



# The Melbirdian

MELBOCA Newsletter Number 71  
February 2010

## Help Protect Native Water Birds Join the Duck Rescue Team: 20 March 2010

The Coalition Against Duck Shooting will again take an army of rescuers and a mobile veterinary clinic with wildlife carers out to the wetlands on the opening morning of the Victorian duck shooting season.

The team will work to prevent birds being shot, rescue wounded birds and collect illegally shot, protected and threatened species.

Join the rescue team at [www.duck.org.au](http://www.duck.org.au) or contact the Coalition Against Duck Shooting – email: [info@duck.org.au](mailto:info@duck.org.au) or phone Lynn on 0414 816 509.

The final information meeting for rescuers will be held on 15 March, 7:00pm, 115a High Street, Kew (at Kew Junction).

Despite seriously low waterbird numbers across Victoria, the Brumby Labor government is again allowing duck hunters to shoot native birds purely for recreational purposes.

In the government's attempt to placate shooters for political reasons, it is ignoring the 87% of Victorians who want duck shooting banned (Morgan poll, October 2007). The

government is also blatantly ignoring the cruelty (25% wounding rate, DSE), the unsustainability (waterbird numbers across eastern Australia are down 82% since 1983) and the fact that three Labor states (Western Australia, New South Wales and Queensland) have already banned the activity.

Birdos are welcome: either join a wetland wading team to help prevent birds being shot, or stay on shore and help document all birds (game and protected) and their reactions to the shooting.

*Lynn Trakell, Coalition Against Duck Shooting*



*Australian Wood Duck – Photo, Duncan Turnbull*

### Inside This Issue:

Past Meeting Reports	2 - 3
Interesting Sightings	4 - 5
Outing Reports (Bolin Bolin Billabong; Sherbrooke Forest)	6
Education Report	7
BOCA/MW Update	8
Dates to Remember	8
Contact MELBOCA	8

## MELBOCA Branch Meetings: Upcoming Guest Speakers

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 8:00pm and features a guest speaker and a Member's Topic segment. Entry is by a donation of \$4. Out-of-town members and visitors are always welcome!

**Tuesday 23 February 2010 8.00pm**  
**Mike Duncan: "Birds of East Africa – an Orchid Fancier's View"**

Mike is a DSE scientist specialising in threatened orchid conservation. On the night he will be wearing two hats – talking about the birds of East Africa as well as the orchids. Should be fascinating.

**Tuesday 23 March 2010 8.00pm**

**David Plant: "Journey along the Northern Coast"**

Come and join David Plant as he takes us on a sea voyage along the northern coast of Australia. Spectacular views and rugged scenery are only the beginning.

**Tuesday 27 April 2010 8.00pm**

**Murray Bouchier: "Victoria's Dry Country – Journey through the North West"**

Members may know Murray from his talks on Hattah-Kulkyne National Park broadcast on ABC's Radio National. Come and learn some of the mysteries of the Mallee.

**Tuesday 25 May 2010 8:00pm**

**Speaker: Jo Oldland: "Birds Australia's Shorebirds 2020"**

National Shorebird Monitoring Program. Jo is keen to raise awareness of this program and should be able to add an extra dimension to our knowledge and observation of Shorebirds.

## Past Meeting Reports

27 October 2009

MELBOCA's president, **Graeme Hosken**, welcomed all to the meeting. Graeme announced that generous donations taken the previous month had allowed the purchase of a new laptop and he thanked all those who gave. We can look forward to stress-free presentations from now on!

The Member's Choice segment was presented by **Duncan Turnbull**. He described a backyard incident where a Spotted Dove appeared to be hiding from a raptor. Was it a Brown Goshawk or a Collared Sparrowhawk? Duncan showed good photographs of the aggressor, zooming in on tail and talon features. Goshawks have a rounded tail tip, and Collared Sparrowhawks a squarer or even slightly notched tail. The tail features were inconclusive in Duncan's bird, but the feet settled the question. The middle toe of a Collared Sparrowhawk is very long, a diagnostic feature if you get to study it. The Turnbull bird had a wicked long middle toe.

Graeme then introduced the main speaker, **Bill Ramsay**, whose talk was entitled *The Feral Chook Islands: Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands*. The title refers to two introduced species, the Red Jungle Fowl, which occurs on Christmas Island, and the Green Jungle Fowl, which is restricted to Cocos Islands. Bill and Shirley made their 12 day trip with Richard Baxter's Birding Tours Australia in November 2008, when the season promised better weather, good birding with possible vagrants, and the red crab migration in full swing.

Located between north-west Australia and Java, Christmas Island is reached from Perth via Learmonth, a six-hour flight. The island is 17km north to south and 19km east to west, with the major settlement in the north east. Languages spoken are English, Chinese and Malay. England claimed sovereignty in 1888, and, during the twentieth century, phosphate mining proceeded with Chinese and Malay labour. The island is now Australian territory.

It is thought that Christmas Island was formed 60 million years ago when a volcano rose from the seafloor. It was further shaped by subsidence, uplifts and erosion. The phosphate deposits may not have had their origin in bird droppings, but rather as a result of lagoonal marine sediments. Mining continues to this day, but is strictly limited to previously mined areas. No primary rainforest can be cleared.

63% of Christmas Island is national park. The vegetation is 40-metre high rainforest on the deepest soil, scaling down to coastal scrub. The coastline is dominated by sheer rocky limestone cliffs, 10-20 metres high, with occasional sand or coral beaches. To get about, sealed roads service the airport and settled areas. Further afield, all haulage roads, minor roads and tracks are unsealed.

Bill showed many marvellous bird photos, many taken by himself, some by other tour members and several from the Christmas Island Tourist Association. Starting at the port, they worked their way around the coast. Red-tailed and White-tailed Tropicbird, including the special Christmas Island golden morph of the White-tailed, were caught in graceful flight. We saw boobies, noddies and frigate-

birds, and were shown all the species one hopes to see at Christmas Island: the endemic Abbott's Booby, Christmas Island Frigatebird, Variable Goshawk, Christmas Island Hawk-owl, Island Thrush and the Christmas Island Imperial-Pigeon. The island was generous with life ticks early in the tour, but the four days allotted to finding vagrants were unproductive.

November was ideal though for crab spotting. Red Crabs were everywhere; the estimated population is 120 million. At least 20 species of crab are found on the island, and since this is the highest abundance and diversity of land crabs in the world, they are given due protection – during migration many roads are closed, there are road signs, special culverts and roadside barriers. Adult Red Crabs migrate from their inland foraging down to the rocky shore; they mate, and the males then head back inland. A female nurtures up to 100 000 eggs, first in a burrow, and then attached to a brood pouch on her abdomen. She then releases the eggs into the ocean. They hatch instantly. After 30 days at sea, the young crabs come ashore and head inland.

Bill highlighted a second crab, the Robber Crab, which is the world's largest land crab; they can weigh 4kg. They have evolved from hermit crabs and also occupy a plundered shell. They are spectacular climbers, scaling trees for protection and also to dislodge coconuts, which they can split open and eat. Despite a \$5000 fine, they are still hunted for food and their status is "vulnerable".

A flight of approximately 1.5 hours took the group on to Cocos (Keeling) Islands. Five main islands lie around a lagoon about 12km across, and North Keeling Island is about 24km to the north. These low-lying coral atolls were visited by Darwin in 1836 and quite a bit of history is associated with the Clunies-Ross family. The plane touched down on West Island and in no time the birders had the Cocos Islands' two "specials", Green Junglefowl and White-breasted Waterhen. For four days, the tour moved about between islands in various sea craft, including motorised outrigger canoe. A trip to South Island was successful in finding Saunders's Tern. Horsburgh and Direction Islands followed, and then came the intrepid landing on North Keeling Island, where one has to be prepared to swim or wade to shore.

The rewards for a ducking were worth it. They found the endemic subspecies of Buff-banded Rail, considered "rare and endangered"; both Red-footed and Masked Boobies breeding; White Terns, which nest in trees; and Great and Lesser Frigatebirds, also breeding. Horn-eyed Ghost Crabs inhabited the beach. Later, on West Island, a Pint-tailed Snipe was seen at Bechat Besar Swamp. A visit to Home Island produced an Asian Koel in the grounds of the Clunies-Ross-built Oceania House; and, subject to BARC review, a rare and immature Blue Rock Dove at the wharf area. Back on West Island, Reef Egrets were spotted in a lagoon north of the airport.

**Chris Doughty** thanked Bill for an interesting talk, which he had illustrated with excellent photographs.

## Past Meeting Reports (Cont'd)

After island hopping, the focus of the meeting moved to education. **Janet Hand** described her busy month of October, details of which will be elsewhere in this issue. Graeme Hosken again asked members to strongly consider volunteering their time and skills at Headquarters in Nunawading. Call Graeme on 9802 5250 to find out how you can help.

**Alison Smith**, from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), then addressed the meeting, highlighting the huge oil spill from the Montara rig off the coast of Western Australia. WWF is

calling for a Royal Commission into the spill, and Alison asked members to lend support through WWF at [www.wwf.org.au](http://www.wwf.org.au).

Graeme thanked **Hazel and Alan Veevers** for stepping up to lead the Beginners' Outings. Their first outing will be in February 2010. A Coach Outing convener (or convenors) for 2010 is still needed. Graeme then closed the meeting.

*Daphne Hards*



*Whiskered Tern at WTP – Photo, John Barkla*

### 24 November 2009

This was the last meeting for 2009 and it was very well attended. **Diane Tweeddale** was at the helm and she led the audience in greeting two new members. **David Plant** then gave us his Member's Choice segment, *Lost and Found*, posing the question "Have Bar-shouldered Doves been displaced by Spotted Doves in Victoria?" David thought this to be so, but began to look into the literature for data to support his contention.

The first recorded survey by Von Mueller in 1869 shows no doves; in 1870, numerous doves were reported, but no Spotted Dove. Two books, one by A.J. Leach (1901) and one by Robert Hall (1907), show big populations of doves across the Top End. The first atlas (1977-81) shows the presence of Bar-shouldered Doves in northern NSW, with current field guides giving their distribution as far south as the River Murray. So, far from being ousted by the Spotted Dove, the Bar-shouldered Dove is slowly moving south. David now wonders whether they are spreading East and West.

Diane then introduced BOCA President, **John Barkla**, for his presentation: *Photography – A New Passion after 50 Years of Birding*. John has been birding since the age of 10, and he remembers a nature walk near his grandmother's house in Kew as stimulating his interest in the outdoors. He acknowledged Charl Giffard and Harold Tarr for guiding his early endeavours, and, through them, he

attended BOCA meetings in the city, where he quietly soaked up information. Only in 1973 did he get round to joining BOCA. John's father contracted encephalitis and during his recovery he also took up bird watching; over the next 30 years he notched up 701 species. John credits his meeting with Fred Smith as inspirational to his success as a birder, and they have spent countless hours together over 40 years. In 2000, John sold his business and needed a new challenge. The loan of a camera for a trip to Darwin was the trigger for his new passion, photography.

The evidence was magnificent. All I can say is "You had to be there!" Many hours of sitting, waiting, snapping and editing went into this beautiful presentation. John showed us approximately 50 species to be found at the Western Treatment Plant (WTP), Werribee, and about 45 species at Bowra Station, Queensland. Each bird was accompanied by very interesting information, be it plumage, status, migration, etc. All I can do is report John's recommendations for each of his two chosen sites.

WTP represents 11 500 hectares of wetland internationally recognised by the RAMSAR Convention. John describes it as the best birding site in Victoria, and as such he thinks it is vastly underutilised. A permit allows visitors access to the western end; whilst an induction course must be attended before visitors can access the eastern section. *Continued page 5.*



## Interesting Sightings

### Field Note Reports – Entered 12 January 2010

The following MELBOCA Field Note Reports were received from members attending the MELBOCA monthly meeting held at Balwyn, 24 November 2009, and incorporate email and website 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? We would also like to know if **Eastern Spinebill's** visit your garden.

<p><b>White-plumed Honeyeater</b></p> <p><b>November:</b> Elwood, Notting Hill.</p> <p><b>Eastern Spinebill</b></p> <p><b>November:</b> Vermont South, Park Orchards.</p>	<p><b>Noisy Miner</b></p> <p><b>November:</b> Balwyn North, Burwood, East Brunswick, Elwood, Vermont South and Blackburn.</p> <p><i>Comments:</i> Martin Mulvihill reports Noisy Miners swooping pedestrians near the Northcote Police Station and also a small colony at All Nations Park to the east of the Police Station.</p>
---	---

### Bell Miner Sightings

The Department of Sustainability and Environment has received reports that **Bell Miner** numbers are reducing or have vacated areas they have occupied for many years. To assist DSE, MELBOCA is asking members to provide the following information:

1. Details of existing colonies (eg Date, Suburb, Melway reference and, if possible, how long the colony has occupied the area);
2. Details of colonies that have disappeared from their normal location. Details as above, Date, Suburb, etc.

Several years ago, BOCA conducted a similar survey in the Melbourne area, but only recorded where Bell Miner were located. It will be interesting to compare the records.

#### Existing Bell Miner Colonies

27 Dec. 2009	Merri Ck (CERES)	Brunswick East Mel: 30 B 7
28 Dec. 2009	Koomba Park	Wantirna Mel: 63 D 6

Information may be directed to MELBOCA on Email: [info@melboca.org.au](mailto:info@melboca.org.au).

### Other Sightings

Date	Sighting	Street/Location	Suburb
30 Oct. 2009	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (10 – First time seen at this location in 20 years)	Altona Golf Course	Altona
09 Nov. 2009	White-winged Triller (2)	Point Cook Coastal Park	Point Cook
12 Nov. 2009 10:15am	Nankeen Night-Heron (1 – in lily pond in front of new building, being harassed by Common Myna)	St Vincents Hospital	Fitzroy
14 Nov. 2009	Masked Woodswallow (1)	Werribee Treatment Plant	
18 Nov. 2009	Stubble Quail (1 – possible escapee)	Truman St	South Kingsville
3-4 Dec. 2009	Wedge-tailed Eagle (2)	Wendover Ave	Bayswater North
11 Dec. 2009	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (2 – feeding on grubs under the bark of an old wattle)	Lillydale Lake Reserve	Lillydale
21 Nov. 2009	White-fronted Honeyeater (1); Purple-gaped Honeyeater (3)	Greater Bendigo National Park	
10 Dec. 2009	Pink-eared Duck (2 – first time seen in this location in 10 years)	Bald Hills Wetland	Venus Bay

## Interesting Sightings (Cont'd)

### Notes Received

The following information was received from a friend of Diane Tweeddale, MELBOCA Committee Member. Sparrows (species unknown) in Hobart, Tasmania, are dying from a strain of Salmonella. The virus has affected five people; and one cat has been diagnosed with the same strain. Has anyone else heard or read of this problem with sparrows?

David Hadley, who lives opposite Belmont Park, Balwyn, provided the following information from a visit to the park on 3 November 2009, with Lauren and Michelle Hadley. Highlights from the two-hour visit included Long-billed Corella (4), Musk Lorikeet (12) and Gang Gang Cockatoo (3). Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (3) were seen overhead, and one Peregrine Falcon was observed devouring a recently caught Noisy Miner.

David has been successful in lobbying the local council to provide nest boxes in the park to encourage nesting for Rainbow and Musk Lorikeet, Eastern Rosella and Sulphur-crested Cockatoo.

Scarlet Honeyeaters have been recorded during November and December 2009 at the following locations east and south of Melbourne.

9 Nov. 2009	Kings Falls	Arthur's Seat
Late Nov. 2009	The 100 Acres	Park Orchards
14 Dec. 2009	Sherbrooke Forest	Dandenong Ranges

All MELBOCA Outing reports may be found on the MELBOCA Website, [www.melboca.org.au](http://www.melboca.org.au)

### Backyard Birds!

I have received several requests from MELBOCA members for the proforma but I am sure there are many more who could be of assistance in this project. Why not give it a go?

I guess many MELBOCA members have a backyard or a park nearby, and, like myself, have made a record of bird species seen at either site since you moved into your home. Now is your chance to share the information you have collected over the years, in my case, forty-six.

It is not a competition, but an 'of interest' exercise. Nominating a 'highlight' would be of interest – in my case, one sighting of a Crested Shrike-tit, 30 years ago.

Information received will be published in *The Melbirdian*.

I have modified a proforma used for the recording of species seen on MELBOCA outings to enter your sighting records, now titled, '**Backyard Birds**'.

The following information is requested:

Name, Site Name, From Date, Abundance, Status, Breeding, Habitat

If you don't want to include info on the latter four items, a cross will do beside the species seen.

Forms may be obtained by one of the following methods:

- 1 Forward your request to BOCA and I shall return the required documents by return email.
- 2 Contact me on 9802 5250 and I shall post the documents to you.

Good luck!

*Graeme Hosken, Recorder*

## Past Meeting Reports (Cont'd)

*Continued from page 3.*

Human population pressure is nibbling away at the edges of the farm, and there needs to be a body of protest to protect it. 280 species have been recorded at WTP, this being one third of Australia's total, and, on any good day, and some bad, you can find John Barkla quietly waiting for his magic shot.

Bowra Station is 14 000 hectares near Cunnamulla in south-west Queensland. It is being acquired by the Australian Wildlife Conservancy, and John rates it highly for dry country habitat and birds. But don't expect to recognise John there – he has developed a camouflage pillowcase which he drops over his head while waiting for nervous birds, such as the Ground Cuckoo-shrike, to settle.

After John's acknowledgements, **Sonja Ross** was asked

to express the audience's thanks for an accomplished talk, and in so doing she highlighted John's skill with his camera and generosity with his knowledge.

Diane then invited **Bernie Stock** to tell us of the bequest made to MELBOCA by his late wife, **Linda**. She valued the club so much during her life and particularly her friends in MELBOCA. We are extremely grateful, and the money will be put to a new laptop computer bearing a plaque to Linda.

**Graeme Hosken** noted that in 2010 the Beginners Outings will take place on the fourth Saturday of the month, not the third as in previous years, with Hazel Veevers as leader. A Coach Tour convener is still needed.

Diane then drew the meeting to a close.

*Daphne Hards*

## Outing Report: Bolin Bolin Billabong, Bulleen

Tuesday 1 December 2009

Twenty people assembled in the Bolin Bolin Billabong car park on a breezy but fine December day. **Diane Tweeddale** led the group until we spread out.

The “usual suspects” were duly noted – Common Starling and Myna, Blackbird, several Australian Magpie, Willie Wagtail, Magpie-lark and many, many Red Wattlebird. Numbers of Noisy Miner and Rainbow Lorikeet were also spotted near the car park. Only a short distance along the walk and Heather called Sacred Kingfisher. This turned out to be to our “co-operative bird of the day”, flying back and forth along the perches of the near bank, and then crossing the river to perch on another clearly visible branch.

Willie Wagtail, Noisy Miner and Australian White and Straw-necked Ibis were present on the sports ground. Crested Pigeon and Common Bronzewing appeared near the start of the walk while Superb Fairy-wren called in the understorey and Red-rumped Parrot perched on the branches above. Two White-faced Heron stood on fallen trees near a depressing accumulation of litter in the river; one was clearly an immature bird, indicating breeding since the recent rains.

Crested Shrike-tit, White-browed Scrub-wren, Golden Whistler and Eastern Yellow Robin were heard but unseen, while Pied Currawong, Grey Fantail and Brown Thornbill were eventually unequivocally seen.

The remnant billabong contained some rather thick algal water and no birds. An old swinging rope hanging from the branch of a eucalypt high on the bank marked the extent of the water in earlier years – it was seven metres from the current water line. Brown Thornbill foraged and warbled in the lower foliage. On the path ahead of us, a male Australian Magpie bashed and rearranged a recently emerged cicada. He seemed determined to remove the wings and then enjoy his catch until he was joined by a female, at which point he swiftly swallowed his prey, presumably to avoid a contest for a significant meal.

Several sightings of Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and Laughing Kookaburra were added to the list. There were few ducks, only Pacific Black and Australian Wood Duck, with raptors represented by the sighting of a Brown Goshawk. At the end of the walk we had a bird list of 41 species, which was quite satisfying for an area still clearly drought-affected.

*Diane Tweeddale*  
Convenor MELBOCA Weekday Outings

## Outing Report: Sherbrooke Forest, Kallista

Wednesday 18 November 2009

The warm weather was tempered by forest shade as 12 birders gathered in the car park. **Rhonda Miller** led the group and **Jan Incall** assisted, providing detailed knowledge of the Superb Lyrebird. Grants Picnic Ground is a tourist destination where buses briefly unload their passengers to feed birds and take photos. The local Crimson Rosella and Sulphur-crested Cockatoo populations have responded predictably, increasing in number and tameness. A few Australian King-Parrot and Galah also took advantage of the easy food.

We headed away from the cars and soon encountered shyer birds. Brown Thornbill and Golden Whistler moved among the lower storey and Lewin's Honeyeater and White-throated Treecreeper were heard. The latter was eventually sighted by most of us. Signs warned of falling branches and the sight of an enormous blasted tree trunk was sobering. Even more sobering were the sound of a falling branch and then the sight of a “widow maker” spearing down to the ground.

A short walk off the main path led to a lyrebird's nest, no longer in use, atypically lodged in a low tree fork rather than at the base of a tree. Later, most of the party sighted a female lyrebird and her banded chick, both retreating swiftly. It was a good patch of bush as it also yielded an Eastern Whipbird and a second lyrebird. A family group of Eastern Yellow Robin flitted near the path and White-browed Scrubwren scolded us from the security of the understorey.

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo and Eastern Spinebill were calling; late in the walk a spinebill fed close enough for most to gain clear views. Grey Shrike-thrush were also vocal and occasionally seen. In forests, it is bird *calls* rather than *views*, and much regret was expressed in the group about the difficulty identifying all the twitters. (Memo, must pay more attention to call ID!)

The only raptor seen was a high-soaring Brown Goshawk, while Pied and Grey Currawong were heard and the former was seen. A group of us was delighted to sight a male Rose Robin. He was extremely flighty and it took several minutes to acquire fleeting views. Then he posed on an open branch, for at least one second, so we could each claim an unequivocal sighting.

Back at the cars we lunched beneath the welcome shade of a (hopefully non-branch-dropping) tree while the local Crimson Rosella team checked us out for handouts, briefly perching on hats and hair.

A short walk after lunch yielded very few sightings and not many calls, as the birds had more sense than the birdos and were resting in the heat of the day. We returned for bird call and found we'd a total of 37 species. This was a rather satisfying total for forest birding in warm conditions and we thanked Rhonda for showing us the possibilities in such a tourist area. Our thanks also went to Jan for sharing some of her lyrebird expertise.

*Diane Tweeddale*  
Convenor MELBOCA Weekdays Outings

## Education Report

### Leeton Birdfair, Lyndale Primary, Wader Identification Night and Field Trip, Maryvale Hostel and Murrumbreen Neighbourhood Watch

November was another exceptionally busy month for education activities. The first event was the **Fourth Annual Leeton Birdfair**. As in previous years, the weather was hot. This year MELBOCA members **Denise and Arthur Carew, Sunny Fernie** and I made the trip to Leeton. Jenny Lau and Don Saunders (BOCA's Conservation Officers) also attended.

The theme was 'Australia – Land of Parrots'. Friday 13 November was Schools Day and about 10 local schools attended for education activities. Some were smaller rural schools that brought students from grades three to six, while the much larger Leeton School brought only their grade sixers. **Annette Cook** (BOCA's Education Co-ordinator) and **Jenny Lau** had worked out suitable activities and Arthur, Sunny and I assisted Jenny in delivering these programs. After Jenny gave a PowerPoint presentation on parrots, the students were split into three groups. One group played a game similar to snakes and ladders, with good bird habitat and bad bird habitat scenarios on the squares. The second group did a craft activity, making parrot heads with a movable jaw. The third, a bird colouring activity. If the students finished early, they could inspect parrot skins taken from the National Office. The schools rotated between a number of rooms where other environmental groups were running their own activities.

On Friday evening, a welcome BBQ was held at the Fiveboughs Wetland on the edge of Leeton. It was a great chance to meet fellow exhibitors and watch the Glossy Ibis come in at sunset. The Fair itself was on Saturday and Sunday morning. Set on the green lawns of the Yanco Agricultural College, the venue was excellent, although hot weather reduced attendance figures. During both days, interesting talks were held in air-conditioned rooms. Our BOCA group rotated the information booth/shop duties so that everyone got a chance to hear the guest speakers of their choice. Saturday night, an outdoor dinner by lantern light was held on the college lawns before we adjourned inside for the Key Speaker's address. We were pleased to learn that this year, in 2010, they plan to move the Fair to the third weekend in September, when it is likely to be cooler. Mark it in your calendars now.

The second education event in November was at **Lyndale Primary School**. On 17 November, Annette Cook gave a presentation to 74 children at the Lyndale Primary School in North Dandenong. A week later, these children were taken to the Dandenong Creek Wetlands to identify the local birds that Annette had told them about. During the field trip, Annette was assisted by MELBOCA members Ken Harris, Geoff Russell and Pauline and Arthur

Spurgeon. By all accounts this was a fantastic day and I thank the volunteers.

Next event on the calendar was the **Wader Identification Night**, Thursday 19 November. Thirty-nine members were treated to a wonderful presentation by John Barkla in the Edna Walling room at the National Office. John supported his talk with beautiful, clear photographs of all the likely subjects at the Western Treatment Plant. He pointed out the features of the different species and made it all seem so easy. At this point I would like to thank Jo Oldland from Birds Australia who supplied a set of laminated identification sheets for all the participants. Everyone left eager to test their skills on Sunday.

And so, our field trip to the **Western Treatment Plant**, Sunday 22 November. This was the wettest morning of the year! Thank goodness for those laminated sheets and for car pooling. As we weaved our way along the ponds, we were forced to look out the side of the car that the rain wasn't pelting against. John didn't want us to miss seeing special birds and was soaked to the skin several times as he ran along the line of cars pointing out uncommon sightings. This was really beyond the call of duty – but much appreciated. By 1:30pm, the rain had cleared and we managed to eat our lunch outdoors. In the afternoon, people could get out of their cars and walk about in search of those Pectoral Sandpipers. We left the Treatment Plant later than expected, but no one was complaining. We had had a marvellous day, despite the rain, and all participants would have seen over 70 species. A big thank you to John from all involved.

On 25 November, the ladies from **Maryvale Hostel**, Boronia, arrived at the Edna Walling Room for a presentation by Annette Cook. This facility has a BOCA membership and we meet with them once a year. On this visit, they learnt about our smaller birds. I assisted Annette when they took part in craft and colouring activities. Each participant took home a laminated memento of their art work. They also enjoyed visiting our Blue Wren Gift Shop to do a little Christmas shopping.

Finally, in December, **Graeme Hosken** gave a PowerPoint presentation to the **Murrumbreena Neighbourhood Watch** group. Although it was a smaller group, they appreciated Graeme's talk about 'Keeping out the illegals'.

I wish to thank all those who have assisted with our educational activities in 2009 and I look forward to some new volunteers in 2010.

*Janet Hand, MELBOCA Education Officer*



## Contact

### Mailing address:

MELBOCA  
C/O BOCA National Office  
PO Box 185  
Nunawading VIC 3131

*The Melbirdian* editor,  
Andrew Fuhrmann, can be  
contacted at the above  
address or via email at  
melbirdian@gmail.com

### MELBOCA Committee:

#### President

Graeme Hosken  
tel: 9802 5250

#### Secretary

Janet Hand

#### Treasurer

Bill Ramsay

#### Conservation

Arthur Carew

#### Members

Sunny Fernie  
Andrew Fuhrmann  
Diane Tweeddale  
Geoff Russell  
John Young

We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.melboca.org.au](http://www.melboca.org.au)

## Dandenong Catchment Survey Summary

The three-year contract between BOCA and Melbourne Water, for monitoring 10 wetlands in the Lower Dandenong Catchment, is drawing to a close with the last survey to be completed in May 2010. On the six wetlands being surveyed by MELBOCA, we have so far identified 131 bird species, four frog species, four mammal species and one fish species.

November and December produce many breeding records, especially with the waterfowl. Raptor numbers also increase, possibly due to an easily obtainable food source.

In October 2009, Melbourne Water contractors commenced enlarging the Kilberry Boulevard site as part of the rehabilitation of the River Gum Creek area in Hampton Park. During the December survey, it was noticed that two recently constructed depressions had filled with water from rain earlier in the month, much to the joy of several Australian Wood Duck, Grey Teal and Pacific Black Duck, while Masked Lapwing were feeding on the newly formed earth mounds. Once established, with hundreds of shrubs and trees being planted, this site will be a "must-visit" area for birding.

One highlight from November and December was the recording of a Royal Spoonbill at Frog Hollow and Hallam Valley Road, a species only previously recorded at two other sites. A Brown Falcon

at Kilberry in December was another highlight, being new for the site, but was not welcomed by the local Australian Hobby, which drove it out of the area. A Crimson Rosella was recorded at Hallam Valley Road in December (all previous records of this bird had been at the South Golf Links site), and, in November, a Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo was observed – a new bird for the site.

At HVR a Striped Marsh Frog was heard calling which takes the total of frog species for the MELBOCA sites to four. The MELBOCA team members are becoming experts, not only in bird call identification but frog calls as well. Our thanks to Howard Plowright for his assistance in providing a CD of possible frog calls that may be heard in the survey area.

Please note that with *The Melbirdian* becoming a quarterly publication, this report, and the MELBOCA Dandenong Catchments Field Report insert, will cover three months of records. It is not known if the contract with Melbourne Water will be extended, but if it is, additional persons will be required to survey at least one site. I shall keep you posted.

*Graeme Hosken*

**Stop Press!** On the 10 January 2010, Howard and Jill Plowright recorded a Caspian Tern at the South Golf Links Road site. The total for the MELBOCA sites is now 132.

### MELBOCA Dates to Remember

**Monday 15 February:** Outing to Bellarine Peninsula – 10:00am to 3:00pm – bush and waterbirds – leader, Fred Smith. Melway 452 A11. From La Trobe Tce/Settlement Rd take Barwon Heads Rd to Barwon Valley golf club. Meet in car park. Toilets available. Convoy driving to different locations. Scopes useful. All welcome – no need to book. Contact MELBOCA Diane 03 9836 8692.

**Wednesday 3 March:** Outing to Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne – 10:00am to 3:00pm – bush and waterbirds – leader, Diane Tweeddale. Melway 2G B10. Meet at Gate H. Parking fees apply to Alexandra Ave meters. Close public transport also available. CARRY LUNCH. Toilets available. All welcome – no need to book. Contact MELBOCA Diane 03 9836 8692.

**Tuesday 16 March:** Outing to Hallam Valley Rd, Hampton Park – 10:00am to 3:00pm – bush and waterbirds – leader, Rob Grosvenor. Melway 96 A3. Enter Hallam Valley Rd from South Gippsland Hwy. Continue to end of Hallam Valley Rd and park beyond gate (Mel 95 K3). GATE LOCKED AT 10:10AM SHARP. Late lunch – no toilets. All welcome – no need to book. Contact MELBOCA Diane 03 9836 8692.

**Monday 12 April:** Outing to Badger Weir, Healesville – 10:00am to 3:00pm – bushbirds – leader, Ken Baker. Melway 278 K9. Enter park at end of Badger Weir Rd. Park near toilets. All welcome – no need to book. Contact MELBOCA Diane 03 9836 8692.

**Tuesday 11 May:** Outing to Lillydale Lake, Lillydale – 10:00am to 3:00pm – bush and waterbirds – leader, Elsmaree Baxter. Melway 38 G7. Enter from Swansea Rd and park in the first car park. Toilets available. All welcome – no need to book. Contact MELBOCA Diane 03 9836 8692

**Check BOCA website and MELBOCA website for late changes**



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

**BOCA MW Dandenong Catchment Survey - MELBOCA Sites**

**Nov - Dec 2009**

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

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

<b>Total number of bird species seen at each site during the current survey months:</b>	41	35	51	40	62	26
<b>Total number of bird species seen on survey days:</b>	87	60	98	84	94	45
<b>Total number of bird species seen at each site on Survey and Non-survey days:</b>	91	60	101	89	97	45
<b>Total number of bird species seen at all MELBOCA sites to date: 131</b>						

**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
<b>Frogs</b>							<b>Mammals</b>						
Eastern Common Froglet	X	X	X		X		Red Fox					Ns	
Southern Bullfrog			X	X			European Rabbit	X		X		X	
Spotted Marsh Frog			X		N	N	Brown Hare						X
Striped Marsh Frog					N		Feral Cat						
							<b>Fish</b>						
							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.

**Ns** Denotes species seen on non-survey day.

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