

# Mornington Peninsula Birdlife



Volume 5 Number 3 September 2016



Australasian Darter (female) and Australasian Bittern, photographed at ETP Boggy Creek wetland by David Stabb

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The cold weather has certainly been evident this winter and it is good to see attendances at our outings are still holding up. We had a successful Coolart event again this year and thanks to Roger for a very interesting talk. What Bird is That at The Briars is coming up in October and we require our members to get behind the committee and provide the necessary manpower to deliver a quality event for BirdLife's image in the community.

Our new secretary Denis and treasurer Penny have settled into the committee very nicely and we must thank Ray our outgoing secretary/treasurer for his outstanding contribution to our branch. We have an outing to the WTP in November, as this is a car pool event we need members to enrol prior to the day

## COMMITTEE NOTES

The committee would like to thank Mr Baillieu Myer AC for his generous support of the branch; it will contribute to the welfare of our beautiful birdlife. The new committee formed for the first time in June and we welcomed Penny and Denis to the fold. We donated \$200 to the Schools Environment Week committee for their ongoing commitment to the

Peninsula's primary schools environmental education.

We recently received support for our newsletter from the Mornington and Flinders District Lions clubs, and as the newsletter is our primary contact with all branch members this was a great fillip. We have been approached by the Wildlife Art Society of Australasia inviting our branch to participate in an art show in early 2017, more later on this event. We now have our own data projector.

**Max Burrows**, President

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## AGM

### At The Briars Mt Martha 11 May 2016

On a cold and very windy morning about a dozen members prepared for the usual pre-meeting outing only to be advised that the Wildlife Sanctuary was closed due to the expected high winds. A different route was then decided upon and we headed west along Balcombe Creek in the direction of the Balcombe Estuary. At a footbridge across the creek we headed north following an uphill track along Harraps Creek, which runs along the Wildlife Sanctuary western boundary. Just prior to reaching Craigie Road we were all in agreement to return for a warm beverage at the Visitors Centre. Even the birds were absent and we barely managed fourteen species; most were the usual suspects.

The BirdLife Mornington Peninsula AGM was held after a warm morning tea and a general catch up. The meeting commenced with a welcome to David Reid BirdLife Australia board member and Distinguished Service Award recipients Joan Peters and Val Ford and BirdLife Australia Life Member Geoff Deason after which the business of the day was conducted.

The speaker for the meeting was Euan Moore who spoke to us about BirdLife's IBAs (Important Bird Areas) and the need to protect these areas that are vital to the existence of some of our at risk species. On the Mornington Peninsula we have two of these IBAs, the water body at Devilbend and the Western Port area. The former has a large population of Blue-billed Ducks these are threatened by a proposal for canoe fishing. We thanked Euan for a most informative session and the assembled members warmly applauded him.

**Danny Vits and Max Burrows**

### Presidents report 2016

Your committee has worked harmoniously throughout the year to achieve our goals, as set out in the annual plan, we have worked constructively with all our people to enhance the understanding of our wonderful bird life.

Our outings program has seen over 500 members attend these walks in 2015 the first time we have reached this milestone. I thank the sub-committee for their planning and expertise in achieving this outcome. Our annual What Bird is That was held and was again well attended with many members of the general public learning about birdwatching and able to chat with some of our experts. The Coolart talk in July by John Barkla was a highlight whetting the appetite for some Nullarbor exploring. Unfortunately our Christmas outing was cancelled due to weather conditions, better luck next year.

Once again our flagship newsletter exceeded all expectations and provided the branch with a genuine focus for birds in the community. Editor Val Ford continues to produce a publication that we are all proud of, thanks Val. Val received the BirdLife Distinguished Service Award at the BirdLife Australia AGM for her extensive contribution to the BirdLife organisation. We were successful in obtaining sponsorship for the printing of the newsletter thanks to Bendigo Bank, Mornington Lions Club and the Flinders Lions Club as well as a sausage sizzle at Mornington Bunnings.

I would like to thank all committee members and those members working off committee for their selfless dedication to making this branch function in the interest of all members and most importantly for the bird life, particularly on the peninsula.

#### Education

The education team participated in many school talks, these included Balnarring, Penbank, Somers, Walkers Road Pre-school, Mt Martha and a number of garden clubs. A big thank you to Pam, Susan and Stuart for their work during the year. As previously mentioned What Bird is That provided us with an opportunity to educate the public on bird matters. Schools Environment Week participation saw us talk to primary schools from across the peninsula. We organised and taught at U3A courses at Mornington and Rosebud, this also is a good medium for signing new members. We now have our own overhead projector to assist our education efforts.

#### Conservation

Roger our conservation and IBA officer has overseen the conservation work of the branch. The main focus for us this year has been the proposal to allow canoes in the Devilbend Reserve and Roger has been monitoring the large numbers of Blue-billed Ducks to provide feedback to DWELP who are investigating the issue. An issue with Main Ridge Flora and Fauna Reserve was also on our agenda. We took a lead role in the Mornington Peninsula Powerful Owl project monitoring the owl's presence in some of the shires reserves and this is an ongoing project. Some of our members are active in the Hooded Plover beach project run by BirdLife National Office and the Friends of the Hooded Plover group. We conducted ongoing surveys at Sunshine Reserve, Balcombe Estuary, Tootgarook Wetlands and Elgee Park.

#### General comments

Sadly we lost one of our stalwart members Barbara Beeson this year Barbara was an ex-committee member and well loved.

Finally I would like to thank Ray Pentland who is stepping down from the secretary/treasurer position after eight years. Ray has been most efficient and provided me with wholehearted support to which I thank him greatly. He will be missed.

#### Max Burrows

### Committee

President/communications/occupational health and safety:  
Max Burrows  
Secretary/membership/e-mail receiver: Denis Goss  
Treasurer: Penny Gillespie  
Education: Pam Hearn, Susan Clark  
Conservation/IBAs: Roger Richards  
Monitoring: David Ap-Thomas  
Publicity: Danny Vits  
Data Base: Rab Siddhi  
Sponsorship/marketing: John Rawlins

### Off committee

Editor newsletter: Val Ford  
Web Master: Neil Shelley

## MEMBER PROFILE

### Elaine Macmillan

#### Starting out

My first birding experience was at primary school in New Zealand when a class of year three went into the patch of native bush adjoining the school grounds to identify trees such as rimu and puriri. If we were all very quiet, thirty-eight of us, we would hear the tuis and the bell bird's call.

Fast forward fifty to when Jock and I moved to Werribee. Jock and I regularly walked along the Werribee River where one of the first birds he pointed out was the Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike. Very impressive. I joined the BOCA group Werribee Wagtails lead by Shirley Cameron and had a great introduction to Australian birds. The group then was of only about a dozen enthusiastic people who were generous with the help they gave to a novice.

Seven years ago, after Jock retired we moved to Mount Martha, where the maritime climate is more benign. Max Burrows welcomed us both to the Mornington Peninsula branch of BOCA (now BirdLife).

#### My favourite birding destination

The Western Treatment Plant. My most memorable birding moment was when the scopes were set up on the edge of Paradise Road Lagoon. Under Gilbert Pickersgill's instructions I stepped up to his scope: I was completely unprepared and quite blown away by the sight of a group of avocets wading and feeding in the distant shallows. The stylised curve of the beak, the elegant legs and the copper coloured plumage were incredibly beautiful.

In the weekends, Jock and I would both go to a number of birding spots. Favourites were: Cobbledicks Ford, Pinkerton Forest, Anakie Gorge and Newport Quarry.

#### My favourite peninsula birding spot

Is at The Briars; watching the pretty little Superb Fairy-wrens, Grey Fantails, White-browed Scrubwrens and Eastern Yellow Robins is just magic. A visit is not complete without going to the hide to watch the Australasian Grebes diving.

Other highlights on the peninsula have been:  
Watching the Spotted Pardalotes build a burrow/nest in a dry wall off our patio;  
Observing the Rufous Fantail who obligingly put on a display while we all admired him in Greens Bush;  
Getting a clear view of a Rufous or Golden Whistler at Baldry's Crossing;  
Spotting the silhouette of a Crested Shrike-tit at the top of a tree at The Briars.

#### Other memorable sightings

Two years ago while holidaying in the Atherton Tablelands we looked down on the Sarus Cranes at Bromfield's Swamp, watching them perform a little dance as they landed.

Back to Werribee days: watching the acrobatics of the Golden-headed Cisticola was a special treat at WTP; on Lollypop Creek where we lived, flocks of Red-rumped Parrots were frequently seen as were the large numbers of White-plumed Honeyeaters playing chasey amongst the old river red gums.



#### Birding ambitions

Rebooking the Kimberley Cruise and Broome holiday which we cancelled last July when I had a tendon problem. Perhaps I could look for more powerful binoculars.

### 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 December edition: 1 November 2016**  
Earlier articles appreciated.

### THANK YOU FLINDERS DISTRICT LIONS CLUB

The Committee of BirdLife Mornington Peninsula wishes to extend its grateful thanks to the Flinders District Lions Club for its support. This most generous donation will assist in the continuation of the hard copy of the Newsletter and will be of considerable benefit to so many of the Branch's members.



### Contacting BirdLife Mornington Peninsula

President Max Burrows; 9789 0224  
21 Moorhen Cres, Carrum Downs, Vic 3201

[mornington@birdlife.org.au](mailto:mornington@birdlife.org.au)

[www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-mornington-peninsula](http://www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-mornington-peninsula)

## Eagle soars back to find family

Once reunited with his parents, the young wedge-tailed eagle released at Bittern a week ago on Monday is going to find it hard to explain his absence.

The bird spent three days with wildlife carer Jennie Bryant, which included being checked by a vet, being taken to Healesville and being fed meals on lean meat and vitamins.

After being given the all clear for take-off, the young wedge-tail was released back into the wild on Monday close to where he was found and where Ms Bryant believes his farsighted parents will soon welcome him home.

Ms Bryant was called to the stricken bird on Friday by some people who spotted it walking on a road. She was able to catch it when it became tangled in a tree by throwing a towel over its head.

Once back at Ms Bryant's Koala Rescue at Tyabb, the wedge-tail was assessed, fed and then taken to visit the vet and Healesville. Ms Bryant said it appeared the bird had only recently left the nest and was unable to fend for itself.

The bird appeared healthy besides being underweight and having a small smear of blood on one wing. "I fed him up a bit, but he didn't seem to like rabbits or duck, which is something he'll learn from his parents," she said.

**Keith Platt**, Southern Peninsula News, 1 December 2015

## Fauna box monitoring

Balcombe Estuary Reserves Group volunteers, working with Naturelinks had a glimpse of settled tiny bats and sugar gliders during a fauna box monitoring workshop on May 10.

Bats, sugar gliders and a number of bird species depend on the hollows in old growth trees to roost and breed. With few such trees remaining around Mt Martha, fauna boxes provide an important alternative for these nocturnal creatures. Monitoring also involves recording the condition of each box and any maintenance requirements.

Dale Westwood and Ben Hallpike from Naturelinks used a camera and light on a telescopic pole to inspect the boxes and data was uploaded immediately to a Shire database. The shadowy images recorded showed the folded wings of tiny bats as they hung upside down from the roughened interior of their box. "We found one very restless bat which stuck its little foot out the bottom of the box" said Bronwyn Street, one of the workshop participants.

**Peninsula Speaks, Autumn Edition, 2016**

## Edithvale birdhide is on the mend

The Friends of Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands Inc (FESWI) committee would like to give members and the public the opportunity to sponsor the bird hide and be acknowledged for donations of \$100 to the restoration fund.

We are talking to some community artists to commission an honour board with wetland bird designs. Each sponsor will have their name printed on a bird on the board, which will be mounted inside the hide. The first public opening will be on 7 August 2016.



Stretching the wings after release into the wild. Photo by Gary Sissons



Camera has light on end to illuminate the inside of the box.

Photo by Pam Hearn



Restoring the FESWI bird hide.

If you would like to donate \$100 to the restoration fund please deposit into the Bendigo Bank. When donating to this fund directly to the Bendigo Bank or via internet transfer please note the following. Payee: FESWI Bird Hide. BSB 633000 Account No 155997141. Description box: your name

For more information about Friends of Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands: <http://www.edithvale-seaford-wetlands.org/>

**Jacqui Sheppard**, FESWI member

## Bittern with satellite tracker

On 29 May Jess Durrant was checking our wildlife cameras on the Chinamans Creek Drain. The cameras were monitoring short finned eels; the rains have returned (thankfully) to the Tootgarook Swamp and the eels are spreading out.

While out in the swamp Jess managed to flush three Australasian Bitterns on private land. One of the birds (dark) had a lump or hump on its back and looked bigger than the male (dark) and much bigger than the other most likely female (lighter).

Later in the day I managed to photograph the bird that has a satellite tracker and lovely leg bracelet attached.

**Cameron Brown**, President of Friends of Tootgarook Wetland Reserves



Coly-Lion at Tootgarook Swamp, 395 km from his Coleambally rice crop breeding territory. Photo by Cameron Brown

## Tootgarook Bittern is Coly-Lion

The mystery bittern at Tootgarook Swamp has been revealed. It's Coly-Lion! It was a little disappointing not to relocate the legendary Robbie but it means that four of our first five bitterns departed the Riverina at the end of the rice season. Three of those headed south into Victoria.

Here he is, photographed just over a week ago. The light blue colour band confirmed his identity. We had been watching Coly-Lion at his breeding territory since January but lost contact with him about six weeks earlier when the transmitter stopped working, so it's absolutely fantastic to see him alive and well, 395 km from his Coleambally rice crop. When the technology fails, there's always eagle-eyed birdwatchers. This is where a mature, breeding male goes for winter: Tootgarook Swamp, south of Melbourne.

**Bitterns in Rice project website, June 13 2016**

## Thoughts on Devilbend Reservoir

Never lose track of the main game.

Brian Cuming always likes to remind us of our vision for Devilbend Natural Features Reserve: To create a world class conservation reserve for future generations.

There is a limit to what we can expect of a reserve that is just over 1000 hectares in size. But bear in mind that the Devilbend Reservoir is one of Australia's internationally recognised Important Bird Areas (IBAs) known to support key bird species in this case the ever wary Blue-billed Duck.

In summer Blue-billed Ducks are secretive and seldom seen but in winter they congregate in rafts of up to about 300 birds on the Reservoir. They are completely aquatic and swim and dive expertly, never coming on land.

We must be vigilant and aware that IBAs can lose their values if the threats to them are not addressed or they become lower priorities for conservation if they no longer maintain the criteria for which they have been selected. Thus protecting the habitat values of Devilbend Reservoir is vital.

We are yet to see the report from researchers from Arthur Rylah Institute who have written a Flight Initiation Distance Report for this species based on a few short visits to the Reservoir in 2015.



Four of our first five bitterns made big movements after rice harvest, departing the NSW Riverina. Image from Bitterns in Rice project website

Whatever conclusions this report may hold, it would be a travesty to use them as justification of boating of any description on the reservoir, which provides habitat for nearly 50 other important waterbird species and others dependent on these deep permanent wetland values not found elsewhere on the Peninsula and in fact quite rare these days in Victoria.

I recently met up with former Parks Victoria Chief Ranger Bob Brinkman and thought back to the enthusiasm of the Community Workshop in late in 2007 when about 30 interested groups worked on a strategic program using landscape ecology, adaptive management, intergenerational equity and the precautionary principle as our guiding principles to achieve our goals. The goals to reach our vision required building regional links, establishing research projects, conducting education and working together to make it happen.

We must now follow and monitor the progress of the Bay to Bay Biolink restoration, work together with groups such as Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association (SPIFFA) and bring in a younger group of people to continue the work of the Devilbend Foundation. It is only by doing this that the community's vision will be achieved.

**Roger Richards**, President Devilbend Foundation Inc  
Devilbend Foundation Newsletter June 2016

## Geo-bands tracking visitors

They might be small and light, but red-necked stints are no slouches when it comes to overseas travel, flying each year between Western Port and as far north as Siberia. The stints spend the summer months in Australia before leaving to breed in the northern hemisphere.

This year Parks Victoria rangers and volunteers banded more than 250 red-necked stints at Yallock Creek with the Victorian Wader Study Group as a part of a long term program to track the birds. Banding involves attaching a unique number metal band and a lightweight geo-locator to the leg of a bird which helps researchers track their journey once they are retrieved.

"The Victorian Wader Study Group has been studying waders for over 20 years and their research is increasing our understanding of the birds and their needs linking Victoria to the rest of the flyway," Parks Victoria ranger Thierry Rolland said.

"The banding program seeks to locate the habitats of migratory birds and is a part of a wider conservation effort to protect their habitats which is of significance to Parks Victoria and other agencies around the world."

Mr Rolland said Western Port is recognised as a wetland of international significance under the international Ramsar Convention. There are agreements between Australia and other countries to protect migratory birds including the Japan-Australia, and China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement. He said many parks in Western Port like Yaringa Marine National Park have protected areas for birds to provide a safe space free of predators and people who may disturb them.

In Western Port red-necked stints feed on small invertebrates found in mudflats. "Their conservation status is currently secured, making them luckier than most other migratory birds such as the orange bellied parrot which is currently endangered," Mr Rolland said.

"It is important to conserve the habitat of these birds. During their time in Australia they spend their time finding all the food they need in the mudflats and seagrass beds in our parks. We understand that water quality, pollution, and introduced plant and animal species can deteriorate a healthy ecosystem.

"Improving water quality in the creeks that flow into Yaringa Marine National Park is a critical part of our conservation efforts. The Watson's Creek project is working with landowners and industries along the catchment to minimise their impact on the creek and water quality. This in turn will decrease sediment loads and turbidity, providing favourable conditions for seagrass, a critical habitat in which the birds find their food.

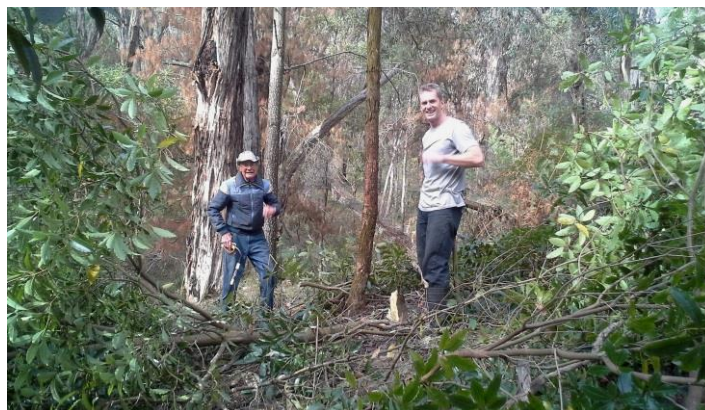
"Birds are a vital part of our ecosystem and their conservation is important to ensure we have healthy parks and healthy people, we need to have healthy, sustainable ecosystems."

For details on Yaringa Marine National Park or how to get involved with the Victoria Wader Study Group call Parks Victoria on 13 1963 or visit [www.parks.vic.gov.au](http://www.parks.vic.gov.au) or [www.vwsg.org.au](http://www.vwsg.org.au)

**Southern Peninsula News 12 July 2016**



Western Port traveller: One of the Red-necked Stints that are being tracked on their annual flight north. Photo by Parks Victoria



Richard and Mark working hard in Arthurs Seat. Photo by Jacqui Salter

## Making great progress in Arthurs Seat

Sheepwash Creek Catchment Landcare Group would like to thank all of the people who attended their recent Working Bee. "It's extraordinary how much can be achieved with so many people" enthused their Secretary, Michelle De La Coeur. Next working bee is Sun 24 July.

**Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network News June 2016**



## THANK YOU MORNINGTON LIONS CLUB

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## 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 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	Danny Vits	0447 046 862
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	Max Burrows	0429 947 893
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

## STUDIO PARK, LANGWARRIN

**Max Burrows: Sunday 15 May**

**Species recorded:33**

Twenty-four people attended the outing on a bright sunny day with a little wind and some cloud blowing by. Studio Park is an area of natural bushland adjacent to McClelland Gallery. There are several paths that weave back, forth, around and through the heathland with heath tea trees, swamp paper bark, sedges and rushes and a canopy of manna gum.

We saw several flowering correa. Through this little birds danced about. Parties of Superb Fairy-wrens hopped across the track. Grey Fantail easily spotted as usual. Thornbills flitting about, being harder to see. Eastern Spinebill seemed to be abundant. A raptor was chased by some Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo. Rainbow Lorikeet were heard overhead.

It was good to welcome new members. These outings cover many sites around the Peninsula and are a great way to discover new areas. Having been a local for over thirty-five years I have never been to Studio Park before. McClelland Gallery lots of times! Our book "*Where to Find Birds around Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula*" is available. Ask at



Looking up at the numerous Eastern Spinebills and other small birds at Studio Park. Photo by Danny Vits

an outing or contacts in this newsletter.

As usual as birdcall was being completed a Welcome Swallow flew over to bring the bird count to thirty-three.

Thank you Max.

**Denis Goss**, Carrum Downs

# Outings

**Studio Park Birdlist:** Pacific Black Duck, Spotted Dove, Common Bronzewing, Australian White Ibis, Black-shouldered Kite, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet, Eastern Rosella, Superb Fairy-wren, White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Thornbill, Striated Thornbill, Spotted Pardalote, Eastern Spinebill, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater, Noisy Miner, Little Wattlebird, Red Wattlebird, New Holland Honeyeater, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Grey Fantail, Little Raven, Eastern Yellow Robin, Silvereye, Welcome Swallow, Common Blackbird, Common Myna, Mistletoebird, Red-browed Finch.

## SAGES COTTAGE, BAXTER

**Susan Clark: Wednesday 8 June**

**Species recorded:43**

Since late 2013 Sages Cottage has been the property of Wallara Australia, an organisation running day programs for people with disabilities. Presently Sages Cottage is not open to the public however this may change in the future. Meanwhile BirdLife Mornington Peninsula is welcome to conduct outings or surveys with prior notification.

On a rather cool and bleak morning seventeen visitors were greeted by Susan Clark our leader for the day. The small dam on the property carried a few waterbirds including Hardhead and two species of grebe. Susan then proceeded towards the bushy and wooded area in the vicinity of the Moorooduc Highway with Golden Whistler, Silvereye, and Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo amongst the various species encountered in the area.

We then received permission to enter the paddocks on the east side which now look out towards the recently opened EastLink Freeway. On the way we encountered Dusky Moorhen, Purple Swamphen and Eastern Rosella in the gardens surrounding the cottage.

In the paddocks a Nankeen Kestrel put on a display for us and finally upon returning to the car park the last bird for the morning was a Brown Goshawk.

An impressive birdlist of forty-three species for the day. Many thanks to Susan for guiding us around.

**Danny Vits**, Mornington

## PENINSULA GARDENS BUSHLAND RESERVE, ROSEBUD

**Ray Pentland: Sunday 19 June**

**Species recorded:34**

On a cold but fine day thirteen members assembled at the gate of Peninsula Gardens reserve to meet Ray who was our leader for the morning. It was good to have young Cassia with us again as she is very knowledgeable on our avian friends. A number of species showed up at the front gate to greet us; this included Little Corella, both ibis species and at



Group setting off from Sages Cottage carpark.



Overlooking paddocks and Peninsula Freeway! Photos by Danny Vits

the completion female Golden Whistler and a flock of Striated Thornbills.

Drum Drum Alloc Creek was flowing as a result of the recent rains and the bush contained a large variety of fungi. This reserve has a good population of mistletoe so it was not unlikely we would see Mistletoebirds and they promptly obliged.

A flowering messmate attracted a host of New Holland Honeyeaters and Little Wattlebirds and the associated mistletoe harboured a Brown Thornbill. New birds for our list were Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo and Australian Raven. The parrot family was well represented with Eastern and Crimson Rosella, Galah, Rainbow Lorikeet, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo and the previously mentioned Little Corella.

A very pleasant ramble through the park ended with bird call. We thanked Ray and dispersed for home.

**Max Burrows**, Langwarrin

## COOLART WETLANDS & HOMESTEAD RESERVE, SOMERS

**Max Burrows: Wednesday 13 July**

**Species recorded:15**



Twenty-three brave souls turned out for our annual in-house event. Outside the weather was raining, hailing, windy and sunny and cold. After a nice hot cuppa we assembled to hear Roger Standen's very entertaining Roebuck Summer dissertation about his experience as volunteer caretaker at the Broome Bird Observatory.

Some of his pictures contained as many as nine species of waders at one high tide roost an amazing look at our migratory waders, and to think we search high and low for just a couple of the said birds. His views of the surrounding areas was an eye opener from the pindan woodlands to the plains behind the bay and the bay itself kept us all wanting to see more. We thanked Roger for his talk and most dispersed for home, the few that stayed for lunch enjoyed the warmth of the visitors centre.

The birds seen on the day represented the casual sightings of the reserve as no bird walk was undertaken. The highlight of the morning was a White-necked Heron which popped itself in front of the observatory window for all to see.

**Max Burrows**, Langwarrin

## OT DAM, RED HILL

**Neil Shelley : Sunday 17 July**

**Species recorded:18**

Before we left the car park Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Little Wattlebird and Noisy Miner were observed in the trees on either side of the road. The sky was clear and there was no rain, but it was cool with a slight breeze, as the thirteen of us set off. The area is popular with mountain bike riders, who have their own tracks to follow and which cross the walking track in a number of places, so caution was required. There were also a few walkers around.

In general the birds were very quiet, not unusual for winter, so we were on the lookout for any signs of movement. As we proceeded down the hill, quite a bit of movement was noticed in the adjoining vineyard, so we all headed over there where we observed Grey Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Eastern Rosella and Common Blackbird. Back on the track and heading further down the hill we encountered Grey Shrike-thrush, White-eared Honeyeater and Crimson Rosella. We also encountered quite a lot of the pink form of Common Heath, the floral emblem of our state, on the sides of the track.

At last we were able to hear some small birds calling but were initially unable to locate them. After several minutes we located a male Mistletoebird calling from the top of a eucalypt. We then proceeded to do a circuit of the dam where we observed White-throated Treecreeper, Laughing Kookaburra and a couple of Brown Thornbill.

As we headed back up the hill we had almost seen less species than there were participants, so we were keen to rectify that situation. First there was a quick sighting of a Wedge-tailed Eagle overhead, several Spotted Pardalote and a female/juvenile Golden Whistler were observed and a Little Raven was heard.

**Neil Shelley**, Mornington



OT Dam in Arthurs Seat State Park.



Photos by Lorraine A, May 2013, at weekendnotes.com.

## Who am I?

In November 2014 the bird in the photograph crashed into our window. I would like to know what species it is.

We live opposite Balcombe Estuary Reserve, on the north side. We get Eastern Spinebills and New Holland Honeyeaters on our birdbath and there are always Wattlebirds (could this be a juvenile?) and Rock Doves. We have the occasional mynah and blackbird.

Please email Val Ford, [fordandreid@gmail.com](mailto:fordandreid@gmail.com) your thoughts.

**Bronwyn Street**, Mt Martha



Photo by Bronwyn Street

## IMMATURE SEA-EAGLE AND LARGE NUMBERS OF BLUE-BILLED DUCKS AND HARDHEADS AT ETP

**22 May 2016:** Seventy-two bird species were logged of which thirty-three were wetland dependant, (only five were shorebirds), seven were raptors and thirty-two were non-wetland dependant.

A major highlight was the presence of at least three Australasian Bitterns, an endangered species, but apart from Black Swans and Blue-billed Duck, waterfowl numbers were well down.

**26 June 2016:** Several recent rain events (rainfall in Melbourne area this June exceeded the average for this month), have resulted in huge inflows of surface water run-off into the Plant such that all Effluent Holding Basins are now holding water, with many near full capacity. However, water levels in pondages which rely on restricted local catchments (e.g. the Donut) have risen only slightly.

Sixty-six bird species were logged of which twenty-nine were wetland dependant, (only three were shorebirds), seven were raptors and thirty-one were non-wetland dependant. A major highlight was the continuing presence of Australasian Bitterns, two of which were seen.

We saw the exciting White-bellied Sea-eagle, an immature, that has been reported by staff in recent weeks and the first Common Bronzewing since November 2014.

The absence of shallow water and muddy shorelines meant that shorebirds were exceptionally scarce. Waterfowl were down in variety and for several species, also in abundance. Since there are now hundreds of waterfowl on the external ETP wetlands notably Banyan, many have just moved locally.

**24 July 2016:** Good winter rains continue to raise water levels throughout the Plant but those pondages which rely on local catchments (e.g. the Donut) have risen only marginally.

Fifty-eight bird species were logged of which twenty-two were wetland dependant, (only two were shorebirds), seven were raptors and twenty-nine were non-wetland dependant. This is the lowest diversity for many years and reflects the exceptionally good rains that have occurred through much of inland Australia. These have also resulted in some of our lowest-ever counts or even the total absence of some waterbirds especially dabbling ducks. When the inland bonanza subsides we should see the benefits here later in the year.

Of special note is the influx of Black Swans (550 counted) with twelve new nests on the WEHB which is now inundated with shallow water and more flowing in. Diving duck numbers continue to rise. Including those on the Banyan Waterhole, there are now over 1,000 Blue-billed Ducks on the whole Plant (a site record) and nearly 700 Hardhead. Other highlights include a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles. Purple Swamphens continue to increase as they return to their once favourite haunt, the Golden Triangle, as water levels there rise slowly.

**Mike Carter**, Mornington



Newly fledged Whistling Kite at the Donut 22 May.



An immature White-bellied Sea-Eagle that has been frequenting the ETP in recent days was still present on 26 June. Photos by Alison Kuitert



Flame Robin, adult male on a sludge drying pan 24 July.  
Photo by Andrew McCutcheon



One-day old Masked Lapwing at the ETP 24 July. Photo by Alison Kuitert

## BLUE-BILLED AND MUSK DUCKS AT BANYAN WATERHOLE

**15 May 2016:** Fifty species were recorded of which twenty-six are wetland-dependent or raptors. Minor highlights included a very high number of Pink-eared Ducks (80), two Cattle Egrets and winter records of both species of Martin.

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 overflowing. The Paddock lagoon was full and surrounds were inundated but substrate was firm.

**12 June 2016:** Fifty-two species were recorded of which twenty-nine are wetland-dependent or raptors. The highlight was the hundreds of waterfowl on the Banyan lagoon that included our first ever records for this site of Blue-billed Duck (47) and Musk Duck (1). These are both diving ducks that prefer deep water and are evidently taking advantage of the changed conditions. There were more Eurasian Coots than ever before.

**9 July 2016:** Forty-four species were recorded of which twenty-four are wetland-dependent or raptors. The highlights were the extent of flood water and the huge number of Blue-billed Duck (234). Dabbling ducks have vacated the Paddock and apart from a good number of Pink-eared Duck were scarce on the Waterhole. Eurasian Coot numbers have increased again and an unusually high number (19) of Red-rumped Parrots were present.



Black-winged Stilts, adult and juvenile on the Banyan Paddock 15 May.  
Photo by David Stabb



Pair of Swans, female (shorter neck) on right, with six cygnets at Boggy Creek on 12 June. Photo by Mike Carter

## AUSTRALASIAN BITTERN AT BOGGY CREEK WETLAND

**15 May 2016:** Only eighteen bird species (including eight wetland dependant & raptors) were logged here today. The highlight was an Australasian Bittern which when disturbed flew across one stretch of water but could not be re-found despite us knowing where it had landed.

**12 June 2016:** Only nine bird species (five of which were wetland dependant) were logged here today.

**9 July 2016:** Fifteen bird species (eight of which were wetland dependant or raptors) were logged here today. The highlight was an Australasian Bittern flushed from, and then flew west along, Eel Race Drain.



View of the flooded Paddock opposite the Clay Targets Shooting Club at Banyan, 12 June. Photo by David Stabb

## DOUBLE-BANDED PLOVER IN BREEDING PLUMAGE AT TURF FARM

**15 May 2016:** Twelve bird species were logged (only two were wetland dependant). Although no water was visible in the wetland it must be damp with some pools as Common Froglets were calling there.

9 July 2016: Twenty-three bird species were logged of which eight were wetland dependant and two were raptors. The highlight here was a Double-banded Plover in breeding plumage.

## SERPENTINE NO LONGER DRY

**9 July 2016:** Because the Serpentine (ETP South) has been dry until now, this area has not been counted since May 2015. Rain water had collected on the sludge drying pans. Thirty-three species of birds were logged of which eleven were wetland dependant or raptors. The two Red-necked Avocets may be the only ones on the Plant at the moment. Common Bronzewing (1) and Eastern Rosella (2) were recorded for the first time at this site.

**Mike Carter**, Mornington

# Habitat for food and shelter

## BIRDS & BIOLINKS

AGMs are not usually very exciting, so it is important to offer members a reward for coming along. Dr Larry Wakefield, speaker at our AGM on Sunday 12 April, gave us a really special reward. His talk was particularly relevant to Main Creek Catchment and was accompanied by brilliant photos of birds and interesting maps. I have summarised some salient points.

Dr Wakefield explained his approach as answering the question of why some birds were present on the Peninsula and some were not. It was largely a matter of habitat for food and shelter. Main Creek Catchment is of special interest because of its strategic position between the two largest patches of native habitat remaining on the Mornington Peninsula: the National Park to the south and the State Park at Arthurs Seat to the north.

While the size of the remnant patches is important, remnants along roadsides (like Old Main Creek Road) and on private land are also important as they can provide 'connectivity' between the larger patches of habitat.

The three main EVCs (ecological vegetation communities) still present in Main Creek Catchment are damp forest, dry woodlands, and damp gully areas; however, there has been a lot of clearing over the past 150 years.

Dr Wakefield grouped birds as "Woodland dependent birds", "Forest dependent birds" and "Open-ground tolerant birds". By classifying birds on the basis of the type of habitat they require, one can quickly see which birds are likely to be vulnerable to extinction due to loss of suitable habitat. On any given farm, for example, a shift towards "Open Ground tolerant birds" is likely to be observed when a census of species is conducted. In a 15 hectare remnant of forest one should see at least 25 species and as many as 40 species if the remnant is of good quality. But often this is not the case. A forest remnant should comprise canopy vegetation, a shrub layer and ground cover; but often the shrub layer and ground cover are decimated by foraging stock which makes survival difficult for bird species which breed and feed on the ground or in the low and middle shrub layers. Examples of birds in this category include the Grey Fantail, Yellow Robin, Bassian Thrush, Brown Thornbill and Golden Whistler. Such birds are likely to be very vulnerable to predation by foxes and cats.

In the forest canopy there are birds which probe bark (such as White-throated Treecreeper, Crested Shrike-tit and the Varied Sittella (with its glorious musical song). Higher up still there are nectarivores such as White-eared Honeyeater, the Spotted Pardalote (which actually nests in a burrow in a sandy bank) and the White-naped Honeyeater.

Other nectarivores include Red Wattlebird, Yellow-faced Honeyeater and Eastern Spinebill. There are also migrants which visit the Peninsula such as Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Rufous Fantail, Satin Flycatcher and Olive-backed Oriole ... but if their habitat is destroyed where they come from, their numbers will also decline on the Mornington Peninsula.

On the other hand, birds which we may be seeing more of include those which are tolerant of open ground, such as the Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Eastern Rosella, Grey Butcherbird, Magpie-lark and the open country birds which include the Australian Magpie, Common Starling, Little Raven, Noisy Miners (which chase other smaller birds out of "their" patch)



Crested Shrike-tit at Chiltern. Photo by John Barkla



Scarlet Robin at Inala Bruny Island. Photo by Andrew Browne

and Bell Miners (which are likely to move on after cleaning up the lerps on the local eucalypts).

Already the Mornington Peninsula has seen several species disappear from this region, such as White-winged Chough, Regent Honeyeater (close to extinction), Diamond Firetail, White-throated Nightjar and Grey-crowned Babbler and a further 8 species. Dr Wakefield challenged us to consider the likely extinctions on the Peninsula by 2020 which could include the Scarlet Robin, Blue-winged Parrot, Chestnut-rumped Heath wren and Painted Button Quail. These losses are likely to occur as the community of birds gradually shifts from Forest-dependent species to those which are open-ground tolerant.

Developing biolinks between patches of indigenous vegetation is critically important because these improve connectivity between the larger patches of remnant native vegetation where the Forest dependent bird species breed and mainly live. Protected indigenous vegetation on private land and established biolinks provide areas for birds to move into and cover for protection from predators. Control of those predators is also vital otherwise the saved habitat and "connectivity" will avail little if the species we try to safeguard are gobbled up by introduced predatory species. So there is much work for Landcare groups such as ours to look after existing remnants of indigenous vegetation and strive to re-establish connecting 'corridors' or biolinks of indigenous species to reconnect patches of remnant. We also need to control if not eradicate weeds which can degrade or out-compete remnant vegetation.

**Dr Bernie Schedvin**, Main Creek Catchment Landcare Group Newsletter June 2015

## 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
7.4.16	Jacky Winter (1)	Blairstown	At my bird bath.	Rosalba Catena
25.4.16	Pink Robin (1, brown bird)	Frankston South	Seen at Sweetwater Creek.	Lana Cumming
30.4.16	Freckled Duck (49)	Balnarring	Wetland adjacent to Balbairoroo wetland.	Tania Ireton et al
13.5.16	Cape Barron Goose (30) Peregrine Falcon (1) Black-shouldered Kite (1)	Tyabb	Seen at the same time, on eastern side of road south of the waste disposal centre.	Brian Thomas
14.5.16	Brown Goshawk (1)	Coolart	Perched, adjacent to Merricks Creek near footbridge.	Danny Vits
16.5.16	Pink Robin (1) Little Eagle (1) Collared Sparrowhawk (1, f)	Coolart	Some of the birds seen on the monthly survey.	Val Ford et al
29.5.16	Australasian Bittern (3)	Tootgarook Swamp	Flushed from private land whilst monitoring.	Jess Durrant
29.5.16	White-bellied Sea-Eagle (1)	Mt Martha	Flying overhead with large fish in its talons; being harassed.	Larry Wakefield
30.5.16	Nankeen Night Heron (8)	Hastings	In a large tree on the corner of Salmon and Herring Streets.	Keith Hindley
30.5.16	Cape Barron Goose (7)	Pt Leo	Flew low along Western Port shoreline.	Val Ford
6.6.16	Yellow-tail'd Black-Cockatoo (5) Little Penguin (1)	Mt Eliza	In Radiata Pines in Jacksons Road. Found dead, with freshly severed head, on Ranelagh Beach.	John Fleiner
8.6.16	Yellow-tail'd Black-Cockatoo (6)	Rosebud West	In trees at the Village Glen golf course.	Celia Browne et al
10.6.16	Great Frigatebird (1)	Frankston	Observed at close range gliding in updraft off Olivers Hill.	Con Duyvestyn
16.6.16	Golden Whistler (2, m & f)	Blairstown	In our front yard Moonah.	Cheryl Barrow
19.6.16	Australian King-Parrot (3)	Frankston South	Seen visiting our garden and bird bath.	Lana Cumming
26.6.16	Brown Skua (1)	Rye/Blairstown	Sitting on Tyrone Foreshore beach; harassed by seagulls.	Will Bridgeman
26.6.16	Flame Robin (5 m, 4 brown bds)	Martha Cove	On fence line, Island Drive.	Susan Clark
27.6.16	Powerful Owl (1)	Balnarring	In my neighbour's garden.	Brian Thomas
28.6.16	Australian Shelduck (2)	The Briars	On the far edge of the water from Chechingurk hide.	Pam Hearn
29.6.16	White-bellied Sea-Eagle (1)	Mt Martha	Seen flying around the point of Mt Martha over the water.	Joshua Gunn
8.7.16	Little Eagle (2)	Rosebud	Over Besgrove St ovals, then flew towards Waterfall Gully.	Joshua Gunn
9.7.16	Shining Bronze-Cuckoo (2)	Greens Bush	At least two heard calling.	Val Ford
13.7.16	Eastern Rosella (75) Red-browed Finch (30+)	Coolart	Feeding on farmland adjacent to lower wetlands.	Brian Thomas
13.7.16	Brown Goshawk (1)	Coolart	Observed catching a Welcome Swallow outside Minsmere Hide.	Kees De Haan
14.7.16	Tawny Frogmouth (1)	Balnarring	In my garden.	Brian Thomas
16.7.16	Yellow Thornbill (1)	Pt Nepean NP	In trees at Quarantine Station.	Val Ford
16.7.16	Yellow-tail'd Black-Cock'too (10)	Frankston South	Five of them landed on our bird bath for a drink	Lana Cumming
18.7.16	Crested Shrike-tit (2)	Coolart	Seen in Woodland when conducting the monthly survey.	Val Ford et al
18.7.16	Australian King-Parrot (2)	Langwarrin	An immature and a female at our feeding table.	Max Burrows
30.7.16	Australian Shelduck (2)	Arthurs Seat SP	On McLaren dam.	Val Ford
31.7.16	Little Corella (300+) Yellow-tail'd Black-Cock'too (90)	Hastings	Saw at the same time, corellas flying to their roost (Hastings foreshore?) and YTBCs flying to their roost in Crib Point.	Chris Chandler
1.8.16	Australian King-Parrot (5)	Rosebud West	Flew into tree beside Hub lake at Village Glen.	Val Ford
6.8.16	Pied Currawong (2)	Blairstown	In my bird bath. Chased by an irate magpie.	Rosalba Catena

**Moderator's note on Birdline Victoria's Recent Sighting page:** Birdline Victoria won't be publishing individual reports of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo in the greater Melbourne area. However, it is worth noting that there have been a number of reports to Birdline Victoria. They certainly seem to be having a very good year and are being seen in urban areas across Melbourne including flocks near Melbourne's CBD such as around the Fitzroy Gardens. Flocks have also been seen in Clifton Hill, Elsternwick, Elwood, Frankston, Hawthorn, Mentone, Mordialloc, Northcote, Parkville, South Melbourne, St Kilda, and so on. It seems that they must have had a good breeding season, possibly related to the warm weather we've had in 2016.

## Frigatebird visits Frankston

In the field of birding one phenomenon guaranteed to set of twittering among the twitchers is the detection of a "vagrant", a bird that has wandered way beyond its normal range. One only has to look at the activity generated by the Red-necked Phalarope at the Western Treatment Plant over the summer and the current interest associated with the Beach Stone-curlew at Inverloch.

The appearance of a Facebook reported sighting of a frigatebird at Frankston on the Friday of Queen's Birthday weekend was just such twitter trigger. We were preparing to set off for Phillip Island for the long weekend and I decided to check Facebook one more time before departure and picked up the report. I suggested a detour in our journey. It was not welcomed, but my wife Mairi acquiesced to my request so we made haste for Olivers Hill.

It did not take long to spot the bird, a male Great Frigatebird in full breeding colours hovering on the bleak westerly wind. The bird did not seem at all distressed to be so far from its normal environment, probably carried south by the east coast storms of that week, and swept back and forth, and up and down on the air currents rising up the face of Olivers Hill. A few spectators and photographers were there before me, but it was a relatively quiet birding scene and I was able to photograph the bird from the car park level, as well as part way up the hill, unhindered. It is in situations such as these that the digital camera comes into its own, with repeat activated I simply aimed and pressed and within about a half hour had collected some 350 images to play with. Reluctantly I called it a day and we continued on to our weekend destination.

I had briefly considered leaving it till our return from the island but was very glad I had reacted to the twitcher urge and "dropped all" for the call. The subsequent Facebook report showed that many came to Frankston early the next morning only to be greeted by empty skies. Where had the bird gone? What happens to a vagrant such as this bird? One can only hope that it made a safe return to its home range but the likelihood of demise in a faraway place is obviously very high.

On 30 July I decided to twitch the Beach Stone-curlew at Inverloch! I first spotted it on the Anderson Inlet flats to the west of Screw Creek and when I approached it for photographs it gradually made its way back towards the creek. It then flew across the creek and walked in an upstream direction along the eastern shore. It was still in that area when the light deteriorated and I decided to call it a day.

**Con Duyvestyn**, Mornington

## Observations of an obsessed twitcher

They're back. For eleven weeks there were no House Sparrows in Blairgowrie but on 20 June 2016 they returned as cheeky as ever around Blairgowrie's three side walk cafés.

Lisa and I travel twice a week between Blairgowrie and Brighton for babysitting. Lisa prefers to drive so in 2012 I started listing the number of bird species we saw each trip. In June 2015 I began recording the number of each species observed. As we picked up our mail at the Blairgowrie Post Office I always checked for House Sparrows.



Great Frigatebird at Frankston.



Beach Stone-curlew at Inverloch. Photos by Con Duyvestyn



Cartoon by Peter Rigby. From "The crazy word of bird watching"

In 2016 the most species seen per trip was 34, the least 18; averaging 26.3 per trip. The most common species is Australian Magpies averaging 35 each trip. We've seen Masked Lapwings on 34 of the 39 trips and a raptor on 15 occasions.

We always pull over at two dams and once were delighted to count 50 Wood Duck at what we call 'the deer paddock' beside the freeway east of the Dromana Drive-in. The more unusual species seen include Australian Shelduck (in the deer paddock), a Wedge-tailed Eagle over Chelsea Heights and two Tawny Frogmouth that roosted next to the Classic Residences car park in Brighton.

**Peter Cockram**, Blairgowrie

## Pied Currawong in my garden

During recent months, we have enjoyed hearing the beautiful distant calls of a Pied Currawong. On occasions, this species has been present at nearby Upper Sweetwater Creek Nature Reserve. In mid-July, I noticed a large black bird having a splash in one of our bird baths. At first glance I assumed it was one of the Little Ravens who frequent the area, but upon further inspection, I noticed that this particular bird was somewhat smaller in size and its plumage was not quite as dark. As soon as I spotted the distinctive bright yellow eyes and patches of white on the birds tail feathers, I realised that it was a Pied Currawong!

This week, the Currawong has been seen foraging around our yard for food and seems to enjoy returning to the bird bath for a preen. Named after its characteristic call, the Currawong is quite animated in behavior, often 'playing' with leaves (or perhaps looking for food) in the gum trees and attempting to evade harassment from the Noisy Miners.

**Lana Cumming**, Frankston South

## Birding at the Village Glen

### A cold and dull day

It was a cold, dull day as fifteen intrepid birders set out on the May walk, destination the Clubhouse via Chinamans Creek and the golf course. Conditions weren't perfect but we identified twenty-four species, the best being a single Black Swan on the Hub lake. Always a majestic sight, a single Eastern Great Egret was later observed in the same area, taking the total up to twenty-five for the day.

Excavation works were being carried out on the lower golf course lake, so the only birds present were a few Purple Swamphens and Pacific Black Ducks fossicking along the muddy edges. No chance of secretive crakes or rails today!

Numbers of Galahs feeding on lawns and at Chapel Circle were observed during May; and flocks of Little Corellas screeched overhead as they flew between the Village Glen and the high school. Close to the Hub, Masked Lapwings were heard often, complaining loudly at the Little Ravens endeavouring to take possession of the tall eucalypts behind the building and there were several reports of both Crimson and Eastern Rosellas enjoying our many gardens.

### Winter birding

It was quite wintery as fifteen keen birders gathered for the June walk. Three species of raptor were sighted over the swamp south of the Village - Swamp Harrier, Whistling Kite and Black-shouldered Kite - which was very pleasing. A family group of Superb Fairy-wrens was much admired and Grey Butcherbirds called in the distance as we walked south along Chinamans Creek. In total twenty-five species were listed for the morning.

Around the golf course lake, we heard unusual and haunting calls from the east. Immediately identified as Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos, the group of six or seven was located in and above the trees. Although not a new species for this area, to my knowledge they haven't been seen over the Village since extensive fires over Kinglake and the Divide in 2009 drove flocks south to the Peninsula in search of food.

As the swamp south of the golf course filled, seven Black Swans were observed feeding there during June as was a



Pied Currawong preening. Photo by Lana Cumming



Australasian Grebe on the Village Glen golf course lake. Photo by Jeanette Marshall

single Eastern Great Egret and the ubiquitous Purple Swamphens. A single pelican was also present on the lake for a brief time.

### Birding in appalling conditions

On 13 July, the bleakest day of the year, four hardy birders ventured forth on the monthly walk from the Hub lake. Despite appalling conditions we identified twenty-six species. A close view of an Eastern Great Egret hunched in the creek was the most rewarding sighting, enabling us to see the pale, pea-green colour of the facial skin which indicated that this beautiful egret was coming into breeding plumage.

On 26 July a new bird was added to the village list. A Little Egret was identified by Val at the Hub lake and enjoyed by other birders. The Little Egret is the 100th bird to be identified in the village since listing began in August 2007 - a milestone indeed!

I had wondered why many of the red flowering, pendulous buds of my Eucalyptus caesia (Gungurru) disappeared in late winter, to be found later on the ground. One July morning five Crimson Rosellas flew in to feed on the blossom. While three rosellas gathered nectar from the hanging flowers on the tree, two others nipped off the flowering buds and gathered nectar while holding the bud right way up in their claws before finally letting them drop.

**Celia Browne**, Rosebud West

## At Balbieroo Wetlands, Balnarring

We had received news that Freckled Ducks among others, had been seen in great numbers about a month ago, so decided to liven up an otherwise dull May 29 Sunday to take a look. The big private dam had many Eurasian Coots, both on and off-shore, with a few Black Swans dotted amongst them. We spotted a pair of Australian Shelducks on the shore, and a solitary diving duck which I took to be an Australasian Shoveler, but may have been a Pink-eared Duck, as its bill was very long; the dullness of the day didn't help in identification.

Andris had spotted a White-necked Heron lurking in the reeds on the far side of Balbieroo, but it seemed to become wary when it realised we were looking at it. However, as we went around the perimeter, better views beckoned, and Andris managed to creep up closer to photograph it feeding. It didn't seem to be bothered by us, so intent was it looking for prey. Andris captured this shot of it with a large beetle in its beak, which it eventually swallowed.

Other bush birds seen were Red and Little Wattlebirds, various small Honeyeaters - New Holland, White-plumed, and lots of Brown Thornbills.

**Pam Hearn & Andris Niedra**, Mt Martha

## Crimson Rosellas in Frankston area

On 23 June 2016, I noticed a pair of reasonably large, brightly coloured feathered visitors in our garden. The brilliant red and blue plumage of a pair of Crimson Rosellas was highly conspicuous, as they were seen foraging for food under one of our oak trees. Whilst we frequently observe the slightly smaller Eastern variety of Rosellas on our property, this was the first time we had seen Crimson Rosellas in the area.

Following a quick search on the internet and several email communications with other BirdLife members, it became apparent that Crimson Rosellas are occasionally sighted in certain parts of Frankston and surrounding localities. They are commonly found further down the Mornington Peninsula, towards Mt Martha and Red Hill, however there are fewer recorded occurrences within the northern parts of the Peninsula.

Crimson Rosellas have been noted at Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve, Carrum Downs and Braeside Park, with occasional sightings in particular areas of Frankston South (near Kackeraboite Creek) and Mt Eliza (recordings at Mann Road Bushland Reserve in 2003). There have been no documented sightings of Crimson Rosellas at the Frankston Conservation Reserve, Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve or Sweetwater Creek Nature Reserve.

**Lana Cumming**, Frankston South

## Geese and herons on Western Port

On 30 May David Reid and I walked in perfect weather along the beach from Merricks to Flinders. As well as watching dolphins and the 'usual' birds we saw White-faced Herons feeding on the rock shelves for the entire length of the walk. I started to count then gave up but would estimate that we saw about fifty (maybe more). Not long after we started



White-necked Heron eating a beetle. Photo by Andris Niedra



Crimson Rosella in my garden. Photo by Lana Cumming

walking seven Cape Barren Geese flew low along the shoreline.

**Val Ford**, Rosebud West

## Newsletter feedback

### [Bird remains on Blairgowrie beach](#)

In my opinion the birds reported in the June issue of the newsletter are White-faced Storm-Petrels. They do of course breed on Mud Islands and The Fort but how come a fox or similar came to catch so many at one time on the mainland. Could suggest that they are nesting or prospecting to nest on the mainland.

Or maybe they were washed up as dead birds and eaten by a fox or something similar.

**Mike Carter**, Mornington

### [Black-shouldered Kite with chick](#)

I was wondering whether it could be a swampen chick.

HANZAB lists quails, crakes and sparrows amongst the prey they have been recorded taking but generally most studies have found 90%+ of prey is small mammals. So this is pretty unusual I would assume.

**Sean Dooley**, BirdLife Australia



## Observed at ETP wetlands

### Secreted in tussocks at Boggy Creek

The Australasian Bittern flew from here across this leg of the southern serpentine and landed on the opposite bank where it could not be seen. When we reached that section of the wetland we could not find it and presumed that it had crossed the track, walked into the next stretch of water and secreted itself in the numerous tussocks there. This shows just how easily this species can be overlooked.

### Bastard wings

Six Nankeen Kestrels at the ETP on 22 May denoted a small influx and enabled close-up observations. Photo by Alison Kuitert on left is of one diving to catch prey spotted while hovering overhead. Note the prominently projecting alulae or 'bastard wings' (at the bend of the wing). These are rarely as conspicuous as they are here suggesting that they may have a function in controlling a dive. Photo on right by Robert Brinkman is of one rising with insect prey in its bill.

### Finding prey under rocks

We watched one of several Little Ravens feeding on the spillway between EHB 2 & 3 at ETP on 26 June. The birds were turning their heads sideways, inserting their bills under fist-sized pieces of crushed rock, levering them up, flipping them over and eating creatures thus exposed. Usually there were several food items under each rock and these would be devoured at the rate of about one every two seconds. It seemed likely that their prey was crawling to the surface to escape the waterlogged ground below.

### Swamp Harrier moult stages

This Swamp Harrier, a young bird reared last summer was photographed by Alison Kuitert at ETP on 24 July. After fledging and assuming juvenile plumage, it has already progressed through at least one partial moult having replaced its two central tail feathers (the grey ones with dark barring) and some upper tail coverts. Eventually these will become wholly pale so that as an adult, it will have an even paler rump.

**Mike Carter**, Mornington

## French Island bird observations

Below are a few observations for 15 May to 30 July. Unfortunately, I haven't been out in the bush much this autumn/winter, so not much to report!

Corellas and lorikeets are rare visitors to the island, which is interesting, as they are common at Crib Point to Hastings, for example. However, we do not have the planted flowering street trees (Eucalypts, Grevilleas, etc), which are found on the mainland. Also Crested Pigeons have not yet been recorded on the island.

**15 May:** Seven Blue-winged Parrots at Clump Road.

**3 June:** Cape Barren Geese with four eggs (beginning of breeding for this species.)

**7 June:** White-bellied Sea-Eagle pair honking to each other on SW coast, a breeding display. There is a nest site nearby.

**17 June:** About 200 Pacific Gulls flying into Warneet harbour from the west. Locals say there are regularly these numbers



Australasian Bittern high in tussock of giant rush at Boggy Creek. Photos by Mike Carter (left) and David Stabb (right)



Nankeen Kestrels at ETP. Photos by Alison Kuitert and Robert Brinkman



Swamp Harrier, young bird. Photo by Alison Kuitert

at Warneet.

**25 June:** Twenty-four Little Corellas at Anchorage Road. This is the fifth record for this species on the island.

**28 June:** White-bellied Sea-Eagle pair honking on SW coast.

**6 July:** One Little Egret at Stony Point.

**8 July:** Black-faced Cormorant at Tankerton jetty. They are rarely seen inside Western Port.

**21 July:** One Rainbow Lorikeet at The Estate. This is fourth record for the island.

**23 July:** One Australian Hobby at Tortoise Head.

**Chris Chandler**, French Island

## Powerful Owl at Langwarrin

In early April 2016 we were walking one of the tracks in Langwarrin Flora and Fauna reserve, just on dark, when we heard a Powerful Owl calling about 50 metres from the track. It was too dark to try and see it and we returned the following morning and found several roosts and the bird!

I informed Brian Thomas of the sighting; we returned with him and were lucky enough to get a few good photos. The bird has been reported to the Parks Ranger that is responsible for the reserve.

**Keith and Andrew Caldecott**, Somerville

## Powerful Owl at Woods Reserve

A couple of years ago Mornington Peninsula Shire conducted some surveys for Powerful Owls in its reserves. A number of us volunteered for this survey, but no Owls were found. One of the reserves surveyed was Woods Reserve at Tuerong.

I bought a flash for my camera a week or so ago and wanted to try it out so I was familiar with it before I go up north soon. So I went to Wood's reserve on Sunday night as I expected to find a few possums there to practice on. I found some and worked out how to use it. I was impressed with how far it can reach - up to the top of those large trees relatively easily.

After doing as much as I thought I could achieve that night I went back to the car and then heard a 'whoohoo'. I stopped and listened and it came again, so I went back toward the call and found the Powerful Owl way up on a branch at the top of a tree. It kept calling quite a bit even when I had the torch on it.

It was a terrific experience - I have never seen a Powerful Owl at night like that - going about its business as it was preening as well in between calling. After all those trips out during the survey it was great to know they were there!

**Rog Standen**, Peninsula Field Naturalists Club Inc  
Newsletter, June 2016

## My Wedge-tailed Eagle nest observations

To add to the report in the June 2015 newsletter, Wedge-tailed Eagle nests I have known over the years but not all used at once, were at these locations.

**Waterfall Gully:** Stand on the left of the falls lookout and follow the tree line down the gully 200/300 metres. In the trees is a nest. May not be used now as there are just too many people living in the area.

**Arthurs Seat State Park:** Immediately behind Hillman Quarry; access is via the quarry. Further along Boundary Road behind Pioneer Quarry and a gully or two is a very mature beautiful nest.

**Greens Bush:** A frequently used nest behind a farm in Hyslops Road which used to have Scottish Cattle. Limestone and Rogers Roads area. Enter off Rogers Road follow fence line across a creek and walk to your left. Huge nest must be years old. Difficult to find, was Tom Sault's favourite.



Powerful Owl at Langwarrin. Photo by Brian Thomas



Predator and prey; Powerful Owl and Sugar Glider at Woods Reserve. Photos by Rog Standen

**Woods Reserve:** In bush behind Scout Camp.

**Bushranger Bay:** I have never seen a nest on the trail or valley. I suspect it is a hunting ground for eagles, plenty of kangaroo and rabbit. Probably changing due to kangaroo proof fence etc.

**Ian Dowling**, Dromana

## Interesting food

On the last day of May, our team of intrepid bird-surveyors (David, Val, Susan and me) did the Balcombe Estuary Boardwalk for our autumn survey. Overall, we came up with thirty-nine species on a beautiful, crisp autumn day.

Just before we reached the Nepean Highway, Susan and I were distracted by a small bird, which turned out to be a female Superb Fairy-Wren, wrestling with something long and large (for her!). When she turned around, we saw she had a large earth-worm, which she was bashing kookaburra-style. We hadn't seen that behaviour before, but don't doubt it is probably common. Very intriguing!

**Pam Hearn**, Mt Martha & **Susan Clark**, Mornington

## YTBC visit on election day

Over the past couple of weeks, we have been viewing and hearing large flocks (20-30+) of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos, a constant delight to us. Most days, they wake up raucously, fly around gathering numbers, and take off- often West towards the Bay, returning in the evening from that direction. We have been wondering if they fly over the bay to feeding grounds. Maybe someone could help with that theory?

This morning, it appears that a large group decided to stay and check out the local pines, hakeas, eucalypts and wattles in nearby Hopetoun Ave in Mt Martha, around the corner from where we live. We set off in early-morning poor light with cameras in the hope that we might be able to get a few good shots. Their constant shrieks, chatter and chuckles let us know where they were. They are very hard to detect in dark foliage in trees. As we stalked up the road, I was amazed by the constant 'crackling' sound of them chewing seed capsules and small branches in their quest for food. The occasional car even had to avoid low-flying birds, and about four who decided to have a drink from the roadside gutter! Of course, they were aware of us trying to get close, and gradually moved away from us along the roadside, at which point we continued our walk up to the golf course and left them to it.

**Pam Hearn & Andris Niedra**, Mt Martha



Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo feeding on a eucalypt.



Drinking from roadside gutter. Photos by Andris Niedra and Pam Hearn

## North American Big Year record

Two guys just broke the North American Big Year record - but how? It turns out seabirds and extreme birding go really well together. Read more at: <http://www.audubon.org/news/two-guys-just-broke-north-american-big-year-record-how=>

**Cheryl Barrow**, Blairgowrie

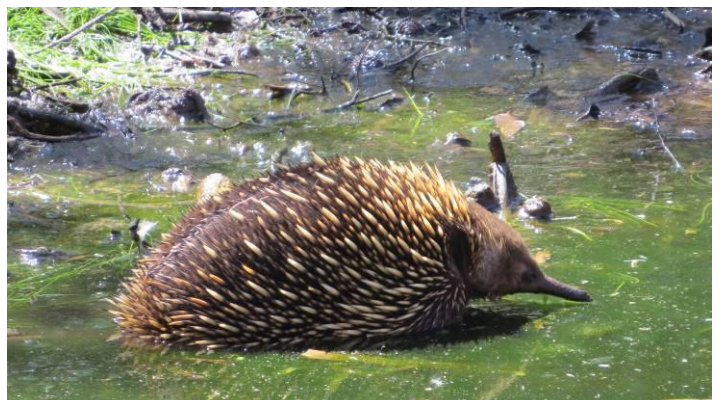
## Birding at The Briars

The Briars had been closed for rabbit control on our scheduled visit last month, so our birding was rescheduled to 5 October 2015. Seven members gathered on a fine warm day, with only a light breeze - ideal conditions. Sue in the Visitor Centre gave a few tips on recent sightings, and then we set out first to the bird hides. A few ducks, including hardheads, were seen on the first pond, as well as nesting swans and a Great Egret. The Ringtail Possum was curled up in his corner over our heads.

There were a few more birds, including Little Pied and Little Black Cormorants, Swampheens, Coots and a White-faced Heron on the larger pond, but with a very high water level no shore birds like Dotterels were to be seen.

At the new bridge over the creek there was a multitude of honeyeaters, including White-naped, Yellow-faced and New Holland; Golden and Rufous Whistlers were heard and eventually seen. At the wetland lookout a flock of about a dozen European Goldfinches made several fly-pasts, and a Swamp Harrier was seen soaring over the paddocks.

Along the Kur-ber-rer walk we encountered both Shining and Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo; the latter heard but not sighted,



Echidna taking a paddle. Photo by Diane Peters

but the former posing for photographs close by on a bare tree. There was a close encounter with a Striated Pardalote. Further along the boardwalk the people at the front spotted a Bassian Thrush, and produced photographic evidence to back up their claim, while Dusky Woodswallows and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes had also returned. Along the back track one of the resident Emus appeared. No koalas were sighted, but there were two Echidnas - one taking a paddle in the dam.

The final bird count was 56, with the highlights being the Bronze-cuckoo and Striated Pardalote. Also sighted were several Spotted Jezebel butterflies (aka Wood White) as well as Painted Ladies.

**Lee Denis**, Peninsula Field Naturalists Club Inc newsletter December 2015. [www.peninsulafieldnaturalists.org.au](http://www.peninsulafieldnaturalists.org.au)

# Observations

## BROWN GOSHAWK WATER

Water becomes very precious in the latter part of the dry season in northern Australia. This was made clear to me when caretaking the Broome Bird Observatory. The shadehouse was a blessed relief from the searing heat in the middle of the day and it gave me the chance to watch the activities around a bird bath.

Rufous-throated and Brown Honeyeaters were the most common birds attracted to the water, along with Double-barred and Long-tailed Finches, Bar-shouldered and Peaceful Doves. Another species that used the bath were Great Bowerbirds that are ever-present around the BBO. However, there was one group of visitors that caused all these regulars to move out of the way – Brown Goshawks! A family moved in one day while I was there and suddenly the bath was deserted.

The adult female dropped down into the bath first, followed shortly after by a young male that looked to be the progeny of the female and an adult male, which sat above on a branch watching the proceedings. The adult male did come down for a drink later but most of the action was between the adult female and the young male.

There was an altercation between the two birds that was very startling to watch with aggressive wing postures from both birds as they stood facing each other trying to force the other bird to back-off. It went back and forth for a while, with the male forcing the female to lie back on her haunches almost lying on her open wings, but eventually the bigger female regained control of the dispute and the young male moved off to a nearby branch to wait it out.

The female then turned her attention to enjoying the water and taking the opportunity to cool down with a solid bath that she enjoyed for over ten minutes. This included quite a bit of time just standing in the water looking around.

Meanwhile, while all this turmoil was happening, the smaller birds did not come anywhere near the water, unlike a couple of Agile Wallabies that snuck up behind the raptor and had a quiet drink while the bird was otherwise occupied.

It is not unusual to see raptors in bird baths, but it reminded me of, what to me was an unusual sight, when a Whistling Kite was wading in the shallows of a rising estuary tide near Karumba. I had thought for a while that it was trapped as the tide rose around it and the kite didn't move, but when the water got to cover its lower back, it walked out of the water and after draining off, flew away. Presumably it was then refreshed.

**Rog Standen, Mt Eliza**



The face off.



Wallaby has a drink.



No goshawks here. Photos by Rog Standen

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