

THE MELBIRDIAN

MELBOCA (BOCA's Melbourne Branch) NEWSLETTER NO. 54
April 2007



MELBOCA 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.

Out-of-town members & visitors very welcome.

Future Speakers

Tuesday 24 April 2007 8pm. Dr Xenia Dennett, "The Long-term BOCA Survey of Western Port". For 35 years BOCA members and friends have conducted regular counts of the migrating waders and waterbirds within Western Port. The survey is a benchmark for monitoring the conservation status of palaeartic and Australasian waders and is an environmental indicator of the biological health of Western Port. Xenia, a participant for a number of years and currently convenor, is in an ideal position to discuss the survey results so far.

Bird of the Evening: the short DVD entitled "Mornington Station" will be shown. This Kimberley property is on the itinerary of BOCA's Extended Tour in July this year.

Tuesday 22 May 2007 8.00 pm. Howard Plowright "Jewels of the Arctic". Jill and Howard Plowright's memorable trip in 2006 to the Northern Hemisphere. From Longyearbyen, Spitsbergen, Svalbard, 74 degrees North then south to Iltoqqortoormiit, an Inuit settlement on the east Greenland coast, via the North Atlantic, by ice-strengthened ship and zodiac. Fjords, icebergs, glaciers, Polar Bears and some birds.

Bird of the Evening: Duncan Turnbull will talk about Nest Box Research.

MELBOCA Committee

President:	Graeme Hosken
Vice-President:	David Plant
Secretary:	Janet Hand
Treasurer:	Bill Ramsay
Celia Browne	Barb Longmuir
Linda Stock	Diane Tweeddale
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PO Box 185, Nunawading Vic 3131	

Past Meetings

23 January 2007. Janet Hand welcomed all and wished us a Happy New Year. She then introduced Ken Gosbell who was to give the **Bird of the Evening** talk, "Saemangeum Shorebird Monitoring Program". Ken told us that the Saemangeum Estuary area in South Korea is the largest reclamation of land in the world and unfortunately encompasses huge feeding grounds for masses of migratory shorebirds during their annual passage. Despite much opposition the program went ahead to enclose the area with a 33 km sea wall. Ken led a survey in April/May 2006 with the object of recording scientific facts regarding the results of this closure of the feeding grounds, in order to be able to present correct information if further such developments are planned.

Amongst the 250,000 shorebirds and waders seen during the survey were; Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Great Knot, Dunlin, Turnstone, Eastern Oystercatcher, Terek Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Noordmann's Greenshank and others—many of which were on a stopover en route to Australia. Ken's talk was accompanied by some

magnificent photographs. A new survey is planned for 2007/2008 and Ken requested either field or financial help to complete this. He emphasised the importance of accurate information that may be presented to prevent further degradation of such areas and he will be our guest speaker in March this year. This could be very important conservation work and deserves thought and support.

Roger Standen was then introduced to present his talk, "**Roebuck Bay**". Roger is an agriculturist, member of BOCA and Birds Australia, the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand and a consultant in natural resources and agricultural business management, having also taken part in parrot, Red Goshawk and waterbird and migratory wader surveys. Roger visited Roebuck Bay (near Broome in WA) in 2002 as part of the Australasian Wader Study Group (ASWG). Banding of the birds in breeding plumage left little time for sightseeing but nevertheless Roger produced a great exhibition of powerpoint images. The area consists of vast shallow tidal flats, mangroves, rocks and red cliffs, so a variety of shorebirds, waders and passerines can be observed in this, fortunately, somewhat remote area. When the tide goes out—it really goes out—5-6 km of mudflats being exposed. This provides a magnificent feeding ground for migrant birds, mudskippers, crabs and other wildlife. Also found in this area are dinosaur footprints. Broome Bird Observatory has set up a shadehouse and accommodation for those working in the area and also provides training programs for ornithologists. Roger showed photos of the Black-necked Stork, Oriental Cuckoo, White-breasted Whistler, Broad-billed Flycatcher, Mangrove Fantail and Eastern Reef Egret. At high tide the waders, including Bar-tailed Godwit and Whimbrel, are 'pushed up' the beach and can be observed and netted for banding on their way to their roosts. It is interesting to note the routine behaviour and distinct pecking order of these and other birds.

The birds may be banded by individual indentifying flaps which are numbered and can be read in order to track that bird over its local habitat. Also used are colour coded bands which identify the country of original banding. Some of these migratory birds have flown from northern Russia, down to Australia, and may well have used Saemangeum on their way. The breeding plumage of the Common Greenshank, Grey-tailed Tattler, Greater Sand Plover, Red-necked

Stint and Great Knot were well shown in the overhead display. Roger had noted that when the flocks leave they form a ragged 'V' formation and it is not unusual for a 'tail-end Charlie' to decide to abort the mission and turn back—whereupon the whole formation follows suit to await another go.

Apart from the waders, other seabirds such as gulls and terns abound, as well as passerines in the mangroves, e.g. Rufous-throated and Brown Honeyeaters, Great Bowerbirds, which may display a magnificent violet cape; Brown Goshawk and Double-barred Finch. Other wildlife is apparent, especially the Green Tree Frogs which get into the pipework in the shadehouse and can drown out conversation with their calls. Roger's amusing narrative and lovely illustrations show Roebuck Bay to be a great destination for itinerant birdwatchers. David Plant then gave the vote of thanks.

Announcements. Janet notified us that three members had passed away recently: Bob Shanks (a past president of BOCA), Peg Hendry and June Couper. The next *Bird Observer* would be the final one with Zoë Wilson as Editor, and we owe many thanks to her for her sterling work in the past. Sue Rochford will take over as Editor, and we are reminded that 'editor' does not mean 'author', so it is incumbent upon us to produce articles for the magazine. Eleanor Stephenson's lovely display of her pastels of birds and raffle of one of her artworks raised \$2000 for Australian Bird Environment Foundation funds—a great effort.

Tuesday 27 February 2007. David Plant chaired this very important meeting that was very well attended. In lieu of the Bird of the Evening we had a presentation by Ralph Kenyon, the CEO of the Port of Hastings Corporation (PoHC) detailing the Report on the **Port of Hastings Land Use and Transport Strategy**. The Port of Hastings is one of the 4 major ports in Victoria that have been earmarked for vast development in order to be able to keep up with commercial usage of the shipping trade that will inevitably use larger vessels and require changes in land rail and road links. In order to develop a strategic plan for submission to the State Government, a highly complicated consultation system has been set up which includes many areas of input from commercial, government and community sections over the last 18 months, reporting to an independent chairperson. Prior to any physical work being commenced an

Environmental Effects Statement has to be agreed upon, and each stage requires an individual EES. The system runs in many phases, and details of all this is available on the website: www.portofhastings.vic.gov.au.

Ralph used a powerpoint display to show maps of the projected areas already identified for expansion which includes much of already existing infrastructure. He acknowledged the sensitive nature of any development in this area due to the fact that part of it comes under the Ramsar envelope and also the current residential areas should be protected. As one would expect, any port expansion would have great impact on corridors of trade exiting and entering the actual port, and this aspect was also discussed.

A great deal of information was given in Ralph's talk and this can be read in the "Report on the Port of Hastings Land Use and Transportation Strategy Consultation Draft of September 2006" or accessed via the website. Any member of the public is able to have an input to this strategy. Written comments should be forwarded to Port of Hastings Corporation, PO Box 129, Hastings, Vic 3915. There are cut off dates for each stage so it is suggested a check on the website prior to submitting comments is made.

This is obviously a long term plan which may or may not have significant environmental effects, so further information and action is very important. Richard Hunter then gave the vote of thanks, stating that BOCA is part of the Western Port community by virtue of the number of surveys and observations regarding the birdlife done there.

The **Guest Speakers** tonight were Jan Incoll and Alex Maisey who gave a beautifully illustrated talk on **The Lyrebirds of Sherbrooke Forest**. Jan introduced Alex who is studying VCE at present and who has been involved with the Lyrebirds since the age of 11. Jan is part of the Superb Lyrebird Survey Group (which has been in existence for 49 years) and visits Sherbrooke Forest most days, especially recording new behaviours of these lovely birds.

The Superb Lyrebird is distributed down the eastern seaboard coast of Australia except for the Otway Ranges. Further north, Albert's Lyrebird is seen in Queensland. The Superb Lyrebird was introduced into Tasmania in 1934-49 and now may be a problem causing damage to herbage and thus other native species. Jan and Alex described the habitat which includes fern gullies with Mountain Ash trees but also

rocky outcrops in Southern Queensland. Availability of suitable food (insects, spiders and seeds) is the factor determining the 'livability' of the habitat. The Lyrebirds are a keystone species in moving dirt.

The birds nest from May to July, the nest varying from ground level to up to 80' up a tree and she showed pictures of such locations. The male builds a courtship mound upon which he displays and mates. Only a single egg is laid which takes 6 weeks to hatch and the chick has a 6 week nesting period, at which time it is most vulnerable to attack from predators such as foxes, feral cats and birds of prey. Jan showed a photograph of a fledgling being fed with the previous season's sibling trying to muscle in on the action. The Survey Group has a dawn survey to count the number of females which were 45 in 2005 and similar numbers in 2006. They band the chicks at the age of 1 month but have experienced difficulties with the bands, which may fall off or become difficult to read and colours indistinct with the debris on legs after scratching for food. Jan and Alex then showed pictures of unusual females which appeared to have male type tail development. The Group was very appreciative of the help given by the local community, Shire of Yarra Ranges and Parks Victoria. They assist the making of films and student projects and work with the Friends of Sherbrooke Forest in the restoration of habitat. It was interesting to note that the famous 'copy calls' may include very realistic fire sirens but never Puffing Billy that steams regularly through the locality. The future goals for the Survey Group are to improve the banding, introduce radio tracking and have DNA analysis as there still is much to learn about the Superb Lyrebird population—it is not known where the females go between one nesting season and another. We must thank Jan and Alex for all their work and lovely presentation.

Graeme Hosken then read out the interesting sightings and stated that reports of the Little Wattlebird are to be included in the future. Barbara Longmuir introduced the latest publication *Birds of Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula*, which is an invaluable publication on that area and to be recommended highly.

Linda Stock

**All MELBOCA members are invited to attend BOCA's
AGM Saturday 12 May 2007, 2.00 pm in the Edna
Walling Room, National Office, Nunawading**

Wednesday Wanderings – Warrandyte to Westgate

Wed 2 May. 9.45am. **Westgate Park, Fishermans Bend.**

Mel edn 31, Map 56 F1. Entry from Todd Rd. Parking & toilets available. Members of BOC Weekdays Outings Group birded here in March 1988 with Ellen McCulloch as leader, 30 species were listed. During the intervening years much has been accomplished to improve this area, so we hope to see even more birds. BYO chairs & join us for lunch after the walk.

Wed 6 June. 10am departure. **Boat Trip.** An invitation to all Wednesday Wanderers to join us as we cruise down the Yarra on the historic *Nepean* towards Williamstown and return. Meet 9.45am at Pier 9, Victoria Harbour, Docklands. Mel edn 31, Map 2E F5 (this is **NOT** Southbank). Cost of \$30 per person includes sandwich lunch, coffee, tea etc. Pay on board. This 3-hour trip will be the last outing in the 3-year program. Numbers are not limited, but I would appreciate a phone call 3rd or 4th June to get an idea. Contact Celia 9877 7337.

For public transport go to:
www.docklands.com/docklands/visit/gettingaround/byPublictransport.shtml

Or for drive and park go to:
www.docklands.com/docklands/visit/gettingaround/byRoad.shtml

A summary of the Wednesday Wanderings will appear in a later edition of *The Melbirdian*. If you wish this series of walks to be repeated, please consider acting as leader or coordinator. All the information is on file, all the hard work has been done! Contact Celia 9857 7337

Weekdays Outings Notes

12 February 2007. Bellarine Peninsula. The day was warm and the wind was rising as 18 birdos rendezvoused at the golf club carpark. Our leader, Fred Smith and the early arrivals had investigated the birdhide but it was decided to start birding on the walking track on the Common. All the area was exceedingly dry. The ephemeral wetlands on the golf course had no moisture at all and the only waterbirds were Straw-necked and Australian White Ibis, mostly distant. As we rounded the end of the Common wetlands where a shallow layer of water covered a small proportion of the mud, we were rewarded by

the sight of 6 Latham's Snipe foraging on the mud. Initially they were so crowded that all were visible in the same scope view. Rewarding viewing but a worry that perhaps resources are now extremely concentrated and localised. No ducks were using the Common at all in contrast to previous years when there had been considerably deeper water.

Next we drove in convoy out to Tait Point on Lake Connewarre. Here the wind was very strong and the birds showed more common sense than the birdwatchers and stayed mostly down and in shelter. Still, by finding a sheltered place behind some thick bushes, the use of scopes revealed first a Common Greenshank foraging on the far bank and then two Great Crested Grebes in the distance, mostly diving and very briefly appearing on the surface of the lake. Cormorants were well represented—Little Pied, Pied, Little Black and Great Cormorants flew past or perched on snags. A Great Egret was visible despite the wind shudder in binoculars and scopes and the sheer size of a pair of Australian Pelicans allowed them to be easily identified in spite of the wind. Moving on towards Blue Rocks and Beach, the tail of the convoy paused to search for Banded Lapwing in the roadside paddocks and were rewarded with sightings. A Skylark and a Singing Bushlark beside the fence line created quite a bit of interest. The house garden yielded House Sparrow, Common Myna, Welcome Swallow and Silvereye. The beach was very quiet, Silver Gull, Great Cormorant and a small flock of Red-necked Stints were the only species sighted. Even the dune line failed to yield the hoped-for chats or fieldwrens.

We moved on to the Barwon Estuary and lunched in the rotunda in the park. After a rather scrambled convoy, we were finally all watching ducks and a few waders on the mudflats. There were good views of an Eastern Curlew plus Crested Tern and an immature Pacific Gull. Next we drove to Lake Lorne in Drysdale where some water remained which supported a small population of waterbirds. The highlight here was the presence of a few Freckled Ducks. Black-fronted Dotterel and Black-winged Stilt joined Masked Lapwing near the water's edge while Hoary-headed Grebe, Eurasian Coot, Australian Pelican and Chestnut Teal were present in the deeper water. Beside the tracks of the heritage railway line, Yellow-rumped Thornbills foraged and a Willie Wagtail flicked its tail. The flowering eucalypts were almost finished

and few honeyeaters were present. We tried Reedy Lake but it was completely dry with only a brief sighting of Superb Fairy-wren, so as the day was now late, we paused for birdcall before separating for our homeward trips. The species total was 68 for the day—this is lower than in the past but none of us had ever seen the area so dry and so it was not surprising that both the species count and the number of individuals were low. We thanked Fred for his dedicated leadership for the day and his preparation in locating the birds that were found.

Diane Tweeddale
Convenor MELBOCA Weekdays Outings



MELBOCA's Education Project

MELBOCA is the largest of BOCA's branches with over half its total membership. Until now BOCA's public education program, within MELBOCA's area, has been the responsibility of the Education Coordinator, Annette Cook—whereas other branches look after education in their own areas with Annette supplying back-up.

In our area a very small group has worked with Annette on several programs but she has had to spend many hours 'in the field'. BOCA believes the best use of the Education Coordinator's time and expertise is for her to oversee the work of all branches, develop resources and where necessary, provide training to enable branch people to effectively carry out vital education work in their areas.

Education, aimed at increasing knowledge about our birds, their habitat and needs, covers many fields and can be as simple as manning a static display at a suburban fair or giving talks to Community Groups, Aged Care Homes or at schools. I have taken on the role of Branch Education Coordinator and to spread the work I need helpers. What tasks we take on will depend on your support. We will grow our Education Program as our support base grows.

Please contact me if you can help—no experience needed.

Janet Hand 9842 4177 or janeffh@dodo.com.au

Western Treatment Plant

As part of Melbourne Water's ongoing upgrade of the Western Treatment Plant, new sludge drying pans are to be constructed at the Farm. The contractor who will undertake this work is now setting up on site and will be using the 65 West Road as the main haul road between the construction site and their compound. With high traffic volumes expected, including heavy vehicles and machinery, it has been decided to close 65 West Road to all other traffic during the construction project.

65 West Road runs north-south just to the west of the 25W Lagoon and is normally designated as a route that is available to birdwatching permit holders during dry weather. But, from 2 March until construction is completed in December 2007 this road will be closed to all but construction vehicles. We understand that signs will be erected to direct birdwatchers to an alternative route (if one can be identified).

Mixed corella parentage

During the late afternoon of 16 February 2007, I was attracted by the calls of a young corella begging its parents for food. When I looked up I noticed that one parent, and the one doing most of the feeding, was a Long-billed Corella, while the other parent was a Little Corella. The juvenile bird looked like a smaller Long-billed Corella. The three birds flew around the area, keeping together and not mixing with other corellas. This took place in the treed grounds of the Bungalow Caravan Park on Burrill Lake, just south of Ulladulla in NSW.

Murray Haby, Box Hill South

BOCA Library

183-185 Springvale Road, Nunawading

BOCA Library really needs more volunteers to work in the Library once a month between the hours of 10.00 am and 3.00 pm on a weekday. Light duties, no experience necessary—we will show you what to do.

Pleasant surroundings, tea/coffee provided, books to read, videos or DVDs to watch and visitors to help or entertain.

Please contact Trish in the office if you are interested in helping out. Phone 9877 5342

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

Entered 28 February 2007

The following Field Reports were received from members attending the MELBOCA monthly meetings held at Balwyn on 23 January and 27 February 2007, Email and WEB reports to the BOCA National Office.

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

06 Jan '07	3	Cnr Ackland/Victoria Sts	St Kilda
Mid Jan '07	2	Hazel St	Camberwell
12 Jan '07	1	Ackland St	St Kilda
	3	Ackland St	St Kilda
15 Jan '07	3	St Leonards Ave	St Kilda
		(First sighting of Pied Currawongs in St Kilda, March 2005)	
23 Jan '07	4	Stafford Crt	East Doncaster

Grey

04 Jan '07	1	Sweetland Rd	Box Hill
05 Feb '07	1	Sweetland Rd	Box Hill

Corella Sightings

Long-billed Corella

Dec '06 – Jan '07	3-20	Ascot St	East Doncaster
		(Seen 2-3 times a week)	
26 Dec '06	20	Browns Reserve	Greensborough
?? Jan '07	4	Monash Freeway	Dandenong
26 Jan '07	7	Karkarook Park	Heatherton
30 Jan '07	2	Chester St	Oakleigh
07 Feb '07	2	Chester St	Oakleigh
		(On 3-storey building, pecking at rubber seal on windows)	

Little Corella

21 Jan '07	30+	Cnr Ballarto & Frankston-Hastings Rds	Skye
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Corella Species

13 Feb '07	(Several heard in the evening)	Braeside Park	Braeside
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Crested Pigeon Sightings

24 Oct '06	1	Main Street	Blackburn
25 Dec '06	2	Stornoway Rd	Camberwell
27 Dec '06	1	Koonung Creek Reserve	North Balwyn
29 Dec '06	4	Koonung Creek Reserve	North Balwyn
Jan/Feb '07	1	Neil St	Carlton
05 Jan '07	1	Surrey Park	Box Hill
07 Jan '07	6	Laburnum Primary School	Laburnum
08 Jan '07	1	Mooroolbark Heights Res	Mooroolbark
09 Jan '07	3	Murdoch St/Fairmont Ave	Camberwell
21 Jan '07	3	Koonung Creek Reserve	North Balwyn
31 Jan '07	2	Foreshore	Frankston
	2	Cobden St	Kew
?? Feb '07	1	Start of Hume Hwy	Fawkner
05 Feb '07	5	Blackburn High School	Blackburn
11 Feb '07	40	Golf Links	Sandringham
13 Feb '07	12	Cross Keys Reserve	Essendon
19 Feb '07	2	Koonung Creek Reserve	North Balwyn
Jan/Feb '07	3-8	In parks, streets & railway land, Newport	

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo Sightings

27 Oct '06	1	Blackburn Lake Sanctuary	Blackburn
19 Jan '07	3	Queens Rd	Albert Park
25 Feb '07	7	Coolart Wetlands	Balnarring

Brown Thornbill Sightings

01 Jan '07	2	Hazel St	Camberwell
31 Jan '07	2	Elmo Rd	Ivanhoe
14/15 Feb '07	2	Harrington Ave	North Balwyn
Most days of the year		Kerry Pde	Balwyn

Song Thrush Sightings

29 Dec '06	1A,1J	Allendale Cres	Wheelers Hill
08 Jan '07	1	Winters Way	Doncaster

Other Sightings

25 Oct '06	Scarlet Robin (6f)	Blackburn Lake Sanctuary	Blackburn
10-13 Nov '06	Blue-winged Parrot (1)	Margaret Rd (Emerald)	Avonsleigh
4-11 Dec '06	Buff-banded Rail (1)	Timms Crt (In garden)	Kilsyth
29 Dec '06	Pallid Cuckoo (1)	Koonung Creek Reserve	North Balwyn
26 Dec '06	White-winged Chough (12)	Swipers Gully Creek	Research
1-18 Jan '07	Superb Parrot (1) (poss escapee)	Tibbarri Ave	Mooroolbark
04 Jan '07	Australian Hobby (2)	Alma Park	St Kilda East
7/8 Jan '07	Common Koel (1)	Royal Botanic Gardens	Melbourne
08 Jan '07	Magpie Goose (1)	La Trobe University Wildlife Reserve	
10 Jan '07	Rufous Night-Heron (1)	Huntingdale Rd Wetlands	Mt Waverley
	Red-rumped Parrot (2)	Darling Park	Darling
	Sacred Kingfisher (1)	Blackburn Lake	Blackburn
12 Jan '07	Wedge-tailed Eagle (1)	Lillydale Lake	Lilydale
16 Jan '07	Common Koel (1)	Royal Botanic Gardens	Melbourne
20 Jan '07	Baillon's Crake (1)	Royal Botanic Gardens	Melbourne
	*Peregrine Falcon (1)	Beatty St	Ivanhoe
21/22 Jan '07	Common Koel (1)	McEvoy St	Kew
23 Jan '07	Common Koel (1)	Williamstown North Primary School	
25 Jan '07	Common Bronzwing (1)	Jacks Rd	South Oakleigh
26 Jan '07	Azure Kingfisher (1)	Wilson Reserve	Ivanhoe
	Brush Cuckoo (1)	Wilson Reserve	Ivanhoe
13 Feb '07	Barbary Dove (1)	Laverton St	Williamstown
19 Feb '07	White-cheeked Honeyeater (1)		
	Noisy Friarbird (1)	Banyule Flats	View Bank
Mid Feb '07	Noisy Friarbird (1)		East Doncaster
21 Feb '07	Red-rumped Parrot (2)	Sweetland Rd	Box Hill
26 Feb '07	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (6)	Flinders Street R'way Station	Melbourne

*Peregrine Falcon sighting at Kew. Simon Rogers reported that the Peregrine was hunting large black beetles for nearly five hours from 11.30am and it didn't mind the rain, cars or people walking just meters below. The beetle species was the Cowboy Beetle, *Diaphonia dorsalis*

Not a Melbourne report, but worth a mention. Has anyone seen this species in Lakes Entrance?

08 Jan '07 Common Myna (1) On Princes Hwy, 5km west of Lakes Entrance

Little Wattlebird. Do you have this species in your garden or a park near you?

MELBOCA is examining the spread of the Little Wattlebird from the inner-city, coastal area to the outer suburbs of Melbourne. MELBOCA welcomes your reports.

Information required: Observers Name, Address, Date of Record, Location of sighting, ie. Street, Suburb, Melway Ref, No. of birds. Forward info to BOCA PO Box 185 Nunawading 3131 or Email: gahosken@bigpond.com

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

Coach Tours

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 Melody 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.

Inaugural New Look Bus Trip – Phillip Island

It was a fine, clear day on Saturday 3 March, with a scattered but artistic selection of clouds in the sky, and the promise of a rewarding experience for the first bus trip of the year to Phillip Island. It was also the first undertaken in a very effective 22-seater bus, and the first organised by volunteers, Veronica Goodwin, Jenny Mortlock and Lana Tinsley, who can be justly pleased with its smooth running.

After our 'coffee stop' at Tooradin, we entered into the spirit of the day with Birdlotto. There were wildly varying guesses at how many birds would be seen. In the end we saw 62 species for the day, which, considering the time of year and the drought conditions (Phillip Island is on Stage 4 restrictions), made for a satisfying day. Those whose accurate estimates were initially regarded as pessimistic, had their realism rewarded with some lovely prizes.

On arriving on Phillip Island we met our helpful and knowledgeable guide, Bessie Tyers, a Rhyll resident, at Conservation Hill Park. Although we had begun bus-birding as soon as we crossed the bridge to the island, and had seen such interesting species as Cape Barren Goose, our first steps off the bus here were greeted

with the sight of a tree containing not less than four species of honeyeater. Among other birds close to the carpark we tracked down Brown Thornbill and an elusive but vociferous Grey Currawong. After morning tea in this spot (we don't do without the necessities on these trips), we set off through bushland to emerge onto a path leading to Rhyll Inlet, which has an extensive mangrove forest. We then walked around the cliff path, with magnificent sea views. This walk gave us more birds, such as Great Egret, Bar-tailed Godwit, Pacific Gull and Pied Oystercatcher. Other notable sightings included a scampering Swamp Wallaby and a Copperhead Snake, thankfully slithering away.

It had become quite hot and windy, but by the time we had reached the bus, which had shifted for our convenience, we were treated to thunder and lightning, followed by a few spots of rain, which provided the opportunity to sight White-throated Needletails. We had also worked up an appetite, and were glad to be reunited with our food supplies and transported to a local park for lunch. Of course, lunchtime doesn't mean we stop birding—we multi-task. Some of the lunchtime discoveries were Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Galah and the unmistakable sweet twittering, and bright green feathers accentuated by red, of Musk Lorikeets in a nearby flowering eucalypt. Our last venue for the day was the Oswin Roberts Reserve, which provided swampland and a coastal walk on the part of Phillip Island opposite Churchill Island. It was fortunate that the swamp still had some water, and therefore we observed quite an array of birds here, while a Swamp Harrier cruised the nearby area. These included Cape Barren Goose, Royal Spoonbill, Hoary-headed Grebe, Silvereye, White-fronted Chat and close, sustained views of a pair of richly-coloured Grey Shrike-thrushes. After this we took a short coastal walk passing ancient Moonah trees, and, when the wind strengthened with the cool change, we watched many small birds, like thornbill, Silvereye, European Goldfinch and House Sparrow, take shelter in the She-oaks. Out to sea a lone Musk Duck was diving, while on some rocks were resting Pacific Gull, Crested Tern and assorted cormorants. We finished our day at this venue with a short walk to the Churchill Island Bridge, seeing much the same collection of birds, but a really clear and close look at some Royal Spoonbills.

After the bird count for the day we headed home via another 'coffee stop' at Tooradin, arriving at the Art Centre in very good time. It was an enjoyable day, and many thanks must go to the organisers, Veronica, Jenny and Lana, to Diane Tweeddale for the bird count, to Bessie, our local guide, for generously giving her time, and our trusty bus driver.

Don't dream about getting out of Melbourne to see the birds in very congenial company, sign up for the next trip!