

BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter

Volume 1 Number 2 September 2012

Orange-bellied Programs

Every year during the summer a small group of little Aussie battlers struggle in the harsh environment of Tasmania's south-west, and each year a group of dedicated staff and volunteers fight alongside them, desperately trying to ensure their survival.

The Orange-bellied Parrot (*Neophema chrysogaster*) or the OBP as it is affectionately known, was listed in 2006 as Critically Endangered by the Commonwealth Government and the IUCN Redlist and has been part of a recovery program for nearly 30 years. At present it is believed that there are fewer than 50 OBPs left in the wild with a further 200 birds being held as part of a Captive Insurance Breeding Program.

The OBP is a small (approx. 45g) ground-feeding parrot which migrates between distinct breeding and non-breeding ranges. Breeding occurs in south-west Tasmania between November and March and is currently restricted to within 10km of Melaleuca Lagoon (Bathurst Harbour). Birds overwinter along the coast of South Australia, Victoria and historically southern NSW between April and October.

Habitat

Breeding occurs in Eucalypt forest, rainforest and the nearby moorland and sedgeland plains. They nest in the hollows of Eucalypts, usually Smithton Peppermint (*Eucalyptus nitida*) and forage on the seeds and flowers of low vegetation in the plains.

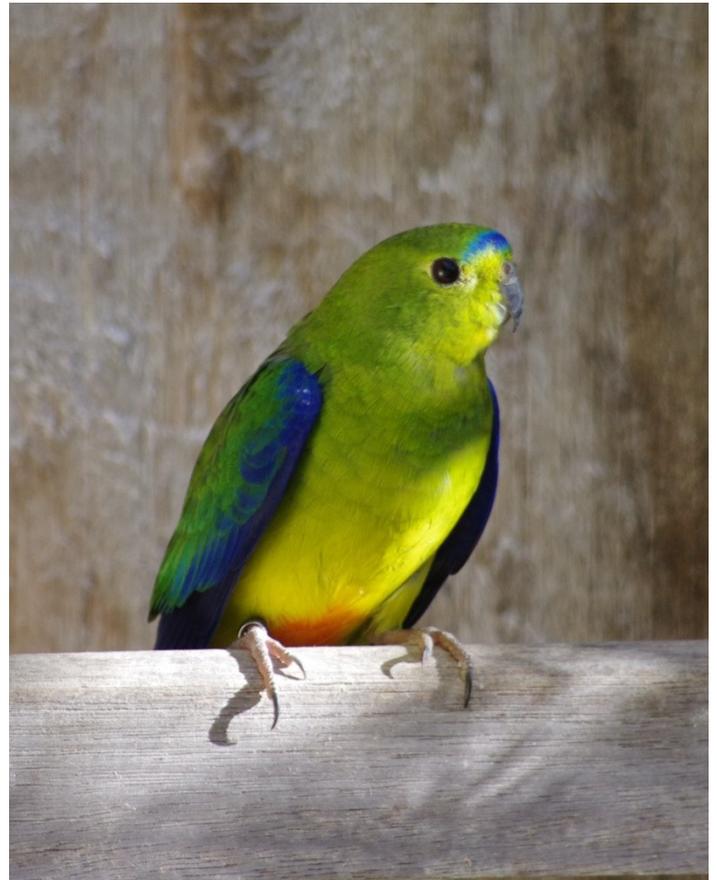
Migrating and non-breeding Orange-bellied Parrots feed on the seeds and flowers of low shrubs in vegetated sand dunes, heathland, grasslands, saltmarsh and nearby pasture and roost in dense shrubs, usually within 10km of the coast.

Melaleuca

Only accessible by boat, plane or on foot, the current breeding habitat of the OBP falls within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. The area has a mining history and is a tourist destination, being a popular start/finish point for some of Tasmania's best known walking tracks. Organised day tours also visit the area.

In October each year as the OBP makes its way across Bass Strait and down the west coast of Tasmania a roster of volunteers is drawn up with keen bird watchers signing on to spend at least two weeks at Melaleuca observing and recording individual birds as they feed on a custom-made feed table. Birds are individually banded and the data on their occurrences at Melaleuca, which has been collected for the last 25 years, has given important information on the population level and continued decline of the OBP in the wild.

In 2010 a survey of potential breeding areas in the South-



Male OBP at Captive facility

West failed to find any evidence of OBP's outside of the Melaleuca area and it is now believed that there are no other large populations to be found in the area.

During the summer of 2011/2012 a minimum of 22 adult birds, 14 males and 8 females, returned to the breeding site. This number has not changed significantly to the number of adult birds observed over the previous 2 years (23 in 09/10 and 21 in 10/11).

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Orange-bellied Parrot

Breeding

In 2010 it became evident that not all females that returned to the breeding area at Melaleuca were breeding, with less than 50% of the females showing such signs. The reasons for this low participation in breeding is not fully understood, but could be related to poor winter foraging sites leading to females being "unfit" to breed when they return to Tasmania. A number of strategies were implemented to try to increase female participation including attempts at supplementary feeding of birds at winter sites on the mainland in 2010, increased supplementary feeding of birds at Melaleuca during summer 2010/2011 and arranging for planned burns in potential OBP feeding habitat in Tasmania. Some of these burns were carried out in 2011 and will improve feeding habitat in the years to come.

In the last two breeding seasons it appears that all females that have returned to Melaleuca have participated in breeding.

Captive Population

The captive insurance population was founded in 1986 with the aim of reducing the risk of extinction of the OBP and to provide animals for reintroduction into the wild. Birds are held at several sites including Healesville Sanctuary and Melbourne Zoo in Victoria, Adelaide Zoo in South Australia and a government facility in Hobart Tasmania.

This program has consistently bred birds over the last 12 years but fertility in the captive population is lower than in the wild. This may be as a result of low genetic diversity in the captive population as the captive birds up to 2010 could all trace their heritage back to only 6 founders. Concerns regarding the decreasing wild population and modelling which suggested that the OBP could be extinct in the wild by



OBP chicks being banded in the wild prior to fledging

2015 led to the Recovery Team making the decision to recruit additional founders from the wild population in 2011. As a result, 19 wild-caught fledglings were added to the captive population, and these birds have now been through their first breeding season in captivity. They have produced 31 offspring and helped to both bring the total number in captivity to approximately 200 birds and significantly increased the genetic diversity present in the captive population.

*Jocelyn Hockley
Senior Keeper*

*Captive Management and Translocation Section
Dept of Primary Industries, Parks, Water & Environment*

See page 14 for our OBP report from the Threatened Bird Network.



**Captive breeding
facility in Hobart**

President's Report

NEWS FROM YOUR COMMITTEE

Your BirdLife Melbourne Committee has been meeting monthly. The key items arising from these meetings are summarised below.

Sonja Ross has been appointed Treasurer and BirdLife Melbourne has a new bank account with some funds from the old MELBOCA bank account transferred to the new account. By the time this note is published, all funds will have been transferred and the MELBOCA account closed.

Alan Crawford and David Plant have joined the *BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter* team as assistant editors.

In the final issue of *The Melbirdian* we asked for suggestions for a new name for the newsletter. Some members made suggestions, some of which were very clever and original, and we thank these members for their suggestions. The Committee has decided to use the name *BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter*, which, although lacking in imagination, clearly and unambiguously states what the newsletter is.

The Committee has decided to make use of the listed sightings on Eremaea's Birdline Victoria and will include the more interesting sightings for Melbourne and surrounds for publication in the *BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter*. Members are encouraged to post their sightings on Birdline Victoria.

I repeat my invitation from the last newsletter: at present we have nine committee members and we would welcome a few more. We need an active committee that can share the workload to provide all the activities that members expect. Please consider stepping forward, but feel free to get in touch if you would like to know more before volunteering. Committee meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month, bi-monthly.

Hopefully the Committee will provide you with what you expect as BirdLife Melbourne Members. If you have any questions or any issues of concern, please talk to a Committee Member, or send us an email on melbourne@birdlife.org.au.

Bill Ramsay
President
(03) 9803 1493
melbourne@birdlife.org.au

Education Report

May was a busy month for our Education Volunteers.

We started with an information table at the Volunteers Expo organised by Whitehorse Council. Annette Cook (BirdLife Education Manager) assisted with the setting up and Elizabeth Ainsworth, Daphne Hards and Barbara Longmuir assisted me during the afternoon.

Duncan Turnbull and I supported Annette when she gave her presentation to the general public on Birds in Backyards at the Blackburn Lake Education Centre on Sunday 27 May.

On Wednesday 30 May we hosted 10 ladies from the Maryvale Hostel in Boronia at the Blackburn Lake Education Centre. I gave the ladies a 'Designing for Birdlife' powerpoint presentation before they decorated BirdLife calico bags by

drawing what they should have in their gardens to attract birds. Annette organised the day and I was assisted by Jenny Frohlich.

My thanks to everyone who has helped with the above activities. I am always looking for people to assist with our Education program.

Forthcoming activities

As part of the Spring Outdoors program run by Banyule, Nillumbik and Manningham Councils BirdLife Melbourne will participate in the following activities:

The Australian Plants Expo 2012 on 8 and 9 September. We have had an information table at this event for the past 4 years and I need **volunteers** to assist me on this weekend. Please contact me if you can spare a couple of hours. My assistants are given free admission.

Breakfast with the Birds at Banyule on Sunday 28 October. The event has been running since 1999 as a joint function between Banyule City Council and the former BOCA. Banyule Council supplies a lovely breakfast after a guided walk through the Banyule and Warringal Wetland, led by BirdLife Melbourne members. I need experienced bird guides to lead groups, but if you do not qualify to lead a group, then consider booking as a general public member to attend the walk and breakfast. Bookings are essential for catering and allotting sufficient leaders. Bookings must be made with Banyule City Council preferably prior to 19 October.

Details of both these events can be found in the Activities Calendar on page 10.

Janet Hand
BirdLife Melbourne Education Officer
(03) 9842 4177
melbourne@birdlife.org.au

BIRDLIFE MELBOURNE COMMITTEE

President: Bill Ramsay (Tel: 9803 1493)

Vice President: Stuart Dashper

Secretary: Fiona Parkin

Treasurer: Sonja Ross

Members: Tim Bawden, Alan Crawford, Andrew Fuhrmann, Chris Lester & John Young

All the above can be contacted by email at melbourne@birdlife.org.au

BIRDLIFE VICTORIA LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS

The BirdLife Victoria Committee, which represents all Victorian members of BirdLife Australia, is seeking volunteers to help produce its newsletter. If you are looking for a way to advance your communication skills, contribute further to the birding community and meet with a fascinating array of contributors, then consider volunteering with the BirdLife Victoria editorial team.

Contact current Committee member Chris Lester at gpicta@vic.chariot.net.au or 03 9370 7418 (AH).

Carlton Monthly Meeting

Monthly meetings at the BirdLife Australia National Office are held on the second Thursday of the month. Meetings begin at 8:00pm at the **BirdLife Australia National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton**. Plenty of free street parking nearby. Tea and coffee served after the meeting with time to chat with other attendees. Contact Fiona fionamariemarkin@gmail.com for details.

Date	Guest Speaker	Topic
13 Sep.	Dean Ingwersen	Can two birds in the hand tell you more than one in the bush? Insights from the Rushworth banding project
11 Oct.	Guy Dutson	Veterinarian, ornithologist and Birdquest tour leader presents Australia's ornithological frontier: New Guinea and neighbouring archipelagoes
8 Nov.	Pam Whitely	Bird health surveillance in Victoria"
13 Dec.	TBA	TBA

Guest Speaker Co-ordinator for Carlton Monthly Meetings

BirdLife Melbourne Committee is seeking a volunteer for the role of **Guest Speaker Co-ordinator** for Carlton Monthly Meetings. The position mainly involves phone calls and sending emails to arrange Guest Speakers. Guest Speakers are arranged at least three months in advance. If you are interested or would like further information please contact Fiona Parkin fionamariemarkin@gmail.com.

Balwyn Monthly Meetings

BirdLife Melbourne's Balwyn 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 donation of \$4. Out-of-town members and visitors are always welcome.

Date	Guest Speaker	Topic
25 Sep.	Sarah Bekessy	Biodiversity in the urban fringe.
23 Oct.	Danny Rogers	Shorebird projects
27 Nov.	TBA	TBA
No meeting in December		

The Member's Topic segment is a 5-15 minute slot before the guest speaker for BirdLife Melbourne members to share a topic of their choice with the meeting. It could be a bird species you have a special interest in, a report on a recent tour either in Australia or abroad, a favourite birding spot, a collection of birding photographs, a tale of birding obsession or even just a question you'd like answered? Let us know!

John Young is the co-ordinator, so if you think you have a topic that would make for a suitable Member's Topic segment, please get in touch on email melbourne@birdlife.org.au or by phone 03 9844 2842.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE YOUR COPY OF THE NEWSLETTER?

BirdLife Melbourne is looking at the ways *BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter* could be distributed to members. Three options are being considered and it is likely that future distribution will be a combination of the three.

Option 1 - Mailed Newsletter: If you wish to receive your copy as a printed copy with your copy of *Australian Birdlife* no action is required. **You do not have to do anything as this is the default option.**

Option 2 - Electronic Newsletter: If you only wish to receive notification when an electronic copy is available from the BirdLife Melbourne Pages of the BirdLife Australia Website for download or reading on line, please email melbourne@birdlife.org.au with a subject header of 'Newsletter Distribution' advising that you have **selected Option 2**. There will be no mailed printed copy with this option. Include your name, postal address and email address in the body of the email text.

Option 3 - No Newsletter: If you do not wish to receive a printed copy or notification that an electronic copy is available on the Website, please email melbourne@birdlife.org.au with a subject header of 'Newsletter Distribution' advising that you have **selected Option 3**. Include your name and postal address in the body of the email text. If you do not have email, please write to *BirdLife Melbourne C/- 8 Franklin Court Glen Waverley VIC 3150* and include the same information as for an email reply, or phone Bill Ramsay 03 9803 1493.

Please email/mail/telephone your responses by **15 October 2012** so that distribution methods can be put in place for the next issue of *BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter*.

Members, including those with Family Memberships, should select only one option.

Current and back copies of *BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter* can always be viewed on the BirdLife Melbourne pages of the BirdLife Australia website.

Members in postcodes 3139 and 3765 to 3799 do not need to respond to this survey as they have been the subject of a separate survey.

Balwyn Meeting Reports

24 April 2012

John Barkla, past BOCA President stepped in at the last minute as guest speaker. The title of John's presentation was *Some Special Birding Spots*. He began at Western Treatment Plant, Werribee; a spectacular birding venue close to Melbourne. As a permanent wetland it is visited by one third of Australian species, including migratory waders.

Then west to Lake McLarty Nature Reserve in WA, near Mandurah, which is an important freshwater ephemeral wetland for shorebirds, particularly Banded Stilt.

In Victoria John regularly visits the Box-Ironbark forests near Ballieston. Two rewarding bird spots are Ballieston Historical Reserve and Coy's Diggings.

Another Box-Ironbark habitat is at Chiltern-Mt Pilot NP. John highlighted several good spots: Donchi Hill, Bartley's Block with the chance of Turquoise Parrot, Green Hill Road where Regent Honeyeater has been seen and Honeyeater Dam.

High on John's list of favourite sites is BirdLife's Gluepot Reserve in SA. There is a chance of seeing Scarlet-chested Parrot; they came last spring to the delight of many. This Mallee habitat supports many dry country birds. Other special Mallee areas are Wyperfeld NP, Murray Sunset NP and Hattah Kulkyne NP.

Another Birdlife property is Eyre Bird Observatory, where the

birdbaths allowed John to get stunning photographs of Major Mitchell's Cockatoos.



Further afield, the gibber and dune country along the Strzelecki Track. Mt Lyndhurst Station is a special birding spot and John showed us Gibberbird and Rufous Fieldwren.

In north Queensland at Mareeba Wetlands, a boat trip affords great views of the many birds to be found there. Kingfisher Park Birdwatchers Lodge is another of John's special sites with Mt. Lewis close by, this area is rich in birdlife.

Lamington NP near Brisbane is another magnificent rainforest haunt. John spoke highly of O'Reilly's Rainforest Lodge, and showed us the dazzling male Regent Bowerbird.

Finally, John included Mud Islands in Port Phillip Bay and Rottneest Island near Perth. Recently John had the opportunity to fly to Auckland Islands, south of NZ, to photograph some very special subantarctic birds.

Bill Ramsay thanked John for an hour of exceptional photography to accompany a wealth of knowledge.

Daphne Hards

(Scarlet-chested Parrot, Gluepot, SA | Photo: John Barkla)

22 May 2012

The meeting was chaired by **Bill Ramsay** who greeted several new members. He invited **Sonja Ross** to present her Member's Topic, *South to Macquarie Island*.

The main speaker was **Dr Lindy Lumsden**. The title of her talk was *Bats – Fascinating Creatures of the Night*. Lindy works for the DS&E at Arthur Rylah Institute and her specialty is microbats. She said that bats are poorly known, largely due to their nocturnal habits and cryptic behaviour.

The Grey-headed Flying-fox which inhabits southern Australia is one of the fruit-eating bats. Their diet consists of nectar/blossom and fruit, and they contribute to pollination and seed dispersal. Lindy recounted their exodus from the Royal Botanic Gardens, dispersing to Bacchus Marsh, Bendigo, and Adelaide. Their adoption of the Yarra Bend site in Kew was a good outcome, except the sparse cover has left them vulnerable to extreme heat events such as occurred on Black Saturday.

Much more common in Victoria are the tiny insect-eating bats. Common in the Melbourne region are the Little Forest Bat, weighing in at 4gram, and the Lesser Long-eared Bat.

Fossils 55-65 million years old show bats with a tail; and indeed there are free-tailed microbats today. The bat is the only mammal capable of true flight. They hear and manoeuvre by a sonar system, bouncing sound off their surroundings and interpreting the echoes. Most bats emit sound at far higher frequency than man can detect. Bat surveys can employ sound recorders which reveal specific sound waves for each bat species.

Micro bats have big appetites. They consume 0.5-0.75 their body weight each night. The Little Forest Bat eats beetles,



Male Figbird enjoying hard fruits, Cairns

The Early Bird Catches the Worm

At the April Balwyn meeting, Sonja Ross presented a compilation of work from the BirdLife Melbourne Photography Group, all on the topic of bird feeding. Coots eating pondweed represented herbage eaters, finches ate soft seeds, Gang-gangs attacked hard seeds and honeyeaters extracted nectar, while doves and bowerbirds sought fruit. Raptors, waders, wrens and robins were all seen to prey on live creatures, and pelicans, terns and herons were taking fish. Birds catch food on the wing, by listening, stalking and probing. Parent birds bring food to the nest to feed their hungry young. *Member's Topic Segment, Apr 2012 | Photo: John Stirling*

Monthly Meetings

Macaroni Penguins at Macquarie Island



South to Macquarie Island

In November 2011 Sonja Ross and her husband travelled by ship to Macquarie Island and returned with good news. The ship left NZ and went south via Snares Island, Auckland Islands and Campbell Island seeing many birds en route. Macquarie Island has been in the news for all the wrong reasons. As a breeding ground for many bird species was threatened by human introduced pests – rats, mice, rabbits and cats. An estimated 100,000-150,000 rabbits were eating the vegetation and causing erosion. Rats and mice consumed bird eggs. In 2010 the Australian Government, with help from NZ, agreed to an eradication program. Following baiting and using trained dogs to detect rabbits, none have been seen since December 2011, and no rats or mice since winter 2011. Besides this excellent news, Sonja came home with photographs of penguins, albatross, skua and much more.

Member's Topic Segment, May 2012 | Photo: Sonja Ross

moths, bugs and mosquitoes. Other species have different preferences, but bats' value to farmers should not be underestimated.

The normal body temperature of bats is 40°C. When the air temperature drops below 10°C bats are able to slow their heart rate and go into torpor. They roost mainly in tree hollows but also fallen logs, fence posts, under bark or in buildings.

Bats are surviving better than most mammals but six species are listed as threatened. The main cause is the lack of tree regeneration. It takes 100 years for tree hollows to form and old trees are scarce. Since most landholders are unaware of microbats, particularly their value as pest consumers, there is a push to change this. Surveys are being carried out on farms, and an interesting website and information sheets have been developed by the Australian Bat Society.

Daphne Hards

26 June 2012

Mark Antos is an environmental scientist with Parks Victoria. In a talk called *What's Happening in the Long Grass* he described for us the



efforts of a dedicated group of volunteers to monitor Victoria's northern grasslands, primarily for the iconic Plains-wanderer but also all fauna species.

Native grasslands are Victoria's most depleted ecosystem: north around Kerang small pockets are dominated by *Stipa* species; and the volcanic plains west of Werribee and beyond dominated by *Themeda* sp.

Terrick Terrick NP is a valuable grassland relic near Kerang, to which small isolated pockets have been added. And, significantly, several landholders in the area have agreed to manage their remnant grasslands for conservation. Together they support 70% of the known Plains Wanderer population, 29 threatened flora species, and 14 threatened fauna species.

Mark heads the Grassland Fauna Monitoring Project. This small group surveys after dark from a vehicle, recording all fauna spotted as the driver follows a transect pattern. Attempts are made to capture the animals with a hand net in order to ring/identify, focusing on Plains Wanderer, quail and button-quail. The sighting spot is marked, and the following day they return to that spot and do a habitat assessment, which includes identifying native and introduced flora species, estimations of leaf litter, bare ground, moss/lichen and biomass, i.e. amount of vegetation. This habitat assessment is repeated at random points.

Since March 2010, 73 Plains Wanderer have been recorded and 87 banded, including on private land. Stubble Quail numbered 663 on transects, and Little Button-quail 101. Brown Songlark and Horsfield's Bushlark were also recorded, along with Fat-tailed Dunnart, Australian Owlet-nightjar and occasional reptiles and frogs. Habitat assessment showed that Plains Wanderer preferred less grass and litter cover, more moss/lichen, shorter grass and less biomass. Good numbers in early 2010 were followed by a crash coinciding



Bill and Shirley Ramsay enjoyed a guided tour by David Diskin, a member of Walk Hong Kong, across the mangrove mudflats, ponds and bays of the Mai Po Marshes. Their list was 73 and 74 each for the day (Shirley 74), and both saw Nordmann's Greenshank and Black-faced Spoonbill (pictured).

Member's Topic Segment, June 2012 | Photo: David Diskin

with the Kerang floods, which rendered the usually dry grassland an inland sea. Subsequently the grasses have grown high with too high a biomass, unsuitable for Plains Wanderer recovery.

The way ahead entails development of paddock scale conservation objectives, using diverse management strategies to encompass the needs of all flora and fauna. Mark acknowledged that botanists and zoologists often have different preferences, especially in the case of Plains Wanderer, which has been shown to be a drought specialist and has clear habitat requirements. Mark would like to see a recovery any time soon, but gratefully acknowledged his volunteer group and the commitment of the local farmers, who protect and police their valuable habitat.

Daphne Hards

(Female Plains Wanderer, Terrick Terrick NP | Photo: Mark Antos)

Correspondence

Your BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter

We'd love to hear from more of our BirdLife Melbourne members, so why not slip us a letter or flick us an email?

Have you recently seen something unusual? In your own backyard, perhaps? Do you have a favourite birding spot you'd like to share?

Let us know your bird watching experiences. Unusual sightings, tips, questions, photos – definitely photos – observations, answers – it all goes toward making this *your* BirdLife Melbourne newsletter.

You can reach the editors at **BirdLife Melbourne, c/- BirdLife Australia National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton, Vic 3053**, or email us at birdlife.melbourne.newsletter@gmail.com

FROM SOUTH-WEST VICTORIA

April to May

In Autumn The Lower Glenelg National Park was the spot for birding with Rufous Bristlebird, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos, Gang-Gangs Cockatoos, Eastern Yellow Robins, Grey Fantails, White-browed Scrubwrens, Superb Fairy-wrens, Eastern Spinebills, Fantail Cuckoo, Bassian Thrush, Rufous, Golden and Olive Whistlers and Buff-banded Rail. Most popular spots were Wild Dog Bend, Princess Margaret Rose Caves, Sapling Creek & Pritchard's.

Around Hamilton birders with employment in the outdoors where lucky enough to see Grey Goshawk (white phase) at the DPI and Varied Sittella, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Common Bronzewing, Nankeen Kestrel, Brown Falcon, Purple-crowned Lorikeet, Striated Thornbill, Golden Whistler, Black-shouldered Kite & Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike at a local forestry nursery. This nursery (as of this autumn) now also boasts a resident family of Superb Fairy-wrens. They are regularly seen using the plant stock as foraging areas and the empty benches and trays as display points to proclaim their territory, scolding workers as they go about daily routines. Elsewhere Scarlet Robins and Striated Fieldwren were seen at Mt Napier State Park and a Pink Robin in a home garden on the northern edge of town .

Regular surveys of Jigsaw Farms during March and April turned up White-fronted Honeyeater, Brown Quail, six Magpie Geese and a single Major Mitchell's Cockatoo which was seen on two different occasions at different locations in mixed flocks of corellas, Sulphurs and Galahs. The local avicultural club was asked if anyone had lost a Major recently but the answer was no, so possibly a misplaced bird from the north?

Correspondence out of Casterton reported a Golden-headed Cisticola at Ess Lagoon and 30 Cattle Egret on the Glenelg River Flats. At Lake Hamilton for a monthly survey from the beach area most notable were Pink-eared Duck, Yellow-billed Spoonbill and Black-fronted Dotterel.

May BirdLife Vic pelagic trip off Portland reported the unusual and very exciting sighting of New Zealand Storm-Petrel along with Grey-backed Storm-Petrel, Brown Skua, White-fronted Tern, Wandering Albatross and Southern and Northern Giant-Petrels.

Cape Nelson area produced a mixed list of birds on the 5th of June; Brown Skuas, Shy & Black-browed Albatrosses, Beautiful Firetail and Pink Robin (brown bird).

June to July

The rare winter sunny day brought birders out to enjoy recently filled wetlands in the Western District. Wetlands in the Victoria Valley produced some very comprehensive lists on the June outing day for the BirdLife Hamilton group. At Fresh Water Lake, full again after years of drought, Swamp Harrier, Black Swan, Australian Shelduck, Australian Wood Duck, Grey Teal and Eurasian Coot were seen around the water. The highlight was a Flame Robin foraging on mud flats across the road. Further up the valley the wetland below the Mirranatwa Hall was chock-a-block with water birds. These included swans, shelduck, wood duck, grey & chestnut teal. Also present a pair of Brolgas and Wedge-tailed Eagles that fly over the wetland scattering flighty ducks as they past.

Lake Hamilton continues to surprise with Spotless Crake, Buff-banded Rail, Black-fronted Dotterel, Little Black Cormorant, Little Pied Cormorant on their usual roosts the buoys that mark the edge of the swimming area, Musk Ducks beginning their matting displaying, Australasian Grebe, Superb Fairy-wren for the first time in the gardens near the kiosk, Varied Sittella and Little Grassbirds were heard calling from reed beds.

At Hynes Reserve, Rockland Reservoir Red-capped Robin, Southern Whiteface and 30 Buff-rumped Thornbill were seen.

Around Portland during June 126 Kelp Gull were counted at Allestree Beach (feeding in kelp pools). A Cape Petrel was found beach cast at Narrawong. And some birds are already nesting in the Portland District; Brolgas, Powerful Owls and Little Ravens.

The start of July in Hamilton has seen a flurry of activity from the local pairs of Masked Lapwings that occupy nearly every round about and square of mown grass. The Eventide pair has been sitting for two weeks; pairs are squabbling over roof space at the forestry nursery and chicks have been seen at a disused factory sight.

Steve Clark .

FROM NORTHERN VICTORIA

April to June

After the recent floods and a return to more "normal" conditions the autumn period in northern Victoria was surprisingly dry, with the box-ironbark country being particularly quiet due to a lack of flowering generally. Swift Parrots were reported at quite a few sites in April and May, with a high count being of 100+ at Daisy Hill near Maryborough, but as the winter set in reports dropped off and it appears most of the population of this threatened species travelled further afield. Other nectivores were also in low numbers, however there were a few surprises such as a male Scarlet Honeyeater near

Axedale on 19 April, and a Painted Honeyeater near Newstead on 24 June.

The commoner migratory honeyeaters were turning up beyond their normal range, spreading out across the plains and mallee country no doubt due to the poor conditions further south. Yellow-faced Honeyeaters near Echuca and Pyramid Hill were unusual, and White-naped Honeyeaters sighted near Hattah had made it well inland. Other birds ranged out of their normal haunts such as Red-browed Finches which occurred out on the northern plains near Terrick Terrick and Pine Grove in June, and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters which made it to the Terricks forest, and who knows may stay and establish themselves there.

There were a couple of reports of Regent Honeyeaters in the Chiltern area in April, but again it seems most of the population were entrenched in NSW.

Continuing a run of vagrant sightings, Grey Goshawks popped up again north of the divide, with birds reported from the Wellsford Forest near Bendigo on 3 May, and on the 2 April at Mt Egbert near Wychitella.

Without a doubt the most intriguing report of the period was of a Night Parrot reported from the north-west Victorian mallee country. Reported by a reliable observer this if accepted would be an extraordinary record, and follows on from an unconfirmed report in a nearby area by an overseas visitor just a few months before. With the explosion of life in the Australian desert, who knows what else is out there!

Lastly, at the end of the reporting period 3 Australian Bustards were seen near Yanac just south of the Big Desert. Perhaps in time, they may have a chance to re-colonize some of their former haunts across the open plains country of Victoria.

Simon Starr

FROM MELBOURNE AND GEELONG

April to June

Birds of prey have been spreading themselves around the district with several reports of an Osprey near Torquay and another (possibly the same bird) at Fingal Beach on the Mornington Peninsula. A Grey Goshawk (white morph) was spotted at several locations close to Geelong and also at Mt Evelyn. Little Eagles were everywhere with reports from Bangholme to Drysdale.

At the Western Treatment Plant, Spotted Harriers were often seen, along with many sightings of Blue-winged Parrots. The Glossy Ibis remains at this site, and after a 'final' report in early May the Broad-billed Sandpiper was rediscovered at the end of June. Other interesting sightings from the Western Treatment Plant include Australasian Bittern, Brolga, Freckled Duck, Magpie Goose and Wood Sandpiper.

Surprisingly, a Yellow-tufted Honeyeater was photographed at the Western Treatment Plant and another was seen at Woodlands Historic Park (Greenvale) in May.

Pink Robins have been reported from sites scattered across Melbourne and the Mornington Peninsula. We received a few reports of Flame Robins in the suburbs and also a single Scarlet Robin at Westgate Park.

There were many reports of Swift Parrots in April and May but interestingly none in June indicating that they had moved out of the area.

Forty-five Bar-tailed Godwits and twelve Great Knots were seen at the mouth of the Barwon River at Ocean Grove.

Margaret Alcorn

Help Support Birdline Victoria

Our reports from south-west Victoria, northern Victoria, Melbourne and Geelong are compiled using sightings reported on Birdline Victoria's recent sightings page:

[<www.ereamae.com/BirdlineRecentSightings.aspx>](http://www.ereamae.com/BirdlineRecentSightings.aspx)

Please assist BirdLife Melbourne in supporting this excellent resource for all birders by reporting your rare and unusual sightings.

RAINBOW LORIKEET

Alison, my Audiologist, knows that I am into birds as she has spent considerable time fine tuning my hearing aids for the best result against bird calls played back on my iPod. Although not a birder, Alison told me of an interesting observation. She noticed a Rainbow Lorikeet fluttering up and down in front of a downpipe, and noted that the call was different to its normal call. Quickly summing up the situation, Alison broke out the base of the downpipe and out flew a Rainbow Lorikeet. A week later she observed a Rainbow Lorikeet flying out from the downpipe opening, but not repeated since. Hopefully the Rainbow Lorikeets decided that downpipes were not great nest sites.

*Bill Ramsay,
Glen Waverley*

Birding and Boneseeding

The You Yangs

2 June 2012, species count: 38

A record 19 people arrived for our June Birding and Boneseeding day. We began as usual by birding around the entrance, the Park Office and the nearby dam. We had good views of the local pair of Tawny Frogmouths. Among the 23 bird species recorded, it was good to see Scarlet Robin and Weebill.

Few boneseed plants grow here, but bridal creeper is increasing. It is harder to remove than boneseed because of its persistent underground tubers.

We arrived at our official boneseeding site by 1.30pm and spent a good hour pulling out many thousands of them. We are catching up after the park's long closure last year, when the boneseed flourished. Our clothes were covered with white flecks, presumably clumps of hairs from the underside of the young boneseed leaves. I hope everyone eventually managed to remove them. If not, keep those clothes for boneseeding!

We rewarded our efforts by birding in the Eastern Flat. We were spread out, so only a few saw the male Red-capped Robin perching in bushes and foraging on the ground. Flame Robins were seen. We recorded four robin species for the day, missing out on Jacky Winter and Diamond Firetail.

Some photos from the day are on my website <http://www.timeinthebush.com/you-yangs.html>. If anyone would like to join my You Yangs contact list for updates on our birding and boneseeding activities, please send me an email Merrilyn@wirejunkie.com.

Merrilyn Serong

Beginners' Outings

O'Donohue Picnic Ground, Sherbrooke Forest

26 May 2012, species count: 21

On a damp and misty morning, 16 members arrived at O'Donohue Picnic Ground in Sherbrooke Forest hoping to see Superb Lyrebird and other elusive temperate rainforest birds. Visibility was poor and it was eerily quiet as we walked down to the falls. Eastern Yellow Robins dominated, with few other species seen. The normally reliable outer track back to the cars yielded only a handful of birds.

It was decided to make an early move to Grant's Picnic Ground, where local knowledge suggested we might fare better. Prior to lunch, we walked down the Hardy Nature Trail to Neumann's Track where Superb Lyrebirds were heard calling. Following up one of the leads, the beginners were rewarded with a view of a male, vocalising close to the track. Two Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos announced their presence. Returning via the Nature Walk, we were looking intently for a reported Lyrebird nest when the female kindly showed its location by fluttering up a tree-fern into a well-disguised entrance to the nest.

Lillydale Lake, Lillydale

28 April 2012, species count: 48

In perfect weather, 23 members assembled at the lake where several female Australasian Darters, in classic swimming and wing-drying postures, and about 200 perched Little Corellas occupied them prior to the start. After walking a short distance along the circuit track, the group headed upstream to Hull Road Wetlands. Wedge-tailed Eagle and Australian Hobby were highlights on the way, and an obliging White-faced Heron gave photographers an excellent opportunity. Few ducks were seen, but more Australasian Darters, Australasian Grebes, Little Pied and Little Black Cormorants, made up for that. A male Golden Whistler was located on the return walk, to the delight of the "new" beginners.

After lunch, almost everyone went by car to the opposite end of the lake, where the ensuing walk passed through European Woodlands towards the downstream wetlands on the approach to Swinburne University's Campus. Whilst watching a Little Pied Cormorant, close to our road-bridge vantage point, a suitably modulated shout brought everyone to see an Azure Kingfisher perched just below the Cormorant. This "bird of the day" was a first for some beginners and a delight for everyone else. It provided a

fitting climax to an enjoyable outing.

Woodlands Historic Park

23 June 2012, species list 34

After two days of rain, 27 participants were treated to an unexpected sunny day. Starting with a walk around the old River Red Gums in the Somerton Road car park area, a pair of Red-rumped Parrots and a Weebill provided early interest for the beginners. We then drove to the conservation area where our hunt for red robins was ultimately successful after a tantalizingly barren start. Coming upon a hot-spot, we had good views of Red-capped, Scarlet and Flame Robins, much to the delight of the observers. It was not possible to enter the back paddock, due to closure for Fox control purposes; however, returning to the cars by the track alongside the cemetery we were treated to several more sightings of Red-capped and Flame Robins.

Lunch was taken, after a short drive, at the Homestead picnic area. Afterwards, we walked through the gardens and onto tracks forming a circuit walk around, and over the top of, Woodlands Hill. Good views of Yellow and Yellow-rumped Thornbills together with Red-browed Finches were highlights. As a change from the unavoidable sightings of aircraft taking-off from Melbourne Airport, a V-formation of Straw-necked Ibis flew quietly overhead, ending, for us, a thoroughly enjoyable outing.

*Hazel and Alan Veevers
Leaders, Beginners' Outings*

Weekday Outings

Cape Schanck, Mornington Peninsula NP

24 July 2012, species count: 35

Under clouded skies and in calm conditions, Pat Bingham led a group of 21, including several newcomers. Both Shy and Black-browed Albatross and Kelp and Pacific Gull were present near the Pulpit Rock boardwalk area. Australasian Gannet flew near and contrasted with the soaring albatrosses. The bushes contained numerous Superb Fairy-wren and Singing Honeyeater plus White-browed Scrubwren and Brown Thornbill. Other honeyeaters were Little Wattlebird, Eastern Spinebill and New Holland Honeyeater. The rocky shore yielded a White-faced Heron and two Sooty Oystercatcher, one with a silver band on its right leg. Raptors were Black-shouldered Kite, Brown Goshawk, Collared Sparrowhawk, Nankeen Kestrel and Peregrine Falcon, indicating good food availability. Excellent photos were obtained of Shy Albatross and Flame Robin which helped with the finer points of identification. The non-avian sightings were a seal (probably Australian Fur Seal), some Eastern Grey Kangaroo, a Southern Right Whale and, unfortunately, a pair of Red Fox. A good day was had by all.

Westerfolds Park, Templestowe

18 June 2012, species count: 45

Eighteen birdwatchers met at the lower car park under grey clouds on a cool morning and soon saw over a dozen

Activities

species – the highlight was a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagle on the power line. Beginners were advised on the distinctions between Rainbow and Musk Lorikeet and Little and Long-billed Corella. Walking north past Lenister Farm, the highlight was a pair of Tawny Frogmouth obligingly perched on a dead tree. Grey and Pied Currawong were also compared and an immature Australasian Darter turned up at the farthest point of this walk. Dogs were being walked but their enthusiasm

didn't seem to affect the remaining birds (perhaps the descendants of phlegmatic ancestors). Back to lunch via a river walk where 6 White-winged Chough were observed. After lunch, south to the rapids where the dense growth finally held some small birds, Brown Thornbill, Superb Fairy-wren and Spotted Pardalote. A good day.

Diane Tweeddale

Co-ordinator, BirdLife Melbourne Weekdays Outings

Activities for BirdLife Melbourne September to December

This calendar includes field activities for BirdLife Melbourne. For details on the **meetings held at Balwyn and Carlton**, please refer to **page 4**. Should you have any ideas for an activity, or would like to volunteer as a leader, please contact the BirdLife Melbourne Activities Co-ordinator, Tim Bawden at tbawden@live.com.au or on 0405 184 100

September

Sat. 1/09/12	Boneseeding & Birding	You Yangs Regional Park. Meet at 10:00am in the car park just past the park office, approx. 300 m from the Branch Rd entrance, Melway Key Map 11 C12. Bring all you need for a normal day's birding plus gardening gloves and a trowel for Boneseed removal. Contact Merrilyn, 9889 4924 or merrilyn@wirejunkie.com
Sun. 2/09/12	Yellingbo Birdwalk	Yellingbo Reserve. Melway 305 G11. Warburton Hwy to Woori Yallock, 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 10:00am. Walk starts 10:30am. Toilets available. Bring lunch and gumboots. Contact Maryanne, 0402 283 080 or onlyme53@bigpond.com .
Mon 3/09/12	Weekdays Outing	Hallam Valley Rd, Hampton Park. 10:00am to 3:00pm. Leader Rob Grosvenor. Melway 95 K3. Enter Hallam Valley Rd from South Gippsland Hwy, continue to end of Hallam Valley Rd and park beyond gate. Gate locked at 10:10am sharp. Late lunch, no toilets. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au .
Sat. 8/09/12 and Sun. 9/09/12	Orange-bellied Parrot Surveys	Mainland Surveys for Orange-bellied Parrot. See www.birdlife.org.au/projects/orange-bellied-parrot-recovery for more details or contact Chris Purnell at chris.purnell@birdlife.org.au .
Sat. 8/09/12 to Sun. 9/09/12	Australian Plants Expo 2012	Eltham Community & Reception Centre, 801 Main Rd, Eltham (Melways 21 J6). 10am – 4pm. Adults \$5 Concession \$4 Children free. Phone 9439 7228 or email apsyarrayarra@gmail.com . (See the Education Report on page 3 for details on volunteering to assist with BirdLife Melbourne's information table.)
Sun. 9/09/12	Weekend Outing	Come along for a great day of Box-Ironbark Birding around the Baillieston district. Contact Stuart Dashper; 0404 012 385; stuartgd@unimelb.edu.au
Tue. 11/09/12	Deviilbend Reservoir Survey	Deviilbend Reservoir survey at 9.00 am. Contact Roger Richards 0419384636; ornithology3@yahoo.com.au .
Fri. 14/09/12 to Sun 16/9/12	Photography Group Weekend	Echuca/Moama District. For accommodation, Morool on the Murray, is suggested Tel: 03 5480 9111 or Email: enquiries@morool.com.au . When booking, let them know you are part of the BirdLife Melbourne Photography Group. For more details Contact Sonja sonja.ross@yahoo.com.au or 9846 5380
Tue. 18/09/12	Weekdays Outing	Endeavour Fern Gully, Red Hill, 10:00am to 3:00pm. Leader Joan Peters. Melway 190 J3. From Arthurs Seat Rd turn into Red Hill Recreation Reserve and park. Toilets available. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Sat. 22/09/12	Beginners' Outing	Newport Lakes and Jawbone Conservation Reserve. Meet at 10:00am in the car park off Mason St. Melway 55 G3. Contact Hazel, 9876 3712 or melbourne@Birdlife.org.au
Sun. 23/09/12	ETP Survey	Eastern Treatment Plant, Bangholme. Meet at 9:00am for a survey that will continue until evening. The survey is carried out by 4WD. Numbers are restricted and booking is essential. Survey date may change at short notice due to operational constraints. Leader is Mike Carter. Contact Mike, 03 9787 7136 or pterodroma@bigpond.com
Sun. 23/09/12	New members BBQ and Birding day	All Welcome, come for along for some birding followed by a BBQ at the You Yangs. Meet and Greet. Contact Tim Bawden 0405 184 100 or tbawden@live.com.au More details to come.

October

Wed. 3/10/12	Weekdays Outing	Birdsland Reserve, Belgrave Heights, 10:00am to 3:00pm. Leader Ken Baker. Melway 84 B2. Enter from McNichol Rd (Melway 75 C2). Limited parking near toilets and shelter. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Sun. 7/10/12	Yellingbo Birdwalk	Yellingbo Reserve. Melway 305 G11. Warburton Hwy to Woori Yallock, 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 10:00am. Walk starts 10:30am. Toilets available. Bring lunch and gumboots. Contact Maryanne, 0402

283 080 or onlyme53@bigpond.com.

Sun. 14/10/12	Weekend Outing	Brisbane Ranges National Park. Leader Tim Bawden. 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. Meet at Stony Creek Picnic Area. Contact Tim Bawden 0405 184 100 or mailto:tbawden@live.com.au
Sun. 14/10/12	ETP Survey	Note change of date. Eastern Treatment Plant, Bangholme. Meet at 9:00 am for a survey that will continue until the evening. The survey is carried out by 4WD. Numbers are restricted and booking is essential. Leader is Mike Carter. Contact Mike, 9787 7136 or pterodroma@bigpond.com
Tue. 16/10/12	Weekdays Outing	Gobur Flora Reserve, via Yarck, 10:00am to 3:00pm. Leader Rob Tate. Melway X910 S7/VicRoads 62 B3. Meet outside Yarck Store on Maroondah Hwy, then by convoy to site. Toilets. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Sat. 27/10/12 to Sun. 28/10/12	Weekend Camp at Mt Samaria	Spring creek sawmill campground. Leader: Fiona Parkin. Approximately 220 km from Melbourne. Map and directions provided to those confirming attendance. Contact Fiona Parkin 98226126 fionamarieparkin@gmail.com
Sat. 27/10/12	Beginners' Outing	Pound Bend, Warrandyte. Meet 10:00 am in the car park near toilets. Melway 23 A11. Contact Hazel, 9876 3712 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Sun. 28/10/12 & Sun. 9/11/12	Banyule Breakfast with the Birds	Meet at 7.30 at Old Shire Offices, Beverley Road, Heidelberg, (Melway 32 3D). Presented by Banyule City Council and BirdLife Melbourne, Join experienced guides from BirdLife Melbourne for an early morning walk as they help to identify over 70 species of birds. The walk will be followed by a light breakfast at the Old Shire Offices, off Beverley Road. BYO binoculars. Limited to 100 people. Bookings essential: Banyule City Council 9457 9816. Free.
November		
Sun. 4/11/12	Yellingbo Birdwalk	Yellingbo Reserve. Melway 305 G11. Warburton Hwy to Woori Yallock, 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 10:00am. Walk starts 10:30am. Toilets available. Bring lunch and gumboots. Contact Maryanne, 0402 283 080 or onlyme53@bigpond.com .
Tue. 13/11/12	Weekdays Outing	Brimbank Park, Keilor East, 10:00am to 3:00pm. Leader Elsmaree Baxter. Melway 14 J9. Enter from Keilor Park Drive and park close to visitor centre/toilets. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Wed. 21/11/12	Weekdays Outing	Point Cook, 10:00am to 3:00pm. Leader Peter Gibbons. Melway 199 E1. Meet at car park Spectacle Lake Bird Hide. Nearest toilets at picnic area, Melway 199 E3. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Sun. 18/11/12	Weekend Outing	Point Addis, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. Leader Tim Bawden. Meet at Ironbark Basin Carpark, Point Addis Road, Bells Beach. Contact Tim Bawden, 0405 184 100 or mailto:tbawden@live.com.au
Sat. 24/11/12	Beginners' Outing	You Yangs Regional Park. Meet 10:00am in the first car park on the left, just past the Information Centre. Melway Key Map Page 11 C12. Contact Hazel, 9876 3712 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
December		
Sat. 1/12/12	Boneseeding & Birding	You Yangs Regional Park. Meet at 10:00am in the car park just past the park office, approx. 300 m from the Branch Rd entrance (Mel. Key Map 11 C12). Bring all you need for a normal day's birding plus gardening gloves and a trowel for Boneseed removal. Contact Merrilyn, 9889 4924 or merrilyn@wirejunkie.com
Sun. 2/12/12	Yellingbo Birdwalk	Yellingbo Reserve. Melway 305 G11. Warburton Hwy to Woori Yallock, 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 10:00am. Walk starts 10:30am. Toilets available. Bring lunch and gumboots. Contact Maryanne, 0402 283 080 or onlyme53@bigpond.com .
Sun. 2/12/12	ETP Survey	Eastern Treatment Plant, Bangholme. Meet at 9:00 am for a survey that will continue until the evening. The survey is carried out by 4WD. Numbers are restricted and booking is essential. Survey date may change at short notice due to operational constraints. Leader is Mike Carter. Contact Mike, 9787 7136 or pterodroma@bigpond.com
Mon. 3/12/12	Weekdays Outing	Marrondah Reservoir Park, 10:00am to 3:00pm. Leader Diane Tweeddale. Melway 270 J5. From Maroondah Hwy turn into McKenzie Avenue. Park near rotunda and toilets. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Sat. 8/12/12	Weekend Outing	Bunyip State Park, 1:00 pm til late. Leader Tim Bawden. Birding and spotlighting. Meet Mortimer Picnic Area. Contact Tim Bawden, 0405 184 100 or mailto:tbawden@live.com.au
Sun 23/12/12	ETP Survey	Eastern Treatment Plant, Bangholme. Meet 9:00 am. Survey that will continue until the evening. Survey carried out by 4WD. Numbers restricted and booking essential. Survey date may change at short notice due to operational constraints. Leader is Mike Carter. Contact Mike, 9787 7136 or pterodroma@bigpond.com

Dandenong Catchment Survey Summary

April to June 2012

BirdLife Melbourne is surveying eight of ten wetland sites for Melbourne Water in the Dandenong Creek catchment. The sites are located in the south-eastern suburbs of Hampton Park, Braeside, Endeavour Hills, Narre Warren and Rowville. The following abbreviations are used: **FH** (Frog Hollow), **KB** (Kilberry Boulevard), **RG** (River Gum Ck), **SGR** (South Golf Links Rd), **HVR** (Hallam Valley Rd), **WW** (Waterford Wetlands), **TC** (Troups Ck) and **MC** (Mordialloc Ck).

No new bird species were added overall, with the total remaining on 159, but the TC team added Noisy Miner in April, taking the site total to 109. Bird numbers were well down at all sites due to the wet conditions, especially in late May and all June. In one case, the survey date was changed due to heavy rain, 40mm in the morning.

The influx of Nankeen Night-Heron reported in the Jan-Mar quarter didn't extend into this period, with the species not sighted at any wetland. Of the Teal species, Chestnut were recorded at five sites with Grey only at three, HVR, WW and TC. Cattle Egret only at TC each month. What was the attraction? The site's remote location away from houses?

There were some interesting one-off sightings. Brown Goshawk at HVR in May and TC in June. Swamp Harrier at HVR and TC in May and June. Wedge-tailed Eagle at RG in June and a Brown Falcon at TC in April. The raptor count is still 14 species. Not bad for eight wetlands in metro Melbourne.

The rain hadn't started in April, hence water levels were average and some mud flats and reed beds were exposed creating a habitat for Buff-banded Rail (WW), Spotless Crake (HVR), Black-winged Stilt (RG) and Black-fronted Dotterel (RG and HVR). The old Red Gum hollows at RG are still attracting a pair of Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, sighted there in April and May, though missed in June they may have been sheltering in a hollow out of the very strong wind on a cold survey day. No Scarlet Robins this period but Flame recorded in April (KB), May (RG), June (FH), and April and May (TC). The Feral Goose, a Greylag, has moved house, now residing at TC being recorded there each month. This lone bird has also been sighted over the years at FH, RG and SGR.

Of the frog species, yes, the team members now have an ear for their different calls, the most prolific is the Eastern Common Froglet, heard at all sites. Verreaux's Tree Frog was again heard at RG in April, Spotted and Striped Marsh Frogs, both at TC in April and the Eastern Banjo Frog at WW in June. A sign of healthy water?

Two sites, South Golf Links Rd and Mordialloc Creek were not surveyed but will recommence in July. I am still looking for volunteers to fill vacancies when team members are unable to attend a survey. I may be contacted on 9802 5250 or by email, melbourne@birdlife.org.au

A full tally of the three month sightings may be found on the BirdLife Website www.birdlife.org.au. Go to 'BirdLife Melbourne Branch' and click on the link to 'Local Website'.

Graeme Hosken
BirdLife Melbourne DCS Recorder

Flora and Fauna Guarantee and the Common Myna

What you can do to help

Under the **Flora and Fauna Guarantee (FFG) Act**, the Common Myna was nominated recently by a third party as a Threatening Process.

The government Scientific Advisory Committee recommended against the nomination on the grounds that the criteria shown below were not met.

Criterion 5.1. The potentially threatening process poses or has the potential to pose a significant threat to the survival of a range of flora or fauna.

Sub-criterion 5.1.1. The potentially threatening process poses or has the potential to pose a significant threat to the survival of two or more taxa.

Sub-criterion 5.1.2. The potentially threatening process poses or has the potential to pose a significant threat to the survival of a community of flora or fauna.

BirdLife agrees that the criteria have not been met. This is in line with our Pest Bird Management Policy 2010 and our Pest Bird Case Study of the Common Myna. However future expansion of Common Myna populations may have an impact on Turquoise, Regent and Superb Parrots.

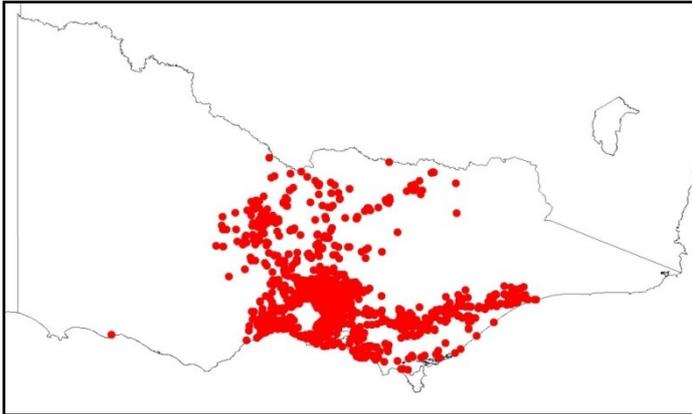
We believe that there is a requirement for more research into the impact that the Common Myna may be having on native birds in the Australian environment. At present there is relatively little research into the impact of the Common Myna on native fauna. If, as a result of future research, an impact on native fauna and particularly on threatened bird species is demonstrated then we would support the re-nomination of the Common Myna as a Threatening Process under FFG.

Many of us suspect the Common Myna is harmful, is taking nesting hollows and potentially harming other species both birds and other fauna, yet we cannot prove it without the collection of good data.

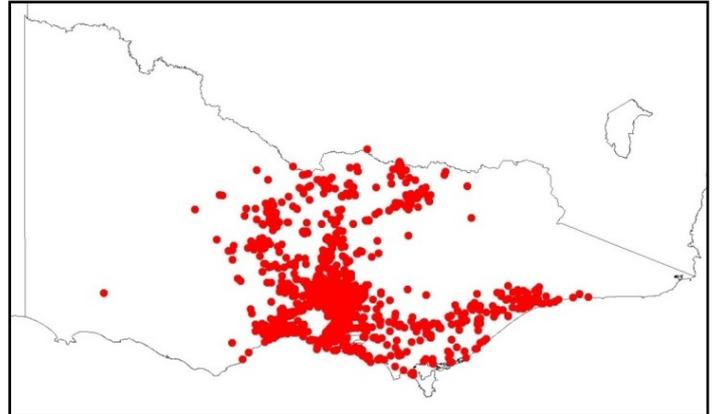
The maps show recent trends in the distribution of Common Myna within Victoria. It appears that the range of Common Myna is expanding most in the north and north-east of the State. Further investigation is required but if this proves to be true then there may be an increase in competition between the Common Myna and Superb and Turquoise Parrots which both occur in this area.

The Wangaratta-Chiltern-Rutherglen area is an area that should be monitored for impacts on Turquoise Parrot. The Lower Goulburn and Echuca areas may also require monitoring for impacts on the Superb Parrot. At present Common Myna appear to be closely linked to human habitation and highly modified environments but this may change over time.

To enable Victorians to have the Common Myna listed as a Threatening Process under the FFG, members can improve our knowledge of the spread of the species.



Common Myna Distribution 1998–2002



Common Myna Distribution 2003–2012.

Source: BirdLife Australia Atlas of Australian Birds database.

We are asking all members to:

Record and report to the Atlas when and where the species is seen. We suspect that many of us simply do not record the species because it is thought of as a pest.

Run local surveys and activities specifically to record the species.

Provide insights into the loss of nesting opportunities caused by the species, whether to birds or other fauna.

We plan to encourage this through activity organisers, Atlas news and web site articles. Peter Baitz, email bayside@birdlife.org.au will contact regional groups, or can be contacted to help co-ordinate activities if assistance is required.

*Euan Moore and Mark Anderson
Victorian Conservation Committee*

Threatened Bird Network

Australian Painted Snipe

It's been an eventful 2 years for many opportunistic waterbird species, none more so than the Australian Painted Snipe (APS). Extensive flooding throughout Victoria in September 2010 only began to recede in early 2011 and APS records soon followed. A trickle of sightings were first reported throughout historic sites within the Loddon River Basin, then with an uncharacteristically southerly winter record from south of the Grampians, birders increased their vigilance around the state's wetlands. By the end of last year 23 birds had been reported from 9 sites within 100km of



Grainne Maguire addresses attendees at the annual National Beach-nesting Bird Workshop, Phillip Island.

Melbourne CBD and a further 30 individuals were reported throughout the state for the period. In 2012, however we have not had a single report of APS from Victoria.

Although much of the species' migratory ecology remains up to conjecture it's thought that outside opportunistic movements, a proportion of the population has a loose north south migration. This would account for the increased report rate throughout the south east Murray Darling Basin in the spring and summer months. With this in mind, September-April is the perfect time to survey Victoria's freshwater wetlands as the population disperses.

With several breeding records and a high proportion of juveniles reported in recent seasons, the next couple of years will be crucial to ensure that these young birds can survive long enough to contribute to the population.

For more information on the species, survey tips and project news please visit <www.birdlife.org.au/projects/painted-snipe-project>



Male Australian Painted Snipe, roadside swale, Kerang | Photo, Chris Tzaros

Orange-bellied Parrot

Since the first records of Orange-bellied Parrots (OBP) arriving on the mainland were reported back in early April, a maximum of 8 separate birds have been observed across their distribution. One group of OBPs have remained reasonably sedentary, taking advantage of the abundance of beaded glasswort seeding at Melbourne Water's Western Treatment Plant. Observations by BirdLife staff revealed that 2 of the 3 adult males observed at the site were banded. A quick look at the database identified one as an 8 year old bird which seems to have taken a particular shine to the area, having been observed at the WTP in both 2007 and 2010.

The presence of a bird without bands is also an encouraging sign and suggests that there are still undiscovered natural nesting hollows in Tasmanian breeding grounds.

Birds have also been observed in habitat fringing the coastal lagoons of Victoria's far west and SA's south east. In an interesting turn of events, a report of a single juvenile stopping off at Aireys Inlet in mid April reveals something of the transitory routes some birds take along our coast upon arrival.

For more information on the Orange-bellied Parrot or an update on the findings of the monitoring project please visit

<www.birdlife.org.au/projects/orange-bellied-parrot-recovery>

Chris Purnell

Beach-nesting bird project

Whilst we are currently in the theoretical 'quiet time' for the Beach-nesting bird project, things have been rather busy. On 25 May this year the extended BNB team held a National Beach-nesting Bird Workshop at Phillip Island, with 110 volunteers and coastal land managers coming together to hear about the recent work into BNB conservation. Participants travelled from as far away as Streaky Bay on the Eyre Peninsula and Merrimbula on the NSW coast, and in total 21 regions were represented.

In the morning we heard updates from NSW, VIC and SA, followed by research results from recent honours students Renee Mead and Aimie Cribbin who presented some amazing images of predators raiding Hooded Plover nests captured by the nest cameras. Before lunch, we were introduced to the new on-line data portal system, which volunteer monitors will be able to use to enter their monitoring data for this upcoming season. The afternoon arrived, along with the threatening storm, and we were given the opportunity to delve a little deeper into two areas of interest.

We could choose between five workshops including 'Talking to the public' presented by Grahame Collier from T Issues Consultancy, 'Interpretive material' presented by Bruce Atkins from Coastcare, 'Shorebird identification' presented by Golo Maurer from BirdLife Australia, 'Protecting a nest' presented by BirdLife Australia and 'Volunteering' prepared by Volunteer Victoria and presented by BirdLife Australia. It definitely was a day to remember and the team is already beginning to plan next year's workshop.



Hooded Plover | Photo, Glenn Ehmke

If you are interested in coming along or helping out at some upcoming BNB events, there will be refresher training days for volunteer nest monitors at numerous locations along the Victorian coast during September, October and November, including Apollo Bay, Saturday 13 October. Keep an eye on the online BirdLife Australia calendar for more dates.

The ANGAIR wildflower show is also coming up on 22-23 September (see www.angair.org.au for details).

*Meghan Cullen
Beach-nesting bird project, BirdLife Australia*



Shorebirds 2020 Armchair Shorebirder needed

Shorebirds 2020 is looking for a Melbourne-based volunteer to help with current and historic data entry. This is an ideal volunteer position for a person who:

- likes the detective work needed to get behind some of our historic shorebird records, so important to track species declines;
- has a mind for birds, numbers and computers; and
- could spare one day a week to work in the Carlton office.

If you think you could aid our efforts to obtain reliable shorebird population trends for conservation in Australia and overseas please get in touch with Golo Maurer golo.maurer@birdlife.org.au. Tea and biscuits will be flowing freely.

VWSG Report

It's been a really good three months for fieldwork success at the Victorian Wader Study Group and, as usual, there have also been some interesting reports of our banded/flagged birds which have moved elsewhere.

Fieldwork

The "Oystercatcher Season" got off to a good start with 45 Red Knot, 59 Double-banded Plover and 96 Red-necked Stint in a catch at Stockyard Point on 6 May! It is not often that we manage to obtain catches of Red Knot anywhere in Victoria, especially in the winter months when only the immature birds are present. This was a particularly valuable catch because it contained a Red Knot banded as a juvenile last July at Meinypilgyno in the Chukotka region of north-east Siberia. This is the location where the few remaining Spoonbill Sandpipers also breed. An intensive study of Red Knots is being carried out in this area by Pavel Tomkovich, of the Moscow Museum. Such are the wonders of modern communications that we received back this banding information from Pavel whilst Roz Jessop and Birgita Hansen and the team still had the bird in the hand on Western Port!

After the above excitement the "real" Oystercatcher season got under way extremely successfully. To date (23 July) we have caught 243 Australian Pied and 59 Sooty Oystercatchers. This is well above our minimum targets each year of 150/50, and is the largest Australian Pied Oystercatcher

total for some years. We still have one fieldwork weekend to go so hope to raise these totals a little further still.

The successful catching has been greatly aided by renovated decoys made by VWSG members Marj Reni and Alan Clarke. Four of these birds had painted red beaks and glass eyes and were most realistic and excellent at enticing wary Oycs to land in the catching area.

Retraps, recoveries and flag sightings

An exciting and varied crop of records makes it difficult to decide where to start. Perhaps with a bird which hasn't even moved?!

In the Fairhaven, French Island, catch on 19 July there was a Australian Pied Oystercatcher which had originally been banded as an adult there in June 1991. It was thus a minimum of 24½ years old. It had also been caught at Fairhaven in July 2000. Almost certainly it was a bird which breeds locally and it could well have been in Western Port throughout the last 25 years!

Pride of place in the recoveries must be a Red Knot banded in Corner Inlet as a first year bird in February 2007 and then found breeding in Chukotka, north-east Siberia, on 25 May this year. Amazingly this bird was seen (orange flag) and then caught a few days later by Pavel Tomkovich at exactly the same site as he had banded the bird that we caught in Western Port on 6 May – less than three weeks earlier. Amazing that we should exchange Knots in the same month.

Another Russian traveller was a Bar-tailed Godwit, also from Corner Inlet (June 2010), which was recovered in northern Sakhalin, eastern Siberia, this May. It was almost certainly on its way to breeding grounds in Alaska when it had to make an emergency stopover in Russia.

Coming nearer to home we've just received the first report of a long-distance movement of one of the Red-necked Avocets which we caught at Yallock Creek in early January. It was seen at Kooragang Island, Hunter Estuary, New South Wales, on 21 July. Apparently an exceptional flock of 3,500 Red-necked Avocets was present there. We've had at least one movement of a Red-necked Avocet from Victoria to that area in previous years. It seems that species such as Red-necked Avocet (and Banded Stilt) do roam quite widely around south-east Australia when not breeding.

Finally an unusually long movement of a Crested Tern. Most young Crested Tern leave Victoria in the autumn and spend the winter along the New South Wales Coast. Only the occasional bird seems to penetrate to Queensland. However one of the chicks banded at The Nobbies on the west end of Phillip Island last December was found at Baffle Creek, Rules Beach, Queensland, on 1 July. This is a movement of 1,690km. – close to the record for this species.

Future activities

August to October is a relatively quiet period for VWSG fieldwork with the winter oystercatcher programme mostly complete and with the main migratory wader program not starting until late October/early November when most birds have arrived back in their non-breeding areas. However we will be attempting to retrieve geolocators from Eastern Curlew at Anderson's Inlet from mid-August onwards as this species arrives back in Victoria much earlier than others. If you wish to take part in any VWSG fieldwork activities please contact me: mintons@ozemail.com.au or

Conservation

Roz Jessop: moonbird@waterfront.net.au. New participants are always welcome.

VWSG members – please remember the AGM, at Clive's house, on Saturday 8 September (10am to 10pm).

Clive Minton
Victorian Waders Study Group

New Members

We give a very big welcome to the following new members and look forward to seeing you at the BirdLife Melbourne activities and meetings.

Karen Rowe, MELBOURNE
Sean Collins, KENSINGTON
Gay Bennett, PARKVILLE
Katrina Lee, CRAIGIEBURN
Judy Holding, COLLINGWOOD
Lesley Borland, CLIFTON HILL
Darren Wells, THORNBURY
Rohan Long, PRESTON
Mary Murphy, ALPHINGTON
John McArdle, IVANHOE
Rupert Gray, KEW
Louise Sexton, KEW EAST
Ted Crawford, HAWTHORN EAST
Alan Wilson, BURWOOD
Bronwen Baird, BOX HILL NORTH
Raymond Mitchelmore, BLACKBURN SOUTH
Valerie McNaughton, RINGWOOD
Douglas Thompson, HEATHMONT
Ann Kelly, MALVERN EAST
RSPCA Victoria, BURWOOD EAST
Melissa Sarrugia, UPWEY
James Frazer, TECOMA
Matthew Ginnever, ARMADALE
Linda Grootendorst, ARMADALE
Paul Millsom, HIGHETT
Rob Titchener, PARKDALE
Brent Clohesy, ASPENDALE GARDENS
Andrew Katsis, GISBORNE SOUTH
Sharon Bandel, NARRE WARREN SOUTH
Rab Siddhi, MORNINGTON
Leeann Reaney, KINGSVILLE
Sandra Dean, HOPPERS CROSSING
Mark Camilleri, ESSENDON
Richard Hughes, CARLTON
Cameron L'Estrange, BRUNSWICK WEST
Andrew & Adrienne Haysom, GREENVALE
Phil Norman, FITZROY
Brian Chee, MILL PARK
Meg & Alex Houghton, LOWER PLENTY
Simon & Yvette Phipps, KEW EAST
Erin & Sebastian Atalla, BLACKBURN
Ruth Ault, NUNAWADING
Erica Gage, NUNAWADING
Timothy Currie, MITCHAM

Patrick Bell, MALVERN
Jennie Sarrailhe, MALVERN EAST
Steven Andrews, ELWOOD
Jenine Martino, ASPENDALE
Steven Fine, BENTLEIGH
Geraldine Kelly, KURUNJANG
Florence Roche, MELTON
Christine Giuliand, SUNBURY
Susanne Wilson, SUNBURY
Peter Carson, MOUNT ELIZA
Kevin Conlan, MOUNT MARTHA
Jill Ford, MOUNT MARTHA

BOCA Distinguished Service Award Recipients

The BOCA Board has announced Janet Hand and Graeme Hosken as recipients of BOCA Distinguished Service Awards. Awards were made to only five BOCA Members for 2011. Janet and Graeme are congratulated on receiving these awards for their great contributions to BOCA and MELBOCA over many years. It is planned to present the awards at the BirdLife Melbourne Balwyn Monthly Meeting on 25 September. After the presentation, a full report will be included in the *BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter*.

Editorial

The *BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter* is published quarterly in March, June, September and December by BirdLife Melbourne, the Melbourne branch of BirdLife Australia.

Editor: Andrew Fuhrmann.

Co-Editors: Penny Johns; Alan Crawford; David Plant

You can reach the editors at **BirdLife Melbourne, c/- BirdLife Australia National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton, Vic 3053**, or email us at birdlife.melbourne.newsletter@gmail.com

Contributions are welcome and should be typed in Microsoft Word compatible format with a minimum of formatting and emailed to the above address. Photographs with contributions are most welcome, electronic or print. Photos will be returned after publication.

The copy dead line for contributions is the first Monday of

July (spring issue)
October (summer issue)
January (autumn issue)
April (winter issue)

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