

## HFNC excursion to Lake Condah 09 Aug 2009

### Rod Bird

This excursion was attended by 10 people, including a visitor (Ros) from Melbourne, and preceded via Port Fairy Rd, the Wallacedale Tumuli and 'Alambie'.

At 'Alambie' we walked in to the ruins and looked across to the wetlands beyond, on the margin of the forest. Due to the water in the creek we were unable to cross and gain access to the high ground near the old woolshed, a better spot for viewing the waterbirds. This wetland has recently been fenced off from cattle and is a refuge for ducks, swan and other species. There were several hundred ducks on the water.

We stopped a little further along the road, at the lava flow on "Alambie", to inspect the eel trap area (see photo) and remains of old stone huts. This area is now owned by the Gunditjmarra people, based at Heywood.



Further along the road we passed the huge bluestone quarry area, stopping on the bush track to view the quarry. This quarry shows a depth of at least 10 m of solid basalt, with water over part of the excavated floor. Water is pumped out across the track to the north.

We continued along the track for about 2 km, taking a turn to the east through a Manna Gum forest and stones, then stopping at the old ruins for lunch. All that remains there of the dwelling is a huge stone fireplace and chimney. Broken down walls surround the house at a distance of 20 m or so and to the NW is a stockyard constructed of bluestone (a drystone wall in good condition). We walked some 400 m SW along a ridge to Lake Condah, viewing the NW corner which contained water. Overall, about a third of the lake bed had water. Swans had nests on the lake bed in the NW area. Grey Teal and Pacific Black Duck were seen on the water.

A short drive then was made further SE to the lake edge – we walked the last 200 m to avoid a rough rocky vehicle descent. Flame Robins, Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo, Grey Currawong, Red-browed Finch, Superb Fairy-wren, Grey Shrike-thrush and Fantailed Cuckoo were seen. The lake bed here was dry and a track led along the edge of the lake to Murphys Hut (opposite the area where the weir is to be built on the Condah Drain) where a picnic shelter and other facilities are being developed.

We travelled back along the bush track to the junction, taking the turn south. This led us across the Condah Drain. We turned right on the Condah Mission Rd and then right again on to Boundary Rd, crossing the Condah Swamp and returning back to the Alambie area, then home by the same route as our outward trip.

The weather was fine and all enjoyed the outing, with all except Janeen escaping without a leech.