



Greetings from the Editor (Mason Crane)

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G'day all and welcome to the twentieth issue of 'Welcome to the Wildside'. This newsletter is produced by David Lindenmayer's research team at the Fenner School of Environment and Society, The Australian National University. It is our aim to ensure that all of our research partners, such as yourselves, are up to date with our work.

An epic field season is now over, with the team out surveying birds and reptiles almost every day of the last

six months. The wet winter caused considerable access issues, which saw the SWS slopes and Box-Gum Stewardship bird surveys strung out over any extended period. The wet conditions though, made it ideal for finding blindsnakes, as they come closer to the surface and become more detectable. New blindsnake species were recorded in both studies.

A new round of bird, reptile and frog, and spot-

light surveys were completed for the Adjungbilly creek study, which turned up some more Booroolong frogs and an antechinus (marsupial mouse).

Along with field work the team has been busy communicating results through numerous field days.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all.

Dan talking reptiles at LLS training day at Coleambally



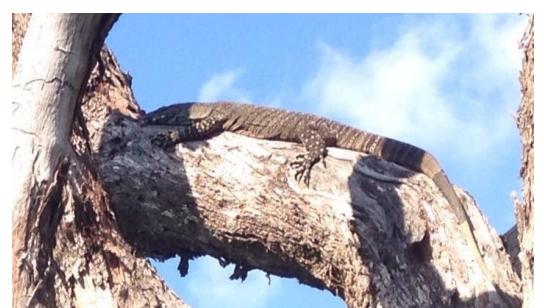
SW Slopes Reptiles (Mason Crane)

Through August and September we completed around 200 reptile surveys on and near farms from Howlong to Juneec. Every year there are new surprises, interesting records and also findings that reaffirm our current thinking.

This year it was great to find our first woodland blindsnakes in the study, one using a treeplanting near Tarcutta and another in a remnant near Walla Walla. It was also a big year for geckos and Dwyer's snakes. We also continue to

find pink-tail worm-lizards at a tree-planting site near Howlong.

Our Travelling Stock Reserves sites also proved to be good hunting grounds for lace monitors, again showing the importance of these sites for critters that rely on large oldgrowth trees.



Lace monitor on a travelling stock reserve near Gundagai

Special points of interest:

- Interesting finds in the Box-Gum stewardship study
- Grey-headed Flying-foxes continue to pop up around the SW slopes
- Meet our new field staff based in Gundagai and Cowra.

Box-Gum Stewardship study birds and reptiles (Mason Crane)

In contrast to our last lot of surveys during the very dry Autumn, an extremely wet winter posed some real access issues for us. However, our persistence paid off with a number of interesting finds across the study. Scarlet honeyeaters turned up at Gunning and Cassilis, we had a further range extension of the Carpentaria snake at Yetman and recorded three-pronged blindsnake for the first time for the study near Stockinbingal.

We continue to find many threatened and rare species in the stewardship sites such as pink-tailed worm

-lizards. It will be interesting to see with further analyses how these sites are performing compared to the business as usual sites.

My highlight was a tiger snake near Queanbeyan.



Above: Three-pronged blindsnake, differentiated by distinct lobes either side of the nose.
Left: Tiger snake

Critter File: Grey-headed Flying-fox (Clare Crane)

Over the last few years we have started to pick up Grey-headed Flying-foxes (GHFF) in our spotlight survey in the SW slopes. These bats are different to the Little Red Flying-fox (LRFF) we usually see, both in size and colour. In fact GHFF is one of the largest megabats in the world with a wingspan up to 1 metre. As the name suggests, GHFF has a grey head and belly with an orange/brown neck ring, compared to the smaller LRFF which can also have a grey head but its body fur and wings have a distinctly reddish/brown tinge.

GHFF are protected nationally and in NSW as they are

considered vulnerable to extinction. They more commonly occur along the east coast of Australia, but seem to be increasingly common west of the divide, often making use of urban areas for food and shelter

Flying foxes feed on nectar, pollen and fruits, and are important native seed dispersers and plant pollinators as they travel between sites. Each year in October/November females usually give birth to a single pup which is carried on her belly as she flies. At 4-5 weeks old the pups have grown all their

fur and are then left in maternal camps whilst the mother feeds at night, up to 20 km away. On her return she nurses the pup for about 12 weeks until it is independent and able to forage for itself.

Below: a new Grey-head Flying-fox camp in Gundagai



New Fieldies join the crew in Gundagai and Cowra (Mason Crane)

Sadly after 7 years Sachiko Okada has left the team to take a position in Tokyo, moving back to the home land. To fill the huge void we have employed two new field ecologists, David Smith and Clare Crane (no relation) to be based in Gundagai and Cowra. These guys will be a great asset to the team bringing new skills and experience, with loads of enthusiasm.

Dave Smith

Dave joined the team as a Research Officer in 2016; relocating to Cowra in Central Western NSW to concentrate his efforts on the Environmental Stewardship Program and Grazing Study. He has a keen interest in birds and their ecology which lead him to undertake a Graduate Diploma of Ornithology through Charles Sturt University after completing his undergraduate degree in Environmental Management and Science.

Throughout his studies, Dave honed his field skills by volunteering with several conservation projects all around Australia, but particularly in the arid interior. He is currently completing his honours degree; his research focusing on determining the effectiveness of sound recorders for surveying birds. Dave's favourite aspects of the



job are his increased exposure to the weird and wonderful happenings of nature and being able to learn from his colleagues and the landholders he works alongside.

Clare Crane



Clare is from a UK farming family and has worked in various sectors on natural resource management and ecology for over 17 years. She first came to Australia in 2005 where she volunteered with Parks Victoria for a year. During this time she worked on monitoring projects across the Parks Victoria estate targeting feral animals, threatened and weed species. She also volunteered on projects with the Australasian Bat Society and Australian Platypus Conservancy. In 2008 Clare returned to work in Australia as a consultant zoologist surveying fauna in Victoria, NSW, central Queensland and South Australia.

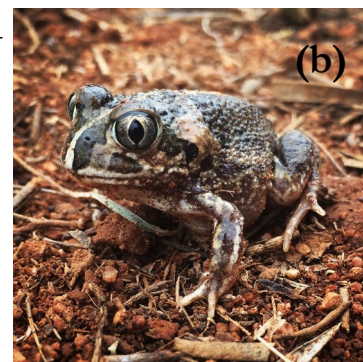
Clare recently joined the team as a research officer to assist with field monitoring of bird, reptile, mammal species and vegetation assessments for long-term research projects across south-eastern Australia.

A message from the Murray (Thea O'Loughlin)

Like many of the other studies in 2016, the Murray Biodiversity Monitoring Program was hamstrung by wet weather. Eventually, and with some serious efforts in gumboots, all but two sites were surveyed for reptiles. A **Hooded Scalyfoot (a)** was recorded by Sachiko under a tile near Moulamein, a rare record for the study as this cryptic species is not usually found during our daytime surveys. Good numbers of frogs were found due to the wet conditions, and the team had their first record of a **Common Spadefoot**



Toad (b) under monitoring substrates. The toad was found hopping about under tin near Urana Lake Reserve.



In the Victorian sites, spotlighting was also undertaken. During the nocturnal surveys it was reassuring to record many of the 'usual customers'. Sites near Barnawartha proved to be the busiest with Tawny Frogmouth, Ringtail Possum, Brushtail Possum (with bub), Eastern Grey Kangaroos and a Wombat all recorded within the space of an hour!

Planned field surveys for the next 6 months

February– March -Vegetation surveys Grazing Study

February - April - Setting up new connectivity study.

June—SW slopes and Nanangroe Study spotlighting

Thanks to

Murray Local Land Services

Riverina Local Land Services

The Australian Government's Environmental Stewardship Program

Further Information

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