

Martindale surveys 22-23 January

In mid 2018 in partnership with the Martindale Landcare Group, HBOC commenced quarterly surveys of the Martindale Valley. It's a very interesting area, well-known as having a good diversity of birds including various western birds are often recorded. I wasn't sure how we'd fare in summer though, since I was expecting conditions to be hot and dry. However, it was a pleasant surprise to find a green and hence picturesque valley due to good recent rains there. The Goulburn River held considerable water and was flowing, although that mostly was because of rain which had fallen outside the Martindale Valley catchment (and Martindale Creek was dry apart from an occasional small waterhole).

Only Jeff Jones and I were able to make it for this summer's surveying. Overall we found the bird diversity to be down a bit compared with previous visits but it still was pretty good overall except at a couple of very cicada-rich sites. Highlight species included White-winged Triller, Hooded Robin, Rockwarbler, Brown and Rufous Songlark and Diamond Firetail. On Monday afternoon I found a Horsfield's Bushlark near the Bureen Bridge. At night around our campsite in the eastern part of the valley we had Owlet-nightjar and White-throated Nightjar (which did a close fly-through) plus Southern Boobook and Tawny Frogmouth. We found it interesting that the frogmouth began calling at about 5pm on the Tuesday afternoon, and continued to call for almost an hour before taking a couple of hours' break until resuming again after dark.

A particular highlight from the summer surveys was the good numbers of White-browed Woodswallows which were present. We found them at several sites and usually they were with very young birds (some of which were still being fed). Because all the young birds were already fledged we can't be completely sure where they originated, but I think it highly likely that they were bred in the Martindale Valley.

Most of our records were on private property and it is a real privilege to be able to access sites that normally are off-limits to the general public. There's one site in particular, located on a property off Horseshoe Rd, which always has me salivating at the prospect of visiting it.

The next surveys will be in April sometime: check the HBOC website in about mid-March for details. Additional helpers are always welcome.

Alan Stuart



Immature White-browed Woodswallow at Martindale (Alan Stuart)