

HFNC Lake Linlithgow Excursion - report for 22 February 2003

Rod Bird

Ten members met at 7 am at the Cypress (south corner of the lake near Chatsworth Road) or later near Boonawah Creek. The track was very sticky along the SE bank and we ought to have bypassed it and gone to Boonawah Creek via Mibus Lane and the lane west to HFNC tree block. It was a lovely mild, calm, overcast morning and we finished up at 12.30 pm, having spent much of the time walking and botanising at Boonawah Creek and on the NW bank.

A list of species and numbers are given below. Total numbers were low, especially for water birds because the lake had been dry for some weeks (wheel marks all over the surface) prior to the fall of about 50 mm of rain 1-2 days earlier. The lake had a smear of water on parts, the depth shown by a fox as it skipped across the centre when we were on the NW bank. A few ducks, lapwings and other birds seen mainly on the centre. A highlight was seeing a pair of Spotted Harriers along North Lakes Road, harried by ravens. Lovely birds – great views of their banded tail and grey back, with black wingtips. We also saw many Pipits, Songlarks and – for the first time for me – Stubble Quail in numbers near Boonawah Creek (enjoying the cover of grass and *Chenopodium glaucum* growing near the shore.

Birds seen:

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| Masked lapwing (25) | Spotted harrier (2, Boonawah area) |
| Red-capped plovers (20) | Brown falcon (6) |
| Whiskered tern (about 100 out in the centre) | Nankeen kestrel (4) |
| Australian shelduck (20 in the centre) | Black-shouldered kite (6) |
| Silver gull (1) | Whistling kite (3) |
| Straw-necked ibis (1, in cypress) | Australian raven |
| Chestnut teal (2, North Lakes swamp water) | Australian magpie |
| Stubble quail (about 12, Boonawah area) | Magpie lark |
| White-fronted chat (30) | Yellow-faced honeyeater (HFNC block) |
| Richard's pipit (30) | Clamorous reed-warbler (Boonawah) |
| Brown songlark (2) | Goldfinch |
| | House sparrow |

Since about April 2002, when John Harris from Parks Victoria had the stock out of the area, there has been a great change in the appearance of the lake environs. The place is mightily improved and credit must be given to John for his efforts. A lot of grass, herbs, rush and other plants. The list of native species now numbers about 56, with many more sure to be noted in future years.

“New” species revealed since grazing was terminated in April 2002:

- *Acacia paradoxa* (hedge wattle) – seedlings at the lane stop on West Lakes Rd.
- *Convolvulus remotus* (hairs appressed on stem, in contrast to *C. erubescens*)
- *Convolvulus erubescens* (pink bindweed) - also seen Boonawah and NW bank area
- *Dichondra repens* (kidney weed) - Boonawah Creek and elsewhere (v. large leaves)
- *Eutaxia microphylla* (common eutaxia – a species I had noted previously only in the Wimmera, not on basalt), of which there are at least a few dozen now evident above the high water mark on the lake shore S of Boonawah creek.
- *Eryngium ovinum* (blue devils) – NW bank
- *Lavatera pleibia* (Australian hollyhock) – Boonawah Creek area
- *Mimulus repens* (creeping monkeyface) – At Boonawah Creek - seen also in Dec..
- *Triglochin striata* (streaked arrow-grass) – lush at Boonawah Creek

A strip 50 m wide has been burned at the entrance to the “Aquatic Club” – that has been done in the past and will continue to provide an interesting contrast for native grass species. Most of the hundreds of trees planted by Parks Victoria in winter of 2002 on the northern half of the lake are alive and well. Where the ripped lines were sprayed on the NE bank there is a line of green thistles, whereas sprayed spots on the NW bank are not as bad. Thistles will be a problem until the grass grows again. The old buildings at The Point on the S side have gone and Boxthorn bushes sprayed. The wire in the fence along North Lakes road has also been removed.