



The Melbirdian

MELBOCA Newsletter Number 68
August 2009

Winter Watching

Volunteers conducting the Dandenong Catchment Survey had to brave damp, misty mornings at most sites during May and June.

The birds were often inactive, absent due to the cold conditions or, if seen, perched in exposed areas waiting for some warmth from the low winter sun to penetrate.

But, despite the conditions, three sites had new species added to their lists. At Frog Hollow Wetland, a Nankeen Kestrel was recorded; at River Gum Creek, a high-flying Striated Pardalote landed in a dead tree, providing the opportunity for positive identification; and at Hallam Valley Road, an Intermediate Egret was recorded. Was this the same Egret recorded at Waterford Wetlands during the last survey period, a species rarely seen in Southern Victoria?

In June, the MELBOCA Weekday Outing visited River Gum Creek Wetland in the morning and added two new species for the site: a pair of Long-billed Corellas and a female Golden Whistler, the latter a new bird for all the six MELBOCA sites. On the same day, a pair of Scaly-breasted Lorikeets was also recorded in the same Red Gum that they had previously been spotted in on survey days during July, August and October last year. Both the Scaly-breasted and the Long-billed were eyeing off nesting hollows in the Red Gum. Breeding records next?

We are now into the third year of the Melbourne Water contract and of the six sites being surveyed by MELBOCA, 128 bird species, three frog species, four mammal and at least one fish species have been noted.

If you haven't visited any of the sites, an enjoyable few hours birding can be recommended at five of the six locations but, unfortunately, access is not available to Waterford Wetlands due to security arrangements. The Melway reference for all sites is shown on the insert listing. Why not pay one or all a visit!

Graeme Hosken



Australasian Darter, photo, Arthur Carew

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MELBOCA Branch Meetings

MELBOCA branch meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of every month (except December) in the Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Avenue, Balwyn, not far from the library (Melway 46 E8). The

meeting begins at 8 pm and features a guest speaker and a members' choice segment – so be sure to attend! Entry is by a donation of \$4. Out-of-town members and visitors are always welcome!

Upcoming Guest Speakers

Tuesday 25 August 2009, 8.00pm

Jack Krohn 'Biosphere and Green Wedges: Perspectives on Melbourne's Hinterland'

Jack is on the Board of the Biosphere Reserve Foundation as well as being Manager of Green Wedges, a Department of Planning and Community Development project directed at protecting non-urban land uses in the Melbourne Metropolitan area.

These are development and conservation issues which affect us all, don't miss what should be a fascinating talk!

Tuesday 22 September 2009, 8:00pm.

Victor Hurley 'Breeding Biology of Major Mitchell's Cockatoo at Pine Plains'

Victor will share with us 12 years of monitoring data on Major Mitchell's Cockatoo and the conservation actions adopted in the mallee to encourage its recovery.

Past Meeting Reports

26 May 2009

Chris Wichems welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the first guest, **Howard Plowright**, who presented the Bird of the Evening, an audiovisual presentation of bird song.

First up was the screech of the Sooty Owl, followed by a highly amplified recording of the very soft interaction between male and female owls close to the nest site. The next call was a mystery call from Gundabooka National Park, near the Darling River, some 80 km from Bourke. This call, which had most baffled, turned out to be a rusty windmill with a Red-backed Kingfisher in the background. The many Red-winged Parrots in the trees next to the river were impossible to record because of the wind factor.

On the river-bank, an unusual six-note call, evidenced by six blips on the screen, was identified as a Red-browed Pardalote. Next was a territorial fight between an adult and sub-adult Red-capped Robin, harsh chirping interspersed very occasionally with the familiar trill. The fight lasted into the next day and was keenly observed by a female Red-capped Robin (and Howard). Following this was a duet between a Grey Shrike-thrush and a Rufous Whistler. To conclude, we heard a dawn chorus of Budgerigars, Woodswallows, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters and Bellbirds.

The Guest Speaker for the night was **Jane Crouch**, a member of the Climate Project. Personally trained by Al Gore in 2007, Jane illustrated her talk with many pictures, graphs and tables.

Jane first addressed the question, *What is global warming?*

As seen from space, the Earth's atmosphere is like the thin brown skin of an onion: a very thin outer layer. As the sun's radiation reaches the Earth, most of it is transformed by atmospheric and surface processes, but some of it is reflected back out into space as infra-red rays. Some of these rays can become trapped by the atmosphere and warm the planet. Before mass industrialisation, this warming effect was limited and did not pose a threat. Now, as we continue to pollute the atmosphere with greenhouse gases, we thicken the atmosphere, and more and more of these infra-red rays become trapped.

Jane then moved on to *Evidence of change*.

We saw photographic evidence of the retreat of many of the world's glaciers, some of which may disappear within

four to fifteen years time: Mt Kilimanjaro; Boulder Glacier; and, in New Zealand, the Tasman Glacier and the Franz Joseph Glacier. Australia itself has 34 glaciers in its territories. The Brown Glacier on subantarctic Heard Island has retreated 1.3 km and will soon be the Brown Lake. We saw videos of glacier calving (collapsing) in Alaska. If all the Greenland ice sheet melts, or half the Greenland ice sheet and half the Arctic, the sea level will rise by 6.5 m.

Ice coring provides an accurate indication of past atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide and fluctuations in the Earth's temperatures. Rises in the Earth's temperature coincide with higher levels of carbon dioxide.

Changing weather patterns provide evidence as well. Seven of the ten hottest years on record have occurred since 2001. 2005 was the hottest year globally on record. In Europe there was a massive heat wave and a reported 35 000 people died. In parts of Australia there has been a dramatic decline in rainfall. In New South Wales and

Victoria there has been an increase in bushfire activity. Days of very high heat and extreme fire danger are predicted to increase by 25% by 2020 and by 75% by 2050. The CSIRO predicts less water, more risk of fire, less snow, less frost damage and changes in species – effects both desirable and undesirable.

Storm activity is also becoming more extreme. As the ocean's temperature is hotter, the wind velocity is greater; more moisture is sucked up and hurricanes are subsequently more extreme. Cyclone Monica, 2006, in northern Australia, was the most intense storm ever in the Southern Hemisphere.

We are entering a *Period of consequence*. There will be a steady increase in natural disasters like bushfires, floods and storms.

There have been floods in Asia and Europe. In China, as in Australia, there are extremes in climate: floods in Shandong Province, but drought in Anhui; floods in Queensland, covering an area larger than Victoria and New South Wales combined, but drought in most of southern Australia. Ingham in Queensland received more rain in one month than Melbourne has had in the last four years. The sea is encroaching on the Pacific Islands. The countries with the fewest resources will bear the heaviest burdens.

Climate Change – Online resources

Find out more about the important issue of Climate Change and what you can do with these useful online resources:

- <http://www.csiro.gov.au/science/Climate-Change.html>
- <http://www.whoonearthcares.com/saveicons/>
- <http://connectors.acfonline.org.au/>
- <http://www.greenelectricitywatch.org.au/>
- <http://www.giss.nasa.gov/>
- <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/change/>
- <http://www.greenpower.gov.au/>
- <http://www.greenelectricitywatch.org.au/>

The WWF has grave predictions for the ecological health of the Coral Triangle. Australia will be faced with increasing numbers of climate refugees. Increases in temperature will bring about many changes: pole-ward species migration, weeds and invasive species, changes to the distribution and abundance of species, changes in phenology, species loss and genetic changes to species.

In the Republic of Costa Rica, higher sea temperatures have led to higher cloud level on the mountains, enabling the Keel-billed Toucan to expand its range and threaten the existence of the Resplendent Quetzal. Because of hotter temperatures in the US, the Western Pine Beetle is attacking the western pine forests and spruce trees in Alaska. In Australia, Gamba grass brought in from Africa for cattle feed is thriving in the heat, which is bad news on the bush-fire front.

“The climate plays a large role in the breeding cycle of the Helmeted Honeyeater. Studies from 1998 to 2004 showed that less rain and increased temperatures lead to earlier breeding and fewer eggs.”

The climate plays a large role in the breeding cycle of the Helmeted Honeyeater. Studies from 1998 to 2004 showed that less rain and increased temperatures lead to earlier breeding and fewer eggs.

Elevated carbon dioxide levels will increase the acidity of the seas which will lead to coral erosion, disruption of food chains, changes to photosynthesis and respiration. Coral reefs are the rainforests of the oceans, with a great number of species sheltering there. By 2020, the Great Barrier Reef could be regularly bleached.

Infectious diseases will increase as will the number of disease-bearing insects, such as fleas and mosquitoes. Dengue fever from Cairns could migrate south. There will be altered rainfall and run-off patterns. River flow will be down in places, elsewhere there will be lowland flooding, loss of wetland habitats and the disappearance of migratory birds.

Climate change will hasten extinctions. The North Queensland White Lemuroid Possum has been declared extinct and the Mountain Pygmy Possum is on the brink. In the last 100 years, about 60 000 species have become extinct. There will be decreased habitat and food supplies for penguins. Breeding of krill is also impacted by ice melt. The 2008 level of sea ice was the lowest of all time.

Maps of the world will have to be redrawn. The Maldives may not survive as it is only 2.45m above sea level. The coasts of Florida and the Bay of Bengal will be eroded away as will large parts of China.

The causes and what needs to be done.

The first cause Jane noted was the population explosion. In 1776 there were 1 billion people in the world. In 2050 there will be 9.1 billion. Developing nations' populations are increasing exponentially.

The scientific and technological revolutions have also contributed. Development is occurring on a large scale with unforeseen environmental damage. The greenhouse gas emissions per capita of Americans and Australians are very high, forty times that of India and China. In Australia 50%

of our emissions are from electricity generation.

We have to change our way of thinking because we possess solutions to the problem. Our emissions must peak by 2016. Australia needs a target reduction of 30% by 2020. In California, renewable energy is 13% of all energy use, in Australia, it is 3%. We need to invest in wind farms and solar energy, energy efficiency and clean transport. In the first half of 2008 the fossil fuel industry spent \$668 million to fight policy change in the energy sector. The Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme rewards big polluters. Cost and energy-effective house improvements should be encouraged. 'Standby mode' devices use 10% more energy than needed. Jobs could be created in expanding wind power. There is enormous potential for solar energy – already 25 000 homes in Australia use it.

Action must be taken before 2010. The December 2009 Copenhagen negotiations are crucial.

Jane concluded her presentation with the question, *How can we help to achieve this?* Sign up to Green Power. 100% green power costs \$5 a week extra. The average home emits eight tons of greenhouse gas a year. It could be reduced to half a ton, by using, among other things, solar hot water, insulation and an HRV system.

Chris Lester then thanked Jane for her interesting talk. **Graeme Hosken** invited all to talk about interesting sightings and the evening closed with supper.

Sunny Fernie

23 June 2009

The June meeting started with MELBOCA's AGM. This was conducted by the President, **Graeme Hosken**. The minutes of the previous AGM, President's and Treasurer's Reports were presented and accepted. Sunny Fernie, Bill Ramsay and Diane Tweeddale were re-elected, while the two vacancies were filled by Andrew Fuhrmann and John Young. Arthur Carew, Janet Hand, Graeme Hosken and Geoff Russells' terms run until June 30th, 2010. Office Bearers will be decided at the Planning Day in July.

Before our Guest Speaker took the stand, John Barkla (BOCA President) presented Xenia Dennett with her Distinguished Service Award. Xenia has contributed 40 years of distinguished service on many BOC/BOCA committees. Full details of her service are in June's *Bird Observer*. Congratulations Xenia!

Richard Loyn was our Guest Speaker with a presentation entitled 'Birds and Places in Chile and Argentina: Coast to Andes, Forest to Desert, Patagonia and Atacama'. Richard explained that this was really a family holiday to Antarctica with his wife, daughter and three friends but they also took in Chile and Argentina before and after Antarctica.

Continued on page 6

Interesting Sightings

An Interesting Sighting is a sighting of a species not generally seen in that location which may be of interest to bird-watchers, but is not as significant as an Unusual Sighting. An Unusual Sighting is when a species is seen in a location where it does not normally occur, or at a time of year when it is not normally present. Unusual Sightings may also involve unusual behaviour or unusual numbers of the species in question.

MELBOCA is collecting reports of **White-plumed Honey-eater**, **Eastern Spinebill** and **Noisy Miner** sightings within 50 km of Melbourne, plus other Field Reports. MELBOCA is very interested in the apparent disappearance of the White-plumed Honeyeater from the Melbourne suburbs. Is

this the case in your area? If so, are Noisy Miners present?

If you would like to provide a sighting or breeding report on any of these species, please forward the information to MELBOCA, c/o BOCA, PO Box 185, Nunawading VIC 3131 or email gahosken@bigpond.com. Be sure to include name, address, date of record, location of sighting (i.e., street, suburb, post code, Melway reference) and the number of birds sighted.

The following Field Reports were received from members attending the MELBOCA monthly meetings held at Balwyn on 26 May and 23 June 2009, via email, or as web reports to the BOCA National Office.

Noisy Miner

Member comments: The following report received from a friend of a member who lives in Eltham: since Noisy Miners entered her garden eight years ago, Silvereyes, Thornbills and Eastern Spinebills have not been seen, and Red Wattlebirds numbers have decreased markedly.

Of the six sites that MELBOCA are surveying in the Lower Dandenong Catchment for Melbourne Water during May and June, two sites recorded Noisy Miners.

No other reports received.

White-plumed Honeyeater (WPHE)

Member Comments: Of the six sites that MELBOCA are surveying in the Lower Dandenong Catchment for Melbourne Water, during May and June, five sites recorded WPHEs.

No other records received.

Eastern Spinebill

Date	No. Recorded	Street/Location	Suburb
Most days 2009	1-2	Bennett Ave	Mt Waverley
Feb.-May 2009	1		Black Rock
Feb.-Jun 2009	2+	Russell St	Surry Hills
Apr.-Jun. 2009	1-3	Magnolia Rd	Ivanhoe
May-Jun. 2009	1	Winters Way	Doncaster
14 Jun. 2009	1	Andrew St	Oakleigh

Bush Fire Birds

Since March, MELBOCA has received many reports of small to large flocks of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, presumably searching for food, more often than not in large pine trees with plenty of cones. Members have also noted other bird species appearing in their gardens for the first time. Has your garden or a park nearby been visited by a 'new' species since the fires?

Perhaps the Common Bronzewing and Bassian Thrush listed (p.5) are Bush Fire Birds?

On Black Saturday 7 February 2009, a BOCA member who lives in Montmorency, and has two large trees in the backyard, witnessed approximately 60 birds of various species, including Musk and Rainbow Lorikeet, Little Corella, Noisy Miner, Common Myna and Magpie, perched on bare branches facing the strong, hot north wind, all with their bills open. A large dish of water was available in one of the trees but none of the birds attempted to drink. An unusual sighting.

Interesting Sightings (cont'd)

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo

Date	No. Recorded	Street/Location	Suburb
08 Apr. 2009	55	Near Valley Reserve	Mt Waverley
18 Apr. 2009	40	Near Valley Reserve	Mt Waverley
22 Apr. 2009	45	Near Valley Reserve	Mt Waverley
Late Apr. 2009	200+	Near Finns Reserve	Templestowe
14 May 2009	14	Torroodun St (feeding on liquid amber seed pods)	Mt Waverley
18 May 2009	3		Hughesdale
22 May 2009	5	Dominion Rd	Mt Matha
23 May 2009	2	Near Valley Reserve	Mt Waverley
30 May 2009	12	Braeside Park	Braeside
Late May 2009	6		Sandringham
10 Jun. 2009	20	Lilian Pde	Eltham
12 Jun. 2009	32	Braeside Park	Braeside
24 Jun. 2009	37	Main St	Eltham

Other Sightings

Date	Sighting	Street/Location	Suburb
01 May 2009	Pied Currawong (1 – a first for the area?)	Neville St	Carnegie
05 May 2009	Collared Sparrowhawk (1 – attacking Crested Pigeons)	Doris St	Murrumbeena
14 May 2009	Bassian Thrush (1)	Torroodun St	Mt Waverley
18 May 2009	Common Bronzewing (1)	East Camberwell Railway Station	East Camberwell
23 May 2009	Common Bronzewing (1)	Valley Reserve	Mt Waverley
24 May 2009	White-bellied Sea-Eagle (1); Common Sandpiper (1); Diamond Dove (1 – new bird for ETP)	Eastern Treatment Plant	Carrum
27 May 2009	Black Kite (1)	Kelletts Rd	Rowville
01 Jun. 2009	Powerful Owl (1 – overnight only); King Parrot (2)	Wattle Park	Burwood
04 Jun. 2009	Gang-Gang Cockatoo (1)		Wheelers Hill
10 Jun. 2009	Gang-Gang Cockatoo (1)		Mt Waverley
13 Jun. 2009	Azure Kingfisher (1)	Rufey Lake Park	Doncaster
17 Jun. 2009	Collared Sparrowhawk (1 – feeding on a Spotted Dove)	Henry St	Cheltenham East
20 Jun. 2009	Common Bronzewing (1)		Mt Waverley

Note: The Pied Currawong sightings (01 May 2009) are included as they may be the first for these suburbs. (GAH)

All MELBOCA Outing reports may be found on the MELBOCA Website, www.melboca.org.au.

Graeme Hosken, Recorder

MELBOCA Education Report

In February, I gave a presentation for St Valentine's Day on the courting habits of our birds to an aged care facility in Camberwell. In late April, more than 50 people braved the rain and hail to hear me speak at the Glen Waverley Salvation Army Friendship Centre. The following week I also spoke at Lionsbrae in Ringwood.

These presentations utilise birds from our skins collection, bird calls and photographs. The elderly residents appreciate a special visitor and usually have lots of interesting questions and observations. Often the staff and carers sit in on the presentations and tell me later that they also have learnt to look at birds differently.

Graeme Hosken and Geoff Russell ran the first Stickybeaks Day at Blackburn Lake in April. Graeme and Diane Tweeddale will have conducted a second Stickybeak Activity Day, at the same venue, by the time this edition of *The Melbirdian* goes to press.

Currently, Graeme is finalising details of his visit to a Primary School in the North-Eastern suburbs and a talk on plants and birds in a Bunnings hardware store in Oakleigh.

I represented MELBOCA at an Education Planning Day held on Sunday 21 June at the BOCA National Office. Annette Cook (BOCA Education Co-ordinator) planned the day to bring together Branches and Affiliated Group representatives to put forth an achievable education program

for the next 5 years. With Ian Boyd from Townsville, via Skype, and representatives from Wagga Wagga, Sydney, Warrnambool and Ballarat, as well as closer regions, it was a very valuable exchange of ideas and resources.

On Saturday, 25 July, MELBOCA conducted a New Members Day information morning on behalf of BOCA. During July, Barbara Longmuir made a return visit to speak at the Halcyon Day Centre.

October and November will see the usual springtime explosion of activities. We have already committed to the Yarra Yarra Australian Plant Society Wildflower Show in Templestowe on 10 and 11 October and the Breakfast with the Birds at Banyule on Sunday, 25 October. MELBOCA is planning a Wader Identification night in November for members, which will be followed by a field trip on the following Sunday to the Western Treatment Plant. Keep watching for more details and how to book. Graeme is also booked to address a Neighbourhood Watch group in Murrumbidgee in December.

Anyone interested in assisting or being an 'apprentice' to the more experienced members, please contact me – with nearly 1500 members living within 50km of Melbourne, there must be others looking for a new challenge.

Janet Hand, MELBOCA Education Officer

Past Meeting Reports (Cont'd)

They arrived by plane at the Santiago airport on the central Chilean coast and travelled south in a hire car. Beautiful photos of subalpine vegetation, flowers and birds, including a beautiful Chilean Swallow, Austral Pygmy Owl and an Andean Condor flashed across the screen.

Travelling by bus into Argentina, the scenery remained spectacular which included a creeping glacier. After leaving South America they headed for Antarctica. We were given quick glimpses of ice-scapes and birds before returning to Cape Horn and heading north to Buenos Aires.

They were now in a warmer area, near Iguassu Falls, where rainforests, butterflies and lizards caught their attention. Another plane flight took them to Salta in north-west Argentina. A minibus (not what they planned) took them

across ranges and valleys, past deserts and salt lakes and over the Andes. They reached the Atacama Desert and obtained a hire car. This area had three species of Flamingos as well as tropical geysers. An old Inca trading area was passed before heading up the Andes and as far as the Bolivian border.

On the coastal side of the range were foggy lowlands with Hummingbirds and Turkey Vultures. They sought accommodation in a motel before departing and found it was near a large seabird roost, so many more species were added. Richard had been to South America before, but on this family holiday managed to tick about 270 species, which included 70 new ones.

Len Robinson thanked Richard for his fast-moving presentation.

After some words from John Barkla and Daphne Hards, the evening concluded with the current activities calendar, notices and cuppa and chat.

Janet Hand



Xenia Dennett receives her well-deserved DSA from BOCA President, John Barkla, at the MELBOCA Meeting on 23 June, 2009. Photo, Bill Ramsay

In a North Fitzroy Garden ...

For some time now I have thought that I really must send in a dispatch about the wonderful array of birdlife in my small North Fitzroy garden. The garden measures approx. 12m by 5m with a dead apricot tree and a rather shabby photinia. There is also a patch of what is trying to be lawn, two birdbaths, a veggie patch, and a lime tree in a tub.

We are located about 500 metres from the Merri Creek.

First, the usual suspects: three pairs of Common Mynas, House Sparrows (nesting in the eaves), Blackbirds, Red Wattlebirds, way too many Common Starlings and a female Spotted Turtle-Dove with her parade of consorts and babies – when they come along. Rainbow Lorikeets come down from a nearby stand of gumtrees when the fruit trees next door are in season. I have also seen Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos from time to time flying over (in fact, just this minute, I have seen three groups of about 10) and, more recently, Galahs. Occasionally, I hear Grey Butcherbirds and Pied Currawongs too.

My pretty little favourites, White-plumed Honeyeaters, up to five, visit almost daily but tend to hang around less than they used to for some reason. The most delightful thing is to watch them bathing – they have a way of diving into the birdbath from directly above, somersaulting and then shooting straight back up into the tree. This acrobatic display can go on for quite a while.

Up to three Song Thrushes visit (hooray for the snails!) but it seems only at certain times of year. Once, to my great excitement, they began constructing a nest in the photinia, but shortly abandoned it. It was a windy day.

In the past two years, one or two New Holland Honeyeaters have appeared and are now regular visitors. Recently, a pair of Willie Wagtails has taken up residence nearby and they visit to raid the insects around the veggie patch. An Eastern Spinebill has been seen several times in June. A few months ago, there were a group of Silvereyes in the persimmon tree next door. It took a while for me to identify them as they are so small and frisky.

One exciting day last year, in October, I saw a large, confused-looking green and red parrot on the grass. I did not want to scare it, so I observed from my large kitchen window. After consulting Pizzey and giving the thing much consideration, I identified it, to my amazement, as a Swift Parrot. It was the long, red tail that sealed it. It had a metal ring on its leg and I thought I should probably report it to someone. Via BOCA, I eventually got on to Birds Australia who agreed that it did indeed sound like a Swift Parrot and suggested I photograph it. In my excitement, I had not thought of finding the camera until that point and by then it had disappeared over the fence.

Finally, in early March this year, my husband reported a Nankeen Night-Heron sitting by a small, artificial pond in the concrete courtyard of St Vincent's Hospital late one night as he was leaving.

So, as you can see, there is quite a bit going on in this inner-city neck of the woods!

*Celia Godfrey
June 2009*

Reunion at the BOCA Centenary Plantation

Four years have gone by since we planted 500 commemorative native trees and shrubs around Banyule Wetlands. Despite harsh conditions, the plants have flourished. On Sunday, 30 August, we are staging a reunion picnic to admire these hardy saplings and to remove the tree guards.

Even if you did not participate in 2005, come along and join us for what should be a great day out. There are always birds to see at this great location.

As it will be toward the end of winter, we hope the weather will be suitable for a picnic after we've tackled this long-overdue job. So rug up, BYO chairs, lunch and binoculars,

plus the all-important gardening gloves for pulling stakes and large scissors for cutting the plastic guards.

Do you remember the numbers of your trees? Celia Browne will have her records on hand so you can find them.

Sunday 30 August – Banyule Flats Reserve, Heidelberg – 11:00 am (Melway Map 32 F2) – car park off Somerset Drive

Birding Taken to New Heights

As some MELBOCA members will no doubt already be aware, Mt Arden Station, north of Port Augusta, South Australia, probably Australia's most reliable site to get a tickable Ostrich, is no longer accessible to birders.

However, not to be deterred, on 15 May 2009, three enterprising Melbourne birders, Brian Johnston, Ken Baker and Tania Ireton, overcame the problem by hir-

ing a light plane, complete with pilot, from a local airfield to hunt out the Ostriches from above.

After about an hour of flying over Mt Arden Station at a height of 150 m, Tania called "Ostrich" and the party had great views of a pair of Ostriches with nine young chicks. Flying at 150 m did not disturb the livestock or birds below.

Outing Report

Weekday Outing

16 June 2009

River Gum Creek Wetland, Hampton Park and Wilson Botanic Park, Berwick

A change in venue from Murrindindi, an area damaged on Black Saturday, 7 February, led us to two new sites not previously visited on a MELBOCA outing.

The morning's visit was to River Gum Creek Wetland in Hampton Park, one of 10 wetlands being surveyed by BOCA under a three-year contract for Melbourne Water. During the first two years of this contract, over 90 bird species have been recorded at the site. In the afternoon we visited Wilson Botanic Park, an old quarry site that is maintained by the City of Casey, just west of Berwick.

A cold and foggy morning didn't deter the 33 birders who turned out, all rugged up and ready to go. The River Gum Creek Wetland is purpose built as a detention basin and, more importantly, as a water 'stopover' to improve water quality as it flows downstream. Native plantings and several water areas of various depths make for excellent bird habitat. The weather improved during the morning with the fog dispersing, allowing some warmth from the winter sun.

Forty-four bird species were recorded with the following highlights: one lone Australasian Shoveler; an Australasian Darter fishing, successfully; a pair of Scaly-breasted Lorikeets (a big 'tick' for several in the party)

eyeing off nesting hollows in an old Red Gum; plus two Long-billed Corella in the same tree. Maybe a battle looming with several Common Mynas in the coming months?

Lunch was at Wilson Botanic Park where we were joined by several 'Friends of Wilson Botanic Park' members. The City of Casey Co-ordinator of Wilson Botanic Park, Kasandra Ross, welcomed the MELBOCA members to the park and gave a short presentation on the history and the continuing development of the area. The area was donated to the City of Casey several years ago and consists of two large water-filled basalt quarries with the surrounding area landscaped and planted with both exotic and native plants. Several trails have been constructed to take advantage of the different habitats.

Next came a walk to the bird hide above the northern lake, then a 2km walk round the rim of the park, resulting in 30 bird species sighted, a Collared Sparrowhawk being the highlight, a new bird for the Wilson Botanic Park list, which now totals 79 bird species.

Prior to leaving we thanked The Friends for their hospitality and they welcomed us back at any time to enjoy 'their' park.

The total combined count was 56 species. Not bad for a winters day.

Graeme Hosken, Leader

Learn to Use Your Digital Camera

PhotoBOCA has invited all MELBOCA members who are interesting in learning more about their digital cameras to an outing at Mill Park Lakes on Saturday 15 August from 10:00 am to 2:30 pm. You do not need to own an expensive camera – any make or model will do.

PhotoBOCA members will be on hand to offer advice on how to take great photographs with whatever camera you bring along. For those wishing to purchase a new

camera or upgrade their existing equipment, the day will also provide an opportunity to examine some of the alternatives.

Directions: from Plenty Rd take McDonalds Rd to Ferres Rd and turn right; cross Findon Rd at roundabout into The Lakes Bvd. Meet in car park behind shops on the Promenade (Melways 183 A8).

No public toilets on site.

The BOCA Library: Can You Help?

Volunteer Opportunity

The BOCA Library, located at the BOCA Head Office, is looking for volunteers willing to come in once a month and supervise library operations between the hours of 10:00 am and 3:00 pm on a weekday.

Light duties only, no experience necessary! We will show you what to do. Pleasant surroundings, tea and coffee provided, books to read, visitors to help or entertain.

Employment Opportunity

The BOCA Library would like to recruit an **Archivist** to sort, document and arrange storage for BOCA's extensive collection of archival material.

The library collection consists of books, pamphlets, periodicals, videos, DVDs, audiotapes, CDs, CD-ROMs and photographic slides, focusing on aspects of the study, conservation and enjoyment of Australian birds, but other parts of the world are also covered.

To find out more about either of these positions, please contact Leanne in the Office on (03) 9877 5342.

MELBOCA Dates to Remember

If you would like to get outside, see some fantastic birds and meet friendly people, then MELBOCA outings are just what you need.

Wednesday Wanderings

Wednesday 26 August – Banksia Park, Templestowe Rd, Bulleen – 9:45 am (Mel 32 D5). If coming from the south, enter from Templestowe Rd just before Heide Gallery. Toilets on site. This is an easy, flat walk as we follow the Yarra's meandering course around the park. King Parrots were a feature of this park in 2005 when 44 species were observed. Lunch back at car park about noon.

Wednesday 23 September – Yarra Flats, Banksia St, Heidelberg – 9:45 am (Mel 32 C6). Enter from The Boulevard. Toilets nearby. This easy, flat walk takes us downstream and back, maybe exploring the billabong en route. We will hope to see the return of some migratory birds. BYO chairs and lunch to eat back at the cars.

Wednesday 28 October – Bulleen Park, Bullen Rd, Bulleen – 9:45am (Mel 32 D10). Entering from Bulleen Rd, turn left towards Archery/Model Aeroplanes. Toilets on site. A flat walk upstream and around Bolin Bolin Billabong if not too muddy. This area yielded a list of 63 species when we were here in February 2006. BYO chairs for lunch back at cars.

Weekday Outings (All welcome, no need to book)

Wednesday 12 August – Brisbane Ranges – 10:00 am to 3:00 pm (Mel 11 A9). From Geelong–Bacchus Marsh Rd, turn into Granite Rd; right into Staughton Vale Rd, then left into Gorge Rd. Bushbirds. Toilets on site. Leader: Dave Torr.

Tuesday 1 September – NOTE: CHANGE OF DATE – Pipemakers Park, Maribyrnong – 10:00 am to 3:00 pm (Mel 28 B10). Enter from Van Ness Ave (opp. Highpoint Shopping Centre). Toilets nearby. Bushbirds. Leader Pat Bingham.

Monday 28 September – NOTE: CHANGE OF DATE – The 100 Acres, Park Orchards – 10:00 am to 3:00 pm (Mel 35 F10) From Ringwood-Warrandyte Rd, turn into Falconer Rd, then left into Knees Rd. Entrance on left. Toilets on site. Bushbirds. Leader Cecily Falkingham.

Beginners Outings

Saturday 15 August – The Pines Flora & Fauna Reserve, Frankston – 1:30 pm (Mel 98 C9). Meet in car park at end of Excelsior Dr.

Saturday 19 September – Westerfolds Park, Templestowe – 1:30 pm (Mel 33 F2). Meet outside Manor Cafe and Gallery.

Birdwalk at Yellingbo Reserve (*MELBOCA have been conducting monthly surveys at this key habitat for the endangered Helmeted Honeyeater for more than 30 years; Melway G11*) Take Warburton Hwy to Woori Yallock, turn right to Yellingbo. At Yellingbo, turn right towards Seville, then left into Macclesfield Rd. After 2.5 km turn right at large pine trees. Toilets available. Bring lunch and gumboots (after rain). Contact MELBOCA, 03 9802 5250

Sunday 2 August – Gate opens 10am, walk starts 10.30.

Sunday 4 September – Gate opens 10am, walk starts 10.30

Sunday 4 October – Gate opens 10am, walk starts 10.30.

PhotoBOCA Events (Contact photoboca@optusnet.com.au)

Saturday 15 August – Photography Outing – Mill Park Lakes – 8:30 am to 2:30 pm (Mel 183 A8). Meet cnr Vautier Pl. and Promenade (in front of shops).

Wednesday 9 September – Melbourne Photography Meeting, BOCA National Office – 7:00 pm to 9.30 pm (Mel 48 F10). Rear of BOCA National Office, 183-85 Springvale Rd, Nunawading. Prize winning prints with Ingrid Makowski and Les Ryan. Gold coin donation at door.

Please consult the Bird Observers' Calendar for additional details about the above walks and for additional outings in the Melbourne Area.

Contact

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Sunny Fernie
Diane Tweeddale
John Stephen Young
Geoff Russell
Andrew Fuhrmann

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.melboca.org.au

Celebrity Owl

Melbourne's Central Business District is not normally a place one associates with bird-watching.

There are the Collins Street Peregrine Falcons, of course, the occasional Australian Hobby in Fitzroy Gardens and, more recently, a Nankeen Night-Heron on the grounds of St Vincent's Hospital (see our MELBOCA member's story on p.6). But, unless one has a real soft spot for *Columba livia*, there's not all that much going on in the city.

But, this year, literally hundreds of people (from around the world, would you believe) have 'flocked' to Melbourne's Flagstaff Gardens, all keen for a look at one thing: Olivia.

Olivia is a Powerful Owl, named by park rangers in late autumn, 2006, when she first started haunting Flagstaff Gardens, apparently seeking a mate.

Un sighted at that location during 2008, this year, since reports first started appearing on Birdline Victoria's 'Recent Sightings' list in mid-May, she's become something of a minor celebrity, generously providing regular sightings in the large oak, corner A'Beckett and William Streets, sometimes clutching prey, sometimes given away by fresh white-wash and owl pellets on the ground below.

Indeed, there have been a number of

unmistakable signs of Powerful Owl activity—on the morning we paid court to Princess Olivia, staff from the Flagstaff Gardens Bowls Club reported one neatly decollated brush-tailed possum deposited on their immaculate greens.

The Powerful Owl is a threatened species in Victoria, with perhaps fewer than 500 breeding pairs in the Greater Melbourne area.

By the time this newsletter goes to press, Olivia will probably have left town (latest sighting at time of writing was 28 June, still in the same oak).

But before then she will have given many a real thrill!



Photo, Janet Hand

MELBOCA Committee Office Bearers 2009/10

The following Office Bearers for the MELBOCA Committee were elected at the committee Planning Day on 7 July 2009

President.....	Graeme Hosken
Secretary.....	Janet Hand
Treasurer.....	Bill Ramsay
Conservation Officer.....	Arthur Carew
Education Officer.....	Janet Hand
Guest Speaker Coordinator.....	Sunny Fernie
Balwyn Meeting Recorder.....	Daphne Hards
Editor – <i>The Melbirdian</i>	Andrew Fuhrmann
Proofreader – <i>The Melbirdian</i>	Arthur Carew
Website Committee.....	Bill Ramsay & Damien Kelly
Weekday Outings.....	Diane Tweeddale
Committee Members.....	Geoff Russell and John Young

The Melbirdian is published six times a year Member birding-related stories and articles (up to 800 words) are invited. **1 September 2009** is the deadline for receipt of information for inclusion in the October issue. Put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and send in your birding-related stories and articles!



MELBOCA is the
Melbourne Branch of
Bird Observation &
Conservation Australia

Survey site number and location	Melway	Survey site number and location	Melway
1 Frog Hollow Wetland, Endeavour Hills	91 G9	4 South of Golf Links Road, Narre Warren	110 F11
2 Kilberry Boulevard, Hampton Park	96 J9	5 Hallam Valley Road, Hampton Park	96 A3
3 River Gum Ck Reserve, Hampton Park	96 H9	6 Waterford Wetland, Rowville	73 E10

Table 1. Bird species observed at MELBOCA survey sites.

Bird species	Site number						Bird species	Site number					
	1	2	3	4	5	6		1	2	3	4	5	6
Black Swan	X		X	X	X	X	Australian Spotted Crake						
Australian Shelduck							Spotless Crake			X			
Australian Wood Duck	X		X	X	X		Dusky Moorhen	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pink-eared Duck							Eurasian Coot	X		X	X	X	X
Australasian Shoveler			X				Black-winged Stilt			X			
Grey Teal			X		X	X	Black-fronted Dotterel			X		X	
Chestnut Teal	X		X	X	X	X	Red-kneed Dotterel			X			
Northern Mallard							Masked Lapwing	X		X	X	X	X
Pacific Black Duck	X	X	X	X	X	X	Latham's Snipe						
Hardhead			X			X	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper						
Blue-billed Duck						X	Pacific Gull			X			
Australasian Grebe	X		X	X	X	X	Silver Gull	X		X		X	
Hoary-headed Grebe	X		X		X		Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo						
Rock Dove	X		X		X		Galah	X		X	X		X
Spotted Dove	X	X	X	X	X		Long-billed Corella			Ns	X		
Common Bronzewing							Little Corella	X	X	X			
Crested Pigeon	X		X	X			Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	X		X			
Australasian Darter	X		X	X			Rainbow Lorikeet		X	X	X	X	
Little Pied Cormorant	X	X	X	X	X		Scaly-breasted Lorikeet						
Great Cormorant			X				Musk Lorikeet						
Little Black Cormorant		X		X			Eastern Rosella						
Pied Cormorant							Red-rumped Parrot						
Australian Pelican					X		Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo						
White-necked Heron							Palid Cuckoo						
Eastern Great Egret				X			Shining Bronze-Cuckoo						
Intermediate Egret					N		Laughing Kookaburra						
Cattle Egret							Superb Fairy-Wren	X	X		X	X	
White-faced Heron	X	X	X	X	X	X	White-browed Scrubwren		X		X		
Little Egret							Yellow Thornbill				X		
Australian White Ibis	X	X	X	X		X	Yellow-rumped Thornbill						
Straw-necked Ibis		X					Brown Thornbill		X		X		
Royal Spoonbill							Spotted Pardalote						
Yellow-billed Spoonbill							Striated Pardalote			N			
Black-shouldered Kite				X	X		Yellow-faced Honeyeater						
White-bellied Sea-Eagle							White-eared Honeyeater						
Whistling Kite							White-plumed Honeyeater	X	X	X	X	X	
Black Kite							Bell Miner						
Brown Goshawk							Noisy Miner			X		X	
Collared Sparrowhawk							Little Wattlebird		X	X			
Swamp Harrier							Red Wattlebird	X	X	X	X		
Little Eagle							White-fronted Chat						
Nankeen Kestrel	N			X	X		Crescent Honeyeater						
Brown Falcon							New Holland Honeyeater		X	X		X	
Australian Hobby	X	X	X				White-naped Honeyeater						
Peregrine Falcon							Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike						
Purple Swamphen	X		X	X	X		White-winged Triller						
Buff-banded Rail							Golden Whistler			Ns			
Baillon's Crake							Grey-shrike Thrush					X	

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Grey Butcherbird		X	X						Silvereeye				X		
Australian Magpie	X	X	X	X	X	X			Welcome Swallow	X		X			
Pied Currawong									Fairy Martin						
Grey Fantail									Tree Martin						
Willie Wagtail	X	X	X	X		X			Common Blackbird	X	X	X	X	X	
Australian Raven									Song Thrush						
Little Raven	X	X	X	X	X	X			Common Starling	X	X	X	X	X	X
Magpie-lark	X	X	X	X	X	X			Common Myna	X	X	X	X	X	X
Scarlet Robin									Red-browed Finch	X			X	X	
Flame Robin									House Sparrow	X	X	X	X		
Horsfield's Bushlark									Eurasian Tree Sparrow			X			
Eurasian Skylark									Australasian Pipit						
Golden-headed Cisticola									European Goldfinch				X	X	
Australian Reed-Warbler									Common Greenfinch	X					
Little Grassbird			X		X				Feral Duck	X		X	X		
Brown Songlark									Feral Goose				X		

Total number of bird species seen at each site during the current survey months:	38	27	53	41	36	19
Total number of bird species seen at each site to date:	82	58	99	83	89	42
Total number of bird species seen at all MELBOCA sites to date:	128					

Table 2. Other species observed at MELBOCA survey sites.

Species	Site number						Species	Site number					
	1	2	3	4	5	6		1	2	3	4	5	6
Frogs							Mammals						
Common Froglet	X	X	X	X	X		Red Fox						
Southern Bullfrog				X			European Rabbit			X			
Spotted Marsh Frog							Brown Hare						
							Feral Cat						
							Fish						
							European Carp	X		X	X		

Key:

- X Denotes species seen at this site during the current survey months.
- N Denotes new species seen at this site during the current survey months.
- Ns Denotes new species seen on non-survey day.
- (Shading) denotes species seen at this site on previous surveys.