

# THE MELBIRDIAN

BOCA's MELBOURNE BRANCH (MELBOCA) NEWSLETTER NO. 53  
February 2007



## Melbourne Branch Meetings

Meetings are held at the Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Avenue, Balwyn, not far from the Balwyn Library, Melway 46 E8, on the fourth Tuesday of each month (with the exception of December) commencing at 8.00 pm. Entry is by a donation of \$4. Following the Guest Speaker and other business there is plenty of time to chat to friends over a cuppa and to listen to stories of their latest trips and bird sightings. Meetings are open to visiting BOCA members from country Victoria and from interstate and overseas.

## Future Speakers

**Tuesday 27 February 2007 8pm.**

**Jan Incoll & Alex Maisey "Survey Work with the Lyrebirds of Sherbrooke Forest".**

BOCA members, Jan and Alex have been working with the Lyrebirds of Sherbrooke for a number of years and look forward to sharing with us their forest experiences. Their talk and Alex's excellent photos promise a fascinating evening which will shed some light on this mystical bird.

**Tuesday 27 March 2007 8pm**

**Ken Gosbell "Following our migratory shorebirds to the Kamchatka Peninsula (Far East Russia)".**

Ken is chairman of the Australian Wader Studies Group and his PowerPoint presentation and photos will be of enormous interest to all who enjoy wader watching here in Victoria. Come along and see these same waders on their breeding grounds in the Northern Hemisphere.

## Melboca Committee

President	Graeme Hosken
Vice-President	David Plant
Secretary	Janet Hand
Treasurer	Bill Ramsay

## *Birds in Pastel Exhibition*

Eleanor Stephenson's exhibition, held in the Edna Walling Room at BOCA National Office over December 2006, was a great success, with lots of visitors viewing the paintings and a total of over \$2000 raised for the Australian Bird Environment Foundation (ABEF). Thank you very much Eleanor for your generosity.

Keith White of St Kilda was delighted to win the raffle—a painting of a Major Mitchell's Cockatoo.

Seventeen works of art, which was over 50% of the exhibits, were sold—a very pleasing result.

Eleanor kindly donated one of her paintings, a White-faced Heron, and this now hangs in the Edna Walling Room.

## Education Committee

### **Digital Photography for Beginners with Bob Young.**

Following the success of the Digital Photography courses over the past two years and Photography in the Bush at Nhill over Cup weekend 2006, Bob has put together a new course for 2007. The emphasis will be on learning to use all the automatic features of your digital camera and how to edit these images using the basic software which came with your camera.

Look for full details and booking information in this month's *Bird Observer*.

## Wednesday Wanderings – Warrandyte to Westgate

**Wed 7 February.** 9.45am. A bird survey of Herring Island, South Yarra/Toorak. Melway 2M C3. Make your own transport/parking arrangements. Meet at Como Landing at 9.45am for a 10am river crossing to the island. Carry lunch and drinks. Toilets on island. Walk finishes approx 2 pm.

**Wed 7 March.** 10am. Botanic Gardens, South Yarra. Melway 2L C2. Gate D. Toilets available. Suggest public transport for this outing. Carry lunch for a picnic on one of the lawns before walking along the Yarra into the city.

**Wed 4 April.** 10am. Birrarung Marr, Melbourne. Melway edit 31 2004, Map 593. Meet at Melbourne Visitor Centre, Federation Square for an upstream walk to Birrarung Marr, returning to city downstream along the south bank. Carry lunch to eat in Alexandra Gardens. *Enquiries Celia 03 9857 7337*

## City Peregrine

This photo of a female Peregrine Falcon in Melbourne was sent in by Martin O'Brien. Victor Hurley from the Department of Sustainability and Environment confirms it is one of four banded in the city in October 2006. Two others have already died (one hit a window and one died of Trichomonosis) and this one was taken into care for a week. She was treated and released back on the eyrie in November.

Let's hope she survives to breeding age and increases the numbers of these wonderful birds of prey in our city.



## Weekdays Outings Notes

**14 November 2006. Butterfield Reserve, Emerald.**

Trousers tucked into socks and ti-tree oil carried at both ends of the line to guard against leech attack, 28 birdos set off in single file along the east track at the Butterfield Reserve. Joan Peters led us on a day when we were very grateful for a change in the weather to light cloud and light breeze after the high winds of the previous days. We welcomed both Katrina Alcorn, the grand-daughter of Pauline and Arthur Spurgeon, and Pat Smith, who came with Elsmaree Baxter.

Grey Fantails flew close and aerobically while Sulphur-crested Cockatoos screeched overhead. Spotted Pardalotes called frequently but only a few in the group managed to see this tiny species and though we also heard Striated Pardalotes, no-one sighted one. This was not the case for Brown and Striated Thornbills which foraged in the foliage low and high beside the track. The White-throated Treecreeper called frequently and was seen by numbers of us, while the fortunate ones near the front of the file, were treated to good, brief views of a Rufous Fantail.

It wouldn't be the Dandenongs without Crimson Rosellas and they were present all the day, calling and perching in the trees and treeferns. The denseness of the vegetation means that birds are more identified by their calls, with bonus follow-up sightings in many cases. This was what happened with the Golden Whistler, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Little Raven, Laughing Kookaburra and Silvereye. On the other hand, the Grey Butcherbird and Pied Currawong called invisibly. Eastern Yellow Robins were quite abundant and one was observed tearing bark strips off a large Eucalypt and carrying them to a nest which seemed to be nearing completion in the crown of a treefern.

Heading back to the carpark for lunch, a few of us were pleased to observe a Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo fly over the road. Those who followed the calling of a Fan-tailed Cuckoo, managed to obtain glimpses of two of these birds before they became tired of the carpark area and moved on. Tree Martins were swooping to collect mud from the unsealed road close by and time was spent trying to identify the hollow branches they were using for nesting.

Some people needed to depart at lunchtime, but after a rest, 17 of us headed west for a short distance along a track through much feral vegetation. Few new species were added to the list in this area, so we returned to the cars and bird call. The total for the day was 42 species and much thanks was offered to Joan for leading such a pleasant day. (By the way, although leeches were seen, no-one was attacked.)

**27 November 2006. Jawbone Reserve and Newport Lakes.**

We assembled around Jane Moseley, our leader, in the carpark at Newport Lakes on a morning which was comfortably mild, clear and with only a slight breeze. Announcements over, the 22 of us carpoled and drove in convoy to the eastern end of Jawbone Reserve to take advantage of any birds foraging on the tide-exposed mudflats. There it was scopes out for those who had brought them and bins up for the rest of us. And the birding was rewarding. So many species crowded into such a small area so close to houses and a busy bike and walking path. Australian White Ibis nest on the rocks and among the reeds. The young were mostly fully fledged but still begging food from the adults. There was no difficulty in distinguishing between the age groups, the youngsters were clean white, while the adults were dingy shades of brown from foraging amongst rubbish and mud. Downwind of the rookery it was a bit wiffy, but that's par for the course for any crowded rookery. One of the highlights for many of us was the low overhead passes of several Whiskered Terns. These birds are really handsome in the black and shades of grey of their breeding plumage. Another highlight was the discovery by Christine of Pat's watch which she had lost on a reconnaissance trip several days previously. It was lying gleaming on the cracked clay soil and was unaffected by its exposure thanks to the dry weather.

Dave claimed a swimming Freckled Duck but none of us glimpsed the bird initially. Then we turned a corner a few minutes later and there was not one, but two, resting on a couple of rocks. Appropriate recognition to Dave from all was the order of the day.

There were so many birds that a list would be tedious to read—the bird list for this area was found to be 58 species—and it was noted that everyone was enjoying themselves so much that no-one was in any hurry to return to the cars and drive back for lunch. As well as the birds already mentioned, the list included

Black-winged Stilt, Great Crested Grebe, Red-kneed Dotterel, Australian Shelduck and Australasian Shoveler, while bushbirds included Crested Pigeon, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Clamorous Reed-Warbler, Superb Fairy-wren, Yellow-rumped Thornbill and Singing Honeyeater.

After lunching back at the Newport Lakes BBQ area, we followed the nature trail around the lakes. The area has been impressively reclaimed from its previous incarnation as quarries and we were interested to see several plaques commemorating people whose ideas and energy had helped create it. Many species were present in both birding areas on the day, though there were fewer birds here. As with everywhere in south-eastern Australia at present, the continuing dry has eliminated much of the understorey and thus removed habitat for bushbirds. Despite this the bird list included Brown Goshawk (seen by only a few), Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo and White-plumed and New Holland Honeyeaters, while the lakes yielded Darter and Great Cormorant as well as Australian Wood Duck. Several Purple Swamphens were whistled out of the scrub by a man, clearly a regular, with a small bag of seed. Near the causeway, the Mallards, Eurasian Coots and Hardheads all showed signs of being used to humans providing food.

Though it seemed that there had been few birds in this area, when it came time for bird call, there were 37 species on the list. The grand total for the day was 65 species in all and our gratitude was expressed to Jane for her planning and preparation which led to such a successful day.

*Diane Tweeddale, Weekdays Outings Convenor*

*Photo by Ian Parsons, taken at Butterfield Reserve*



## Unusual sighting: Platypus distracts birdwatcher

On a sunny, rather breezy Sunday in November, my wife and I headed to Birrarung Park, Bulleen for a picnic lunch and a walk along the Yarra River. We decided on a quick walk before lunch and took the path upstream. An Olive-backed Oriole entertained us with constant calls from a low branch. When we reached the top of a bank about 3 m above the river, I did the usual, scanning everything along the water for kingfishers.

While I was intent on this, my wife, standing just back on my right, kept saying, "Look at this, look at this". I finished scanning the banks and turned to her and followed her pointing hand down. Straight below us in the water, a Platypus was wallowing around. It went down, probably because of the way I was carrying on, and we could see a bubble trail. It came up again a few metres away, then resubmerged. We tried to spot bubble trails again. A couple of minutes later it resurfaced in the middle of the river, a few metres downstream from the first two sightings. It appeared to be a reasonably large specimen, having had a look at some of the mounts in the Museum of Victoria in Melbourne.

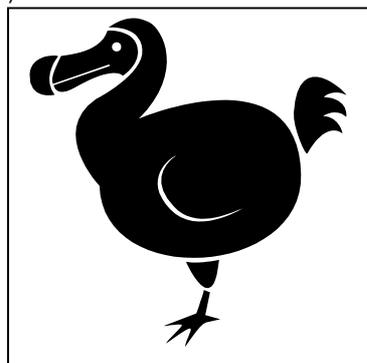
It was about 1.00 pm and gave me one of the two best sightings I've ever had of a Platypus in the wild. Sad to say, the park there is a bit of a wilderness. After lunch we walked downstream. There were dozens of rabbits running around, patches of thistles, blackberries and numerous other weeds. But sightings of Purple Swamphen, Grey Shrike-thrush, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Superb Fairy-wren and others, added to a memorable picnic.

Craig Robertson

## Trivia Questions for People Interested in Birds

Take time out and test your bird knowledge.

Quiz provided courtesy of the BOCA Library. Answers appear on page 6.



## Questions

1. What year was the Bird Observers Club formed?  
**bonus** if you can correctly place an apostrophe in the name of the original club.  
.....
2. Name three present day countries which once were part of Gondwana?  
**bonus** if you can name the modern avifaunal region of two.....
3. If Australia has a journal called *Emu*, and South Africa has a journal called *Ostrich*, what could you expect a South American journal to be called, and why?  
.....
4. The wingspan of the Wandering Albatross is approx a) 300 cm b) 500 cm c) 200 cm.  
.....
5. The Short-tailed Shearwater breeds in a) Japan b) Australia c) Korea d) China e) New Zealand.  
.....
6. The White-throated Needletail breeds in a) Japan b) Australia c) Korea d) China e) New Zealand.  
.....
7. **Underline** the non-passerines: Whistling-Duck; Ibis; Lyrebird; Woodswallow; Cockatoo; Pratincole; Dove; Turtle-Dove; Cuckoo; Cuckoo-shrike; Nightjar; Kingfisher; Drongo; Fairy-wren; Treecreeper; Swift; Pitta.
8. **Underline** if this is **not** the name of a penguin : Macaroon, Fiordland, Snares, Princess.
9. **Underline** if this is **not** the name of a honeyeater: Green-backed, Bridled, Striated, Graceful.
10. Where on a bird would you find the nictitating membrane? .....
11. Taxonomic name of the domestic fowl.  
.....
12. How long since the Dodo became extinct? ..... /where? .....
13. To which family of birds did the Dodo belong?  
.....
14. A dodo was one of the birds which fell into Alice's 'pool of tears' which she wept down the rabbit hole when she was 9 ft tall. Name one other bird which Alice met in the pool of tears.  
.....

## INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

Entered 19 December 2006

The following Field Reports were received from members attending the Melboca monthly meetings held at Balwyn on 29 November 2006, and Email or WEB reports to the BOCA National Office or myself. The reports include Currawong, Corella, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Brown Thornbill, Song Thrush and Crested Pigeon sightings within 60km Melbourne, plus other Field Reports.

### Currawong Sightings

#### Pied

28 Nov '06	1	Opher Rd	Mount Waverley
6-8 Dec '06	2	Purches Rd	Heatherdale

**Grey.** No sightings reported for this period.

### Corella Sightings

**Long-billed Corella.** No sightings reported for this period.

**Little Corella.** No sightings reported for this period.

### Crested Pigeon Sightings

Sep/Oct/Nov '06	4	Macbeth Street	Braeside
14/21 Oct '06	5/6	Box Hill Gardens	Box Hill
5 Oct '06	1	Fairmont Avenue	Camberwell
25 Oct '06	3	Fordham Gardens	Camberwell
Nov '06	2	Crematorium	Springvale
		Braeside Park	Braeside
		Devil Bend Reservoir	Hastings West
08 Nov '06	1	Koonung Reserve	North Balwyn
	2	Ruffy Creek Reserve	Doncaster
19 Nov '06	2	Huntingdale Wetlands	Mount Waverley
12 Nov '06	1	Frog Hollow Reserve	Camberwell
15 Dec '06	3	Robinlee Avenue	Burwood East

### Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo Sightings

2/7 Sep '06	5/6	Henderson Street	Reservoir
06 Nov '06	32	Golf Course	Ivanhoe
Early Nov '06	3	Union Street	West Brunswick
6/7/12 Dec '06	2/6/4		Bayswater
15 Dec '06	3	Koonung Reserve	North Balwyn

### Brown Thornbill Sightings

Oct & Nov '06	2	Magnolia Road	Ivanhoe
21 Oct '06	2	Athelston Road	Camberwell

### Song Thrush Sightings

Late Oct '06	1	Magnolia Road	Ivanhoe
Nov '06	2	Williamson Avenue	Strathmore

### Other Sightings

02 Sep '06	Powerful Owl (1)	Royal Botanic Gardens	Melbourne
	White-necked Heron (1)	Halliday Park	North Mitcham
14 Oct '06	Common Bronzewing (1)	Moule Street	West Brunswick
1-2 Nov '06	Freckled Duck (1)	Jawbone Reserve	Williamstown
North			
02 Nov '06	Aust. Spotted Crake (6)	Newhaven	Phillip Island
12-13 Nov '06	Regent Parrot (1) (possible escapee)	Rankin Road	Ferntree Gully

19 Nov '06  
26-28 Nov '06  
05 Dec '06

Latham's Snipe (2)  
Common Koel (1)  
Black-fronted Plover (2)

Waste Water Treatment Site Mt Martha  
Fawkner Park South Yarra  
Old Quarry, M'borough Rd E Burwood

Please note that the above records cover the area within 60km of the Melbourne GPO.  
Refer to Melway Street Directory, Pages 1 & 2.

Graeme Hosken, Recorder

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## Coach Tours

Melboca has appointed a new team of dedicated volunteers to run the popular coach tours and they have a full calendar of bus trips planned for you to enjoy in 2007. Please support them by participating in these fun excursions, and bring a friend—non-members are always welcome.

### Phillip Island

**Saturday 3 March 2007**

We will follow a flexible itinerary on this lovely holiday island, guided by Bessie Tyers of the local WESBOC Branch. Areas could include Rhyll for shorebirds and the Oswin Roberts Reserve.

Fare per BOCA member \$50.00, non-member \$55.00

### Bellarine Peninsula with Fred Smith

**Saturday 14 April 2007**

This area is a favourite of our leader, Fred Smith and there is always the possibility of a 'special' bird species amongst the waders. Possible areas to visit are Belmont Common, Reedy Lake, beach area of Black Rocks and Lake Lorne.

Fare per BOCA member \$45.00, non-members \$50.00

### To book for Coach Tours

Prepaid reservations only. Please post fare to BOCA, PO Box 185, Nunawading 3131, or for credit card bookings, phone Jenny or Mel on 03 9877 5342.

Late cancellations can be phoned in to the office, but for a refund, please confirm in writing. A cancellation fee will be charged.

Please dress appropriately for the weather and wear sensible walking shoes. Don't forget your binoculars, hat drinks & lunch. Extra baggage can be left safely on the bus when out walking.

Tours leave from outside the Hamer Hall (Melbourne Concert Hall), St Kilda Rd, Melbourne at 8.00 am sharp, returning approx 6.30 pm. Melway Map 2F G7.

## Answers to Trivia Questions Relating to Birds

1. **1905 bonus: Observers'.**
2. Australia, South Africa, South America, New Zealand. **Bonus:** Australian, Ethiopian, Neotropical.
3. **Rhea;** because they are all ratites.
4. Approx a) **300 cm.**
5. b) **Australia.**
6. a) **Japan** c) **Korea** d) **China.**
7. Whistling-Duck; Ibis; Cockatoo; Pratincole; Dove; Cuckoo; Nightjar; Kingfisher; Swift
8. **Macaroon, Princess.**
9. **Striated.**
10. **Eyelid.**
11. **Red Junglefowl.**
12. **About 325 years /Mauritius** 1681 or 1662.
13. **Pigeon.**
14. **Lory** (parrot), **duck, magpie, eaglet, canary.**

A vacancy exists at BOCA National Office  
In Nunawading for an

### Administrative Assistant

We require a person with well-rounded office  
experience,

Able to fit into a multi-skilled team and able to work  
with minimum supervision.

Experience with Microsoft Office products and  
accounting software is essential.

Knowledge of small business and retail sales would  
be an advantage.

Tasks include general office duties, accounts  
payable and shop stock control.

Salary, hours and conditions of employment  
negotiable according to skills and experience.

For further information contact Trish Teesdale at  
BOCA National Office  
Telephone: 03 9877 5342

Email: [admin@birdobservers.org.au](mailto:admin@birdobservers.org.au)