



FoCC Incorporated Spikey News



Linking the community with Woovookarung and the Canadian Corridor
June 2023 Issue Number 100

Spikey News features

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1. Spikey News - 100 issues

Read all about it

Spikey News is 100



Issue 1 was distributed in February 2013, titled "Canadian Forest: A multi-use park and update" as a FOCC information flyer. The distribution list consisted of 29 friends. A small start.

Issues 2 to 34 were issued under the "Update" banner until July 2017

Issues 34 to 69 were issued from August 2017 until August 2020 under the "News Update" banner. Issue 69 went out to 664 subscribers.

"Spikey News" began in September 2020 with issue 70 and the rest is now history. This issue will go out to 1110 subscribers.

2. FoCC June General Meeting

The Geology of Woovookarung Regional Park was under the spotlight at the Friends of Canadian Corridor general meeting on Wednesday evening at Earth Ed Science Centre in Mt Clear on June 21st 2023.

Haydn Swan, Lecturer in Geology at Federation University outlined the 460-million-year geological history of the Woovookarung Regional Park and surrounding areas. He explained how Ballarat's gold wealth was centred on the North South indicator along the Whitehorse Ranges including Sovereign Hill.

The western side of Woovookarung has extensive alluvial or surface gold mining. Despite the sinking of many shafts and explorations in the Woovookarung Regional Park and forested areas it is effectively free of gold bearing quartz. Haydn explained the difference as that the quartz reefs along the Whitehorse Range contained gold whilst the quartz reefs in Woovookarung were gold free.

And that is the main reason that the Canadian Forest, despite heavy cutting and abuse over the years, is still there and is now the centrepiece of the Park.



Tarn and Haydn with an appropriately labelled "geology" bottle of wine.



Haydn presenting. Image 21st June 2023

3. Bird of the Month XXI (June 2023)

Red-browed Finch (*Neochmia temporalis*)

Looking for some avian variety? A change up from the usual suspects, with all due respect to magpies, ravens, wattlebirds, rosellas, lorikeets, cockatoos, and some ubiquitous non-natives (e.g. Common/Eurasian Blackbird)? Enter the Red-browed Finch! A useful bird to know about, and the reasons are threefold: 1) as the sole native representative of the Finch (Fringillidae) family in Ballarat (with the exception of some infrequent, recent records of Diamond Firetail sightings in neighbouring LGAs), the Red-browed Finch is a symbol of phylogenetic/taxonomic diversity for our local bird assemblage. Here, where other species of its lineage are locally absent, the Red-browed Finch has the unique evolutionary adaptations to perform an unoccupied ecological niche/role. Therefore, it contributes to the local ecosystem's capacity to have 'all bases covered' in defence against ecosystem collapse. 2) given its aforementioned uniqueness, the Red-browed Finch will surely inspire a greater appreciation of our local bird diversity. And 3) the Red-browed Finch is another potential ID contender for that small, unidentified feathery blur that teasingly darts in and out of cover. You know, that fleetingly glimpsed mystery bird (admittedly, perhaps one of many species) that you may want demystified for future reference?! Read on to learn more.



Left: Juvenile Red-browed Finch. Right: Adult Red-browed Finch
Image credit: Rob Loveband.

On closer inspection, the Red-browed Finch (11-12cm) is actually quite the visually characterful, little masked bandit – not just another 'little brown job'. Of course, it has that titular red eyebrow, but the red doesn't end there. As its alternative name, Red-browed Firetail, suggests, it sports a bold, flame red upper tail and rump, in addition to its conical, scarlet bill. Top it all off with olive-green upperparts, and a silver cap, and you've got an aesthetically

unmistakable package. Males and females are indistinguishable, while young individuals have a black bill and lack the red eyebrow.

Red-browed Finches occur in pairs and family parties, and may co-inhabit with Superb Fairywrens and Yellow-rumped Thornbill. A seed and grain eater (termed 'granivore'), the species characteristically forages on the ground of grassy clearings in forests and woodlands, heaths/scrubs, parks, and gardens. They may also inhabit farmland, and creek-sides. Topical to our current seasonal context, Red-browed Finches, during autumn and winter, often form highly sociable, close-knit flocks on lawns (preferably unmown), bordered by dense understorey of bracken ferns, blackberry thickets, or even pine windbreaks.

Breeding season for Red-browed Finch is September through January. Both parents share nest-building, incubation (13-15 days), and feeding duties of the broods of 4-8 young. The nest is an untidy, large, horizontally orientated bottle-shaped structure, with a hood or tunnel entrance. Made of grass, with an interior of feathers, the nest is situated at heights of 1-3m (or in rare cases 8-10m) in prickly bushes, citrus, or cypress pines. Young fledge by 24 days of age. The species is common, sedentary (resident year-round) or locally nomadic.

Speaking of highly sociable, Red-browed Finches communicate with 'extremely high, almost inaudible, drawn-out squeaks' of "tsee" or "tseet", or when alarm-calling "tchip". Also, 'sharp "dup"' and 'brisk chatter'. Another clue that what you've encountered might be a Red-browed Finch is the fact that species' 'bouncing' or 'undulating' flight behaviour, including when flushed.

Next time you wander through Woookarung Regional Park, or other patch with grassy clearings, don't forget to look out for the bouncy, seed-eating, little masked bandits that are Red-browed Finches – and if you find them, take a moment to appreciate the diversity we have in our midst!

Author note: FoCC Committee member and co-admin of FoCC's Facebook and webpage, Joel Ellis is the resident bird nerd, amateur Powerful Owl researcher, and editor of FoCC's (co-funded) 'Indigenous [Species] of Southern Ballarat' trilogy of brochures. Joel has studied birds up to Honours degree level, interns as an ecological consultant (ornithologist), and is a member of BirdLife Australia (Ballarat branch).

4. 2023 Tree Planting

The FoCC is planning to plant 500 trees in the Dozed Rd and Katy Ryans Rd intersection area on **Sunday August 6th 2023 beginning at 10 am.**

This will be the seventh mass tree planting by the FoCC beginning with 220 trees in 2017.

The trees are supplied by the wonderful people at the City of Ballarat Community Nursery. The trees are propagated using locally sourced seed.

Details:

Meet at Cnr of Dozed Rd and Katy Ryans Rd, Mt Clear. Solid footwear and warm hard-wearing clothing required. It may be wet. The FoCC will supply gloves and tools.

5. Koala sightings are nearing 300

This report is by Jo Kelly, FoCC Koala Data volunteer. A big thank you to everyone who has sent koala images to FoCC. It's been a wonderful journey to ensure all those sightings have been put into data bases readily available for all to see. The recording started in 2018 and has continued steadily. FoCC makes certain they are placed onto iNaturalist and the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (VBA).

Friends are welcome to enter direct onto iNaturalist themselves, however the FoCC asks observers to still send them along to FoCC.

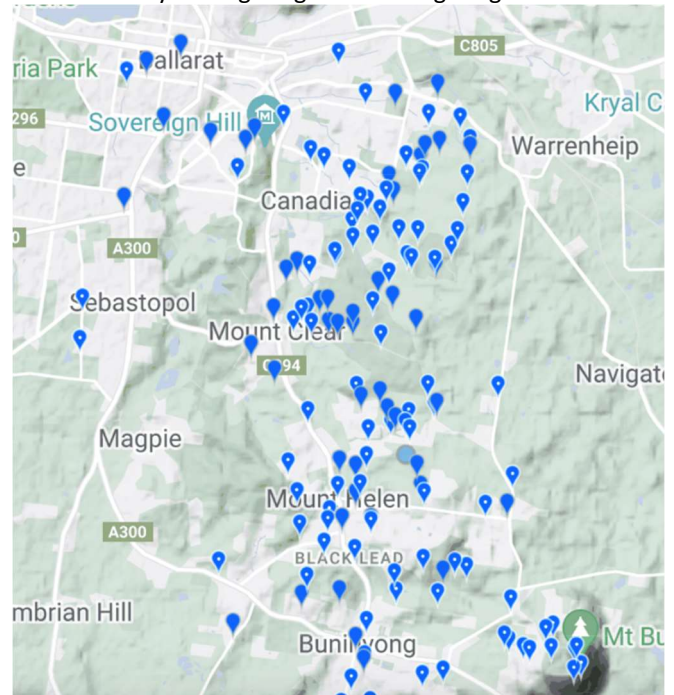
And never hesitate to report those koalas! While photos are brilliant, even when no photo is available, a report of a koala grunting, or koala scat is valuable. Those sightings can still be entered and then retrieved by developers, ecologists and researchers on both data bases. Here are a three of my favourite images.



Text and images from Jo

Ballarat Koala sightings spread

Koala sightings are wide spread across Ballarat. The map shows where sightings have occurred most. These sightings show where people see Koalas. There are Koala habitat areas around Ballarat that have very few visitors and therefore very few sightings. A Koala sighting conundrum!



Koala sightings spread across Ballarat. Each dot may have more than one koala sighting. Source iNaturalist

6. Koala sightings

October to March is Koala breeding season and peak sightings season, so sightings tend to be less now. They are still there, just harder to spot.

If you see, hear or find scat from a Koala, please send the information containing the when, where, and how to: focinfo@gmail.com.



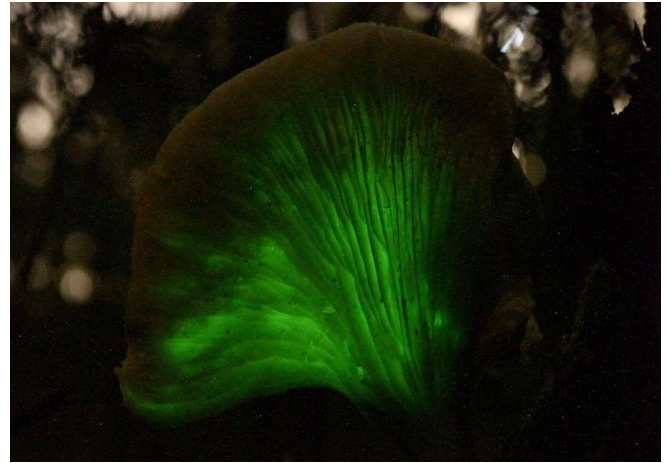
Kylie Crescent Mt Clear. Image: Courtesy of Libby 12th June 2023

This Koala was looking out over the Haymes Rd Mt Clear development site from a tree in an adjacent property. The developer's agent claimed the land was poor Koala habitat and not worth keeping. The development proposal is now with VCAT with the FoCC as an objecting party.

7. Fungi time

Winter is wonderful time for fungi spotting in the Park. All through the Park wonderful fungi appear. The wet autumn means another great year for fungi. Look out for luminous fungi at night.

The images below were taken near the Lookout.



Both images courtesy of Angela June 2023.

8. Common Heath

Wildflowers are a continuous delight in the Park.

Currently flowering is Victoria's Floral Emblem, Common Heath, *epacris impressa* (pink flowers).

Outstanding clumps of the heath are in the north end of the Park. Try along Wilson St and east of Pax Hill.



Both images east of Pax Hill 12th 2023



9. Park works

Trail works

The Cherry Ballart and Treefern trails are under construction in the north of the Park. The images below show three creek crossing treatments. Removing boggy crossings lessens the risk of passing on Phytophthora from boots and tires to vulnerable grasstrees.



Ranger Mitch at work on the Treefern loop. Image 13th June 2023.



Side creek crossing on the Cherry Ballart trail. Image 8th June 2023.



Grasstree Creek crossing on the Cherry Ballart trail. Image 8th June 2023.



New board walk over a boggy area south of Grasstree Creek on the Cherry Ballart trail. Image 27th June 2023

Bollard provision

Parks Victoria contractors have been very busy installing bollards around the York St and Wilson St blocks as part of the Cherry Ballart and Treefern trail ongoing construction. The bollards stop 4WD access whilst allowing ongoing access by walkers, cyclist and horses.



Map of the York St and Wilson St blocks and bollard installation sites. Not every bollard is on the map. Map courtesy of Google.

Olympic Avenue Car Park



Brand new car park in Olympic Avenue in Mt Clear. Image 21st June 2023

10. CoB toilet strategy submission

The City of Ballarat announced a review of public toilets in Ballarat last December. In May 2023 the Council released a discussion paper and sought feedback by June 25th 2023. The Council discussion paper identified Mt Clear, Mt Helen and Warrenheip as suburbs lacking public toilets. A FoCC submission was prepared requesting public toilets for Mt Clear and for the Dementia Forest and Sensory Trail.

To read the full FoCC submission at:

<https://www.focc.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/FoCC-Toilet-strategy-response.pdf>

11. CoB Grasree Creek Trail extension

A new off road walk cycle shared trail is under construction along Spencer St in Canadian by the City of Ballarat.



Gorse and broom woody weed removal and trail preparation underway. Image 6th June 2023.



Trail map

The new 400 m long trail will be accessible for most people including prams and wheelchairs. It extends the existing trail along Grasree Creek from Richards St through the Sandy Banks Bushland Reserve to Fussell St. The trail will provide a safe connection between the City, Pax Hill and Woookarung Regional Park

The construction began with the removal of a large infestation of gorse and broom along the road reserve. Two days of mechanical woody weed removal by EME Contracting has completed the first step in preparing for the trail's construction. At the east end a large infestation of Pine trees was removed.

2014 FoCC submission to the CoB

In 2014 the FoCC made a submission to the City of Ballarat Bicycle Strategy requesting:

"An extension of the Pennyweight Gully trail (wrongly named at the time) along Grasree Creek from its end at Richards St in Sparrow Ground. The trail is to run along the unmade section of Spencer St to the junction of Fussell St and Spencer St at Pax Hill. There is a fire trail in existence along the northern boundary of this land which is known locally as Sandy Banks."

A map showing the connection designated path F was provided. Note the trail at that time was misnamed as Pennyweight Gully Trail. Trail markers with that name still

exist along the trail. New signage will be part of the trail works



The map submitted by the FoCC to the City of Ballarat in 2014.

12. Joe Lowe last miner in Canadian

Joe Lowe was the last miner in Canadian. His mine in Sandy Banks just off Spencer St is still there today, characterised by its very white kaolin (clay) spoil. It closed in 1976. Joe was the Pax Hill caretaker in the early 1970's and he was a well-known local identity with his horse Dorothy, 38 years old, at the time the Ballarat Courier photographed Joe and Dorothy.



Joe and Dorothy in the Courier 26th July 1972. Research into Joe courtesy of Marg.



Joe Lowes mine in Sandy Banks near cnr of Spencer and Richards St Canadian. Image courtesy of Peter K

13. Canadian Hall

The image of the Canadian Hall was recently published by a Ballarat historical group. Does anyone know where it was located?



Canadian Hall circa 1930

14. Rubbish dumpers, thieves and vandals

The FoCC encourages Park friends to report track vandals, rubbish dumpers, wood thieves and other suspicious activity to Parks Victoria on 13 1963 or email: woovookarung@parks.vic.gov.au

In emergency situations please call 000. If an offender is spotted, please note vehicle registration details as vehicle identification is most helpful, plus location and details.

15. Useful information

- **Parks Victoria Woovookarung email address:** woovookarung@parks.vic.gov.au

18. 2023 Calendar of events

August 6 th	7th Annual Tree planting. Dozed Track area. 10am start. See item 4 in this issue for more details.
August 16 th	General Meeting TBA
August 27 th	Slow tree identification walk. Meet at Dementia Trail rotunda
September 14 th	Koala Forum at the Eureka Centre.
October (early)	FoCC Sunday afternoon visit to Clarksdale Bird Sanctuary
October 16 - 22 nd	Great Australian Backyard Bird Count
October (late)	8th Annual Wildflower Walk.
November 15 th	7th Annual Meeting
December 1 st	Drinks at the Lookout

The FoCC Spikey News is published on behalf of the Friends of Canadian Corridor Incorporated, Registered No A0097535B. The purpose of "Spikey News" is to link the community to Woowookarung Regional Park and the Canadian Corridor.

The FoCC is a registered Landcare Group with Landcare Victoria Inc and a member of the Yarrowee Leigh Catchment Group. Circulation this issue is to ~~1406~~ 1110 subscribers. Welcome to all new friends.

The update is generally published monthly. Friends wishing to add articles to the FoCC update may do so by emailing focinfo@gmail.com

Feel free to circulate widely including doctor's waiting rooms, work offices, friends and neighbours.

We are proud to walk this land with the Wadawurrung people and all other First Nations people.

Any opinions expressed in the publications are made in by the editors in good faith and do not officially represent Parks Victoria or the FoCC.

Web - www.focc.asn.au Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/friendsofcanadiancorridor/>

Unsubscribe by emailing focinfo@gmail.com

• **City of Ballarat wildlife information:**

<https://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/me/pets-and-animals/wildlife>

• **DELWP wildlife issues reporting information**

Report wildlife crime to Crime Stoppers Victoria on **1800 333 000**.

Report any wildlife at immediate risk of deliberate harm or neglect to **136 186**. Other matters relating to wildlife and wildlife management should use the **136 186** too.

The Help for Injured Wildlife tool will help you locate and contact the closest relevant wildlife carers and rescue and rehabilitation organisations to help the injured wildlife.

The main point to reiterate is for any matters related to wildlife crime, call Crime Stoppers.

16. FoCC Membership

Membership runs from 1st January to 31st December each year, Membership fee is \$20 per year. Children of members are free. New members after July are credited to the next year. Membership forms are available online or email focinfo@gmail.com

17. FoCC Facebook and webpage

www.facebook.com/friendsofcanadiancorridor/

Rob is overseeing the webpage webmaster@focc.asn.au
The FoCC has over 1000 friends following us on facebook and growing. Welcome to all new friends. Feel free to pass on to other friends and press the like button.