



The Melbirdian

MELBOCA Newsletter Number 65
February 2009

Unusual Sighting Yields a Wealth of Information!

On 8 December 2008, Lyndall Yeoman observed and photographed a Peregrine Falcon at McCrae on the Mornington Peninsula. She noticed that the bird had bands on both legs, and forwarded an Unusual Sighting Report to me. As Victor Hurley had just spoken about Peregrine Falcons at the November 2008 MELBOCA Meeting, I thought the report might be of interest and, therefore, I decided to forward the report to him. Lyndall kindly forwarded the photos.

Victor was very pleased to receive both the report and the photos. Because of the high quality of the photos, the identifying information on the bands was visible. From the bands, Victor was able to determine the age of the bird, where it had been banded, and he provided the following information:

“The band on the left leg was white and the band on the right leg was green over black. The notation U4 could be read on one of the bands. Almost certainly, the bird was banded as a nestling on 25 October 2007 at the Moorooduc Flora & Fauna Reserve (an old quarry) and is thought to have left the nest in November 2007. The photos of the bird clearly showed the grey back feathers between the shoulders and the brown flight feathers that were yet to moult out into the adult grey colour. The bird had travelled a distance of 24 km, approximately south west, from its nest. The bird will most likely take up a territory and breed for the first time in spring 2009.”

You just never know what sort of information might be gleaned from a sighting – so keep your eyes on the lookout! Many thanks to Lyndall for submitting the report.

Bill Ramsay



Peregrine Falcon photographed at McCrae by Lyndall Yeoman.

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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, located at 45 Talbot Avenue in Balwyn, not far from the library (Melway 46 E8). The meeting

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

Upcoming Guest Speakers

Tuesday 24 February 2009 8.00 pm

Tania Ireton 'Desert Birding: the Strzelecki Track and Other Places'

This is an evening not to be missed! Tania's passion for birding is infectious and her birding knowledge is second to none.

Come and discover the gems of the desert from the comfort of an armchair as Tania leads us on a birding tour down the Strzelecki Track.

Tuesday 24 March 2009 8.00 pm

Bronwyn Isaacs 'Powerful Owl Habitat and Prey Availability within a Suburban Park of Melbourne'

Bronwyn, a PhD student, is studying the spatial ecology of the Powerful Owl across Greater Melbourne and she is the first in Australia to use GPS technology to do so. Her studies will provide new information on the habitats that are important for the owls' survival.

Forget about the night life in the CBD - come and discover the 'real wild' night life in a suburb near you!

The Leeton Experience

The Australian Birdfair was again held in Leeton, NSW, during this past November and we had the honour of attending. For non-birdos, the trek up could be a long and boring drive; however, for us it was a journey of discovery as we played 'Hide and Seek' with the bird population.

After leaving Melbourne at 8.15am, we travelled up the Hume Highway then onto the Goulburn Valley Highway. The first place we wandered off the bitumen was at Nagambie, where a visit to the lagoon west of the lake revealed White-breasted Woodswallows, Rufous Songlark, Black Swan and an Eastern Great Egret. The usual Silver Gulls and House Sparrows hung around the lawn area in town. The next stop was Shepparton Lake, where, in 2007, we had seen Spoonbills, Glossy Ibis, and Black-winged Stilts in good numbers despite low water levels. However, in 2008, the lake was bone dry and there was not a bird in sight, so we diverted to the Ardmona Factory outlet in Mooroopna for our own refreshments. From there we counted not birds but the number of painted cows (works of art) in Shepparton!

Over the Murray and into Riverina country we encountered our first Pied Butcherbird. We stopped at the Finley Picnic and Toilet area where, in 2007, we had seen 12 Nankeen Night-Herons in the willows around the deep water hole. Unfortunately for us the path around the back was blocked off and we were limited to seeing one from afar. At the Jerilderie Lake we added Purple Swamphen, a Mallard hybrid and a nesting Magpie-Lark. Then everything was put up by a passing Peregrine Falcon. As we travelled north, a family of emus was road side, we were visited by a Black Kite and a Nankeen Kestrel, and we recorded nine species of parrots. This was all before we reached our accommodation at the Yanco Agricultural Institute Motel (8km South of Leeton) at 4.45pm. We quickly unpacked the car and headed for the Fiveborough Wetlands near Leeton. The reeds were higher and thicker this year but we added an impressive list of species. Glossy Ibis and Whiskered Terns flew overhead with the Whistling Kite and Swamp Harrier. Spotless Crakes, Black-winged Stilts, Red-necked Avocets, Black-fronted and Red-kneed Dotterels were there, together with both Marsh and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers. Our duck species for the trip were brought to nine with Pink-eared Ducks and Hardheads observed at the adjacent sewage pond.

On Friday, we spoke to the local school groups about birds and on Saturday and Sunday we were involved in various activities at the Birdfair itself (please see Jenny Lau's article in The Bird Observer for more details). Despite our busy schedule, pre-breakfast birding was still possible! On Saturday morning we visited Yanco Weir – bush birding along the dirt road through red gum forests to the Murrumbidgee River. A lone Apostlebird was found; where were his other "eleven"? Sunday morning Pat located a nesting White-faced Heron, witnessed disputes between Noisy and Little Friarbirds and overflying Superb Parrots and Cockatiel adjacent to the motel.

At the conclusion of the Fair on Sunday afternoon we headed north as the BOCA staff headed south to Melbourne. We had sourced local information at the Birdfair as to the best locations to visit on route to the Cocoparra National Park, east of Griffith. But the birding was so good that we never got there!

Before reaching Leeton, we added a flock of Budgerigars to our growing list. We had excellent birding along the roadside stockroute north from Leeton towards Yenda. We saw Painted Honeyeaters and Cockatiels in one reserve, whilst a narrow roadside strip produced White-browed Babblers, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, Yellow-throated Miners and a Striped Honeyeater. In search of the Black and Pied Honeyeaters, our destination was Wattle Dam in the Binya State Forest. There, we sat and watched as several Black Honeyeaters (a **big** tick for Janet) came into drink with many other birds. As the sun dropped, we sought accommodation in Griffith; the trip list so far totaled 117 species.

The next morning we returned to an area of Eremophila, on the Yenda Road, where the Pied Honeyeaters had been seen the day before. We didn't find them but instead added Great Cormorant, Australian Hobby, Restless Flycatcher, Mallee Ringneck and Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo before departing for home. A lone male Crimson Chat circled the car, stopping us in our tracks, as did a dozen Superb Parrots on the roadside south of Whitton as we approached the Murrumbidgee River. The Deniliquin Truck Wash, normally full of water and the associated poo washed from the stock trucks, is usually a marvellous place for water birds in this dry country. Today, it was dry, perhaps due to local water restrictions, so we moved onto a riverside stop at Echuca, where we found a nesting Laughing Kookaburra and a Dollarbird. A White-fronted Chat and Brown Songlarks sat on fence posts whilst many Australian Pipits flew ahead of the car on a dirt road South of Elmore.

We arrived home safely at sunset with plans to include Cocoparra National Park, perhaps next year. Please consider going to the Australian Birdfair in Leeton next year (9-15 November 2009). It's not only the destination, but the wonderful birding to be had on the journey too. We recorded a total of 132 species, a big tick for Janet and 11 birds Pat had not seen since the turn of the century.

Janet Hand and Pat Bingham

Interesting Sightings

Entered 02 Jan 2009

An Interesting Sighting is a sighting of a species not generally seen in that location that may be of interest to birdwatchers, 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.

Currently, we are collecting reports of White-plumed Honeyeater, Eastern Spinebill, Noisy Miner and Little Wattlebird sightings within 60 km Melbourne, plus other Field Reports. The following reports were received from members attending the MELBOCA monthly meeting (held at Balwyn on 25 November 2008), via email or as WEB reports to the BOCA National Office.

MELBOCA is very interested in the apparent disappearance of the White-plumed Honeyeater from the Melbourne suburbs. Is this the case in your area – and, if so, are Noisy Miners present? Of the six sites that MELBOCA are surveying for Melbourne Water (see attached report), White-plumed Honeyeaters have been recorded at five sites; Noisy Miners have also been recorded at those same sites, but in small numbers.

White-plumed Honeyeater Sightings			
All Months '08	< 10	River Gum Creek Wetland	Hampton Park
Since July '08	3-5	Kidman Street	Yarraville
28 Sep '08	22	Royal Park	Parkville
20 Nov '08	1	Kernan Street	Strathmore
25 Nov '08	20-15	England Road Wetland	Glen Waverley

Eastern Spinebill Sightings	
No reports this period	

Noisy Miner Sightings			
All Months '08	5-10	River Gum Creek Wetland	Hampton Park

MELBOCA is examining the spread of the **Little Wattlebird** from the inner-city and coastal areas to the outer suburbs of Melbourne. The following is a list of Melbourne suburbs recorded so far where Little Wattlebirds have been observed.

Is your suburb listed?

Airport West	Brunswick	Elwood	Langwarrin	Northcote*	Sunbury
Armadale	Burwood	Essendon	Lilydale	Nunawading	Surrey Hills
Ascot Vale	Burwood East*	Essendon West	Lower Plenty	Oakleigh	Templestowe
Balwyn	Camberwell	Ferntree Gully	Lower Templestowe	Pakenham	The Basin
Balwyn North	Camberwell East	Fitzroy North	Macleod	Parkdale	Thomastown
Bayswater North	Canterbury	Frankston	Mentone	Parkville	Travancore
Beaumaris	Carlton North	Gembrook	Mill Park	Patterson Lakes	Vermont South
Belgrave Heights	Chadstone	Glen Iris	Mitcham	Point Cook	Viewbank
Bentleigh	Cheltenham	Glen Waverley	Mont Albert Nth	Reservoir	Wantirna*
Berwick	Chirnside Park	Greensborough	Montrose	Richmond	Westgate Park
Black Rock	Clifton Hill	Hampton	Moonee Ponds	Ringwood	Werribee
Blackburn	Cranbourne	Hampton East	Moorabbin	Rowville	Wheeler Hill
Blackburn North	Croydon	Hampton Park	Mooroolbark	Rosebud	Williamstown
Blackburn South	Deer Park*	Hawthorn	Mount Eliza	St Kilda	Yarrambat
Box Hill	Doncaster	Hawthorn East	Mount Waverley	Sandringham	Yarraville*
Box Hill South	Doncaster East	Highett	Murrumbeena	Southbank	
Brighton	East Malvern	Ivanhoe	Newport	Sth Melbourne	
Brighton East	Eltham	Kew	Niddrie	South Yarra	

* Suburbs added, Nov – Dec 2008

Total: 105 Suburbs

MELBOCA welcomes sighting and breeding reports for the Little Wattlebird. Please include your name, address, date of record, location of sighting (i.e., street, suburb, post code, Melway reference) and indicate how long you have noticed this species in your area. The number of birds is optional. Forward this information to MELBOCA, c/o BOCA, PO Box 185, Nunawading VIC 3131 or email info@melboca.org.au.

Interesting Sightings Cont'd

Other Sightings				
25 Oct '08	White-winged Triller	1	Banyule Flats	Heidelberg
Early Nov '08	White-winged Triller	1	North of Lilydale	
Early Nov '08	Brown Songlark	1	North of Lilydale	
11 Nov '08	Baillon's Crake	1	100 Steps to Federation	Altona Meadows
11 Nov '08	Australian Spotted Crake	1	100 Steps to Federation	Altona Meadows
17 Nov '08	White-winged Triller	1	Yan Yean Reservoir Park	
19 Nov '08	White-winged Triller	1	River Gum Creek Wetland	Hampton Park
22 Nov '08	Baillon's Crake	2	Hawkstowe Park	South Morang
22 Nov '08	Australian Spotted Crake	1	Hawkstowe Park	South Morang
22 Nov '08	Spotless Crake	1	Hawkstowe Park	South Morang
22 Nov '08	Eurasian Coot	3000+	Hawkstowe Park	South Morang
09 Dec '08	Indian Ring-neck Parrot	1	Kalang Park	Blackburn

Additional Notes

- The Little Wattlebird sighting in Yarraville was in Kidman Street where they nested in a grape vine and raised three young.
- Two Little Wattlebird young were raised at Garston Court, Wantirna.
- John Kulich reports that Little Wattlebirds have been in Northcote for at least nine years, becoming more prevalent over the last few years (more so than Red Wattlebirds and White-plumed Honeyeaters). In addition, Little Wattlebirds nested in his backyard in December 2008.
- In early October, Little Wattlebirds were feeding young at Daisy Street, Murrumbeena.

Please note that all of the above records cover the area within 60 km of the Melbourne GPO.

Refer to Melway Street Directory, Pages 1 and 2.

All MELBOCA Outing Reports may be found on the MELBOCA website: www.melboca.org.au

Graeme Hosken, Recorder

Do You Know Your Bird Colours?

During a break between birding on the BOCA Jingellic Camp, John Land found time to compile the following information, a valuable aid for all birders.

Of the 852 species listed in C & B 2008 (excluding extinct species), did you know that the word 'white' appears in the English Name of 56 bird species? Before you ask, 'black' appears in the English Name of 47 species. In descending order, the number of species with other colours in their English Names are as follows: 38 'red'; 29 'yellow'; 26 'grey'; 15 'brown'; 11 for each of 'green' and 'blue'; 5 'purple'; and 3 for each of 'pink' and 'orange'.

Note: the survey did not include other colour descriptions such as 'crimson', 'scarlet', 'silver', 'gold', 'buff', 'chestnut' etc.

Bill Ramsay

Past Meeting Reports

25 November 2008

Janet Hand opened the meeting with a welcome to new and old members. Graeme Hosken and Arthur Carew were introduced and they ran the Bird of the Evening, a bit of Christmas Fun. The segment, very ably put together by Bill Ramsay and Chris Wichems, took the form of a “keep standing if you are right, sit down if you are wrong” quiz. Questions ranged from the BOCA organization to bird-related subjects with the quiz being very entertaining. When it came down to the line, Heather Mitchener was the last “man” standing. Well done, Heather! Unfortunately, neither Chris nor Bill were able to attend tonight’s meeting and see how well their efforts were appreciated.

Victor Hurley, leader of the Victorian Peregrine Project and our speaker of the evening, entitled his talk, ‘Long Term Monitoring of Victoria’s Peregrine Falcons: Life in the Fast Lane is not Always Easy.’ Victor, a most accomplished speaker, has had a long association with raptors and their conservation. His present project involves banding Victoria’s Peregrine Falcons and monitoring their nesting sites and behaviour.

As the Peregrine Falcon is a predator at the top of the food chain, anything that impinges on its lifestyle and food supply is likely to reflect what is happening in the environment. There are 17 subspecies of Peregrine Falcon that can be found throughout the world on every continent except Antarctica. They avoid treeless and waterless deserts, and regions that are extremely cold. Some populations migrate large distances, whereas other populations, like those in Australia, are largely sedentary. Territorial and monogamous, Peregrine Falcons, like all falcons, do not build a nest; instead they prefer to use another bird’s nest or a “scrape” on a cliff face or similar location. They have a reverse sexual dimorphism, meaning that the female is larger than the male. These birds can live up to 16 years, but most do not live out their maximum life span. Peregrine Falcons are able to breed at 3 years of age with an average clutch size of 2.5 chicks.

In a dive, the Peregrine Falcon is the fastest bird in the world, but did you know that when it comes to manoeuvrability, this speedster can be outmanoeuvred by the Black and Brown Falcons? The Peregrine falcon feeds exclusively on birds, taking them in flight. They don’t feed on the ground so they are not likely to be effected by the 1080 poison used to kill rabbits.

The Victorian Peregrine Project has been monitoring Peregrine Falcons and nest sites across Victoria since 1991. Research findings from the project have been used and applied to improve the nesting success of Peregrines in a range of urban and industrial locations. In Victoria, there are 160 recorded nest sites. Most of these nest sites are in rural areas, although Peregrines are very successfully moving into urban / industrial areas where food may be readily available. In Victoria, quarries and other urban / industrial nesting locations account for 10%

of the known Peregrine nesting sites.

Nesting in quarries or on manmade structures can be a dangerous practice. For example, Peregrine Falcons nesting in quarries run the risk of losing their nest when quarry managers destroy cliffs (and nesting sites) because of the occupational health and safety risks associated with the cliffs. Those birds that nest on manmade structures, such as buildings in cities, may choose an inappropriate nesting site – such as a rain gutter – with negative consequences. Victor has found that Peregrines often take to nest relocation with no problem. Installing nest boxes, not only moves Peregrines into a safer location on a cliff or a building, but it can dramatically increase the hatching success rate. To get sites to agree to nest boxes, Victor has worked with quarry, building and refinery managers to educate them about these fantastic birds, and help them adopt a ‘living with wildlife’ attitude. Now workers at many sites are protective of ‘their’ birds; great examples include the Melbourne site in Collins Street, the Alcoa Water tower in Anglesea and the Mobil Refinery in Altona.

Approximately 100 chicks are banded each year. Because the Peregrines are banded as chicks, records are available of where and when a bird was born; from this information, we are able determine both the age and the ‘hometown’ of a banded adult. The bands used are colour-coded so they can be identified through binoculars, thus alleviating the necessity of having to net the birds. The Peregrine parents can be very aggressive and territorial to the bander; however, they defend the nest site rather than the chick. Victor’s brilliant presentation was accompanied by some stunning photography of the Peregrine Falcons.

John Barkla gave the vote of thanks, stating it was especially important to encourage long term studies like this because the outcomes are important to everyone, not just ornithologists.

Janet Hand reported that the Education program had received some excellent feedback after the Eltham and Banyule Breakfast with the Birds outings. Graeme Hosken detailed the interesting and unusual sightings which are published elsewhere in *The Melbirdian*. He informed us that negotiations are in progress with Melbourne Water to ask them to delay the cutting of spring grass growth, or at least to leave a grass barrier around treed areas, as we are now getting reports of seed eating birds seen in areas not previously recorded. Further, the long grass is also useful to birds that use the grass as a safe haven. More education on responsible dog control in areas where birds are breeding is needed, and the Painted Snipe previously reported at the Edithvale Wetlands is still there.

The evening ended with the usual cuppa and chat. We wish you all a happy holiday! Have a safe, peaceful and happy time with good birding to go with it.

Linda Stock

Outing Reports

Wednesday Wanderings

A Reflection on the 2008 Wednesday Wanderings

Although small, Normans Reserve in Warrandyte is a great little park, and on the 4th Wednesday in May, 27 MELBOCA members arrived eager to explore the area. Our walk took us downstream and, although quite misty, we noted 36 species including 8 in the Parrot family: Galah, both Corellas, plenty of "cockies", Rainbow Lorikeets, both Rosellas & two Australian King Parrots (the latter are always a thrill). Due to the drought, smaller bush birds have been rather scarce along the river banks, but we did manage to add both Grey Fantail and Eastern Yellow Robin in May which was particularly pleasing.

In June, Marlene Lyell very capably led the Wednesday Wanderers around Glynn's Reserve in North Warrandyte. This is a Parks Victoria area not normally open to the public, so 23 members took advantage of the opportunity to explore here and they weren't disappointed. Of interest here, was viewing, from the opposite bank, the exit of the river tunnel which we had observed from the entrance side the previous month. Again, as a result of the drought, bush birds were few and far between, but 8 Honeyeater species were observed and White-winged Choughs were enjoyed, as was a Scarlet Robin. Thank you, Marlene.

The July walk saw us again visit a private Parks Victoria property - Longridge Farm, Warrandyte. The area is used for camping groups - Guides, Scouts, etc. and boasts a very pleasant camping ground in a bend of the Yarra, complete with an ablutions block. Unfortunately it is a

"tents only" so not suitable for BOCA camps. This winter walk produced 30 species but, unusually, no Tawny Frogmouths.

August saw the group explore another private Parks Victoria property on the north side of the Yarra in Eltham. 38 birders appreciated this little-known area and we were thrilled to see 42 species, including such highlights as Brown Goshawk, Wedge-tailed Eagle and Varied Sittella. Spotted Pardalotes were breeding, Striated Pardalotes were sighted and a Golden Whistler was much admired.

In September at Tikalara Park, Warrandyte, a total of 39 species was observed. This longish, flat walk, took us alongside the Mullum Mullum Creek to its confluence with the Yarra, a significant site for Aborigines in times gone by. A highlight of the walk was Azure Kingfishers flying above the Yarra. One Koala, 12 Eastern Grey Kangaroos, a fox and rabbits added to the morning's sightings.

In October we visited Sweeny's Flats in Eltham and walked downstream to Griffiths Park, returning the same way to the cars for lunch. On this very pleasant walk, 35 species were observed. Again Azure Kingfishers were a highlight, pointed out by a MELBOCA member who lives near the site. A pair was observed tending their nest-hole on the opposite bank of the river and we learned later that at least one young was raised successfully. Also enjoyed were two pairs of Tawny Frogmouth on two separate nests. Duncan was able to take an attractive photograph of one on a very low nest atop a broken off stump. White-winged Choughs were observed breeding and 35 species were noted on this very pleasant spring walk. *(cont'd next page)*



The first Wednesday Wandering Walk of 2008 at Jumping Creek Reserve attracted 56 MELBOCA members!

Outing Reports Cont'd

On the last Wednesday Wandering for 2008, we walked upstream from Westerfolds Reserve to Candlebark Park, then crossed the river and explored Lenister Farm on the opposite bank. This outing was held on a fairly warm, humid November day and the tally of birds observed was 43 - a great result for early summer. A good view of a pair of Mistletoebirds was perhaps the highlight for many. Adding to the interest, especially for two visiting Americans, were: one Tiger Snake swimming across the Yarra, one Brush-tailed Possum, five or six Eastern Grey Kangaroos and two Long-necked Turtles.

MELBOCA members now look forward to more Wednesday Wanderings in 2009, commencing on 25th February with a downstream walk in Westerfolds Park. Please see the activities calendar for details.

Celia M. Browne

Weekday Outings

8 December 2008 Organ Pipes, Keilor North

When we started walking, there were 25 people in calm, mild and sunny conditions. We'd welcomed Linda from the USA to our company and were glad to include those who could only seldom make the walks. The birds were understandably scarce in the dry windswept upper slopes of the gorge, but rabbits, the occasional Black Wallaby and numerous dragonflies and butterflies kept us attentive. Silvereyes called but were difficult to see clearly. Alarm calls from New Holland Honeyeaters alerted us to look up where we saw a Peregrine Falcon soaring overhead. Other raptors included a Brown Goshawk, briefly in the same patch of sky as the Peregrine, a Little Eagle and a Whistling Kite which engaged the attention of two separate groups of birders simultaneously. Movement was seen in the canopy and then a Yellow Thornbill was identified. We found that birding can be hazardous when a pause to view some birds also coincided with us obliviously standing on an ants' nest! Subsequent brushings of biting ants from trousers and socks followed.

The site is beneath the outbound flight path from Tullamarine airport. That meant the frequent roar of departing planes. The birds present seemed to have become habituated to the noise, but for birders it was a challenge to hear bird calls against the background of the planes' engines. Watching a Jetstar plane flying over, we thought how convenient it would be if the birds also had their identity written across their chests or bellies for the birders below.

As we descended into the gorge, the birdlife became more numerous. Australian Magpies flew and called, and a family group of Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes briefly held our attention. Dusky Woodswallows flew between trees and, locating a nest, we saw a juvenile being fed. Other spring sightings included a Willie Wagtail constructing a nest, an

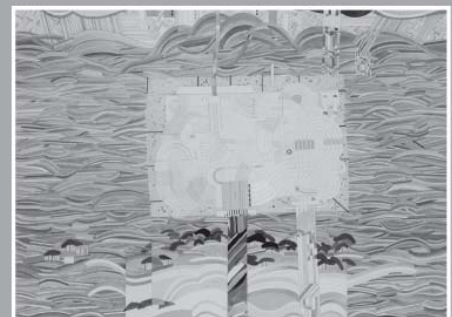
Eastern Yellow Robin attempting unsuccessfully to shred fallen bark, presumably for nesting material, and a very young Common Blackbird which briefly inspired thoughts of 'Bassian Thrush' due to its spangled markings. Further along the track a very young Eastern Yellow Robin, speckled, brown and gaped, caught our attention.

The Organ Pipes formation is clearly visible from the viewing area and we guessed that the white wash in several places was the result of raptors roosting. There certainly seemed no ledges suitable for nesting. The creek bed and its surrounds supported numerous Superb Fairy-wrens, Willie Wagtails and Dusky Woodswallows. Red-browed Finches and the occasional Brown Thornbill and White-plumed Honeyeater kept adding to the variety. A Dusky Moorhen was the only waterbird in the creek this day.

Walking towards Rosette Rock and the Tesselated Pavement, we encountered Australasian Reed Warblers and a New Holland Honeyeater. Some heard a Horsefield's Bronze-cuckoo and others a Crested Shrike-tit. At the farthest point of the walk we were rewarded with very good views of a brilliant male Spotted Pardalote close overhead and then good views of a male Rufous Whistler. 'Lunch' was the siren song and we returned to the cars. A bird call resulted in a total of 35 species for the morning, and it was considered a successful day for the final walk of the year.

Diane Tweeddale
Convenor MELBOCA Weekdays Outings

the gift art exhibition



A collaboration between thirteen artists in a unique project to express a mutual love for the Bass Coast and opposition to the Wonthaggi desalination plant.

BOCA Gallery
183 - 185 Springvale Rd. Nunawading.
16th Feb - 13th March 2009
Monday to Friday 10am - 4pm
www.thegiftexhibition.org

Autumn Coach Tours – Book Now!

Join us on a coach tour this autumn!

The Briars, Mt Martha

Saturday 4 April 2009

Leader: Joan Peters

Cost: \$55.00 BOCA members
\$60.00 non-members

Cranbourne Botanic Gardens (including the 'Australian Garden' and Blind Bight)

Saturday 2 May 2009

Leader: Pat Bingham

Cost: \$60.00 BOCA members
\$65.00 non-members

We will be birding in the bushland area of the Botanic Gardens and we will also visit the new, award-winning 'Australian Garden'.

Blind Bight is an area of mangrove habitat and a woodland walk on Western Port Bay. Tidal conditions on the day will decide which area we visit first. The cost includes entrance fee to 'Australian Garden'

Attendance on a Coach Tour is by prepaid reservation only. Please either:

- Post fare to BOCA at the following address:
BOCA National Office
PO Box 185
Nunawading VIC 3131
- Ring Jenny on 03 9877 5342 for credit card bookings

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

Please dress appropriately for the weather and wear sensible footwear. Don't forget your binoculars, hat, drinks and lunch. Extra baggage can be left safely on the bus when out walking. Tours leave from outside Hamer Hall, St Kilda Road, Melbourne (Melway 2F G7) at 8.00 am.

Please note that 2009 Coach Tours will return to Melbourne at approximately 5 pm.

Melbourne Water Survey Update

At all MELBOCA sites, water levels were low in November and high in December. Because of this, species like the Black-winged Stilt were absent in December as feeding areas were flooded. Several duck species were also not present or low in numbers in December for the same reason. Raptor numbers were down in both months with only three species being recorded. One, a Collared Sparrowhawk, was a new sighting for River Gum Creek Wetland.

Hallam Valley Road Wetland was the place to be during the past two months of the survey as 12 species were added to their 'list', with five being new to the MELBOCA sites tally (Red-rumped Parrot, Striated Pardalote, White-fronted Chat, Grey-shrike Thrush and Tree Martin). At River Gum Creek Wetland, two species were added: a lone Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo and a White-winged Triller, taking the total to 120 species.

With Christmas now over it will be interesting to see if the Feral Goose at River Gum Creek and South of Golf Links Road will be there in January '09.

Melbourne Water's senior wildlife and wetland scientist, Will Steele, visited the River Gum Creek site with 'our' survey team in December to discuss concerns raised regarding grass cutting, rubbish collecting and additional plantings at the site. Will shall visit the Hallam Valley Road site with the MELBOCA team in January to examine the possibility of cutting a path through the small Redgum stand to allow easier access to that area (and overcome a potential snake hazard resulting from trekking through tall grass).

Looking forward to successful surveys in 2009!

*Graeme Hosken
MELBOCA Recorder.*

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

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. Check out some of the outings on offer and we hope to see you in the field!

Wednesday Wanderings

Wednesday 25 February 2009 - Westerfold Park, Templestowe. 9.45 am. Meet in Westerfold Park car park; the entrance is at Melway 33 F2. Enter park from Fitzsimons Lane, turning right and keeping the main road on your right. Park near the canoe launch at river (Melway 33 F1). There are toilets here. A morning wander downstream and around this attractive Parks Victoria park, visiting rapids to look for kingfishers and open paddocks to search for raptors. Please carry water. Join us for lunch afterwards - BYO chairs and lunch.

Wednesday 25 March 2009 - Finns Reserve, Templestowe Lower. (Melway 33 B4) 9.45 am. Enter from Duncan Street. Toilets here. An easy upstream walk along the Yarra towards Westerfolds Park and return. Possibility of platypus from pedestrian bridge. Lunch back at cars. Please carry water. Join us for lunch afterwards - BYO chairs and lunch. No outing on Total Fire Ban day.

Weekdays Outings

Monday 16 February 2009 – Bellarine Peninsula. (Melway 452 A11) 10am - 3pm. From Latrobe Trace / Settlement Road, take Barwon Heads Road to Barwon Valley Golf Club. Meet in carpark – toilets available. Convoy driving to different locations; scopes will be useful. All welcome, no need to book. Leader: Fred Smith.

Wednesday 4 March 2009 – Springvale Wetlands, Aspendale Gardens. (Melway 93 C4) 10am - 3pm. From Springvale Road, drive Wells Road to Narelle Road, U-turn at traffic lights back to Bowen Rd. Park in road, no toilets. Convoy driving to lunch and afternoon walk at Braeside Park, Grosvenor Road. All welcome, no need to book. Leader: Geoff Deason.

Tuesday 17 March 2009 – The Gurdies. (Melway 612 R9 / VicRoads 96 B8) 10am - 3pm. Turn from Bass Highway into Gurdies – St Hellier Road, travel 4km to Dunbavin Road on the right and park at the end of the road, approximately 2km. Toilets at Shell Service Station, Lang Lang. All welcome, no need to book. Leaders: Max and Ann Gillespie.

Beginners Outings

Saturday 21 March - Truganina Swamp / Mt St Joseph Wetlands, Altona. (Melway 54 C10). 10 am. Meet outside the school on the corner of Civic Parade and Galvin St (public transport available – get out at Westona Station).

Saturday 18 April - RJ Chambers Flora & Fauna Reserve, Pakenham Upper. (Melway 313 G8). 1.30pm. Meet in BBQ area in carpark off Bourkes Road (near the intersection of Matters Rd).

Photography Group Outing

Saturday 28 March 2009 – Western Treatment Plant. 'Birds in Flight' with Geoff Jones and John Barkla. 8.30 am – 4:30 pm. Bookings essential. To book, please contact: bob.young@optusnet.com.au.

Birdwalk at Yellingbo Reserve (*we have been conducting monthly surveys at this key habitat for the endangered Helmeted Honeyeater for more than 30 years; Melway 305 G11*)

Sunday 1 February. Gates open at 10 am. Walk begins at 10.30am

Sunday 1 March. Gates open at 10 am. Walk begins at 10.30am

Sunday 5 April. Gates open at 10 am. Walk begins at 10.30am

Upcoming Coach Tours

Saturday 4 April – The Briars, Mt Martha (bookings essential)

Saturday 2 May - Cranbourne Botanic Gardens, including the 'Australian Garden' and Blind Bight (bookings essential)

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

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.melboca.org.au



MELBOCA is the
Melbourne Branch of
Bird Observation &
Conservation Australia

Your Letters... Not in My Backyard!

One morning in late November, I had an interesting backyard sighting. Looking out our kitchen window, I noticed a young Spotted Pardalote being fed by one of its parents. After a few minutes the second parent appeared carrying food for the young bird. What I hadn't seen, until it landed on a gate post near the back fence, was a Pied Currawong and it had a Spotted Pardalote in its bill. Unfortunately, the Pardalote didn't escape and was devoured by the Currawong.

The Currawong survey that was conducted by MELBOCA over the past several years has indicated that Currawongs, especially Pied, are 'staying over' during the spring and summer months in some Melbourne suburbs, and in many reports, breeding has been recorded. This behaviour may be detrimental to the welfare of some of our smaller birds.

Several years ago, while holidaying in the central highland of NSW, I observed a Pied Currawong take a Bassian Thrush that was feeding on a grassy area. Several other Currawongs joined in a 'fight' over the Thrush but a Kookaburra came in and won the battle.

I would be interested if you have observed Currawongs feeding on other birds?

Graeme Hosken

Food is Food...

Just once, during the four years (1989 - 1993) we lived at Wye River in the Otway ranges, Victoria, we witnessed cannibalistic behaviour of Purple Swamphens, similar to that reported by Graeme Hosken in the December 2008 *Melbirdian*.

The subject / victim was a road-kill - a squashed but still quite obvious Purple Swamphen - with three to five of its fellows tucking in for an opportunistic feast. My old *Readers' Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds* lists its diet as mainly reed stems, but with occasional frogs and molluscs, so Purple Swamphens apparently do have a taste for meat.

Our observation was on a back road somewhere between Deans Marsh and Colac during one of our 'driveabout' trips. The sight amazed us at the time and the memory remains, even though the date and the location are hazy: an object lesson in keeping a notebook at hand - and using it.

Leonie Robbins

Noisy Miners in Royal Park

In response to the query in the Interesting Sightings section of a recent *Melbirdian* (No. 63, October 2008), Royal Park does indeed have Noisy Miners! And they have been present for at least two years.

As a local resident, my frequent walks around Royal Park confirm Noisy Miners in at least two sites: many **very** Noisy Miners are currently nesting around the Golf Course, particularly near the Western Oval in the northern section of the Park; and in the Gully Habitat Area they frequent the stands of mature sugar gums, with their many nesting hollows. I feel they may be compromising this latter nesting area for the usual lorikeets and galahs.

Kaye Oddie

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

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Bird species	Site number						Bird species	Site number					
	1	2	3	4	5	6		1	2	3	4	5	6
Little Raven	X	X	X	X	X	X	Song Thrush			N			
Magpie-lark	X	X	X	X	X	X	Common Starling	X	X	X	X	X	X
Flame Robin							Common Myna	X	X	X	X	X	X
Horsfield's Bushlark							Red-browed Finch						X
Eurasian Skylark					X		House Sparrow	X	X	X	X	N	
Golden-headed Cisticola	X	N		X	X	X	Eurasian Tree Sparrow			X			
Australian Reed-Warbler	X	X	X	X	X		Australasian Pipit						X
Little Grassbird	X		X	X	X		European Goldfinch	X	X	X	X	X	N
Silveryeye				X	X		Common Greenfinch			X		X	
Welcome Swallow	X	X	X	X	X	X							
Fairy Martin			X		N		Feral Duck	X		X	X		
Tree Martin					N		Feral Goose			N	X		
Common Blackbird	X	X	X	X	X								
Total number of bird species seen at each site during the current survey months:								42	35	61	43	60	21
Total number of bird species seen at each site to date:								73	57	89	75	75	31
Total number of bird species seen at all MELBOCA sites to date: 120													

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	X	X		European Rabbit			X		X	N
Spotted Marsh Frog			N				Brown Hare						
							Fish						
							European Carp			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.

■ (Shading) denotes species seen at this site on previous surveys.