



The Melbirdian

MELBOCA Newsletter Number 75
Autumn 2011

Wet Wet Wet: Dandenong Catchment Survey October to November

Conditions experienced from October to December broke the average rainfall records. As indicated in the July-to-September report, water levels continued to be high for this period, and again waterfowl numbers went in the opposite direction, with Pink-eared Duck, Hardhead, Australasian Shoveler and Blue-billed Duck not being recorded at any of the six MELBOCA sites. Even Hoary-headed Grebe was absent and of the egret species, one, a loan Eastern-great was recorded at South Golf Links Rd (SGLR) in October.

Royal Spoonbill was an exception, with sightings at SGLR in November and December and at Kilberry (KB) and River Gum Ck (RGC) in December. Perhaps communication hadn't been received by this species of extensive rains and flooding inland.

Raptor sightings were also limited, with a Black-shouldered Kite at Hallam Valley Rd (HVR) in October, a Collared Sparrowhawk in December at SGLR and each month for this period, a Swamp Harrier at SGLR but only at HVR during October and November. In December, a Eurasian Skylark was added to the KB list and Tree Sparrow moved a little east from RGC to become a new species at KB in October.

Crakes, as usual, were elusive, but a Spotless was a new species for SGLR, but also recorded at RGC in October. The only other Crake species recorded, Baillon's, was at RGC in November.

Species recorded on non-survey days proved fruitful this period, with a Caspian Tern at RGC in December, a new species for this site, and the Red-rumped Parrot at KB in December. Sacred Kingfisher decided to visit KB and RGC in October, a new species for the MELBOCA sites. Previously recorded on a non-survey day, the Pacific Gull's status was elevated to the HVR list in December.

It is possible that the Scaly-breasted Lorikeet may have nested at RGC, being recorded at the entrance to a hollow in an old Red Gum in October and December. It may have been in the same location in November, but rain prevented sighting this species on the survey day. We're looking forward to the New Year to see if the sightings of this species increase at RGC from the normal two.

Only one new species was added this period for the six MELBOCA sites: a Sacred Kingfisher seen on a non-survey day. The count now stands at 144 bird species.

In the last report, I indicated that the new site at Rigby's, south of Ferntree Gully Rd, surveys would start in January this year. Unfortunately, Melbourne Water has advised that the site will not be available until at least July as the wet conditions in 2010 delayed completion at the site and also access has been given to East Link to use a service road through the site for construction of a Service Centre on the east side of the Toll Road overlooking Rigby's.

Graeme Hosken

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 Ave, 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 22 February 2011 8:00pm
Chris Lester: "Don't just go to Lima Zoo"

We look forward to Chris's humour as much as his photographs as he takes us with him on his tour of Peru.

Tuesday 26 April 2011 8:00pm
Ben Camm: "Living Marine Treasures"

Ben works for the Dolphin Research Centre down on the Peninsula. We look forward to hearing about the wonders found along our shores.

Tuesday 22 March 2011 8:00pm
Ken Osetroff: "Nature of Japan in all seasons"

Ken regularly leads tours to Japan and he will show us the wide variety of natural surroundings as well as wonderful locations for bird watching.

Tuesday 24 May 2011 8:00pm
Atticus Fleming: "A new model for Conservancy – making a difference in the field"

Atticus is Chief Executive of Australian Wildlife Conservancy, which owns 21 sanctuaries around Australia to protect many species of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians.

Inside This Issue:

BOCA/BA Amalgamation Report (2-3) – Past Meeting Reports (4-5) – Education Report (7) – Outing Report: 100 Acre Park and You Yangs (7), Koomba Park (10) – Interesting Sightings (9) – Dates to Remember (9) – Contact MELBOCA (10)

Report of the First Meeting: MELBOCA and BA Vic Group

Meeting held 16 November 2010

In preparation for the possibility of a BA/BOCA amalgamation, a meeting was held between MELBOCA and BA Vic Group to discuss how both groups would operate if the amalgamation occurred. The meeting was attended by Janet Hand, Graeme Hosken and Bill Ramsay representing MELBOCA, and Mark Anderson, Tim Dolby, Chris Lester and Stuart Dashper representing BA Vic Group.

BA Vic Group Operation

Prior to the meeting, both groups exchanged an outline of their operations. Although the bulk of BA Vic Group's members are located in Melbourne, the group has a strong state-wide focus. Their state-focused activities/projects include:

- Conservation issues that affect Victoria;
- Awarding Research Scholarships to postgraduate students whose research will have benefits for the conservation of Victorian avifauna;
- The Rushworth Bird Banding Project;
- Running the annual Twitchathon, the main fund raiser for BA Vic Group;
- Preparation of a quarterly newsletter, *VicBab-ber*.

BA Vic Group also runs activities with a Melbourne focus, such as a monthly meeting, held at BA National Office in Carlton on the second Thursday of the month.

BA Vic Group finances operate on a capitation system where they receive a proportion of Victorian BA Members' fees from BA National Office.

A Preliminary Plan

After much discussion it was decided that we should consider the following preliminary plan, which basically allows for all current BA Vic Group and MELBOCA projects/activities to continue under a new organisation structure. Three main elements were considered.

1. State Issues

A Committee or Council should be elected from the Victorian members of the new organisation to address State issues. Such issues include:

- Conservation;
- Research Scholarships;
- Twitchathon;
- State issues Newsletter with input from Victorian Branches.

Other issues of State importance that overlap several Branches.

It is not proposed that this Committee or Council is another tier of management but a resource for Victorian Branches to call upon for assistance and possibly funding

for any special projects, or issues in their area that are of State significance.

2. Melbourne Branch

It was recognised that the bulk of BA Vic Group's Melbourne members live more centrally in Melbourne than the bulk of MELBOCA's Members who live more in the eastern suburbs. This means that the membership is spread over a large area, presenting a possible case for more than one Branch to accommodate the combined membership. It was also recognised that at present MELBOCA fully overlaps BAYBOCA's area and extends into the area of PenBOC and Yarra Valley Branch.

It was agreed that we should initially consider a single branch to combine BA Vic Group's Melbourne centred activities and MELBOCA's activities. The main features of this amalgamation would be:

- Formation of a Melbourne Branch Committee;
- Continuation of all MELBOCA's Activities including a Melbourne Newsletter;
- Continuation of all BA Vic Group's Melbourne Activities;
- Holding two monthly meetings, at their current venues and time slots.

Incorporating all BA Vic Group's items of Melbourne interest into an enlarged version of the current MELBOCA Newsletter.

3. Funding

This matter will need more discussion. It was thought that an extension of the current BA capitation system would be the most suitable.

It was considered that the capitation should have two components:

- Part going to the State Council or Committee (which in part will find its way back to the Branches for relevant projects);
- Part going to each Branch. This may require all members of the combined organisation to nominate which branch they wish their proportion of Branch capitation be directed to.

Obviously the funding issue is a National issue and will require a lot of input from the BOCA/BA Working Group.

Future Actions

The above is a summary of the outcome of the first meeting. They are preliminary thoughts that need to be considered and developed much further

MELBOCA recognises that some of the issues affect all Victorian Branches, so it is planned to forward this document to all Victorian Branches for comment and input, with an invitation to Victorian Branches to have representation at future meetings.

Bill Ramsay, MELBOCA

Report of the Second Meeting: MELBOCA and BA Vic Group

Meeting held 13 December 2010

In preparation for the possibility of a BA/BOCA Amalgamation, a second meeting was held between MELBOCA and BA Vic Group to discuss how both groups would operate if the amalgamation occurred. The meeting was attended by Jess McVicar (BA/BOCA Project Manager); Janet Hand, Graeme Hosken and Bill Ramsay representing MELBOCA; Mark Anderson, Tim Dolby, Chris Lester and Stuart Dashper representing BA Vic Group.

Report by Jess McVicar

Jess gave verbal report to the meeting on recent BA/BOCA progress. The main points were:

- The process was being considered in two stages:
 - issues to be resolved pre BA/BOCA AGMs;
 - issues to be resolved post BA/BOCA AGMs.
- Both the BA and BOCA AGMs are to be held on the same day, 21 May 2011.
- An information pack is to be issued to all BA and BOCA Members in April 2011.
- BA Vic Group and MELBOCA are leaders in the pre-amalgamation discussions.

It was generally considered by the meeting that April was too late and the issue date for the information package should be brought forward to March to give Members more time to review the proposal and allow some time for discussion.

The preliminary plan proposed at the meeting on 16 November 2010

The preliminary plan provisionally adopted at the previous meeting considered three elements:

- Formation of a Victorian Region Council to deal with state issues and issues overlapping Branches;
- Formation of a new Melbourne Branch to deal with the Melbourne issues of BA Vic Group and all MELBOCA issues;
- Funding—an area that the meeting considered that they could make suggestions and identify issues, but which would require significant input and decision-making by the BA/BOCA Working Group.

Items arising from the meeting on 13 December 2010

1. Both BA Vic Group and MELBOCA expressed concern about the lack of feedback and comment from their members and Victorian BOCA Branches about the last meeting.

2. Both BA Vic Group and MELBOCA considered they need more information on the geographic distribution of membership throughout Victoria. Both groups are seeking this information from their respective CEOs.
3. There was a long discussion on the method and amount of funding that would be forthcoming from National Office to the Victorian Region Council and Victorian Branches.

It was agreed that input was urgently required from the BA/BOCA Working Group on this last matter so that BA Vic Group and BOCA Victorian Branches could report the outcome to their members.

A list of questions (see below) was prepared for Jess to submit to the BA/BOCA Working Group.

If the amalgamation is voted in at the AGMs, it was agreed that the BA Vic Group Melbourne based members and MELBOCA should form a joint committee to manage all Melbourne-based activities, commencing 1 July 2011. At the MELBOCA Committee Meeting held the following day it was decided that 1 October 2011 would be a more manageable date for MELBOCA.

Questions for the BA/BOCA Working Group

1. How will the new structure accommodate BA and BOCA Members who may not want to be part of a Branch.
2. How will the new capitation system work, in particular:
 - How will funds be paid to the Regional Councils and Branches?
 - Given that one of the BA/BOCA aims for the amalgamation is 'to provide a better service for all Members' and that it has been stated 'that we would retain and foster the core activities and interests of the existing organisations', what level of funding can Regional Councils and Branches expect?
 - After amalgamation, will Regional Councils and Branches be responsible for financing, production and distribution of their newsletters?

Future Actions

Hopefully we will have the answers to our questions available for consideration at the next meeting planned for 27 January 2011.

MELBOCA recognises that some of the issues affect all Victorian Branches, so as for the previous report, it is planned to forward this document to all Victorian Branches for comment and input, with an invitation to Victorian Branches to have representation at future meetings.

Bill Ramsay, MELBOCA

Past Meeting Reports

26 October 2010

Graeme Hosken called the meeting to order, greeted all and commenced a program of topics dear to us all – birds and water! In another superb display of her bird photography, **Sonja Ross** took the microphone and led us on her recent holiday trip through western New South Wales, west Queensland, across to Townsville, then Cairns, Atherton, Brisbane, Lamington, Dubbo and home. What a buzz to see water in Menindee Lake, with several stately White-necked Heron and Eastern Great Egret. The Darling River had water, and at Thargomindah rain had brought Black Kites, Nankeen Night-Heron, Great Crested Grebe and flocks of Major Mitchell's Cockatoos. At every stop Sonja found great subjects to photograph, with the rainforest being very rich in variety.

Graeme then introduced **Will Steele**, who is Waterways Biodiversity Conservation Program Leader at Melbourne Water. He grew up in South Africa, and since migrating to Australia in 1995 has worked on HANZAB at Birds Australia. His talk addressed the subject of water: *Wetlands of the Port Phillip and Westernport Region*. Asked to talk about the surveys being conducted by MELBOCA for Melbourne Water, Will gave a background to their constructed wetlands. He began with the Ramsar Convention's definition of wetland, which not only embraces standing water, fresh, brackish or salt, but also rivers and streams. And a wetland can be natural, artificial, permanent or temporary. Whereas the treaty was initially driven by concerns for bird habitat, it now covers all fauna and flora.

Since 1835, approximately one third of natural wetlands have been lost in Victoria, and another third are degraded. In the whole Port Phillip and Westernport area only 16,443 hectares of wetland exist. Six categories exist: freshwater meadow, saline and freshwater marsh, deep freshwater marsh, semi-permanent saline and permanent saline. The first type, freshwater meadows, are highly threatened in Victoria; many have been drained for development, or developed into stormwater wetlands. Will is passionate that the importance of the remainder be recognised. Most of the natural wetlands are the responsibility of Parks Victoria, however; Melbourne Water on the whole looks after constructed wetlands, such as sewage treatment plants and water storage basins. Wetlands of international significance in Victoria are the Western and Eastern Treatment Plants (WTP and ETP), and Edithvale and Seaford Wetlands. Besides managing these, Melbourne Water looks after 36 regional wetlands, known as *biosites*.

Sewage treatment facilities consist of huge oxidation ponds, but at WTP in Werribee we are lucky to have some shallow ponds set aside for birds. ETP, in the Lower Dandenong Catchment, occupies a much smaller area, and has no access to the public, though monthly bird surveys have been conducted since 2004. Both sites support a wide variety of bird species.

Edithvale and Seaford Wetlands are an example of a Flood Retarding Basin. Melbourne Water purchased the land to prevent development, and to manage storm water surges. There are about 200 such basins, and about 150 of these have a healthy wetland at the bottom, e.g. Mon-

bulk Creek. Urban lakes, e.g. Patterson Lakes, on the other hand, stagnate, get smelly, develop blue-green algae and are not popular with Melbourne Water.

Of late, Melbourne Water's largest projects have been the construction of Stormwater Treatment Wetlands. One such is Boggy Creek Wetland near the ETP in Carrum. Stormwater carries nitrogen and phosphorus from plant material, and silt matter called "total suspended solids". By building a large meandering course through an artificial wetland, the outcomes are several: stormwater is prevented from flowing directly into waterways (water off roadways and factory sites is not healthy for rivers); flows are retarded, allowing filtration; flash floods are reduced, hence less erosion; and stormwater is treated before discharge into Port Phillip Bay. The biggest stormwater treatment basin in the southern hemisphere is currently being constructed at Rigby's Wetland in the Dandenong Catchment. It is designed take up 27,340kg nitrogen, 7,820kg phosphorus and 4,501kg solids. One of the controversial features about these basins is that they eventually require dredging to remove accumulated sediment. Melbourne Water considers this a dynamic and positive feature, whereas the public generally resents disturbance.

Melbourne Water is keen to know how birds make use of these constructed wetlands, and has initiated bird surveys to record not only bird species, but also numbers and breeding dates, so that necessary maintenance can be planned accordingly. WTP, ETP, Edithvale and Seaford, Boundary Road and Parks Wetlands all have monthly surveys in hand. To get a picture of the environment around ETP, Melbourne Water engaged MELBOCA to survey eight wetlands in that area, being Golf Links Road, Troups Creek, Rivergum Creek, Hallam Valley Road, Frog Hollow, Heatherdale Road, Karoo Road and Mordialloc. Data has been collected since July 2007 and surveys are scheduled to continue for a further 12 months.

A new five year Regional Strategy is being prepared by Melbourne Water for 2012-17, with a budget of \$300 million plus. In it are principles for the construction of further wetlands: larger areas are preferable to smaller ones; the desirability of natural settings; incorporating natural fluctuations in water levels; and recognition of wetlands as drought/climate refuges. Current discussions include using birds as a performance indicator for wetlands, also frogs and fish. If this is approved a lot more information will be required. Will hopes that the surveys extend from the present core of eight to cover all Melbourne waterways, say, 250 sites.

John Barkla thanked Will for his talk, and acknowledged how Will has effectively brought science into play in the workings of Melbourne Water over a 24 year period.

Graeme made many announcements which will be detailed elsewhere, but please note the Planting Day to be held in April 2011 at Yellingbo. Details to come later. After outings, the shop, unusual sightings, and a vagrant snippet from **Chris Doughty** about a recent trip to Ashmore Reef, we closed for supper.

Daphne Hards

Past Meeting Reports (cont'd)

23 November 2010

After welcoming members and a visitor, **Bill Ramsay** asked **Hannah Busch** to give her Member's Choice segment, *Roxby Downs' Birdlife*. Hannah spent six months living at Roxby Downs, six hours drive north of Adelaide, and when not working she went birdwatching. In the town of 3-4000 people, she regularly saw Long-billed Corella, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Black Kite, White-plumed Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Miner and White-breasted Woodswallow. Ten kilometres north, at the sewage ponds at Olympic Dam were ducks, grebe, avocet and Black-fronted Dotterel; and in a pocket-sized patch of adjacent scrub, Hannah photographed corellas, Blue Bonnet, Mulga Parrot, Crimson Chat, Singing and Pied Honeyeater, Zebra Finch, Variegated Fairy-wren and Rainbow Bee-eater. Going south, on a BA Shorebirds 20-20 survey at Coorlay Lagoon (private property), the group counted approximately 6,800 birds including Hoary-headed Grebe, Pink-eared and Freckled Duck, Red-capped Plover, Glossy Ibis, Sharp-tailed and Wood Sandpiper and Black-winged Stilt. Why visit Roxby Downs? Well, why not?

Our main speakers were **Bruce and Sue Tardif**, coordinators of the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater. To this role they bring qualifications in horticulture, teaching, conservation and land management; and they titled their presentation, *What Role can Friends Groups Play in the Conservation of Threatened Species?* Bruce told us that the land set aside for the preservation of the Helmeted Honeyeater at Yellingbo is managed by Parks Victoria, and the Friends group was formed in 1989. Their flagship bird is *Lichenostomus melanops-cassidix*, a subspecies of the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, which needs swampy forest with tall gums such as Manna Gum and Mountain Swamp Gum for foraging, and a sedge-rich shrub understorey for nesting. In their limited range, Helmeted Honeyeater had been plentiful, but dogged land clearing resulted in just one population of 50 birds remaining at Yellingbo. The Friends group was initiated by **Steve Craig**, and their aims were to protect remaining habitat, plant more, and to raise public awareness.

Our record for protection of endangered species is not good, and the threats identified for Helmeted Honeyeater include: habitat fragmentation/loss; habitat degradation, e.g. degradation of riparian vegetation by livestock and deer (a big challenge at Yellingbo); predation by fox and cat; competition from Bell Miner; and a fire regime which is based on flora rather than fauna. The Yellingbo was identified as a biodiversity hotspot, and it has the sedge-rich *E.camphora* (Mountain Swamp Gum) swamp that the Helmeted Honeyeater can thrive in. Bruce then showed us a collection of superb photographs of these honeyeaters, many taken by **Merrilyn Serong**, plus other birds and creatures which live within this safe haven, such as Leadbeater's Possum and Swamp Skink.

Sue then took us through the significant events in the protection of the Helmeted Honeyeater. In 1952, the Bird Observers Club started a ten-year survey, Survey Cassidix, at Yellingbo, to record bird numbers. Alarm bells rang and the Yellingbo Faunal Reserve was proclaimed in 1967. In

1971 the Helmeted Honeyeater was named the Victorian faunal emblem, but, despite this recognition, by 1989 only 50 birds remained. Simultaneously, the Friends group was started and the captive breeding program began at Healesville. In order to keep up a supply of plants, the indigenous plant nursery was set up in 1991. Learning heaps along the way, the first captive bred birds were released in 1995, but these adult birds died. Only young birds can adapt to the wild, from 40-day old to six months. In 2001, birds were also released at Tonimbuk and Bunyip; the cluster at Bunyip is struggling (approx. 40 birds survive), and Tonimbuk is yet to be a successful site. Currently there are about 40 birds at Yellingbo. The goal is to have 10 release sites.

So what can a Friends group do? They can go ahead and get the job done while the politicians procrastinate! As part of their goal to protect habitat, the Friends help run the nursery and assist in seed collection. This supports the revegetation program. Volunteers are critical in the ongoing replanting. 80,000 tubestock are prepared annually. Partnerships with companies help finance the work. Schools and corporate groups enjoy planting days, and they use a fenced plot system rather than tree-guards. The partnerships that have developed give hope for good outcomes: Yarra4life are a local group working with landowners to protect habitat; the Judith Erdly Save Wildlife group was set up to raise money to buy land for Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos, and they are happy to come on-board; lobbying of politicians like Gavin Jennings, former Environment Minister, has led to parcels of public land being identified and incorporated into a new park, State Emblem Park; Melbourne Water is a funding supporter and also the federal Caring For Our Country Initiative.

To raise public awareness of the Helmeted Honeyeater, the Friends are heavily involved in community education, they promote volunteer opportunities, lobby politicians, support the recovery program and help in networking. They started an Ambassadors Program to take the message to the local schools. Local artists have helped by donating cards; local markets have been places to showcase their aims. Surveys are essential for the assessment of the recovery program, and the volunteers have been critical in achieving regular monitoring. The Friends' can-do attitude is worth noting: in the last 4 years they have given 141 talks, propagated and planted 271,725 plants, hosted 105 revegetation days, written 45 grant proposals and been successful with 33, and volunteered 22,636 hours of labour.

So a group of dedicated and organised Friends can achieve a great deal. Sue emphasised that even one person can make a difference. **Arthur Carew**, president of Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater, thanked Bruce and Sue.

Bill outlined MELBOCA plans on amalgamation (see pages 2 and 3 of this newsletter). **Barbara Longmuir** spruicked the shop, and we heard of Common Koel singing in Kew. It was then time to sample the mince tarts.

Daphne Hards

Interesting Sightings

Field Note Reports – Entered 30 January 2011

The following Field Reports were received from members attending the MELBOCA monthly meetings held at Balwyn on 23 November 2010, incorporating email and web-site reports to the BOCA National Office.

This is the final report for **White-plumed Honeyeater**, **Eastern Spinebill** and **Noisy Miner** sightings within 40km of Melbourne.

I thank members for their submissions. Field Reports of Interesting Sightings will continue.

White-plumed Honeyeater	
All days	Milton St, Elwood
17 Nov. 2010	Doncaster
Eastern Spinebill	
24 Oct. 2010	Rosanna/Banyule Flats
20 Nov. 2010	Doncaster East
Noisy Miner	
All months	Milton St, Elwood
Oct. 2010	Balwyn Mont Albert, Viewbank
Nov. 2010:	Glen Waverley

Other Sightings

02 Oct. 2010	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (5)	Newport Lakes	Newport
14 Oct. 2010	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (15)	Aspendale Railway Stn	Aspendale
14 Oct. 2010	Spotted Pardalote (2 – nesting in garden)	Mimosa Crt	Doncaster East
08 Nov. 2010	Cattle Egret (20)	Dandenong Ck flood plain	Scoresby
25 Nov. 2010	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (2)	Anderson St	Oakleigh
29 Nov. 2010	Sacred Kingfisher (1)	Birdsland Reserve	Tecoma
30 Nov. 2010	Song Thrush (10)	Raymond St	Preston
?? Dec. 2010	Sacred Kingfisher (2)	Westerfolds Park	Templestowe
02 Dec. 2010	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (4)	La Trobe University	Bundoora
12 Dec. 2010	Crested Pigeon (2)	Solders Rd	Clayton Nth
27 Dec. 2010	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (3)	Sherman St	Forest Hill

Members Comments

At the MELBOCA November meeting in Balwyn, two reports were received of a koel recorded in late November in the Kew area near the Yarra River. In early December, sightings and calls were heard of a Koel in the Mt Waverley area. Any other reports of Koel sightings in the Melbourne area would be welcome.

Celia Browne writes that she has just finished reading an interesting book, "The Biggest Twitch", by Alan Davies and Ruth Miller of northern Wales, UK. It documents their

2008 year-long twitch to break the world record of greatest number of birds seen in the world. They broke the existing record of 3,662 with help from various world-wide bird leaders, recording 4,314 species. They birded from 9 October to 6 November, seeing 408 species in Australia. Celia found some of the bird names fascinating. Your turn?

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

Backyard Birds!

Since January 2010, I have been requesting MELBOCA members submit records of bird sightings in their backyard. One hundred and forty species have been recorded and transferred to a Master List of Possibles that may be recorded on a MELBOCA Outing. The following are recent additions to that list: Barking Owl, Fork-tailed Swift, Eastern Koel, Stubble Quail, White-bellied Cuckoo Shrike, Budgerigar, Cockatiel, Grey Falcon and Grey Goshawk.

My thanks to those members who participated and a full report will be placed on the MELBOCA Website at a later date.

Birds Australia has recently commenced a similar study, although broader, Backyard Birds of Victoria. The reporting method is Web based and BA would be pleased to receive your input. To access the required proforma, log onto Birds in Backyards www.birdsinbackyards.net From the home page, click "Site Map", scroll down to "Surveys" and click on "Backyard bird survey". Membership is required, which is free, to enable data to be in-putted after receiving a password.

Graeme Hosken
Recorder

Beginners Outings

100 Acres Reserve, Park Orchards

23 October 2010

Eighteen members assembled at the 100 Acres Reserve on a wet and overcast morning with poor visibility. On the earlier part of the walk, the birds were very quiet and hard to identify. Powerful Owl, which had been regularly sighted in the reserve, were not found in any of their known roosts. Fortunately, the weather improved as the day went on and members enjoyed many good sightings of other birds. Bell Miner, Crested Shrike-tit, Golden Whistler, White-throated Treecreeper and Eastern Yellow Robin were all clearly seen by the beginners. The delicate nest of a Yellow-faced Honeyeater was admired close beside the path. Five parrot species were observed, Crimson Rosellas being particularly noticeable. Masses of native spring flowers lined the tracks with Milkmaids and Chocolate Lilies in abundance.

After lunch, seven members explored another section of the park and were rewarded with some excellent sightings. A pair of Tawny Frogmouth with a nest was particularly memorable, as were Rufous Whistler and a Varied Sittella. A total of 46 bird species were recorded for the day; a good total considering the inauspicious start.

You Yangs

27 November 2010

Severe weather warnings and heavy overnight rain did not deter the seventeen members who gathered for the annual You Yangs' beginner's walk. This is always a popular

venue in November because of the chance to see birds not commonly found in the Melbourne area.

Led by Geoff Deason, the group drove to a section of the park near to private land at Hovell Creek. Restless Flycatcher were soon heard and were found to be busily building a nest. Shortly afterwards a pair of Rainbow Bee-eater were spotted perched in dead branches of tall eucalypts. Despite the overcast conditions, their brilliant iridescent colours were clearly visible and much enjoyed. Nearby, Brown Treecreepers were observed, while across the creek Diamond Firetail, Zebra Finch and Red-browed Finch were all seen perched in dead bushes. A Sacred Kingfisher was heard and then tracked down, and White-winged Chough were seen flying to their huge pudding-basin-shaped nest.

As the morning progressed, the weather deteriorated and the group headed back to the Ranger's Office where they sat in a long line on the veranda to eat lunch as the rain poured down. Three baby Welcome Swallow crammed in a nest under the same shelter provided good photo opportunities.

A short afternoon walk round the nearby dam did not produce any extra species and as the rain became even heavier it was decided to head for home. Despite the dreadful weather conditions everyone agreed it had been a very good excursion with some excellent sightings. Our thanks go to Geoff Deason for his assistance in leading this outing.

Report by outings leaders, Hazel and Alan Veevers

Education Report

On Sunday 26 October 2010 we held our twelfth **Breakfast with the Birds** at Banyule Flats. The morning was overcast and windless as 43 people arrived to discover the birds of Banyule. Small groups were sent off along two different routes. The usual third route along the river was avoided because it was wet and slippery after recent rain. It had also been cut up by dirt bikes. The walks concluded with a delicious breakfast supplied by the Banyule City Council and organised by Belinda Moody (Biodiversity Education Officer) and Fleur, her assistant.

A total of 64 birds were seen by the visitors, with 18 of those species breeding. This year we added Satin Flycatcher to our list, which now includes 114 species for this

day in October.

I wish to thank my guides – Pat Bingham, Lyn Easton, Anthea Fleming, Daphne Hards, Sonja Ross and Diane Tweeddale, as well as my telescope operators at the wetlands – Brian Fleming, Bill Ramsay and Duncan Turnbull. Without your help this day would not be possible.

Activities for 2011 are already planned and help is always needed for these events.

*Janet Hand
MELBOCA Education Officer.
(03) 9842 4177 or info@melboca.org.au*

Vale Rae Gay

Rae and her late husband Keith were regular BOCA Camp and Tag-a-long participants for many years. Rae also organised several camps. Rae passed away peacefully on 11 December 2010. Sadly missed.

Invitation to an Education Volunteer Training Session



Western Port Welcomes Waterbirds

Volunteer Training Workshop to be held *Thursday 17 March 2011*

Background

Western Port has considerable biodiversity value, regularly supporting over 10,000 waterfowl (ducks, swans etc) and over 10,000 shorebirds from 37 species. This includes over 5% of the Victorian population of eight species of migratory shorebirds. Western Port is recognised as a wetland of international significance for migratory shorebirds and this is reflected in its listing under the Ramsar Convention (1971), and its inclusion in the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Site Network. However, as Western Port is also widely used for human recreation and industry, considerable pressure is placed on the biodiversity resources and ecological function of the bay.

Western Port Welcomes Waterbirds is a joint project involving the central Coastal Board (CCB), Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI) for environmental Research (Department of Sustainability and Environment) and Bird Observation & Conservation Australia (BOCA). It aims to provide evidence-based information on key high-tide roosts and feeding areas for waterbirds in Western Port, the threats operating at those sites and recommendations for improved management of habitats.

The Role of Schools

Schools are an important link with local communities, the same people who derive their living and participate in recreation around Western Port. The involvement of schools can help lead to a raised awareness waterbirds and the threats they face. A further development might be to have local communities monitoring birds and collecting data.

Any program delivered in a school will be developed to meet curriculum requirements and fit with current school programs. Tooradin Primary School has been chosen for this initial program partly because of its location on Western Port but also because of its existing interest in environmental activities.

Why train Education Volunteers?

BOCA is a membership-based organisation and volunteers take an active role in many aspects of the organisation's core business. BOCA education programs rely on the willingness of volunteers to share their knowledge of birds. The training program aims to provide volunteers with skills and resources to assist them to deliver education more effectively to a variety of audiences. Research reveals that volunteers value 'on-the-job' training and opportunities to practice techniques. To help provide this element to the BOCA volunteers we will be working with a group of students for part of the training day.

What will happen on the day?

During the morning volunteers will meet for a series of sessions at the Tooradin Hall. These will include a speaker from a school that has an existing bird-monitoring program, explanation of health and safety considerations and discussion of available shorebird and waterbird education resources.

Tooradin Primary School will be invited to participate in a bird monitoring activity for about an hour during the afternoon. Students will be involved in a short introduction followed by bird watching at a location that is within walking distance.

Please contact the BOCA National Office to express your interest and to find out more
Ph: (03) 9877 5342 – Fax: 9894 4048 – Freecall: 1300 305 342 – Email: info@melboca.org.au
www.boca.org.au

Dates to remember

Weekday Outings (Contact Diane, 03 9836 8692)

Mon. 14 Feb. – Bellarine Peninsula

10:00am to 3:00pm (Mel 452 A11). From La Trobe Tce/ Settlement Rd take Barwon Heads Rd to Barwon Valley golf club. Park near toilets. Scopes useful. Convoy. Leader Fred Smith.

Tue. 15 Mar. – Baldry Crossing/Floodway, Main Ridge

10:00am to 3:00pm (Mel 254 G6). Nearest toilets Seawinds (Mel 171 D1). Leader Joan Peters.

Wed. 30 Mar. – Newport Lakes, Newport

10:00am to 3:00pm (Mel 55 G3). From Mason St take Lakes Dve and park near toilets. Leader Elsmaree Baxter.

Mon. 18 Apr. – Jells Park, Wheelers Hill

10:00am to 3:00pm (Mel 71 K6). Enter from Waverley Rd extension, park in car park 4. Leader Rob Grosvenor.

Wed 11 May – Crosbie State Forest

10:00am to 3:00pm (Mel X909 H5; Vicroads 45 D8/ 626 F6). Meet Heathcote, park on hwy opposite toilets. Convoy. Leader Pat Bingham.

Beginners Outings (Contact Hazel, info@melboca.org.au)

Sat. 26 Feb. – Birdsland Reserve

10.00am (Mel 84 B2). Meet in car park.

Sat. 26 Mar. – Pound Bend, Warrandyte

10.00am (Mel 23 A11). Meet in the car park near toilets.

Sat. 23 Apr. – Cranbourne Botanical Gardens.

10.00am (Mel 133 K12). Meet in the Stringybark Car park.

Sat. 28 May – Braeside Park.

10.00am (Mel 88 D8). Meet in the car park by visitor centre.

Wednesday Wanderings (Contact Celia, 03 5982 1314)

Wed. 23 Mar. – Birrarung Marr, Melbourne.

10:00am (Mel 2F G5). Meet at Melbourne Visitor Centre, Federation Square for an upstream walk to Birrarung Marr, returning to City downstream along south bank. Carry lunch to eat in Alexandra Gardens.

Wed. 27 Apr. – Westgate Park, Fishermans Bend.

10:00am (Mel 56 F1). Entry from Todd Road. Parking and toilets. Park list totals 124 bird species including Barn Owl. Leader Andrew McCutcheon. BYO lunch to eat back at cars.

Wed. 25 May – Last in series.

10:15am for 10:30 ferry Melbourne/Williamstown and return. Meet berth 5 at Southbank, near footbridge. (Mel 1B K11). Carry picnic lunch to eat in Williamstown or dine there. Return on 1:30pm ferry. Approx cost for return trip \$40.

Birdwalk at Yellingbo Reserve (Contact Maryanne, 0402 283 080)

First Sunday of the month (6 March; 3 April; and 1 May 2011)

Take Warburton Hwy to Woori Yallock and turn right to Yellingbo. At Yellingbo, turn right towards Seville, then left into Macclesfield Rd. After 2.5km, turn right at large pine trees. Gate opens at 10:00am. Walk starts at 10:30am. On-site toilets available. Bring lunch and gumboots. Mel 305 G11.

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

See the front page of this edition of *The Melbirdian* for more details, including upcoming guest speakers.

Member's Choice Segment – Call for Contributors

Every fourth Tuesday of every month, at the MELBOCA branch meeting, we dedicate five to ten minutes for a Member's Choice segment. This segment is an opportunity for members to share a topic of particular interest to them with all of us.

We are currently on the look out for contributors for this segment. It could be a bird species you have a special interest in. It could be a report on a recent tour, either in Australia or abroad. Perhaps there is an area that you've

been visiting for many years that you'd like to share. Or maybe you have a collection of birding photographs. A tale of birding obsession? A quest? Or just a question? Let us know!

Sunny Fernie is the coordinator, so if you think you have a topic that would make for a suitable Member's Choice segment, or just want to run some ideas past us, please get in touch with Sunny through MELBOCA on email info@melboca.org.au or by phone **03 9592 7728**.

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
info@melboca.org.au
tel: 9802 5250

Secretary

Janet Hand

Treasurer

Bill Ramsay

Conservation

Arthur Carew

Members

Sunny Fernie
Andrew Fuhrmann
Diane Tweeddale
Sonja Ross
John Young

We're on the Web!

www.melboca.org.au

Join the 2011 Duck Rescue Team

Just as our native waterbirds are struggling to breed-up after 13 years of drought, a full three-month Victorian recreational duck shooting season has been announced by the new Baillieu government, with over 20,000 licensed duck shooters allowed to take ten birds per day.

There are only 15 wildlife officers to patrol the whole of Victoria and there is no finance available to police the duck

shooting season.

Our waterbirds need your help. The Coalition Against Duck Shooting will be protecting birds on the Opening Weekend (19 March), and every weekend of the season. Go to www.duck.org.au to join, or call Lynn on 0414 816 509.

Coalition Against Duck Shooting

Outing Report: Koomba Park, Wantirna

8 November 2010

A warm day with clear skies and a light wind promised good viewing conditions. The group numbered 17 with Hazel and Alan Veevers as our leaders. The car park contained aggressive Noisy Miner and Red Wattlebird; the latter became the most frequent sighting for the walk. Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and many Australian White Ibis showed white against the sky, the only time the ibis appeared clean. Fewer Straw-necked Ibis were seen. We scanned the sky in vain for raptors. Perhaps the good conditions had led to their dispersal. Certainly grasses were high and lush after the rains and acacias were flowering profusely.

The boardwalk near the highway was closed with a notice about slippery wet conditions. The Dandenong Creek had recently overflowed its banks impressively, to judge by the washes of flood debris three metres above this day's creek level. Frogs called beside the creek and from the standing waters. Bell Miner called and Common Myna flew in pairs while an Olive-backed Oriole was heard but not seen. Laughing Kookaburra watched from power lines and branches while male Superb Fairy-wrens displayed on tops of reeds.

So much water meant waterbirds were well dispersed and Little Pied Cormorant, Pacific Black Duck, Eurasian Coot, Dusky Moorhen and Purple Swamphen were the only species observed. Both moorhens and swamphens had young while above there was much interest in tree hollows by Rainbow Lorikeets. A Shining Bronze-

Cuckoo almost glowed as it perched in full view in the sunshine and a brilliantly coloured male Spotted Pardalote was a reward for the persistence for some. Mistletoe was flowering, so we watched the clumps carefully and several people saw both male and female Mistletoebird in the area.

Australian Reed-Warbler called from the water sides and occasionally flew into sight. High above, Welcome Swallow wheeled and even higher flew Fairy Martin and a small flock of Dusky Woodswallow. We headed back to the cars and lunch, adding Silvereye and White-plumed and Yellow-faced Honeyeater as we turned. A male Golden Whistler called and perched obligingly close.

After a shaded lunch break we drove north, our numbers reduced to ten. Parking near Boronia Rd we walked north. Flood debris continued and feral honeybees buzzed near a tree hollow.

A saddening sight was a dead Eastern Rosella with its leg wedged in a crack in a tree trunk. Mishaps as well as predation lead to death. This area added Magpie-lark to the group's list and was comparatively quiet in the heat of the day. Back to the cars and bird call in the shade of the information shelter.

The final list had 49 species, a reflection of the varied habitat and the careful preparation of Hazel and Alan. We thanked them for leading us through this interesting area which is still productive beside the busy freeway.

*Diane Tweeddale, convenor MELBOCA
Weekdays Outings.*



*MELBOCA is the
Melbourne Branch of Bird
Observation &
Conservation Australia*

The Melbirdian is published four times a year. Member birding-related stories and articles are invited. The deadline for receipt of information for inclusion in the Winter Edition is 18 April 2011.