

Mornington Peninsula Birdlife



Volume 5 Number 2 June 2016



Grey Plover, photographed at Sandy Point Western Port by Andrew Browne

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As part of the Mornington Peninsula School Environment Week at The Briars in March, we took the opportunity to talk to the students about our Northern Hemisphere waders and their lifestyle and threats. This fitted nicely into BirdLife Australia's current project "Migratory Shorebirds Public Engagement Campaign". A big thanks to Pam and Susan who organise all the associated activities.

Our outings program is proving to be successful with increased attendances and new prospective members. Our branch is experiencing an increase in membership, as is our national body.

COMMITTEE NOTES

We have been asked to provide a speaker at the National Science week to be held in August at the Coolart Homestead, if you would like to participate please let us know.

As indicated in the last committee notes we have conducted an informal survey of Tuckey Track Sorrento for the friends group down there and we have included this in our outings program in October.

We will have our yearly meeting at Coolart on 13 July with Roger Standen giving us an insight into summer in Roebuck Bay.

Our sausage sizzle at Bunnings proved a fizzle with Fridays not a good money-spinner, we will ask for a weekend next year.

Max Burrows, President

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Education report January - April 2016

2016 has started off pretty busy for Susan Clark and I, with an early request for a presentation at the Penbank School Campus in Moorooduc. We spoke to Year 4 students about local Mornington Peninsula birds. We then went for a short walk around their grounds, to spot some birds, and commented on their extensive native plantings. They have plans to build a bird hide near one of their dams. The school also purchased some of our Branch's resources (book, posters). We received an enthusiastic response from the children, and had a pleasant afternoon.

On 28 February, John Rawlins and Susan Clark participated in the BERG Mt Martha Family Day at Balcombe Creek Reserves. They had the telescope set up (at child height) on the jetty and were able to give children and adults close-up views of Little Pied Cormorant, Chestnut Teal and two splendid Royal Spoonbills. They were assisted by BERG member Jenny Ramm (who adjusted the telescope, allowing them to do the talking). John is also a BERG Mt Martha member.

On March 15 to 18, we were booked for the schools' Environment Week at The Briars. Max, Susan and I found we were heavily booked for sessions in the bird hide, and hoped the birds would cooperate.

We rounded up volunteers to assist with the 'scope. Many thanks to Susan, Max, John Rawlins, Peter Mason (who almost made it! - car problems), David Ap-Thomas, Keith Caldecott, and Diane Tomlin. A sterling effort.

We had some amazing student helpers on different days - a young woman from Westernport Secondary College who was a natural with children, and two personable young men from Mt Eliza Secondary College who were very engaged and helpful. Our thanks to you all!

Max did a great presentation about the amazing Great Knot, one of the wading birds which makes the huge trip to the Northern Hemisphere (Siberia) in our southern autumn. By relating it to the 'knot' in his shoe, he ensured the children would remember its name! Brilliant!

I nearly made it through the whole four days, succumbing to a throat ailment on the Friday - no voice. As it happened, the 'great storm' came that morning, the schools didn't show, and the day was cancelled.

Birds appearing on a regular basis (thankfully) were little Black-fronted Dotterels, Eurasian Coots, Chestnut Teal, Welcome Swallows, a White-faced Heron, and an appearance of an Emu. We also saw Swamp Wallabies, a tortoise, and a sleeping Ringtail possum in the roof outside the hide door.

Susan and I were then engaged to speak at the Mornington Garden Club on 11 April. We arrived early to set up the technology required for a visual presentation, assisted by the President's husband. All was ready to go. About 100 people packed St Mark's Hall in Mornington, most of them women. Meeting formalities were completed, and then it was our turn. I began by showing and talking to, a slide show of 'Some Birds of the Mornington Peninsula', complete with some bird sounds.

When we were near the end of the slide-show, the digital projector shut down - no visuals! While some people wrestled with the technology (not resolved), Susan and I had to 'wing it', talking about the requirements of birds in backyard gardens. We then proceeded to questions, which proved to



Max explaining Great Knot migration.



Susan with helpers from Mt Eliza Secondary College.

Photos by Pam Hearn

be quite lively and productive. Topics ranged from introduced pests, such as the Common (Indian) Myna problem, to the feeding of birds, and anecdotes about members' sightings. I think we were received well, and were gratified by a generous donation from the Club. Many thanks. We may even have the prospect of returning next year for further explorations about birds. No bookings on the horizon at present, but we'll be ready to go if needed.

Pam Hearn, Susan Clark, Education Officers

Bunnings sausage sizzle

As part of our fundraising we had a sausage sizzle day at Bunnings Mornington on Friday 5 February. This proved to be not entirely successful as the clientele were not particularly attracted to sausages on this day. We will in future schedule this activity on a Saturday or Sunday. Given all that we still made a profit in excess of \$300 and this will be added to with further funds from product sales of which there was considerable over supply.

I would thank all who volunteered on the day as it all went without a hitch, if only the customers were as diligent.

Max Burrows

MEMBER PROFILE

Jock Macmillan

How I started birding

I had an early introduction to birding as my father had been a Field Officer for the American Museum of Natural History up until the start of WWII. He had completed a bird collection of the islands of the south-west Pacific in 1938/39 that included a Silvereye only found in the New Hebrides (as it was then) and named *Zosterops lateralis*; *race macmillani*. I kept a "bird diary" from eight years of age when I also received a first edition copy of "What Bird is That?" for Christmas. A bird was never referred to by its common name; silvereyes were *Zosterops*; kookaburras were *Dacelos*; etc. I also created a wildflower collection for a specific part of the Kuringai Chase in Sydney.

This promising start to birding and botany was curtailed for a prolonged period when I went to boarding school as a ten year old for seven years; then to universities in New Zealand and the USA and then returned as a career scientist in New Zealand for thirty years. An appointment at the Vet School of the University of Melbourne in Werribee in 1997 allowed a re-introduction to birding when time permitted. Moving to Mount Martha in 2009 was the first real opportunity to recommence more serious birding after a break of fifty-nine years. It has been a personal revelation that those childhood years of birding have been preserved remarkably well; not so much the bird calls, but certainly the shapes, flight patterns, etc.

Favourite birding spots on the Peninsula

Being a member of BirdLife Mornington Peninsula has provided a perfect introduction to the diversity of Peninsula habitats and the associated range of birds. Even from our home on our 900 sq metre property at Mount Martha we have recorded thirty-five species with another five observed flying over the Bay from our front deck. Then there are another additional forty-two species observed on Mount Martha beach, the Balcombe Creek board walk and the Briars Park. And, that is within a period of just over five years. So, in my case, my favourite birding spot is "the Peninsula".



Sausage sizzlers John Rawlins, George Widelski, Peter Mason and Larry Wakefield. Photo by Rab Siddhi



If there had to be a "special spot" on the Peninsula, it would be "spotting" the Powerful Owl in the Arthurs Seat State Park on a regular Sunday outing.

Other favourite birding spots

Living in Wyndham Vale for twelve years provided an excellent opportunity to frequently visit the Western Treatment Plant as well as the You Yangs. Another favourite site is the Tarra Bulga National Park with its Lyrebirds. However, the absolute favourite birding spot would have to be at a rainforest lodge just out of Tarzali which is just out of Malanda on the Atherton Tablelands. A three day visit in mid-2014 meant we had an extensive list of "new species".

Some memorable birding moments

The first moment would be during my childhood birding days when the twice daily observations of a pair of Silvereyes building their nest, setting and then rearing their young all came to a sudden end when a pair of Grey Butcherbirds skewed the fledglings to adjacent sharp twigs of the maple tree.

Many of the other moments were during our visit to Tarzali; like the Sarus Cranes returning to their swamp late afternoon; or sighting the Yellow-eyed (Barred) Cuckoo-shrike; and tolerating the raucous calls coming from closely watched catbirds and a Helmeted Friarbird as a contrast to the vividness of a Victoria's Riflebird.

Birding ambitions

As an active member of BERG Mount Martha, I have been part of a small team that has a weekly working bee along Balcombe Creek. One project has involved removing blackberry, truck tyres, etc. from an old quarry cum hand gun shooting range. The revegetation process has been associated with the return of native birds in increasing numbers and variety. Continuing to see this recovery process is an ongoing ambition.

Other interests

Obviously, BERG Mount Martha is an additional interest. U3A activities include petanque in the Mornington Rose Gardens and trying to teach a scientifically trained mind to solve cryptic crosswords. The Arthurs Seat Probus provides social stimulus. I haven't yet managed to completely retire from research activities, but these continue to be exclusively related to dairy cows!

Brilliant artistry

Only a few months ago, Pam Hearn contacted me with regard to painting/drawing some of my Hooded Plover images. She'd heard from a reliable source (Val Ford) that I had 'zillions' of the things and could supply whatever she wanted; side-on, standing, sitting, running, flying or even copulating. Pam ignored the latter suggestion and wisely chose to paint an image of the Moana East parent, MU, with chick, running across the sand. Not only is the reproduction an amazing piece of work, Pam has very kindly donated the framed painting to the Friends of Hooded Plover to 'use as we wish'.

So we thank Pam for this amazingly generous gift and will utilise her brilliant artistry to further Hooded Plover conservation.

Mark Lethlean, Red Hill



Painting of Moana East parent with chick. Photo by David Reid

Red Bluff Mornington

Separating Mills Beach from Shire Hall Beach in Mornington is a small hill/bluff covered in coastal scrub, banksia, gum trees and other vegetation not all of it native. For the last eight years or so I have traversed it on my daily walks and kept a simple record of the birds observed on the land, overhead or out to sea over the bay and the tally stands at eighty-one species, a sizeable total for what is after all a very small area. For two consecutive years I witnessed the arrival at the Bluff of Flame Robins from Tasmania at about this time of the year (April).

Recently, a pillar has been installed in the carpark of the Tanti Creek estuary at the bottom of the steps leading up to the track and several excellent lookouts informing visitors of the various aspects of the area both ecological and historic.

Over the years a great deal of maintenance work has been conducted by the Friends of Tanti Creek/Mills Beach with monthly working bees under the guidance of President Jan Oliver. Currently, the Friends together with Mornington Shire are engaged in the restoration of this patch of Coastal Banksia Woodland.

When in the area, check it out, a relaxed circular walk only takes about twenty minutes.

Danny Vits, Mornington



Eastern Great Egret on a banksia at Red Bluff. Photo by Danny Vits

Feather Map of Australia Project

Mapping Australian wetlands, feather by feather The Feather Map of Australia project aims to collect waterbird feathers from wetlands around Australia.

Become a citizen scientist today by collecting wetland bird feathers you find on the ground or in the water and help our researchers create the first ever Feather Map of Australia. For more information <http://feathermap.ansto.gov.au/>

Frankston Nature Conservation Reserve

Congratulations to the team and to the Community Committee of Management for their hard work and perseverance over the last few years to see this day finally arrive – there have been so many hurdles and frustrations along the way, which must make the opening even sweeter for these dedicated environmentalists. The reserve is now open to the public on Thursdays through to Sundays, from 10am to 5pm.

This has been a huge effort from the original Friends of Frankston Reservoir, now known as Friends of Frankston Nature Conservation Reserve, and the Community Committee of Management. Don your walking boots and visit the reserve. For further detail: <http://www.fncr.org.au/>

David Cross, Frankston Environmental Friends Network

Contacting BirdLife Mornington Peninsula

President Max Burrows; 9789 0224
PO Box 2262 Rosebud Plaza, Vic 3939

mornington@birdlife.org.au
www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-mornington-peninsula

Newsletter contributions

Thanks for your fantastic articles and photos; keep sharing your sightings, observations, bird photos, daily birding activities, surveys, tips on bird identification and birding while travelling stories.

Send to Val Ford; 5981 1445 & fordandreid@gmail.com

Deadline for September edition: 1 August 2016
Earlier articles appreciated.

Weeding at Frankston Reservoir

For our annual working bee we decided to help out at Frankston Reservoir. Despite the weather (the wettest July day in 25 years) on 12 July 2015 four members joined half a dozen members of the Friends Group for a few hours removing woody weeds.

After being passed back and forth between Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria and Frankston City Council, the area has now passed to the control of the Friends group and renamed Frankston Nature Conservation Reserve. The website <http://www.fnrc.org.au> gives some information on the history and features of the reserve.

There are extensive areas of good quality heathland, but also, particularly near neighbouring houses, areas heavily infested with weeds. We noted just about every weed species you can think of during our visit, and spent some hours (in the rain) removing Bluebell Creeper, Sallow Wattle, and Pittosporum, amongst others.

Ending thoroughly soaked, we had to admire the dedication of the Friends who seemed reluctant to stop despite the downpour. The Friends hold a working bee on the second Sunday of each month – they can be reached through the aforementioned website.

Lee Denis, Peninsula Field Naturalists Club newsletter September 2015

Taking action to curb myna numbers

More than 130 people have now registered interest in becoming part of an Indian Myna trapping program on the Mornington Peninsula. If you are keen to hear more, please contact: Jacqueline.salter@mornpen.vic.gov.au I'm currently devising a monthly survey to record myna sightings and trappings. You can also join the Facebook group: "Mornington Peninsula Indian Myna Group".

Jacqueline Salter, Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network News, April 2016

Sunshine Creek pollution identified

Waterwatch monitoring by the Sunshine Reserve Conservation and Fireguard Group has led to pollution reduction in Mount Martha.

Sunshine Reserve Conservation & Fireguard Group have been monitoring Sunshine Creek in Mount Martha for over 10 years. In 2011, elevated phosphate results were detected and the group were able to trace the input back to a stormwater drain connected to the creek. The EPA and Mornington Peninsula Shire Council were notified of the high phosphate levels and have been working to find the source of pollution ever since. Finally a breakthrough came early this year and the source was identified as a property in the local area that had a toilet plumbed incorrectly into the stormwater system. The situation has now been rectified.

This is a fantastic result for Sunshine Reserve Conservation and Fireguard Group and a great testament of the value of long-term water quality monitoring to detect changes and track the health of local waterways.

Sunshine Bushland Reserve, Autumn 2016 Newsletter



Thoroughly soaked after weeding at Frankston Nature Conservation Reserve. Photo by Judy Smart



Wounded juvenile Tawny Frogmouth. Photo by Stacey Lethlean

Vet angered by senseless attack on tawny

The senseless shooting of a tawny frogmouth has upset and angered Rye Beach Veterinary Hospital staff. The wounded juvenile was found on Old Melbourne Rd near the Rye football oval with a badly fractured and infected shoulder could not be helped and had to be euthanised. X-rays revealed a lead pellet – probably fired from an air rifle. "I was very upset to receive it as it was a lovely little bird," said veterinarian Stacey Lethlean, who has treated injured native animals for the past 30 years.

The nocturnal raptor, which eats moths and small animals, is a well camouflaged predator. It is protected by law and Ms Lethlean will report the shooting to police. "It was probably just a senseless thrill-kill," she said. "Its wing was fractured and it had obviously been in a lot of pain. We only found the slug through x-rays, which makes me wonder whether other injured native animals brought in, have also been shot."

Southern Peninsula News, 23 February 2016

EVERYBODY'S WELCOME

Outings are held on the second Wednesday and third Sunday of the month, except in January, and are cancelled on total fire ban days.

Newcomers, beginners and visitors are welcome and members will help you with the birds. Binoculars for casual use are available on every outing. Bring lunch (optional) and a folding chair for bird call and chat.

To ensure the health the safety of everyone at outings, participants need to take responsibility for their personal safety. To assist with this, the Committee provides the following guidelines.

1. Wear name tag (write emergency contact name and phone number on the reverse side)
2. Wear suitable footwear i.e. closed shoes or boots
3. For areas where snakes are likely, wear gaiters
4. Always carry items you may need e.g. water, snacks, personal first aid kit, hat, sunscreen, insect repellent, your name and residential address and, if you have one, a mobile phone with battery charged
5. Remain with the group at all times and advise leader or "whip" if you intend to leave before the walk ends.

For more information about an outing contact Max Burrows on 0429 947 893 or the leader listed.

Max Burrows, Outings Coordinator

Date	Time	Locality	Meeting place and other information	Leader	Phone
Wed 8 June	9.30	Sages Cottage, Baxter	Meet 9.30 at main gate near corner of Sages Road and Moorooduc Highway. Mel 106 G5	Susan Clark	5975 7409
Sun 19 June	9.30	Peninsula Gardens Bushland Reserve, Rosebud	Meet 9.30 at entrance in Jetty Road north of Browns Road intersection. Mel 170 H10	Ray Pentland	5986 4717
Wed 13 July	10.00	Coolart Wetlands, Somers	Meet 10.00 at car park; enter off Lord Somers Road near Beach Hill Avenue. This outing will be held in the theatre and will include morning tea and Roger Standen to talk on "Roebuck Summer", then a walk to the lagoon bird hide. Mel 193 J9	Max Burrows	0429 947 893
Sun 17 July	9.30	OT Dam, Dromana	Meet 9.30 at entrance to Arthurs Seat State Park Arthurs Seat Road opposite Bellingham Road. Mel 171 K2	TBA	
Wed 10 Aug	9.30	Greens Road, Main Ridge	Meet 9.30 at Gate 15 in Greens Road off junction with Purves/Browns/Baldrys Roads. Mel 254 D4	TBA	
Sun 21 Aug	9.30	Jacks Beach reserve, Crib Point	Meet 9.30 at car park on Woolleys Road. Mel 165 A7	TBA	
Wed 14 Sept	9.00	Bulldog Creek Road, Tuerong	Meet 9.00 at intersection of Foxeys Road and Bulldog Creek Road off Balnarring Road. Mel 151 K11	TBA	
Sun 18 Sept	9.00	Eaton's Cutting, Red Hill	Meet 9.00 at car park. Enter from Arthurs Seat Road opposite School into Eaton's Cutting Road, go past Holmes Road. Mel 190 E/F1	TBA	
Wed 12 Oct	9.00	Tuckey Track, Sorrento	Meet 9.00 at second car park Sorrento Sailing Club Point Nepean Road. Mel 157 E9	David Ap-Thomas	9787 6691 0429 939 036
Sun 23 Oct	9.00	What Bird is That at The Briars Nepean Highway Mt Martha	Meet 9am to 1pm at Visitors Centre. Activities include bird walks, displays, bird information, theatre presentation and morning tea and a chat. All welcome. Mel 145 E12	Max Burrows	0429 947 893
Wed 9 Nov	9.00	Tootgarook Wetlands private property, Boneo	Meet 9.00 at equestrian centre entrance, off Boneo Road past Rosebud Country Club and before Browns Road, and follow BirdLife signs. Mel 170 A9	David Ap-Thomas	9787 6691 0429 939 036
Sun 20 Nov	7.00	Western Treatment Plant, Werribee	Meet 7.00 at Baxter Tavern car park, enter off Baxter/Tooradin Road. We will proceed in convoy to the plant. (Bookings to Max essential). Mel 107 B4	Max Burrows John Barkla	0429 947 893 0417 382 966
Wed 14 Dec	9.00	Devilbend Reserve, Tuerong	Meet 9.00 at entrance on Derril Road south of Woodlands Road before Hodgins Road. Mel 152 F7	Danny Vits	0447 046 862
Sun 18 Dec	9.00	Xmas outing at Dunn's Creek Estate, Red Hill	Meet 9.00 at property gate, 137 McIlroys Road. Bring a plate to share after outing. Mel 191 D1	Max Burrows	0429 947 893

BALDRY CROSSING, MAIN RIDGE

David Ap-Thomas: Wed 10 February

Species recorded:34

Our first outing for 2016 attracted thirty-two enthusiasts including a number of keen new members.

David led us out over varied terrain, through eucalypt forest with low undergrowth and down into dry gullies. Conditions were excellent with no wind, mild temperature and light

cloud cover. Sometimes we snaked single-file along the track with those at the rear seeing David striding out some distance away.

White-flowering eucalypts and mistletoe were busy with honeyeaters, including Yellow-faced, Brown-headed, White-naped, Crescent, Eastern Spinebill and Little and Red Wattlebird.

Moving through were Crimson (adult and juvenile) and Eastern Rosella, Rainbow Lorikeet, Australian King Parrot, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Galah, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo and Brown Goshawk.

We had many calls and/or sightings of Spotted Pardalote, Superb Fairy-wren, Grey Fantail, Eastern Yellow Robin, Brown and Striated Thornbill, White-browed Scrubwren, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Butcherbird, Golden and Rufous Whistler, with Crested Shrike-tit and White-throated Treecreeper working the tree trunks. A resting Fan-tailed Cuckoo sat for ages, spreading his beautifully marked tail and we heard and saw plenty more of these.

Our two highlights were, firstly, Rufous Fantail which seemed to be everywhere, either singly or in groups. We were treated to close-up views of these bright birds flitting at eye-level among the bracken. Secondly Satin Flycatcher. A family party displayed and called for us, helpfully perching on some dead branches. The wonderfully rich orange throat of a female was very impressive.

At one point we heard a sharp yelp. We had disturbed two foxes which each dashed off in different directions. Some of us also saw three kangaroos.

Thanks David for leading this first walk of the year.

Susan Clark, Mornington

SHOREHAM FORESHORE RESERVE, SHOREHAM

Max Burrows: Sun 21 February

Species recorded:28

Twenty-seven members attended on a fine Sunday morning. We welcomed new member Ron and we set off for the beach. Unfortunately the birds were scarce with a Pacific Gull the main sighting as it winged its way passed the pines. There was evidence of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos, as under the pines scattered cone debris on the ground was the clue.

We headed back to the road and took the track to the caravan park, which was much more bird friendly. A Laughing Kookaburra eyed us off along the track and Grey Butcherbirds were calling from the adjacent woodlands. New birds for our area bird list were Australian King-Parrot and Rufous Fantail, the latter has been seen much more often this year. A large party of Striated Thornbills were feeding along the track and we spent some time observing these busy little birds.

After a circuit of the caravan park we headed back to the cars and bird call. We dispersed and some of us took the opportunity to lunch at Point Leo.

Max Burrows, Langwarrin

ARTHURS SEAT STATE PARK, ROSEBUD

Joan Peters: Wed 9 March

Species recorded:35

Seventeen people turned up on a humid, overcast and slightly damp morning. After the recent string of sunny, hot days, it was a relief. The slight drizzle was no problem.



White-eared Honeyeater and Eastern Yellow Robin at Baldrys.



Immature male Superb Fairy-wren, Arthurs Seat State Park.
Photos by Pam Hearn

We set off along residential streets, spotting Little Wattlebirds, Eastern and Crimson Rosellas, a Crested Pigeon, and many roosting and flying Welcome Swallows. As we entered the State Park, we heard many calls of Spotted Pardalotes, and saw three, one of whom chased off the third from its tree. Along the walk, we heard and saw White-eared and New Holland Honeyeaters, more Wattlebirds (Red and Little), Eastern Spinebills, Superb Fairy-wrens and White-browed Scrubwrens.

We came to McLaren Dam and saw Australian Wood Ducks, a swimming Purple Swamphen, Pacific Black Ducks, and a Grebe (probably an Australasian). Galahs, Rainbow Lorikeets and Straw-necked Ibis flew overhead. We also heard what was thought to be a White-throated Treecreeper with a strange one-note call. Magpies and thornbills made an appearance, we heard Silvereyes, with lots of Grey Fantails flitting about. Grey Shrike-thrush and Magpie-lark called.

Heading back out towards the streets, we had a close encounter with a female Golden Whistler. We encountered no raptors, which was disappointing. As we neared the carpark, the wind sprang up and it became a little wetter, though still really warm and humid.

After bird call of thirty-five species, we called it a day and went our separate ways, deeming it a bit too dismal to be parked for lunch. Thanks to Joan for a most enjoyable outing. It was a peaceful place to visit after the hot spell.

Pam Hearn, Mt Martha

LANGWARRIN FLORA & FAUNA RESERVE, LANGWARRIN

Max Burrows: Sun 20 March

Species recorded:30

There was a slight chill in the air as sixteen birdos gathered on a bright clear Sunday morning to see what birds were out and about at the Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve. Max, our leader gave an introduction, outlining the history of the reserve. We set off from the car park, just a few species spotted, Rainbow Lorikeets and a pair of Galahs flying overhead. The circuit Max had chosen took us down Centre Track, north over the sandy heath area along SEC track to the eastern boundary and back around to Centre Track and the car park. A gentle 2½ hour ramble. Over that time, the bird sightings came in clusters, so we spent quite some time at a few spots and logged mainly canopy species such as Striated Thornbill, both Striated and Spotted Pardalote, White-eared, Yellow-faced and White-naped Honeyeater, Red Wattlebird, Grey Shrike-thrush and Grey Butcherbird. Plenty of Grey Fantails were seen at regular intervals on the circuit.

Flurries of excitement were caused by a fleeting glimpse of a Bassian Thrush, the mystery silhouette that turned out to be a juvenile Red Wattlebird and three Tawny Frogmouths. They were perfectly camouflaged against the trunk of a gum. At first, everybody was looking the two "obvious" ones until some said "There's a third one above!" Mum, dad and junior!

Scrub birds were not much in evidence, just the odd Superb Fairy-wren, and a White-browed Scrubwren scolding in the bracken. In fact, we didn't see or hear any whistlers and not a single Brown Thornbill. Not too much in the sky either, a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and just a fleeting glimpse of what was probably a Brown Goshawk.

For me the highlight of the outing occurred at the lunch spot where we were entertained by around fifteen Striated and Spotted Pardalotes darting and diving into a small puddle of water in an old ornamental pond that was in the process of being unearthed by Parks Victoria. It was a very pleasant ramble and a big thanks to Max for leading the outing.

Larry Wakefield, Mt Martha

TOOTGAROOK WETLANDS (PRIVATE PROPERTY), BONEO

David Ap-Thomas: Wed 13 April

Species recorded:44

Access to the Tootgarook Wetlands was via Boneo Park Equestrian Centre and is not open to the general public. This meant that the Wednesday outing on 13 April was an opportunity not to be missed by many members of BirdLife Mornington Peninsula and visitors from several other BirdLife groups. The property comprises 800 acres with 500 acres being under a covenant to remain as swampland. It is the main component of an environmental overlay that was



Langwarrin frogmouth. No wonder they are so hard to spot.
Photo by Sandi Coathup



Dune Track, on the way to the next bird hotspot. Photo by Danny Vits

formed as part of the building of the Peninsula Link. The equestrian portion of the property includes extensive barns with exercise and training areas surrounded by well watered and manicured lawns. The barns were also home to a Nankeen Kestrel, Crested Pigeons and a pair of Eastern Rosellas. However, the main area of interest for the bird observers was the adjacent wetlands.

One of the first species to be observed was an obliging pair of Golden-headed Cisticola – a first-time sighting for several of the group. The walk progressed over open ground that had been mown. A pair of Black-shouldered Kites was busy on the edge of scrub feeding on a rat carcass. (Observation note on page 19). Other raptors seen in the distance included Wedge-tailed Eagles, Swamp Harrier and Brown Goshawk. Observed open grassland species of birds included Australian Magpie, Galah, Little Raven and Grey Butcherbird.

There was only a small area of open water but that was where Little Black and Little Pied Cormorants, White-faced Heron, Black-fronted Dotterel, Masked Lapwing, Welcome Swallow and Black Swans were observed. Willie Wagtails, Magpie-larks and the Australian as well as the Straw-necked Ibis were in the vicinity of the open water. Although a bird spotted in grass near Chinaman's Creek could not be positively identified, a Baillon's Crake was heard calling.

Tea tree scrub was the dominant cover once through the open grassland. Yellow-faced Honeyeaters were prevalent and other honeyeaters included Red and Little Wattlebirds, Crescent, New Holland and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater. The insect-eating Brown Thornbill and Grey Fantail were also identified, but there was no clear sighting of an Eastern Yellow Robin. Other species seen near or in the scrubland included a group of Silvereyes, a Grey Shrike-thrush, Superb Fairy-wrens and a White-browed Scrub-wren. The hoped-for sighting of the Southern Emu-wren did not materialize. However, a flock of Red-browed Finches were most obliging in providing a clear sighting for the photographers.

The list of 'reliable' introduced species included Common Starling, Common Blackbird, European Goldfinch, Common Myna, Spotted Dove and Eurasian Skylark. To achieve a total of forty-four species in the bird list was a satisfying outcome. The day's leader, David Ap-Thomas indicated that another visit could possibly be arranged later in the year. It would be great to see those Golden-headed Cisticola at their "dive-bombing best".

Jock Macmillan, Mount Martha

MORDIALLOC CREEK WETLANDS, BRAESIDE

Ray Pentland: Sun 17 April

Species recorded:

It was a beautiful sunny day when twenty-eight people gathered at the Mordialloc Creek Wetlands, Waterways Estate, for this outing. BirdLife Mornington Peninsula had, for a number of years, carried out regular surveys of this wetland for Melbourne Water and it was interesting to see how it has developed. The vegetation has grown considerably which is good for the wetlands but did make seeing the waterbirds more challenging.

An early arrival saw a group of Brown Quail along the path which is a good sign that the area is able to support a good variety of birds. Black Swans, Eurasian Coots and Purple Swampheens were quietly feeding in the water where we gathered. Little groups of Rainbow Lorikeets flew noisily overhead. As we continued our walk, strung out like brown's cows, some heard Golden-headed Cisticolas wheezing in the grass areas. Occasionally one would pop up to see who we were and disappear just as quickly.

Black-shouldered Kites demonstrated the art of hovering and in the distance a lone Wedge-tailed Eagle was being harassed by Magpies and Little Ravens. A Swamp Harrier also put in a brief appearance.

There were a number of Australasian Darters around, standing with wings outstretched to dry their feathers. Most were females and there was a suggestion that the males had gone to the footy as it was a Sunday afternoon. One darter was standing on a bridge structure with a fishing hook in its beak and line wrapped tightly round the beak, unable to eat. Wildlife carers were called and were attempting to catch the bird with a long-handled net. It was able to fly and didn't want to be caught. Two days later the people from AWARE, Tel: 0412433727 were still trying to catch the bird.

We successfully crossed over the creek at the Springvale



Nankeen Kestrel twitching the twitchers at Boneo Park Equestrian Centre.



Who saw the goshawk? Photos by Con Duyvestyn



Australasian Darter entangled in fishing line. Photo by Sue Brabender

Road bridge and walked back along the levee bank on the south side. Both White-necked and White-faced Herons were feeding along the bank. Flame Robins can be seen along the fences in winter but they presumably have not arrived from Tasmania yet as nothing was using the fence posts that day. Two foxes were out in the paddock in the open in broad daylight. Superb Fairy-wrens squeaked in the bushes in the paddock and White-plumed Honeyeaters called from the large gum trees.

A total of fifty species were recorded after a most enjoyable walk. Our thanks to Ray Pentland for leading the outing. Some had lunch sitting on the mown grass overlooking the wetland and watching the Eastern Great Egrets feeding. Very pleasant. As I drove out of the estate, the cows in the paddock across Springvale Road had a number of Cattle Egrets in attendance.

David Ap-Thomas, Mt Eliza

FOUR LITTLE EAGLES AT ETP

6 March 2016: Seventy-four bird species were logged of which thirty-six were wetland dependant, nine were raptors and twenty-nine were non-wetland dependant. Only six shorebird species were seen - the lowest for many months reflecting lack of suitable habitat in the operating section of the Plant.

Major highlights included an adult Wedge-tailed Eagle feeding a rabbit to a juvenile, an immature White-bellied Sea-Eagle, two Common Sandpipers and seven Double-banded Plovers. The latter have migrated from their New Zealand breeding grounds to spend the winter here.

Other observations of note were a hybrid Mallard/Pacific Black Duck, a Common Bronzewing and the diversity of raptors. Dusky Moorhens were seen on three water-bodies. The total absence of Black-winged Stilts and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers was a surprise. Some have moved to the external wetlands at Banyan and the adjacent paddock where Black-winged Stilts (25), Sharp-tailed Sandpipers (33), Pectoral Sandpipers (2) and Red-kneed Dotterels (2) were seen.



Little Eagle juvenile (dark morph) at the ETP. Photo by David Stabb

27 March 2016: Seventy-nine bird species were logged of which forty were wetland dependant, seven being shorebirds, eight were raptors and thirty-one were non-wetland dependant.

Major highlights included four Little Eagles, two of which we can expect to see around the Plant until next spring. Two Common Sandpipers are still present but most other Palearctic waders have departed for their breeding grounds. Land birds were in greater variety and more numerous than usual including twelve New Holland Honeyeaters, three Dusky Woodswallows and five Silvereyes. This was partly due to the abundance of flowering eucalypts on the Plant.

24 April 2016: Eighty bird species were logged of which thirty-three were wetland dependant, (only five shorebirds), eleven were raptors and thirty-six were non-wetland dependant. A rain event that resulted in a significant inflow to the Plant occurred on 21 April.

There were no major highlights but interesting observations included two White-necked Herons. Flame Robins and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters (three) have returned to spend the



Adult Red-capped Plover and juvenile Double-banded Plover on the Aeration Ponds at the ETP.



Little Grassbirds are more often heard than seen. March 27 was an exception; taking advantage of the pleasant weather several ventured out of the reedbeds to forage on the wet mud. Photos by Mike Carter



White-plumed Honeyeaters live all year round at the ETP. This one is immature. Photo by Alison Kuitert

winter here, while six Yellow-faced Honeyeaters were passing through on migration. A wandering Grey Shrike-thrush and three Eastern Rosellas were welcome occasional visitors.

Mike Carter, Mornington

ORIENTAL PRATINCOLES AT BANYAN WATERHOLE & ADJACENT Paddock

7 February 2016: Fifty-two species were recorded of which twenty-six are wetland-dependent or raptors. The bird population is well up from last month following the input of water into Banyan.

The highlight was an adult female White-winged Triller in the trees and shrubs along the fence-line at the top of the wet Paddock, which is the eastern boundary of the area we count. Although it has nested once, this species is normally only a rare visitor to the ETP. More mundane but still interesting were the at least twenty-six Yellow-rumped Thornbills that are resident in the open woodland areas around the Waterhole.

13 March 2016: Fifty-five species were recorded of which twenty-six are wetland-dependent or raptors. Highlights include two Little Lorikeets, the first time this species has been recorded on ETP land, twelve Musk Lorikeets and three Pectoral Sandpipers.

Both inlet and outlet sluice gates were open but there was no obvious flow in or out. The Rossiter Drain and channel into the Paddock were about 75% full but not flowing. The Paddock lagoons are drying and were about 80% full (still a single water-body) but surrounds were mostly dry and substrate was firm.

10 April 2016: Forty-eight species were recorded of which twenty-five are wetland-dependent or raptors.

A particularly exciting highlight was two Oriental Pratincoles on the Paddock adjacent the waterhole, a species that is rare in Victoria (in fact anywhere south of the tropics). This constitutes the first record for the ETP. This species spends the boreal winter in large numbers in northern WA. This 'pair' presumably made a wrong turn somewhere on their way back north to their breeding grounds in central Asia.

FIRST FLAME ROBIN FOR THE SEASON AT TURF FARM & WETLAND

7 February 2016: Thirteen bird species were logged (seven wetland dependant and raptors). Note wetland was dry but thirty-five Red-capped Plovers were widespread over the well-watered turf growing area.

13 March 2016: Ten bird species were logged (five wetland dependant and raptors). A quiet, boring count. The wetland was dry but water was lying in drainage channels from watering of turf growing areas.

10 April 2016: Sixteen bird species were logged (six wetland dependant and raptors). These included the first Flame Robin at the ETP for this winter-season, five Double-banded Plovers, twenty-three Red-capped Plovers and nine Red-necked Stints. The shorebirds were on the watered turf or in the drainage channels.

Mike Carter, Mornington



The Sharp-tailed Sandpipers have fattened-up and coloured-up in preparation for their migration to their northern Siberian breeding grounds. Although the foreground bird is a particularly fine example it still has a little way to go to complete its moult into full breeding plumage.



Oriental Pratincole, adult in breeding plumage, on the Banyan Paddock.
Photos by Mike Carter



White-winged Triller, adult female, with a bug it caught at Banyan.



Yellow-rumped Thornbill at Banyan. Photos by Alison Kuitert

Volunteering on Western Port beaches

RED-CAPPED PLOVER MONITORING

Why?

Our involvement with Red-capped Plovers this season came about as a by-product of trying to mentor Hooded Plover volunteers at Western Port. During a walk with Philippa Hoskin we found a very exposed Red-capped Plover nest adjacent to the Point Leo SLSC and felt the need to protect it.

Jon Fallaw, from the Phillip Island Nature Reserve has been requesting more monitoring of Hooded Plovers along the Western Port coast. There have been only random reports of sightings feeding back and they were most commonly Phillip Island birds. As a consequence, and in discussions with Val Ford, we put a request in the September 2015 *Mornington Peninsula Birdlife* newsletter for members to report their sightings to me.

We have also had requests to investigate bird and nest sightings reported to the BirdLife Beach-nesting Birds team by members of the public in the Western Port region. They have always been Red-capped Plover nests.

Mentoring

Many of the volunteers and rangers on the Western Port beaches are probably more interested in Red-capped Plovers than Hooded Plovers. It's understandable, as they are far more common. This year was the first Hooded Plover nest recorded inside the bay for a very long time so although significant, it is an uncommon event. It is impossible, while mentoring, to walk past and ignore Red-capped Plover nests that are so exposed and not offer some level of protection.

BirdLife are keen for more Red-capped Plover data. Although the most common of the shore-nesting birds, ironically, less is known about their behaviours and life-cycle than for the Hooded Plover.

Outcomes

Community awareness and involvement has been amazing. The Red-capped Plover on Western Port beaches has become the ambassadorial bird for both the Hooded Plover and migratory shorebirds.

We began in Point Leo with the support of Tony Walkington the local ranger, and were then invited by Peter Carroll, the ranger for Shoreham, to provide a similar service. The Balnarring ranger has become involved with a nest discovered and fenced by Andrew Browne which hatched a single chick. We regularly get emails and texts from the general public regarding chicks and nests.

Nest protection works brilliantly. The flight initiation distance for these nesting birds is extremely low and they will remain on the nest in the face of extreme disturbance. Even as I set up the fence they will be trying to get back onto the nest. The open chick fences are also working extremely well affording much needed refuge. There are even up to 200 Red-necked Stints making use of the protection at times.

So our limited results for 2015/2016; Shoreham/Pt Leo: 12 nests (all managed) 24 eggs, 15 chicks (2 refuges created), 5 fledglings. Balnarring: 1 nest (managed), 1 chick.

Where to from here?

We are desperately in need of more volunteers. My hope is that we can recruit more volunteers and train rangers and staff to take on more of the work. The rangers have been so



Female Red-capped Plover on a nest at Point Leo.



Rob Patrick explaining nest protection to beach users.



Red-capped Plovers, adult male and chick. Photos by Mark Lethlean

supportive but unfortunately spend most of their time during the breeding season managing the camping aspects of their reserves and have little time for much else. BirdLife BNB team is planning to run a joint workshop for volunteers and rangers prior to next breeding season.

There is a tremendous opportunity for keen observers to be part of the monitoring and data collection that is only just starting to gather momentum. It is quite exciting, as there is so much to learn about the behaviours and life cycle of this supposedly common but enigmatic shorebird.

So we invite people to register their interest at hploversmornpen@gmail.com. The breeding season is now over but the birds are still present, flocking on the beaches. Hopefully we will hold workshops this September/October.

Mark Lethlean

FIRST YEAR HIGHLIGHTS

Looking for an environmental conservation project, I joined BirdLife's Beach Nesting Bird (BNB) group as a volunteer early December last year. For me it fulfilled the attributes I was seeking in a conservation project in that it enabled me to pursue my healthy exercise regime of beach walking, the opportunity to learn more about the 'resident' Red-capped Plovers on my local Balnarring beach and finally to facilitate my, now four year old hobby, bird photography. Prior to my retirement, despite my professional background, I had no interest in birds or photography.

Activities on my local Balnarring beach quickly extended to include Somers beach and a weekly six kilometre and return walk to Sandy Point where I located a 'resident' pair of Phillip Island born Hooded Plover that during my observation time did not manage to successfully breed. Also as I travel frequently within Australia, I now include extended beach walks, with bird observations and photography, in my itinerary.

The highlights of my season's BNB activities include:

1. The location and management of a nesting (two eggs) Red-capped Plover pair (my first). This first observation of breeding activity on my local beach in recent history caused much interest and assistance from the local foreshore management and other locals. This beach is heavily traversed every morning for four hours by permitted horse riders (most being racing thoroughbreds in training) and walkers with dogs, many of the latter being illegally off lead. One chick successfully hatched before it disappeared at six days of age; cause unknown. Hopefully in future seasons we can build upon this small start to revive breeding on this beach to its former level.

2. On the observation of a juvenile Red-capped Plover (my first juvenile), flagged 'CO', at Sandy Point on 30 January 2016, Glenn Ehmke was able to ascertain that this bird was tagged by Dan Lees, a BNB Project Officer, at a Deakin research site at Cheetham, Point Cook.

Dan emailed the following information:

"I found the two egg nest on the 3/09/2015; the parents were both already flagged and confirmed as CP (female) and CA (male). The nest hatched sometime between 28/09/2015 and 29/09/2015, only one chick could be seen (the other was presumed perished) and was caught and banded (band number 59169 and confirmed as male through genetic analysis). It was radio-tracked and recaptured on the 27/10/2015 and flagged as CO. I continued to track CO until 3/11/2015 when it was 35 days old and capable of flight. After fledging was confirmed tracking was discontinued."

This was a great effort as this newly fledged bird had travelled some seventy kilometres from its Point Cook birthplace to Sandy Point, and the researchers were grateful for the feedback.

3. Again at Sandy Point in mid February, I observed a single Grey Plover in company with the pair of 'resident' Hooded Plover before it flew out to sea. This again was a first sighting for me but subsequently I have sighted another six of these plover on an April Mud Island trip. Thanks to Mark Lethlean for the assistance in confirming the identification.

4. On a late December trip to Bruny Island Tasmania, at



Red-capped Plover juvenile; banded at Cheetham wetland, photographed at Sandy Point.



Crested Terns at Sandy Point. Photos by Andrew Browne

- Adventure Bay I observed two pairs of Hooded Plover with six fledged juveniles and on an adjoining beach another pair with three fledged juveniles. This was very encouraging to see; a happy change from the poor fledgling numbers on our local Mornington Peninsula beaches. All birds were unbanded.

5. Revisiting Tasmania in early March, I walked fourteen, mainly east coast, beaches for a Hooded Plover count of seventy adults, thirty-four juveniles and one late season chick. Again no banded birds. Along with the Hooded Plover were many Red-capped Plover, Double-banded Plover, Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers, Red-necked Stints, Sanderlings and White-fronted Chats.

6. A more recent walk to Sandy Point on a low tide enabled, after a long commando crawl, the opportunity to photograph in close quarters feeding Crested Terns and juveniles. This was a bonus after the six kilometre and return walk to the point.

As you can see from the above, I've enjoyed my involvement as a BNB volunteer and have been able to combine it with my other interests. I look forward to my future ongoing BNB participation and a return of successful breeding activity on my local Balnarring beach. Thanks to the BNB team and especially Mark Lethlean and Glenn Ehmke for their advice and guidance: it is greatly appreciated.

Andrew Browne, Balnarring

BIRDS AND GLIDERS

All these photos were taken in the back garden of our house which backs onto the Frankston Nature Conservation Reserve (Maberley Crescent) and are just a small selection of birds and wildlife we see on a daily basis. We have also seen New Holland Honeyeaters, as well as Superb Fairy-wrens, Eastern Yellow Robins, Common Blackbirds (my favourite songbird and always reminds me of home), Laughing Kookaburras (which we feed by hand), Eastern Rosellas, Sulphur-Crested Cockatoos, Common Myna, Common Bronzewing and Crested Pigeons.

The Sugar Glider story

Since we moved to the house just over three years ago, we have been placing seed blocks and feeders out in the gum tree at the back of the house. We noticed quickly that the birds hadn't found it (obvious by the lack of birds on the feeders when we were there), but we did notice that the block and seed disappeared during the night.

I went out one night because the dog was going mad and spotted a large male Brushtail Possum happily hanging upside down chomping on the seed. We got used to this and often had to put the feeders and block back onto the hangers because he'd lift them up and drop them to the floor. I suspect he did this to save hanging on whilst feeding.

A couple of months ago I saw something small on the seed block. Initially I thought it was a Ringtail Possum, but it was too small. Next thing on my list was a rat of some sort, but when I got my glasses and a high intensity torch I realised the 'critter' was in fact a Sugar Glider.

Since that first sighting, we have found both this character and occasionally a mate hanging down to feed, or actually standing on the block. Obviously this doesn't affect the birds, other than they eat some of the block, but they are such a fantastic creature to have in the garden and we feel honoured that they feel safe and secure enough to come every night.

Our family of kookaburras

One of the main factors for buying our house was the close proximity to nature and the view onto the Reserve and bush land really sold the house. When we first moved in we could hear the kookaburra calling at various times of the day. As the other birds in the area found the free source of food we were supplying, we also noted that one or two kookaburras were landing in one or other of the gum trees and watching on the ground for food. Now it seemed that it was a bit unfair on such a wonderful bird, that they as meat eaters were being excluded from the picnic, so my wife and I decided to get some nice fresh mince from the fridge to try and encourage them to the garden.

The first few attempts to get them to come to a raised feeding area were unsuccessful, but with some persistence we were able to get them to come to the raised steel bowl and feed. We took this one stage further and actually had the male flying in from the tree and taking food directly from your fingers on the wing, a bit like feeding a falcon.

We noticed just over a year ago that the male and female were coming down a lot more than usual and we suspected they were trying to feed a brood of young. Sure enough we ended up helping to rear five young and regularly had all five babies and both adults in the trees, on the garden arch,



Crested Pigeon waiting to come down to feed.



Sugar Glider feeding on seed block.



Kookaburra family in the raised steel bowl. Photos by Gordon Munro

house roof, balcony and the bowl being fed. We still see the pair but the young have probably flown to their own areas.

Red-browed Finches

One of our favourite birds in the garden is the Red-browed Finch. I was used to seeing the various parrots and larger birds, but the first time I saw this beautiful little bird, I had to rush and get the binoculars and Google to find out what bird was visiting my seed tray.

Once the first finch had found the seed tray, it became obvious by the numbers that they had been chatting on where was best for free food. This resulted in the peak with us getting a flock of between forty and fifty finches in the trees waiting their turn to get onto two seeds blocks and two seed trays. The trays by this time had proper finch food, it was really funny to watch them squabble over who's turn it was next to get into the seed and feed. The numbers have dropped but we still see occasional small groups feeding.

Gordon Munro, Frankston South

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

These reports, some from Birdline Victoria, are not authenticated records. Researchers are advised to check with the observers before citing.

Please report your sightings, for example arrival and departure dates of migrants, to Val Ford: 5981 1445 or fordandred@gmail.com

Date	Species	Location	Comments	Observer
January	Jacky Winter (1)	Greens Bush		Keith Caldecott
2.2.16	Cape Barren Goose (~30)	Hastings/Tyabb	In a paddock on McKirdys Road.	Snez Plunkett
6.2.16	White-throated Needletail (1)	Bittern	Flew over my place in Birdwood Avenue.	Richard Hook
9.2.16	Shy Albatross (1)	Merricks Beach	Found washed up on the beach.	Rupert Steiner
12.2.16	Jacky Winter (1)	Coolart	In the Tea Trees outside the Minsmere hide.	Keith Caldecott
14.2.16	Cape Barren Goose (7)	Tyabb	Near the corner of McKirdys and Denham Roads.	Marianne Punshon
15.2.16	Wedge-tailed Eagle (1)	Mt Eliza	Near Nepean Highway and Oakbank Rd; circling relatively low.	Susan Clark
16.2.16	Grey Plover (1)	Sandy Point	On the beach at Sandy Point, Western Port.	Andrew Browne
18.2.16	Yellow-tail'd Black-Cock'too (18)	Mt Eliza	Three in our garden and fifteen next door or flying around.	David Ap-Thomas
18.2.16	Jacky Winter (1)	Langwarrin F & F Reserve	Seen whilst walking Long Crescent North track.	Keith Caldecott
19.2.16	White-bellied Sea-Eagle	Hastings	Flying low over Warringine coastal wetland.	Snez Plunkett
20.2.16	Lewin's Rail (2)	Tootgarook Swamp	Seen on Sanctuary park reserve survey.	Cameron Brown
22.2.16	White throated Nightjar (1)	Esplanade Mt Martha	Flew up from scrub at edge of cliff near Parer St at 19:50.	Kevin Conlan
February	Rainbow Lorikeet (100+)	Rye	Seem around Pasadena & Andrea streets for past 3 months.	Kees De Haan
29.2.16	Southern Emu-wren (11) Lewin's Rail (1)	Boneo	On Boneo Park (private property). Feeding n Chinamans Creek, Boneo Park.	Cameron Brown
1.3.16	Yellow-tail'd Black-Cock'too (10)	Frankston South	Seen in Frankston Nature Conservation Reserve.	Gordon Munro
3.3.16	Spotless Crake (1)	Hastings	Behind motel, under bridge at southern end of boardwalk.	S & S King
8.3.16	Eastern Curlew (10)	Rosebud West	Flew over Capel Sound foreshore from east to west then back.	Lois Greene
8.3.16	Bell Miner (1)	Frankston	Heard around the mid Sweetwater Creek area.	Lana Cumming
9.3.16	Yellow-tail'd Black-Cock'too (18)	Frankston	Flying over, with several birds resting in our large gum trees.	Lana Cumming
11.3.16	Australian King Parrot (1)	Rosebud	Feeding in a fig tree in Foam Street.	Imants Niedra
11.3.16	Blue-winged Parrot (3)	French Island	Mt Wellington Road; third sighting since 27 February.	Chris Chandler
12.3.16	Nankeen Night-Heron (1)	Rosebud West	Seen late morning at Village Glen Hub lake.	Val Ford
13.3.16	White-throated Needletail (30)	Rosebud West	Flying in large circuits over The Village Glen.	Val Ford
13.3.16	Cape Barren Goose (2)	Tyabb Air Show	Flying along the runway to the pleasure of all the spectators!	S & S King
19.3.16	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike (23)	Tootgarook	Recorded on Sanctuary park reserve survey.	Cameron Brown
25.3.16	Bassian Thrush (1)	The Briars, Mt Martha	Near the W3 benchseat on Woodland Walk.	Sue Brabender
27.3.16	Rose-ringed Parakeet (1)	Mornington	Seen at our bird feeder, most likely an escapee.	Neil Shelley
29.3.16	Rufous Fantail (1)	Mornington	Seen in low, thick foliage around our property over Easter.	Neil Shelley
3.4.16	Flame Robin (1,m)	Rosebud West	On Village Glen golf course.	Ian Miles
7.4.16	Yellow Thornbill (8)	Blairgowrie	Enjoying our bird bath; first time seen here.	Rosalba Catena
8.4.16	White-bellied Sea-Eagle (1)	Tootgarook Swamp	Flying over Browns Road near Nepean County Club.	Val Ford et al
9.4.16	Australasian Darter (1)	The Briars, Mt Martha	At the pond beside Chechingurk bird hide	Kevin Conlan
10.4.16	Oriental Pratincole (2)	ETP, Bangholme	On the Paddock adjacent Banyan waterhole.	Mike Carter
15.4.16	Powerful Owl (1)	Langwarrin F & F Reserve		Keith Caldecott
16.4.16	Yellow-tail'd Black-Cock'too (20)	Blairgowrie	Landed in a pine tree in Browns Road.	Val Ford
18.4.16	Wedge-tailed Eagle (1)	Langwarrin F & F Reserve	Circling low over woodland south of Central track.	Danny Vits
25.4.16	Crested Shrike-tit (2,m)	Pines Flora & Fauna Res	Two males feeding and calling on south side of Rosella track.	James Peake
29.4.16	Yellow-tail'd Black-Cock'too (50)	Seaford	Flying over Peninsula Link/Frankston Dandenong Road.	Roger Skipsey
7.5.16	Fan-tailed Cuckoo (1) Crested Shrike-tit	Kings Waterfall circuit, Arthurs Seat SP	Part of a large, species and overall number, mixed foraging flock. The biggest I have ever seen/heard.	Val Ford

Visiting my garden

Rose-ringed Parakeet

Even though we have a bird feeder hanging from our back balcony, which overlooks Tanti Creek, I rarely put seed in it. The only time of the year I do so on a regular basis is when the Galahs are nesting in the hollow of a large eucalypt in our backyard.

However for some reason I did put some seed in the feeder over Easter and was interested to see an unusual parrot fly away from it one morning. I didn't get a good look at the bird, but it seemed about the same size as a Rainbow Lorikeet only pale green all over. Fortunately the bird stayed in the area and visited the feeder on several occasions, which allowed me to get some reasonable photos of it.

It turned out to be a Rose-ringed Parakeet, which are considered pest species nationally, and was quite tame and could be approached closely. It was most likely an escapee.

Rufous Fantail

When we moved to Mornington in mid 2013, very few small bush birds frequented our new property, even though we backed onto Tanti Creek and there was a reasonable amount of bush in the area. This was largely because the previous owners had two cats, as did one of our new neighbours, who unfortunately let their cats roam well away from their property.

It took a while, but we finally convinced these neighbours of the need to contain their cats.

Now we regularly get mixed feeding flocks of small bush birds passing through our property several times a day. These flocks usually consist of Brown Thornbills, White-browed Scrubwrens and Grey Fantails, plus Eastern Spinebills in season. Apart from their foraging, they also utilise our bird baths, usually first thing in the morning.

Over Easter, we were pleasantly surprised to see a Rufous Fantail in the garden on the Saturday, Monday and Tuesday. There was only a single bird and it didn't stay long, so we suspect it had just "dropped in" on its way north. Interestingly, we didn't notice any Grey Fantails in the garden while it was here.

Neil Shelley, Mornington

Birding at The Village Glen

Exuberant New Holland Honeyeaters

In mid-February a resident witnessed "an amazing, entertaining event! Twice a day for four days our back garden was invaded by a large exuberant flock of adult and juvenile New Holland Honeyeaters. We estimated there were at least fifty in the flock. They were exceptionally animated, chasing each other and squabbling noisily." I believe this is an example of the way this season's "youngsters" join up with older birds to form a group before, perhaps, dispersing northwards for autumn and winter.

I experienced something similar over my garden - a small group of adult and juvenile Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes (which are neither cuckoos nor shrikes!) hovered in a stiff south-westerly breeze while on the lookout for small insects, caterpillars etc. which they snatched from nearby ti-trees.



Rose-ringed Parakeet. Photo by Neil Shelley

Nankeen Night-Heron and needletails

On the March walk the morning's best sighting was of a Nankeen Night-Heron flushed along Chinamans Creek. We tried to follow its flight but lost sight of it near villa 255. As the name suggests this is mainly a "bird of the night", hunting for tasty morsels along creek edges, rivers, swamps. The name derives from the rich rufous colour of its back, the colour of nankeen, a brownish cotton cloth imported from China (Nanking) during the gold-mining era.

On 13 March approximately thirty White-throated Needleetails were sighted over the village. White-throated Needleetails are Australia's largest swift and are among the fastest flying birds in the world. They breed in northern Asia and come south for our summer, roaming the skies above eastern Australia, hawking for insects. It was always thought that they never set foot on the ground while here but fed and slept on the wing. It has now been observed that birds will roost in trees, and radio-tracking has since confirmed that this is a regular activity. They are most often seen just before a storm front during humid, thundery weather.

With the recent addition of the needleetails and King Parrot, the village list has climbed to ninety-seven species.

Crippling views of Spotless Crake

Fine autumn weather brought out both birders and birds for our walk on 13 April. Twenty-one residents enjoyed thirty-seven species during the morning. Good sightings were obtained from Elizabeth Avenue of three raptors over dried up Tootgarook Swamp: Black-shouldered Kite, Swamp Harrier and Nankeen Kestrel.

From the path alongside the southern section of Chinamans Creek we enjoyed good views of Golden-headed Cisticolas sitting atop gently swaying reeds in full sun. An Eastern Yellow Robin - my favourite bird of eastern Australia - was also admired. At the golf course lower swampy area we were treated to crippling views of Spotless Crake pottering about on the mud among the reeds in the sun; it was agreed that this was "the bird of the day"!

A Flame Robin was seen on the golf course in early April. Flame Robins over-winter on farmlands and open woodlands, often in small groups, so keep an eye open for splashes of bright orange (the male) during the next few months.

Celia Browne, Rosebud West

Distinguishing features

Flame Robin

Distinguished from Scarlet Robin by absence of rufous wash on breast and because the dual white spots at base of its bill are very tiny. Its sex is unknown as it is in its first year of life (age denoted by the very pointed white-tipped, tail feathers). This is the first seen on the ETP this autumn and it will spend the winter in the lowlands having been born either in the Australian Alps or in Tasmania.

Pectoral and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers

These very similar species are easily confused especially when a Pectoral Sandpiper is poorly marked as is this individual. Usually the breast streaking is a little bolder, the base to the bill paler and the legs more yellow or orange rather than green. The lack of streaking on the lateral undertail coverts and flanks, clearly visible in the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper to its right, are the diagnostic character here. The third of this species present today (13 March) was in classical plumage. Both species breed in Siberia. The Sharp-tailed will commence its migration within the next week or two but the Pectorals may stay another month or more.

Mike Carter, Mornington

Large-billed Scrubwrens at Blairgowrie?

At 5pm on 11 February 2016 a group of eight Large-billed Scrubwrens used our birdbath for approximately twenty minutes. Our birdbath is only ten metres from our kitchen window and I had plenty of time to study them through my binoculars. The bath is next to a leafy Sea Box shrub and they were diving in and out of the bath, staying only for a few moments. It seemed there were about twelve birds but we only saw five or six at a time and so put the total at eight birds.

There was not a skerrick of white on the head or the rest of the body. The bath was not in sunlight and I thought the eye was black at first (definitely not yellow) but I guess it was just dark red. Their legs were definitely pink not grey and their bodies and beaks were definitely bigger than a thornbill. When the birds had gone I dug out Pizzey & Knight and the only thing they could have been was Large-billed Scrubwrens. Wow!! Updating the record for 'Birds seen from our block' at Blairgowrie they are number sixty-four and the only new bird for two years.

P.S. Mike Carter was kind enough to comment on this observation and raised doubts that they could be Large-billed Scrubwrens as they are usually a sedentary species. If only I had a camera and knew how to use one!

Peter Cockram, Blairgowrie

Fairy Prion in my freezer

My daughter was watching this "cute little bird" close to the shore at Point Leo when a big bird she thinks was a Pacific Gull dropped on it and flew off (because of their close proximity). So she waded into the water to retrieve the body and promptly sent me an SMS with a photo attached and took the body home to put it in her freezer. I was very interested and picked up the bird on Sunday evening but I



Flame Robin at ETP Turf Farm.



Pectoral Sandpipers (2) and a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (the right-hand bird) at the Banyan Paddock on 13 March. Photos by Mike Carter



Fairy Prion. Photo by Noel Knight

was vague on identifying it so thought I would take more photos and seek professional help. Its identity as a Fairy Prion was confirmed by Mike Carter.

It has been passed on to Neil Shelley for BirdLife Australia's bird collection.

Noel Knight, Dromana

Kookaburras far from home

Little did I think that kookaburras would fly about 400 metres across open ground every day to support their brood of young in their dark nest, but this was the lot of a pair of Blue-winged Kookaburras in north-west Australia. They had chosen to nest inside a large termite mound on Roebuck Plains Station behind the Broome Bird Observatory, well away from the Pindan scrub surrounding the plains.

While I didn't see an adult anywhere near the nest, I watched the progress of the remaining two youngsters in the latter stages of their development over a week in late December. At least three young hatched, but when I was shown the nest there only two left and they were probably in their last days within the nest when I last saw them. While I don't know for sure, the loss of the third nestling may have been due to sibling aggression that is common in kookaburras.

How did the adults find the termite mound out there with the suitable hole for a nest? Or did they make the hole themselves from scratch so to speak? David Hollands notes in his 1999 book *'Kingfishers and Kookaburras: Jewels of the Australian Bush'* that they often make their own nest, but to my surprise, to his knowledge all the termite mounds he had seen nests in were in trees – never on the ground. This may have been due to him working mainly in Queensland for nests and the ground mounds may not have had the massive size of those further west. The nesting mound I saw was probably two and a half metres high. HANZAB Vol 4 reported that while they mostly nest in natural tree hollows, they also excavate their own nests in termite mounds.

While superficially similar to our common Laughing Kookaburra, the pale eyes give a completely different, almost spooky look to the Blue-winged species. They are very vocal birds, but I found them difficult to approach, even though there was a family around the Broome Bird Observatory where I was staying as caretaker for the summer. It took me many days of trying to get within 'shooting range' of my camera before I could get a few snaps of them. David Hollands noted that this is a consistent trait of this species so I didn't feel so bad after I read that.

Contrary to this experience was one I had in the Northern Territory five years earlier when one came down almost beside me to catch a mole cricket. Admittedly, this was in a camp ground so they may eventually habituate given the right conditions. However, I understand this was an immature bird, recognised by its brown rather than white iris and it may be that they become more cautious with age.

They are striking birds and I never get tired of watching them when I get the chance.

Rog Standen, Mt Eliza



A Blue-winged Kookaburra nest in the top of an isolated termite mound.



Adult Blue-winged Kookaburra in full, raucous voice.



Juvenile Blue-winged Kookaburra with a mole cricket.
Photos by Rog Standen

Shy Albatross on Merricks Beach

I found a bird, later identified as a Shy Albatross washed on Merricks beach on the morning of 9 February.

An autopsy was performed and it seems the bird had no food in its stomach and was underweight. It was not banded.

Rupert Steiner, Balnarring Beach



Shy Albatross on Merricks Beach. Photo by Rupert Steiner

Black-shouldered Kites at Tootgarook

During our April outing at Tootgarook Wetlands we recorded a number of sightings of a pair of Black-shouldered Kites, firstly in an aerial display and subsequently roosting in a tree and on the remains of an old windmill.

Whilst we were watching, one of the pair descended from the windmill to the ground, or rather, to a mound at the back of the field we were in. As we watched it appeared that this bird was in the act of devouring some prey, so all binoculars were focused on this bird and whatever it was consuming. At the time, all we could agree on was that it was a black, furry animal and the consensus was that it was probably a rat.

When I loaded my pictures of the event onto my computer I discovered the truth was far from our field interpretation. The picture shows a nest built on a mound of stable straw and manure, and in the nest is a single, black, fluffy chick, which was being fed by the adult bird. While all this was happening the mate moved from the trees behind and took up an observation position on the windmill, keeping a close eye on the large flock of twitchers in case they should stray too close. A pity we did not realise the true situation at the time.

Con Duyvestyn, Mornington



Black-shouldered Kite on nest with chick. Photo by Con Duyvestyn

Bassian Thrush at The Briars

When walking in The Briars Wildlife Sanctuary on 24 March I spotted a Bassian Thrush on the Woodland Walk near the W3 benchseat. This is only the second sighting I have had of a Bassian Thrush in the Sanctuary in eleven years of working at The Briars.

I also watched as a Pied Currawong searched amongst dead leaves hanging in a Eucalypt tree, eventually pulling out a small nest which looked like a Mistletoebird nest. I have seen Currawongs, Pied and Grey, several times now at The Briars but only from October last year.

Sue Brabender, Mornington



Bassian Thrush at The Briars. Photo by Sue Brabender

Raptor with broken neck

On 14 March 2016 whilst working in our sheep paddock at Main Ridge with my son he investigated a pile of feathers of a bird with a broken neck. Reference to Pizzey sadly confirmed the barred rufous and white almost scalloped feathers on the underparts to be of a juvenile Brown Goshawk or Collared Sparrowhawk. A positive outcome is the communication with the grandkids and learning about raptors.

Jill Phillips, Main Ridge



Raptor with broken neck. Photo by Jill Phillips

Bird remains on Blairgowrie beach

Walking Blairgowrie bayside beach close to the Yacht Squadron early morning on 14 February, we came across the remains of at least six small birds in a 50 metre stretch.

They appear to have been killed/eaten overnight by a fox or some such creature. Virtually the only remains were the wings and legs although one head also remained. Each wing measured approximately 15cm, legs very thin; a relatively small bird about half the size of a seagull.

Rob Varney, Sorrento



Bird remains on Blairgowrie beach. Photo by Rob Varney

Observations

Hooded Plover feeding on the Mornington Peninsula

Hooded Plovers are omnivorous with a diet that is said to consist of polychaetes, molluscs, crustaceans, insects, turions (type of bud) and seeds. I often watch and photograph adults and chicks darting across sand or on rock platforms pecking at invisible morsels.

For the first time, this year, St Andrews had five chicks fledge and so there was ample opportunity to watch the varying feeding strategies. We noticed that many of the younger chicks seemed content to feed high on the beach even when the shoreline was free of traffic.

Even while watching and photographing their busy strategy of run-stop-peck we still couldn't find their target diet. We assumed an amphipod although they fed off the sand between the seaweed wrack.

As the chicks grew they ventured more and more onto the rocky platforms. It is a dangerous strategy, as they can get isolated by tides if beach traffic blocks escape routes. But the rewards obviously outweigh the risks. Yesterday I managed to watch the newly fledged chick at Moana scouring the wet sand. I watched him/her devour a dead centipede and dead bee. I guess that makes them a scavenger.

I also watched the feeding strategy of the older fledged chicks at Miami feeding in one to two centimetres of water on the rock platform. Their strategy was very similar to that of an egret- head on side, studying their prey beneath the water and then, on occasions, grabbing food with their head totally immersed.

I have recently had the opportunity of comparing the rocky platforms within the Point Nepean National Park where there is little human interference. The contrast with our denuded rocky platforms at St Andrews is an important reminder that rock walking and poaching maybe destroying this valuable food reserve.

Not only for Hooded Plovers but a myriad of shorebirds. This year alone we have noted Sooty and Pied Oystercatchers, Double-banded Plovers, Silver, Kelp, and Pacific Gulls, White-faced Herons, Masked Lapwings, Common Starlings, Willie Wagtails, Welcome Swallows, Ruddy Turnstones and even an Australasian Pipit feeding from this valuable resource.

Mark Lethlean, Red Hill

If you would like to know more about Hooded Plovers and/or assist with monitoring activities contact Friends of the Hooded Plover hploversmornpen@gmail.com



Adult Hooded Plover feeding on turions.



Juvenile feeding with head immersed.



Juvenile devouring a dead bee. Photos by Mark Lethlean

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