). *Pinus radiata* from adjacent shelterbelt plantings has invaded the reserve at many places, particularly in the northern section. We found the Silver Banksia at a few widely separated places, either side of the railway crossing.

Stonefield Rd swamp

We had a brief trip down Stonefield Rd to view the swamp (at about 10 km). There was a little water and a few Black Swan, Purple Swamphen, Masked Lapwing (> 100), Shelduck & Eurasian Coot.

Yatmerone

At Yatmerone we admired the new stone wall at the car park and then walked to the bird hide. Some cattle were wading in the swamp at the far NW corner, with 43 White-faced Heron perched on the rails.

Birdlist for Yatmerone

Straw-necked Ibis (200)
Australian White Ibis (15)
Pacific Black Duck (10)
Grey Teal (12)
Purple Swamphen (>10)
White-faced Heron (43)

Long-billed Corella (120)
Australasian Darter (1)
Whistling Kite (2)
Silvereye
Buff-rumped Thornbill (6)
Welcome Swallow

Harnath Wildlife Reserve and Lake Linlithgow

After coffee at Bagdad tea-room in Peshurst, some members drove to Harnath Wildlife Reserve on the return to Hamilton. We noted the fencing of the frontage and sheep grazing the frontage. A report with photographs was submitted to the Ranger at Mt Eccles National Park who is responsible for this site.

We noted that there are only a few small pools of muddy water lying just west of The Point on Lake Linlithgow. There are possibly a few more wet spots towards the centre of the lake. The surrounds at the boat ramp have not been slashed by the Shire and the site does not look appealing to visitors.