

HFNC Excursion to Lake Fyans and Devil's Garden – 18 August 2019

Dave Munro

Participants: Dave & Lyn Munro, Glenys Cayley, Janeen Samuel, Reto Zollinger & Yvonne Ingeme, Steve & Debra Martinich, Liz Fenton, Ross Simpson.

The weather forecast indicated that cold and wet conditions could be expected but despite a few light, and some not so light, showers throughout the day we remained mostly dry. The temperature, however, rarely reached double figures.

Lake Fyans lies about 6 km N of Pomonal and 8 km east of Halls Gap. It can be accessed from either the Pomonal-Stawell Road or the Halls Gap-Stawell Road. The Devils Garden is an area of bushland lying north-west of Lake Fyans bordering the Halls Gap-Stawell Rd.

Lake Fyans is a small off-stream reservoir with a small natural catchment that supplies water to Stawell, Ararat and Great Western. According to the Grampians Wimmera Water website it was 78% full at the time of our visit.

Our drive from Dunkeld was accompanied by some light drizzle which did nothing to minimise the beauty of the great variety of Acacias in bloom. It is indeed the Sprinter season – the end of winter and the beginning of spring.

After a few unintended detours we eventually arrived at our destination on the western shore of the lake. We stopped next to an impressive red-brick castle-like toilet block quite close to the sandy beach. Initially there was little of botanical interest but a stroll along the beach led us to a more promising patch of grassy woodland. There we came across a patch of Slaty Helmet Orchids (*Corybas incurvus*) and a colony of Dwarf Greenhoods (*Pterostylis nana*). Scented Sundews (*Drosera aberrans*) were scattered throughout the area, as were a few Flame Heath (*Stenantha conostephioides*) and *Hibbertia* shrubs. A lone Early Nancy (*Wurmbea dioica*) was spotted.

There were several clumps of fungi, Yellow Navels (*Lichenomphalia chromacea*), growing on exposed sandy ground along with the ever present algal mat. A large earthball, probably of the genus *Scleroderma*, drew our attention. It was growing at the edge of the sandy beach on a clayey substrate. Subsequently more smaller specimens were found nearby. Other fungi noted were *Laccaria* sp., a *Cortinarius* relative, a possible *Entoloma* and a *Marasmius* species. A single specimen of *Amanita xanthocephala* was unearthed showing its bulbous base and orange edged volva.

As we entered the reserve a small dam gave our first bird recordings of the day. It held three species of duck, Wood, Pacific Black and an Australian Shelduck. A stroll along the shore line did not produce many birds. The first bird seen was a medium-sized brown bird scratching on the ground amongst leaf litter. It may have been a Brown Treecreeper but not having any of our regular birdos present identification remains tentative. Many Coots were seen and a Willie Wagtail entertained us with its antics and calls. Many Long-billed Corellas were seen flying around the dead stags of the drowned eucalypts which dotted the lake. They no doubt find them a suitable and safe nesting location. Several Tree Martins whizzed around hawking prey which was invisible to us.

We had lunch at a recently erected shelter with tables and a distant view of the lake. We were attended by a young Magpie whose pitiful calls encouraged some of our party to proffer sustenance. A group of Superb Fairy-wrens showed up just as we were leaving.

We climbed up to a lookout on the levee bank to get another perspective of the landscape. With the Grampians/Gariwerd to the south and the Western Black Range just across the water from our raised position we were able to see the full expanse of lake. The fast moving clouds created an ever-changing series of moods added to by wind gusts rippling the water surface. A Musk Duck was spotted nearby.

We found the track to Devils Garden but it appeared to be too wet to drive along. Discretion prevailed and so we had a short walk through bush which obviously had not been burnt for some time. The only “finds” were a pair of Scarlet Robins and some White-winged Choughs and an extensive patch of

Nodding Greenhoods (*Pterostylis nutans*). A dark cloud and cold blast sent us scurrying to the cars. Thence to Halls Gap for a hot drink for some and ice cream for others. A Kookaburra watched us emerge from our cars.

From previous experience we know that, later in the year, the water reserve round Lake Fyans is the habitat of several species of unusual and significant plants, particularly orchids.

Plants identified:

Drosera aberrans
Stenanthera conostephioides
Wurmbea dioica
Hibbertia sericea
Acacia implexa ?
Corybas incurvus
Pterostylis nana
Pterostylis nutans

Birds identified:

Grey Currawong	White-faced Heron
Raven	Australian White Ibis
Purple Swamp-hen	Australian Shelduck
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Long-billed Corella
Willie Wagtail	Eurasian Coot
Tree Martin	Pacific Black Duck
Australian Magpie	Australian Wood Duck
Superb Fairy-wren	Silver Gull
Scarlet Robin	White-winged Chough
Musk Duck	



Lake Fyans looking south from levee bank

Fungi identified:

Marasmius sp.
Scleroderma sp.? (Earthball)
Laccaria sp.
Lichenomphalia chromacea (Yellow Navels)
Amanita xanthocephala (Pretty Grisette)



Amanita xanthocephala