

Brian Everingham
The Journey West
2023



Bird List

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|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Emu | 37. Brown Falcon | 70. White-eared Honeyeater |
| 2. Australian Pelican | 38. Nankeen Kestrel | 71. Fuscous Honeyeater |
| 3. Darter | 39. Rock Dove | 72. White-plumed Honeyeater |
| 4. Little Pied Cormorant | 40. Common Bronzewing | 73. Brown-headed Honeyeater |
| 5. Little Black Cormorant | 41. Crested Pigeon | 74. Eastern Spinebill |
| 6. Hoary-headed Grebe | 42. Galah | 75. Grey-crowned Babbler |
| 7. Australasian Grebe | 43. Little Corella | 76. Red-capped Robin |
| 8. Magpie Goose | 44. Sulphur-crested Cockatoo | 77. Eastern Yellow Robin |
| 9. Black Swan | 45. Rainbow Lorikeet | 78. Grey Shrike-thrush |
| 10. Pacific Black Duck | 46. Australian King Parrot | 79. Golden Whistler |
| 11. Grey Teal | 47. Crimson Rosella | 80. Rufous Whistler |
| 12. Australasian Shoveler | 48. Yellow Rosella | 81. Grey Fantail |
| 13. Pink-eared Duck | 49. Eastern Rosella | 82. Willie Wagtail |
| 14. Hardhead | 50. Australian Ringneck | 83. Magpie-lark |
| 15. Australian Wood Duck | 51. Red-rumped Parrot | 84. Spotted Bowerbird |
| 16. Dusky Moorhen | 52. Mulga Parrot | 85. Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike |
| 17. Purple Swamphen | 53. Blue Bonnet | 86. Grey Butcherbird |
| 18. Eurasian Coot | 54. Laughing Kookaburra | 87. Pied Butcherbird |
| 19. White-necked Heron | 55. White-throated Treecreeper | 88. Australian Magpie |
| 20. White-faced Heron | 56. Superb Fairywren | 89. Pied Currawong |
| 21. Great Egret | 57. Splendid Fairywren | 90. Australian Raven |
| 22. Little Egret | 58. Spotted Pardalote | 91. White-winged Chough |
| 23. Nankeen Night Heron (juv) | 59. Striated Pardalote | 92. Apostlebird |
| 24. Australian White Ibis | 60. Inland Thornbill | 93. Welcome Swallow |
| 25. Straw-necked Ibis | 61. Yellow Thornbill | 94. Tree Martin |
| 26. Royal Spoonbill | 62. Buff-rumped Thornbill | 95. Australian Reed-warbler |
| 27. Yellow-billed Spoonbill | 63. Yellow-rumped Thornbill | 96. Golden-headed Cisticola |
| 28. Masked Lapwing | 64. Red Wattlebird | 97. Little Grassbird |
| 29. Silver Gull | 65. Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater | 98. House Sparrow |
| 30. Black-shouldered Kite | 66. Blue-faced Honeyeater | 99. Common Blackbird |
| 31. Whistling Kite | 67. Noisy Miner | 100. Common Starling |
| 32. Black Kite | 68. Yellow-throated Miner | 101. Common Myna |
| 33. White-bellied Sea Eagle | 69. Yellow-faced Honeyeater | |
| 34. Little Eagle | | |
| 35. Spotted Harrier | | |
| 36. Swamp Harrier | | |

Saturday 1st July 2023

We got away from Engadine at 8.30am, drove south under sunny skies and had morning tea at Marulan under a cold, cloudy and windy sky. From that point on, the weather became less friendly and while the winds eased much of the drive was through light showers but we were back in the Midwest.

We stopped at Boorowa for lunch. It looked bleak!



I was so cold I actually availed myself to the free hot cup of tea at a driver reviver stand!

Sunday 2nd July 2023

It's Sunday so a late start is in order as we caught up with a sleep deficit. But then we went straight to Gum Swamp and spent the entire morning at that location.



Gum Swamp is the discharge point for treated sewage water into a billabong. There are now four bird hides over the site.¹ We visited all hides and they are very impressive. Three have two floors!



¹ The area encompassing Gum Swamp is under the control of the Rural Lands Protection Board (formerly Pastoral Protection Board), gazetted 14 October 1932.

Further, the land was proclaimed a Bird and Animal Sanctuary on 31 December 1926. pThe NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service have classified the area as a Wildlife (Bird) Refuge for its significance as a bird and waterbirds habitat.

Forbes Shire Council owns the land occupying the Sewerage Treatment Plant. Forbes Shire Council manages Gum Swamp as part of their sewerage treatment system using it as a point for treated effluent disposal while also maintaining roads and pipes on site.

Ref: FORBES SHIRE COUNCIL - Gum Swamp Management Plan

Originally an ephemeral wetland, the southern section of Gum Swamp was transformed into a permanent waterbody in the 1920's when the sewerage treatment plant (STP) was constructed and its output discharged into the low lying swamp.

However, the northern section of the wetland remains ephemeral, being filled in the cooler months by rain water and overflow from the southern section of the wetland.













Pink-eared Ducks amidst the many Grey Teal



Grey Shrike-thrush



Female Red-rumped Parrot



“Road Kill”²

² Victorian sculptor, Jimmy Rix breathed a sigh of relief when his commission piece for the Sculpture Down the Lachlan (SDL) trail was finally set in place at the Four Mile Reserve in Forbes. ‘Road Kill’ was officially unveiled last week following a nine month delay due to the COVID border restrictions between New South Wales and Victoria.

“I sent most of the sculpture on the semi-trailer and my plan was to head up to Forbes one week later,” Jimmy said.

We ducked home, unpacked and then walked out again to explore the Forbes Lake.



Juvenile Nankeen Night Heron

“However, the NSW-Victorian border closed just a few days after, and I had to wait nine months before I could cross into New South Wales to install the work.”

Jimmy drew inspiration for ‘Road Kill’ following a trip to Forbes in 2019, at the tail end of a three year drought. The 3.5 tonne reinforced Corten steel plate sculpture, which took six months to construct, depicts a role reversal of a rebellious kangaroo taking its revenge on a busy stretch of road.

Chair of the Forbes Arts Society (FAS) Dr Karen Ritchie said ‘Road Kill’ has been “worth the wait”.

“The piece is in keeping with the SDL trail’s unofficial theme – challenging viewers to take a moment to think about our impact on the natural environment,” said Dr. Ritchie.

“What I love most about this piece is its appeal to everyone.”

The ‘Boosting the Lachlan Valley Econo-my Art Project’ has been proudly funded by the NSW Government’s Regional Growth – Environment and Tourism Fund, the Forbes Arts Society, Forbes Shire Council, Lachlan Shire Council and Evolution Mining.

Ref: <https://www.forbesphoenix.com.au/worth-the-wait-road-kill-unveiled-as-part-of-sculpture-down-the-lachlan-trail/>



Not sure what I think about this!





Monday 3rd July 2023

The day was spent in bits. Let's finish breakfast and head down the street to revisit the birds at the upper reaches of Lake Forbes.



White-plumed Honeyeater





After a quick morning tea, we then walked the streets of Forbes to record a town “recovering” from the floods but, really, in slow decline since its heyday as a 30,000 sized town after its gold mining glory.



Flood water stains way up the curtains



Ned's sister drowned in one of the many floods here



Having said our words to two of the more famous residents in the local cemetery, we drove south to see if we could get into the Lake Cowal area. The short route was going swimmingly until we reached a sign saying the road was closed. Indeed, it was. Lake Cowal had split over and flooded the neighbourhood. The long way around was impossible in the timeframe but I had learnt about the topography, the water issues and the countryside and I think I can now comment more about some issues that the expanded gold mine might face.



Promiscuous spoonbills ... or one who is lost

We then drove back to Gum Swamp!





Grey Teal



Pink-eared Ducks



Australasian Shoveler

Tuesday 4th July 2023

During the morning, when the rain was at its lightest, we drove from Forbes to Condobolin via the Sculpture Trail. We stopped at all, except one. That was the final one, entitled “Utes in the Paddock”, an art installation inspired by Jana and Graham Pickles. Well, copied from an American idea on Route 66! Given that today is July 4th, it was fitting that we missed that one. In any case, as art, it is too close to reality. The irony is too obvious.

Speaking of irony, many of the other large sculptures along the drive cast a sharp, critical gaze on our treatment of our environment. It was not lost on us that some funding came from mining interests and, even more critically, the route took us through increasingly modified landscapes of expanding irrigation, of more and more water extraction, of fewer properties as businesses were consolidated into agribusiness, of abandoned homes and depopulation of small settlements.

Still, there were some truly wonderful art installations.





The expanded agricultural footprint



It was raining even more heavily by this time so it was perhaps foolhardy to attempt another short cut to Lake Cowal but we managed the 25km route through increasingly problematic wet, muddy conditions and arrived onto the tarred road leading to the mine.

We arrived at the gate of the mine but were not allowed in and apart from a tailing's barrier and screen of trees, the operation was invisible. Still, I learnt of the topography within which the mine sits, have downloaded the appropriate documents and once in Dubbo, I shall have time to assimilate the EIS and make a submission.

As it was still raining, we grabbed our lunch and ate it in the car before then driving on bitumen to Lake Cargelligo via Ungarie. We booked in, discovered that there would be no problem if we just stayed one or two nights, unpacked into a very basic, tiny room, and walked up to get some milk and juice at the local IGA.



Wednesday 5th July 2023

We wandered around Lake Cargelligo this morning. At first, we headed south, beyond the Rotary Park and lookout, and on into Frogs Hollow. There, as celebration of NAIDOC, we visited the ochre pits. It seemed a suitable place to visit, especially as it demonstrated that local indigenous groups were also miners, noting that the white settlement here also grew on the back of mining (gold)





We then turned around and walked the lake edge, right back through the park dedicated to the WW1 volunteers, through and out of town to the north, doing what birding we could en route.







Our return walk took us up past the hospital, looped around a colourful, old water tower, back past the Central School and home for lunch.



Yellow-throated Miner

Our last foray before dinner was a drive out along the road to Cobar, a walk near the Lachlan River and another walk, with more mud sticking to our shoes, to discover a family of Splendid Fairywrens and a skittish family of Yellow-rumped Thornbill.



Dinner tonight at the local pub: or one of them! We both had grilled barramundi with chips and salad!!!!

Thursday 6th July 2023

We left Lake Cargelligo after breakfast and drove direct to Condobolin. That meant that we stayed on a sealed surface and that we drove through swathes of flooded ephemeral lakes. This is Banar Lake.



Friday 7th July 2023

It may have been cold but it was not raining so Faye and I spent the entire day walking around the Western Plains Zoo. Our membership cards ensured us a “free” entry (my third visit this financial year).

At first the African Hunting Dogs were invisible, hiding in their lairs (cold weather?). Amusingly, one of the volunteer guides suggested we throw on of the kids over the fence to see if we could get them out that way!



Grey-crowned Babbler



One of the birds roaming free and not part of the official exhibit list



White-winged Chough



Blue-faced Honeyeater



Tasmanian Devil (part of the rescue program)

Saturday 8th July 2023

We had a slow start today. I began to wade through the Lake Cowal documents and prepare my own personal submission and then headed out to walk the streets.

After morning tea, we then drove out to visit Dundullimal Homestead,³ a National Trust property not far beyond the Western Plains Zoo.



³ The History of Dundullimal Homestead

Believed to be the oldest surviving sophisticated slab house in Australia, Dundullimal and its sandstone stables, timber church, and shed are a living illustration of rural life on an isolated property. The homestead and grounds are perfect for an extended visit for tourists, families and groups.

Its story is one of amazing endeavour and vision, evidenced in the creation of a finely-crafted vintage home. The homestead has survived in near original condition from a time when the land was beyond the limits of settlement in the Wellington valley.

It wasn't your normal historical home, Set in acres of well-tended lawn.
It wasn't constructed of convict made bricks, Or the place where the nation was born.

Dundullimal homestead was none of these things. Palatial, imposing or grand,
But the way it was built, and the way it survives, Embodies the soul of our land.
Blue the Shearer (aka Col Wilson)

Built in the early 1840s as the head station of a 6,500 hectare (26,000 acres) squatting run, the homestead is Dubbo's oldest building that is open to the public. Its interior is remarkably sophisticated for its genre, with louvres and multiple-pane glazed openings onto the verandah. The imposing sitting room is noted for its 'tent' shaped plaster ceiling and wallpaper, reproduced from an 1850 patent. The master bedroom is complete with an iron bed and a campaign chest.

Ref: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/places/dundullimal-homestead/>



Now what we did not get was any story of either previous or overlapping indigenous stories. Nor did we learn anything at all of the servants/staff that would have been on the property. I raise this because over at the Western Plains Cultural Centre I found this breastplate!



Sunday 9th July 2023

We split the day into sections, beginning at Wongarbon Nature Reserve, very close to the eponymous village and not far out of Dubbo. Having spent a morning here on a wet day in July 2020, and having written a detailed report of the vegetation types, etc, I'll skip that this time and focus on the bird list: adding an additional 8 species to the trip list (now standing at 96 species!). I think Faye would say the Red-capped Robin was her favourite for the day!!!! Perhaps mine was the flock of Brown-headed Honeyeaters! The Inland Thornbills were also more than OK!



Female Red-capped Robins can be shy



Astroloma sp



I reported the illegal logging



After morning tea, we drove around to the Beni SCA and walked along the perimeter of that area; an area much abused by trail bikes, if the tracks are any reliable evidence.



Box in flower





Presumably a hangover from the days of Forestry





Recently used!!!!⁴

⁴ The NPWS encourages a range of activities within this SCA. Their own webpage states:

“Bushwalking, running, cycling and horse riding are popular activities for Dubbo residents and visitors alike. Ride along one of the many criss-crossing trails - you'll find 45km of double track - but don't forget that these are shared with walkers and vehicles. If you're serious about cycling, why not join the annual Beni Spring Spin, held right here in the park? And if you're not sure which trails to explore on your visit, grab a brochure from the park office or information bay.”

Ref: <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/beni-state-conservation-area/learn-more>

It's a pity that there is little about the values of the park (except by way of saying birdwatchers would have a good time) and the link to what they are doing shows that there is only a SMI for this park.

Ref: <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/park-management/documents/beni-state-conservation-area>





Monday 10th July 2023

Today's target: this time to Goonoo! A Park that has been part of my story now for close to thirty years.

While we were there, we stopped at four different locations (all different to the last visit, some 3 years ago). The first two stops were under gloomy, cloud-covered skies and by the time we had a clear blue sky above it was after 1.00pm and by then the birds had taken to siesta time.

The other thing of note is that the flowering this year is behind the timeline from our last visit, though I have to say the foliage made up for lack of flowers!



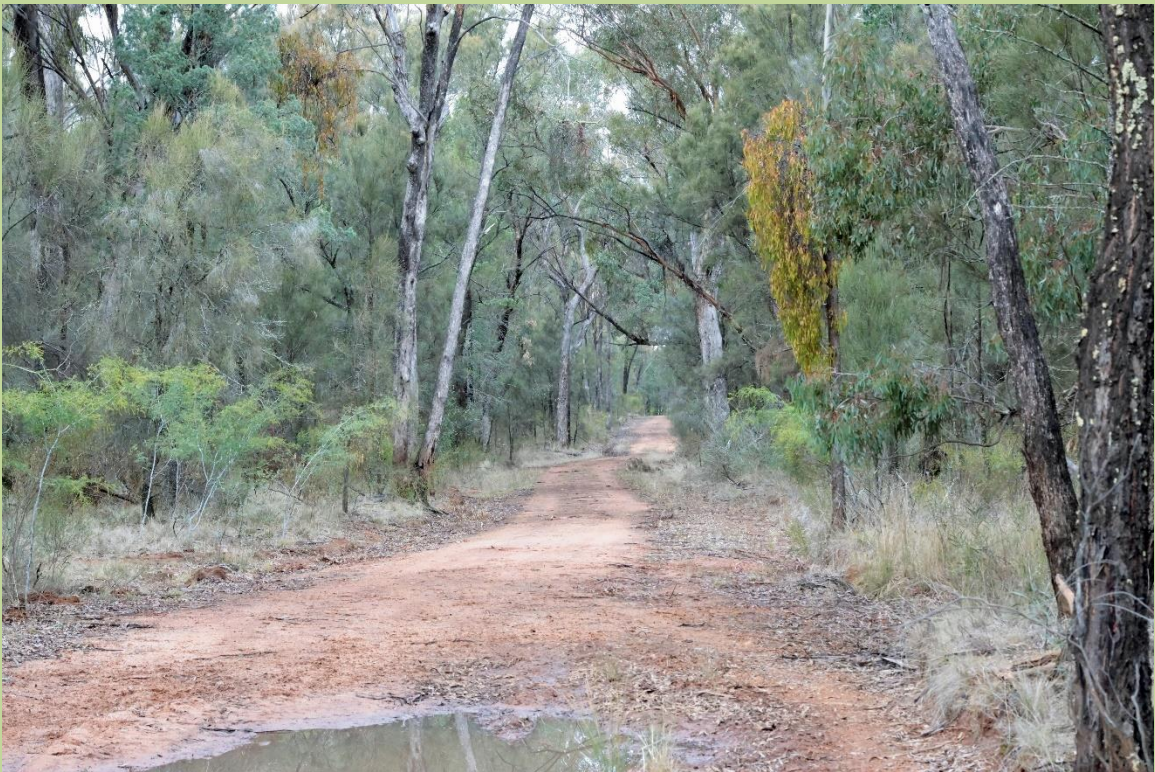
Stop 1: Hennessys Road: Goonoo CCA Zone 1 National Park



Evidence of pig damage



Historic logging



Stop 2: Sandy Creek Trail: Goonoo CCA Zone 1 National Park



Variations of acacia









And stalkers!

Stop 3. Mogriguy Forest Road (State Forest)



Historic fire observation tower



Stop 4: Bore Dam 2 (Goonoo SCA)

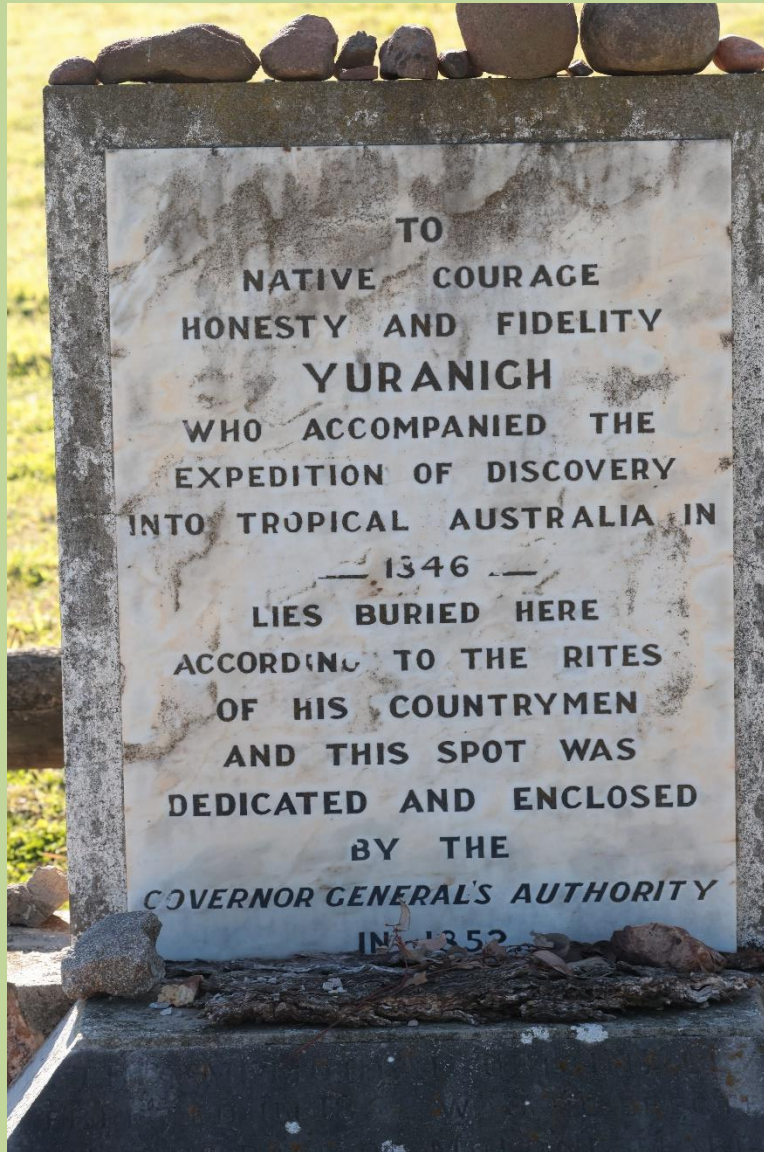






Tuesday 11th July 2023

We left Dubbo not long after 8.00am, filled the car with fuel (at \$179.9 per litre) and drove to Orange via Molong and Yuranigh's Grave!



Amazingly, it was a clear day of blue skies. The last visit had us ducking rain to see the site!

I am still also stunned by the empathy and humility of Mitchell to pay for this, to ensure that Yuranigh was buried according to tribal custom and to not once mention his own role as leader of that expedition. Perhaps some people who are opposed to The Voice should ponder this act!



The journey to Canberra took us via Orange and the Regional Art Gallery, thence to Canowindra, Cowra, Boorowa and on around Yass into the city. We'll skip the art and the townscapes (they have been deleted from this account) and move on!

Wednesday 12th July 2023



Except that I must show this new art installation

Opened in March (8th), 2023, Dame Enid Lyons and Dame Dorothy Tangney⁵

⁵ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-03-08/canberra-parliamentary-zone-to-get-first-female-statues/102064348>

The statues of Dame Dorothy Tangney and Dame Enid Lyons will stand on one side of Old Parliament House in the nation's capital, not far from the Women's Suffrage Commemorative Fountain in the adjacent rose gardens.

Thursday 13th July 2023

Home via a cold, foggy and gloomy Jerrabomberra wetland.



There was little diversity in the wetlands today and no exciting discovery but the behaviour was worth watching!



Gentle allopreening





Brian Everingham

