



MEET IMPORTANT LOCALS – a few notes from our walks... more info will be added

MARCH 6 2022

We savoured the smell of recent rain. It was windy, which meant many insects were sheltering out of view. Nevertheless, with keen eyes and patience, we observed:

Blue Banded Bees

Concealer moth

Lagoon Fly (initially identified as a bee-fly)

White-banded Grass-dart Butterfly

Splendid Ochre (Skipper Butterfly) – searching for lomandra leaf blades to lay eggs

Grape-vine Moth – the moth was flying around the wetland area, but it rarely settled, so we did not see it feeding on flowers.

Common Grass Blue butterfly

Painted Lady butterfly

Case moth

Damsel fly

Dragon fly

Yellow-banded Dart

The slant-nose grasshopper appeared again – perhaps the same one as last time? It was in the same area, similar size, but didn't tell us its name.

We saw another false praying mantid – green and much smaller than the salmony coloured one we saw during our February walk. Being a False Garden Mantid, it too had a distinct dark mark on the inner side of each forearm.

A beautifully shaped egg sac in a web – a tiny hole in it suggested the spiderlings had been born

A robberfly eating ...?

A native wasp – possibly one of the Spider eating

Scientific/conservation terms used on the day

Complexity – the combination of plant species, vegetation layers, spent vegetation parts (old grass flower stalks for example), logs, leaf litter and twigs within a defined space. Diverse textures, shapes, and sizes. The space could be small (your backyard) or defined as an entire ecosystem.

Layers – plants that grow in a specific section of an ecosystem. Layers may include herbaceous plants, grasses, prostrate plants, shrubs, tall trees and canopy trees. More images coming soon...

The brilliance of Purple Loosestrife

Attracts a wide range of insects including Blue Banded bees, Cuckoo bees, Leaf-cutter and Resin bees, Meadow Argus butterfly, Splendid Ochre butterfly, dragon and damsel flies, various beetles. Bees are attracted to ultra violet colour of Purple Loosestrife.

It is worth noting that many sources state that Purple Loosestrife is native to Australia, while some others disagree. It is wise to consider possibilities when planting in certain areas where it might spread and dominate other vegetation.

Creating/promoting habitat

When regenerating/creating wildlife habitat, the scale does not necessarily have to be large. Larger habitats are ideal though! Instead, think about what plants an insect may like in a small plot and see whether these plants could fit into your front/back yard. In the example below, Sweet Bursaria, Lomandra longifolia and Poa species are happily surviving in a 3 x 2 meter area. Perhaps this type of habitat is something you could replicate in your yard to attract butterflies and other insects. Butterflies often feed on Sweet Bursaria flowers and lay their eggs/rest on grass and lomandra leaf blades. Insects are an important source of food for other animals from skinks and birds to phascogales and echidnas.

Wetland plants such as Lythrum Salicaria (Purple Loosestrife), Lycopus australis (Gypsywort) and Persicaria decipiens (SLENDER KNOTWEED) flower in late summer. These plants become particularly important food sources, at a time of the year when many terrestrial plants have finished flowering.

Goodenia ovata (Hop goodenia) is another plant that provides important food at this time of year... more info on the diverse qualities of goodenia another time!



A revegetation site in Hurstbridge providing excellent habitat for butterflies and other arthropods. In terms of bang for your buck – lomandra Longifolia, Indigenous Poa species and Sweet Bursaria are hard to beat in the Nillumbik Shire.

Sweet
Bursaria

Poa Species

Lomandra
longifolia

FEBRUARY 20 2022

What a terrific afternoon we had for our first walk! Here are some of the creatures we saw:

False Garden Mantid
Splendid Ochre Skipper butterfly
Grass Dart butterfly
Unidentified skipper butterfly
Blue-banded Bee
Small cuckoo wasp (green, metallic sheen) Family CHRYSIDIDAE
Small unidentifiable wasps looking for homes in the Manna gum tree
Garden Skink looking for insects on a Manna Gum
Common Grass Blue butterfly
Sawfly (not sure of the species)
Salt and Pepper Moth
Longhorn Moth. Not sure of the species
Small pintail beetles
Unidentifiable spider (looking for insects on a Sweet Bursaria specimen).
A colourful shield bug ?
Slant-faced grasshopper
A moth in the Taxeotis genus

Surveying technique for insects

Stand three to four meters from a flowering specimen. Use your binoculars to survey the plant for insects or use your naked eye to spot flashes of colour or movement. Gradually move a little closer after 5 minutes or so. The more you train your eyes, the more you will see. Try carrying a magnifying glass too – if you get close enough to an insect you will discover a great deal! Be careful on extremely sunny days.

At all times, we urge you to avoid stepping on vegetation, and stick to paths. Please consider other 'Protected not Impacted' Guidelines here www.nillumbio.wixsite.com/home/resources

Scientific/conservation terms used on the day

Richness – refers to the amount of species in a given area. For example – you may count 6 species of insects on a Bursaria tree.

Ecosystem services – the 'services' provided by a relationship in an ecosystem. For example birds or insects pollinating a plant species. These help an ecosystem become self-sustaining over time.

Diversity – A combination of both *richness* and *abundance* of each species. Richness may be high but if you only have one or two individuals of each species, then populations might not be viable and therefore ecosystem services might not be provided.

Arthropods – insects plus spiders

The brilliance of Sweet Bursaria

- Flowers in early – late summer when many other terrestrial plants are not flowering (therefore providing a good source of food)
- Attracts a high diversity and abundance of insects
- These insects in-turn become food for predatory arthropods, birds and reptiles
- Seeds have a purse shape and often has spikes but not always. Plants can be quite variable – for example, the leaves of some Bursaria plants are more than double the size of other bursaria plants, and some have very few prickles while others much more.
- Can grow to the height of a tree. But is generally considered a tall shrub. They can grow into wonderfully sculptural forms.
- Hardy species that can handle a range of different conditions

Creating/promoting habitat

When attempting to attract certain animals to your backyard/conservation area – think about different lifecycle stages. For example the Splendid Ochre Skipper lays its eggs on lomandra leaves but as an adult feeds on Sweet Bursaria.

Leave dead and 'wild' looking habitat – it is likely to still be providing shelter and food for wildlife. For example holes in trees bored by moth and beetle larvae can in-turn become homes for indigenous bees and wasp larvae.

Native bees are especially attracted to ultraviolet colours (pink, blue, purples) and yellow. However they will go to other coloured flowers. White flowering plants attract a high richness of insects.

When managing weeds or other vegetation in the understory please consider leaving mosaic patches if you must mow. Grass stalks and leaves provide resting spots and substrates for butterflies to lay eggs.