

Hello Everybody – welcome to 2025!

HFNC's activities and events in February 2025

General Meeting at 7.30 pm on Thurs. 20 February at HIRL – please see attached:

- Minutes of Dec 2024 meeting
- Agenda for Feb. 2025 meeting
- **DRAFT Program of Meetings, Excursion & other activities for 2025** – this will be a focus for discussion and any amendment at the Feb. meeting
- 2025 Membership form

Membership subscriptions for 2025 – these are now due. After many years unchanged, we have had to increase the fees a little. The annual subscription for a family is \$35 or \$25 for an individual. The most convenient way to pay is either to the Treasurer at a meeting or via Internet Banking:

CBA BSB 063 513 HFNC's A/c No. 00901086.

(Please print your name and 'subs' in the Description section of the internet banking form)

Excursion to Lake Linlithgow (Jenawarra) on Sunday 23 February – we will meet at the lake at 8 am, at The Point, off Chatsworth Rd. For those not familiar with the lake, this is the main entrance and is found at the top of the hill after rounding the southern end of the lake. Harnath Swamp and Krause Swamp are dry this summer but the adjacent Lake Bulrush is an exception, so we may make a detour there before returning to The Point to continue the drive around the east bank of Jenawarra. That lake will have sufficient water for us to see several species of ducks, waders and other waterbirds and raptors. We will have morning tea at Boonawah Creek and then drive around the lake, stopping briefly on the northern bank and then finishing at about noon.

HFNC Website – our website has been overhauled/re-structured. If you have not looked at it for a while then we think you will be pleasantly surprised. We have also been working on reports of some of the very early club excursions. The main difficulty is the lack of photos to illustrate the reports, which were often very brief.

Wetland bird surveys – since 2010 we have been conducting surveys in February of shorebirds/waterbirds and raptors on about 25 wetlands in the Hamilton, Willaura and Killarney areas. That was an extension of the summer monitoring that began in 1983 at Lake Linlithgow. We have also conducted surveys in July at about 20 of those wetlands beginning at Killarney in 2010 and Hamilton & Willaura wetlands in 2018. The surveys involve counting species and numbers of each species – the data is reported to BirdLife Australia and may be seen on our website.

The current surveys finished this week and the results will be available in a month or so. Of note, the number of wetlands that are dry – e.g. Lake Kennedy, Krause Swamp, Soldiers Swamp, Harnath Swamp, Bryan Swamp, Green Swamp, Brady Swamp, Walker Swamp, Killarney Swamps. Lake Buninjon and Lake Muirhead are almost dry. Those with water include Lake Bulrush, Lake Linlithgow (may dry up), Lake Bolac, Tower Hill Lake and Freshwater Lake. And the standout sightings? – 175 Brolga on a strip of water on Lake Muirhead, 8 Latham's Snipe on Freshwater Lake, 185 Red-necked Stint on Linlithgow, 1020 Sanderling at Killarney Beach, 2775 Eurasian Coot at Tower Hill and 275 Blue-billed Duck on Lake Bolac.

Grampians/Gariwerd fires – over 60% of the park has been burned out, seemingly regardless of previous burns, and it seems that this is the new norm. We need a much better early response when lightning strikes start fires. It is also clear that Victoria should prohibit camp fires in the summer months, as done in some other States. While few animals will survive the fires, I have seen many unburned areas that we hope will eventually allow a recovery of fauna in the burned areas.

Rod Bird

Secretary

Hamilton Field Naturalists Club