



12 June 2015 Ken Walker (kwalker@museum.vic.gov.au) Museum Victoria. Edition 12.

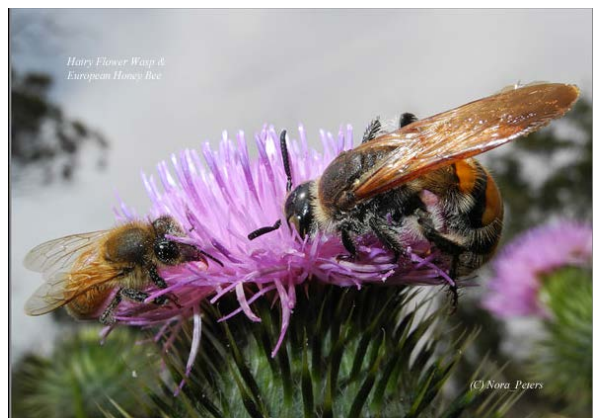
Hi All – On last Wednesday night, I gave my “Native Australian Bee” talk to the Friends of the Melton Botanic Gardens. Melton is on the western side of Melbourne and was first established in the 1830s as part of the gold rush. It had to wait until the 1990s for its recent and rapid population growth and is now considered one to be one of the newer Melbourne satellite suburbs. But true to form, as I have found with many of the Australian Plant Society (APS) groups I have spoken to over the past 2 years – I found a functioning, financial, friendly and vibrant group of people. Listening to the administration “stuff” at the beginning of the meeting, I learnt that they have 225 financial members from as far afield as Japan! They have an “extremely” healthy bank balance which they are using to create the Melton Botanic Gardens. They recently purchased \$16,000 worth of compost and put out a call for volunteers to help spread it. They have planted literally thousands of native plants in the Melton Botanic Gardens which has a range of different themed areas. They recently purchased and re-potted 900 seedlings in preparation to sell at various plants shows in September and October to raise more funds.

At the beginning of my bee talk, I make the comment that every image I show in my PowerPoint presentation has been taken by a citizen scientist and I encourage the audience to take up this

activity. I have had great success with the likes of Anna Lanigan and others from the talks I have given. At the end of my talk, my final slide lists the names of all of the people whose images I presented during my talk. The society's President then thanked me for my presentation and mentioned that one of the citizen scientists I listed was sitting at the back of the room – Nora Peters. What a thrill it was for me to finally put a face to an email address and to thank Nora personally for her many wonderful image emails that she has sent me over the past few years. Many of her emails simply have the subject title: "Brighten up your day" message and Nora's emails certainly do brighten up my day. Nora is great with vertebrate identifications so we "met" by her asking me to identify her invertebrate images. I am always most happy to provide identifications as doing so provides me with "eyes into the environment" where I can look out for pest or invasive species or population explosions and even potentially new species – all done from my sedentary desk at the Museum.

With Nora's permission, I have uploaded many of her images onto BowerBird and her efforts have made a significant contribution to our better understanding of the fauna of Melton and surrounding areas. I asked Nora the secret to her photograph success and she replied "patience". Here are some examples of Nora's wonderful and creative imagery:







There are many more of Nora's images and all are as good as the images above. Nora has an eye for nature. I asked her what camera she uses and it is a basic point and shoot style camera. WOW! What results indeed.

And finally, how about this for one of Nora's Christmas card emails !! (PS. Her daughter Kelly, who I also met at the talk, is the Photoshop wiz.)

You can view Nora's BowerBird profile at this URL:

<http://www.bowerbird.org.au/users/4683/sightings>



Mite Update



Last week, I told you about this presumed parasitic mite attacking a vinegar fly. My “mite” expert had been off-line for a few weeks and I just found out why. He had a double dose of pneumonia (Is that like Man-flu twice?!) and spent a week in hospital on life-support so he was indeed very sick. But, he is now back and answering his emails and has identified this mite as the House fly mite (*Macrocheles muscaedomesticae*). This is an interesting case of phoresy. That’s when an animal hitches a ride with another animal that hopefully flies it to a new habitat where it can re-colonise. Phoretic mites are unusual in that when in their phoretic stage they stop feeding and go into quiescence or “sleep” mode. The young mites feed on rotting organic material and eat the eggs and larvae of the Vinegar fly but then as an adult mite, they will hitch a ride on an adult fly hoping it will take them to some new food source where the mite can begin a new colony.

And, a second, much smaller mite has been found associated with one of the wasp parasites of the vinegar flies. It seems to congregate around the head of the wasp and multiple mite specimens were seen on several wasps. But, is this a phoretic or parasitic mite?



I have now photographed the mite and sent off these images to the Australian mite experts (sadly both now retired). I'm hopeful the unusual setae on the legs will be diagnostic.



What's your favourite bird? Mine is *Malurus*!

BowerBird's tribute to Fairy wrens.

These are the most delightful bird to see and watch prance about. ABRS lists 9 species and 25 subspecies for Australia. BowerBird currently has on display 6 of these species. It is the male of the species that displays the vibrant colours.

Male bird



Female



Superb Fairy wren *Malurus splendens* — Photos by Erica Siegel.

Red-winged Fairy-wren - *Malurus elegans*



Variegated Fairy-wren - *Malurus lamberti*



Photos by Erica Siegel

Blue-breasted Fairy-wren - *Malurus pulcherrimus*



Photo by Erica Siegel

Superb Fairy-Wren - *Malurus cyaneus*



Photo by Adam Edmonds

Red Backed Fairy Wren - *Malurus melanocephalus*



Photo by Dave Walter

Here is a classic Superb Fairywren wren image showing three immature birds. All I see in this image is what captions I could add –

- Who said that?
- Did you see that?
- Where's Mum?
- A bird in the hand is worth "3" in the bush.

And, I love the expression of the squashed bird in the middle – perhaps best named "Malcom in the Middle" after my children's favourite TV series.

I wonder what he/she is saying --

"When I get my own room .." "Do I know you two?" "Warm as toast in here" You can ad lib yourselves Enjoy!



Photo by Cathy Powers

Fungal images from this week

Wow! Each week, I am amazed and in awe at the range and variety of fungal image submitted. Very inspirational indeed.

<p>Small <i>Lepiota</i> sp. at Wilsons ...</p> A small mushroom with a brown cap and gills, growing on a mossy forest floor. <p>0 0 1 0 0</p>	<p><i>Tremella fimbriata</i></p> A dark, gelatinous, reddish-brown fungus growing on a rock surface. <p>0 0 1 0 0</p>	<p><i>Inocybe austrofibrillosa</i> (or ...</p> Several round, light-colored mushrooms with gills, growing on a forest floor. <p>0 0 1 0 0</p>
<p>Matt Campbell</p> <p><i>Rickenella fibula</i> (Little Pin)</p> A small, orange, pin-like fungus growing on a mossy forest floor. <p>0 0 1 0 0</p>	<p>Matt Campbell</p> <p><i>Clavaria miniata</i> (Flame Fun...</p> A bright red, flame-shaped fungus growing on a mossy forest floor. <p>0 0 1 0 0</p>	<p>Matt Campbell</p> <p><i>Ramaria flaccida</i></p> A cluster of yellow, branched, stinkhorn-like mushrooms growing on a forest floor. <p>0 0 1 0 0</p>
<p>Matt Campbell</p> <p><i>Russula rosacea</i></p> A mushroom with a reddish-brown cap and gills, growing on a forest floor. <p>0 0 1 0 0</p>	<p>Matt Campbell</p> <p><i>Russula lenkunya</i></p> A purple, flattened mushroom growing on a forest floor. <p>0 0 1 0 0</p>	<p>Russell Stanley</p> <p><i>Russula</i> sp.</p> A dark, almost black mushroom with a thick stem, growing on a forest floor. <p>0 0 1 0 0</p>
<p>Russell Stanley</p> <p>Bolete and <i>Lepiota</i> sp. growi...</p> A large, reddish-brown bolete mushroom with a thick stem, growing on a forest floor. <p>0 0 0 1 0</p>	<p>Russell Stanley</p> <p><i>Hygrocybe</i> sp.</p> A bright red mushroom with a thick stem, growing on a forest floor. <p>0 0 1 1 0</p>	<p>Russell Stanley</p> <p><i>Amanita xanthocephala</i></p> An orange mushroom with a yellow stem and a red cap, growing on a forest floor. <p>0 0 1 0 0</p>



Hygrocybe cheelii - Photo by Joy Williams



Tremella mesenterica - Photo by Russell Stanley



Tremella fimbriata - Photo by Matt Campbell



Inocybe austrofibrillosa - Photo by Matt Campbell



Rickenella fibula - Photo by Matt Campbell



Clavaria miniata - Photo by Matt Campbell



Bolete sp. - Photo by Russell Stanley



Hygrocybe sp. - Photo by Russell Stanley

If this spectacular array of fungal images does not send you out to look for fungi, then nothing will. Remember – best to look, photograph but not eat !!

Favourite Images for the week

This week's first favourite image for the week comes from that dynamic duo from the west – Jean and Fred Hort with this fly:



Lauxaniidae – *Poecilohetaerus* Photos by Jean and Fred Hort

Followed by this Paper wasp *Polistes Polistella humilis* - Photo by Erica Siegel



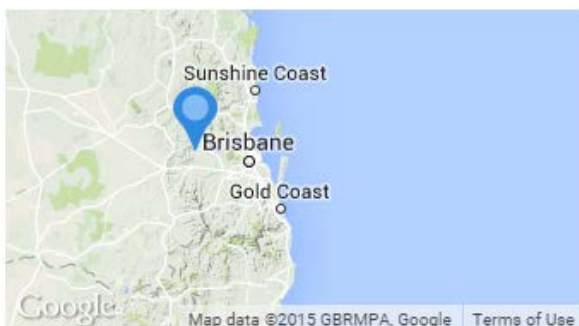
Erica added this note: "In my back yard on a potted bay tree"

And finally, what a cool image of a Cicada Killer wasp -
Sphecius pectoralis Photo by Erica Siegel



Erica's image is from SE QLD whereas all of the previous records for this species on ALA are from North Queensland. Nice massive range extension !!

Occurrence records map



As always from BowerBird

Haveagoodweekend all Happy photographing ...

Cheers – Ken

(If you wish to leave this email list, please contact me directly at
kwalker@museum.vic.gov.au – else share with your friends)