

BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter

Volume 2 Number 2 June 2013

Gentoo Penguins, Heard Island
Photo, Tania Ireton



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The Heard Mentality

Tania Ireton has reached a point with her Australian bird list where serious travelling is required.

At the January Balwyn meeting, current President of BirdLife Bayside, Tania Ireton, offered a night of spectacular images from her recent trip to Heard Island and McDonald Islands.

Heritage Tours' *Spirit of Enderby* set off in November 2012 on the 10,034km voyage from Fremantle, heading south-west to Heard Is, before crossing back to Albany. Heard Is lies south of the Antarctic Convergence, that's further south than Macquarie, and it forms a small volcanic archipelago with the McDonald group which is 44km away. Heard is 372sqkm of stunning snow, ice and glaciers, where Mawson Peak, the highest mass, reaches 2745m. The rugged, inhospitable coastline is 102km, the average temperature is between 0 and 4°C, and wind gusts can reach 180km. Captain Heard landed in 1853, and American sealers filled 100,000 barrels with Elephant seal oil from 1855-1880. UK claimed the island in 1910, but gave it to Australia in 1947, and now it is in the care of the Australian Antarctic Division. Their representative was aboard the ship, and she set the rules of behaviour for this World Heritage Area.

Southward, toward the islands of Île Amsterdam and Île Saint-Paul, they encountered Humpback Whales, and nearby the islands were Amsterdam and Yellow-nosed Albatross, Southern Skua and Northern Giant Petrel. On the 8 day journey to Heard Is all clothing to be worn on Heard Is had to be deseeded, de-haired and checked, and footwear had to be disinfected. Outer weatherproof garments were provided. Four precious days were assigned as possible landing days. The first was a storm with horizontal snow, and the ship cruised up and down in the lee of the island. Bird watching happened all day from the bridge, and Tania remarked on the good nature of the Russian crew. Prions obliged, and Cape Petrel, Southern Giant Petrel, Black-bellied Storm Petrel, Antarctic Fulmar and South Georgia Diving Petrel. Tania's persistence was rewarded with the first sighting of Snow Petrel at Heard Is since 1948!

The second day allowed them to kit up and zodiac to Atlas Cove. Mawson Peak was bathed in sunlight, with glaciers running down to the narrow beach, and a landscape dominated by lava flows and ash deposits. One of the party, Graham Budd, was re-landing after 41 years (1971). Young Elephant Seals lounged on the beach, the young males displaying some aggression. With a map of choices in hand, Tania chose to walk, or scramble, along the rocky shoreline to a colony of Southern Rockhopper Penguins. En route a few of the 13 plant species were spotted, including Kerguelen

(Continued on page 4)

President's Report

Report on the Branch AGM and elections to the Committee

Our inaugural AGM was held prior to the Balwyn Monthly Meeting on 26 February 2013. Eighty-two members attended the meeting. Stuart Dashper and Sonja Ross were re-elected, Susan Pepper and Scot Sharman were elected, and the four join Tim Bawden, Alan Crawford, Andrew Fuhrmann, Fiona Parkin and Bill Ramsay as Committee Members for the coming year. Another one or two persons willing to serve on the Committee to share the workload would be welcome and I look forward to hearing from a couple of volunteers in the very near future.

The President's and Treasurer's Reports were accepted with

no questions or discussion from the floor. As there was no further business, the meeting was closed.

By the time the June newsletter is published both the Branch Consultation Meeting on 24 May and the BirdLife Australia AGM on 25 May will have been completed. The Branch Consultation Meeting was initiated to enable delegates from all branches to interface with National Office and work through issues of mutual concern. I am crystal balling now, but I am confident that this will have been a day well spent towards achieving a better BirdLife Australia.

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*

BIRDLIFE MELBOURNE COMMITTEE

President: Bill Ramsay (Tel: 9803 1493)

Vice President: Stuart Dashper

Secretary: Alan Crawford

Treasurer: Sonja Ross

Members: Tim Bawden, Andrew Fuhrmann, Fiona Parkin, Susan Pepper & Scot Sharman

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

To contact the BirdLife National Office in Carlton (03) 9347 0757, Mon to Fri 9am - 5pm.

HELP KEEP BIRDLIFE MELBOURNE STRONG:

Every organisation needs an active membership to remain strong and vibrant, and BirdLife Melbourne is no different.

We're currently looking for several volunteers to help with the everyday running of the branch. There are a number of opportunities, so if you'd like to support Melbourne's birding community, as well as meet some wonderful new birders, please don't hesitate to get in contact.

- One or two members to assist with co-ordinating speakers at the Monthly Carlton or the Monthly Balwyn meetings
- Members interested in assisting with the quarterly newsletter, in either an editorial capacity, or sourcing/contributing content
- One or two members willing to serve on the Committee
- Members interested in leading group outings, or suggestions for branch outings, including camps.

If you can help, or would like any further information about these positions or the work of the committee, please contact branch President Bill Ramsay on (03) 9803 493 or email melbourne@birdlife.org.au



Swallows: An obsession

Wildlife artist, Roger Scott, revealed his obsession with the flight of swallows in the Members Choice segment at the November 2012 Balwyn Meeting. It began because his early photographs did not capture their aerial speed and artistry. Persistence has paid off, and he now has photographs showing flight characteristics, reflections in water and swallows skimming over water with just beak immersed. After total immersion, these acrobats can shake their head feathers free of water with a millisecond 180° flick of the head.

If you have a special subject you'd like to share, be it the fruits of a recent trip, an enduring interest or a topic of broad appeal, drop us a line at melbourne@birdlife.org.au.

Education Report

Education Activities continue apace in the quiet of autumn

Duncan Turnbull has continued to work with the grade 6 students at Kingswood College in Box Hill. He produced a double-sided laminated photographic bird identification sheet showing the 54 birds most likely to be found on the Box Hill Golf Course. This was followed by a talk on survey techniques and how to use a data sheet he had produced for this purpose. The big test of their newly acquired skills came when Duncan, Fiona Parkin, Bill Ramsay and I assisted them on an outing on 24 March. We were very impressed with

their first field work. It is planned to continue this activity in June, September and December. Thanks Duncan for all your input.

In February I gave a PowerPoint presentation to the ladies from St. Timothy's Ladies Fellowship Group in Bulleen. It was a very hot afternoon so I was delighted to see that over 40 ladies attended. An interesting question and answer session followed.

I can always use more volunteers in many different ways. Spring is always when our resources are stretched.

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



**Kingswood College,
new members of
Birdlife Australia.**

Fledgling Birders in Action

On Wednesday 20 March, 24 students from Kingswood College, year 6, conducted a survey of the birds at Box Hill Golf Course. The students and two teachers were joined by four Birdlife Melbourne members who assisted them with their identification of the birds. Mark, the Golf Course Supervisor, ensured the safety of all of the group on the course.

The students enjoyed the challenge of distinguishing between the male, female and juvenile of the 140 or so Wood Duck on the course. The biggest surprise was a lone Silver Gull that landed on the dam while the students were present.

A total of 16 species were recorded with a total of 256 birds seen on the two-hour excursion.

The College is planning to conduct similar surveys in each of the three remaining terms this year and hopefully will continue these surveys in years to come.



Birds in the Backyard

Our backyard is typical suburbia, with plenty of grass left for the boys – which we didn't have – to play cricket on.

It's not the kind of place you often see Brown Goshawk, so it was a surprise to see this bird surrounded by feathers under the clothes line. It stayed there a while I got my camera and went out onto the patio. Discussing this with an ornithologist from the Department of Sustainability and Environment he suggested there may not be enough food for them in the bush due to the increase in the breeding numbers.

Margot Craddock, Montrose

Meeting Reports

In 2013 Carol Griffiths and her husband volunteered to be wardens for a three month stint at Eyre Bird Observatory, near Cocklebiddy in WA. Tasks include maintaining the historic telegraph station, three daily weather reports, hosting and feeding visitors, fetching supplies, regular bird surveys and Atlas entries, coordinating work-bees and writing newsletter reports. The telegraph station is 60 minutes 4X4 drive from the highway, nestled in treed dunes towering over limestone flats, a short walk from the beach. Volunteering or visiting, it's a must. Major Mitchell's perform every day, and bush and beach birds are rich and full of surprises.



Heard Is., volcanic Rock covered in Snow and Ice
Photo, Tania Ireton



Southern Rockhopper Penguin
Photo, Tania Ireton

(Continued from page 1)

cabbage, high in vitamin c, and consumed by thankful sealers. Amongst the rocks were King, Gentoo and Macaroni Penguins, Southern Skua and Heard Is Shag. Tania had great shots of the only terrestrial breeding bird, which forages on carcasses, the Black-faced Sheathbill.

Day three was a rough passage to and from McDonald Is, and since the sea floor is uncharted inshore, they had to maintain distance. On the fourth and final day Tania chose to take a zodiac cruise along the coast of Heard Is, overhung by massive vertical cliffs. Then they had the eight day return sailing, during which they tallied 68 bird species and 15 cetacean species for the trip.

22 January 2013
Daphne Hards, Meeting recorder

The Birdsville Track and Back

Balwyn Meeting Report, 26 February 2013

In front of one of BirdLife Melbourne's biggest turnouts of the last year, **Chris Tzaros** invited us all to share the highlights of his trip to the Birdsville Track and back.

As we travelled with him, he also shared clues to improve our birding. Starting at Hattah-Kulkyne National Park, the trip went to Flinders Ranges, Willow Springs, then up the Birdsville Track from Marree to Birdsville. Then on the return the family travelled down by Innamincka, through Mertly Mertly to Depot Glen (where the mosquitoes were the size of Welcome Swallow).

The photographs started at Hattah-Kulkyne National Park which Chris said that, according to locals, was showing the best vegetation cover for the last 40-50 years. Kangaroo numbers in the park are huge, and there is a kangaroo fence. Chris found a Regent Parrot which had died after flying into the fence. He relayed this information to Parks Victoria. Photos were shown of Owlet Nightjars (a cross between a sugar glider and a bird). These are seen on the tracks at night. Also shown were Grey Butcherbird, Mallee Emu-wren in the abundant Spinifex grass, Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, Mallee Ringneck and Mulga Parrot.

Across to inland South Australia, we saw Redthroat and even a Grey-fronted Honeyeater along with a yellow-footed rock-wallaby (an endangered species in SA). It was then on to the Clayton wetlands which in Chris's opinion was one of the



Grey Grasswren
Photo, Chris Tzaros

best areas of the trip. You can even take hot showers. The question of where to set up camp was answered by Chris when he said that it was best to stay at registered camp sites. You can only camp within 500 metres of a camp site or as Chris said within eye distance of the centre of the camp site. Two of the grass wren habitats are now off limits to the general birding public due to people flouting these rules.



Crimson Chat
Photo, Chris Tzaros

While photos were shown of the White-winged Fairywren, the most common bird on the Birdsville Track was the Orange Chat. Also seen were Crimson Chats, Diamond Doves, Pied Honeyeaters and Budgerigars (but no fat budgies). White-plumed Honeyeater are more golden than the same bird in Melbourne. There was hardly any water in the Mungerannie Wetlands, but the flourishing vegetation showed water has flowed in the recent past. Even the gibber country was flourishing.

Innamincka was raptor country. Here were seen Wedge-tailed Eagle, Australian Hobby, bustards and even Letter-winged Kites. Chris said that the jizz of this bird is very different to the Black Shouldered Kite of Victoria. Even here Bourke's Parrot was seen in the Mulga Gums. A Gibber Chat was sitting on a bare branch on the way to Mertly Mertly, which was showing more greenery than in the past. On to Depot Glen where 7 to 8 Eyrean Grasswren groups, which were easy to see, Chris said, once you got your eye in.

Allan Crawford gave the vote of thanks to both a popular talk and speaker. Everybody went away happy with the talk. The only question that remained unanswered was how Chris dipped out on seeing a fat budgie, and what is a fat budgie anyway?!

Scot Sharman

So what is a fat budgie?

'Fat budgie' is the nickname of the endangered Night Parrot (*Pezoporus occidentalis*). The only uncontested evidence for the bird's continued survival are a dead adult found in 1990 by the side of a highway, and dead, headless juvenile found by a fence in 2006. In 1991, volume 23 of *Australian Natural History* wrote of the 1990 specimen, found north of Boulia:

"It bears a superficial resemblance to an over-sized Budgerigar (*Melopsittacus undulatus*), but no-one would ever confuse them."

The nickname became widespread last year after Chris Tzaros made headlines around the country with a reported sighting in Victoria's north west. In June, the *Age* newspaper opened a brief profile piece on Chris and the parrot by declaring:

"It's the avian equivalent of the Tasmanian tiger – a mysterious ground-dwelling parrot that looks a bit like a fat budgie."

Ever since, the name has stuck, perhaps a melancholy gesture toward a familiarity with the species that most birders will never have.

Fat budgie or elusive Night Parrot? Museum Victoria's Night Parrot specimen



Activities Calendar June to August 2013

This calendar includes field activities for BirdLife Melbourne. Activities are open to every member of Birds Australia. Should you have any ideas for an activity, or if you are available to lead an outing, 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

| | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Saturday, 1 June 2013 | 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 to the park. Melway Key Map Page 11 C12. Until late afternoon the day is spent birding and removing the invasive weed Boneseed. Bring all you need for a normal days birding plus gardening gloves and a trowel for Boneseed removal. Contact Merrilyn, 9889 4924 or merrilyn@wirejunkie.com |
| Sunday, 2 June 2013 | Yellingbo Birdwalk | Yellingbo Reserve. Melway 305 G11. Take 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 |
| Saturday, 15 June 2013 | Photography Group Outing | Birdsland/Sherbrooke. For details contact Sonja, 9846 5380 or sonja.ross@yahoo.com.au |
| Wednesday, 19 June 2013 | Weekdays Outing | Badger Weir, Yarra Ranges. 10:00am to 3:00pm. Leader Diane Tweeddale. Melway Page 10 R5. Enter park at end of Badger Weir Road, park near farthest toilets. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au |
| Thursday, 20 June 2013 | Carlton Meeting (note change of date) | 8:00pm at BirdLife Australia National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton. Plenty of free street parking nearby. Speaker to be advised. Tea and coffee served after the meeting with time to chat with other attendees. Contact Fiona, fionamarieparkin@gmail.com |
| Sunday, 23 June 2013 | 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 |
| Tuesday, 25 June 2013 | Balwyn Monthly Meeting | 8:00pm at Balwyn Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn. Melway 46 E8. Good street parking nearby. Speaker Martin O'Brien: "Birds and habitats of French Island, Western Port - a birding gem close to Melbourne". Martin is a wildlife biologist and policy officer at DSE, and is also the Executive Officer on the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act Scientific Advisory Committee. Stay for supper and a chat after the meeting. Contact melbourne@birdlife.org.au |
| Sunday, 7 July 2013 | Yellingbo Birdwalk | Yellingbo Reserve. Melway 305 G11. Take 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 |
| Monday, 15 July 2013 | Weekdays Outing | Lysterfield Park, Lysterfield. 10:00am to 3:00pm. Leader Elsmaree Baxter. Melway 108 D2. Take Belgrave/Hallam Road to Horswood Road. Meet in first car park to left of entrance. Toilets available. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au |
| Thursday, 18 July 2013 | Carlton Monthly Meeting | 8:00pm at BirdLife Australia National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton. Plenty of free street parking nearby. Speaker: To be advised. Tea and coffee served after the meeting with time to chat with other attendees. Contact melbourne@birdlife.org.au |
| Thursday, 18 July 2013 | Photography Group Study Night | Members Sharing Night. For details contact Sonja, 9846 5380 or sonja.ross@yahoo.com.au |
| Tuesday, 23 July 2013 | Balwyn Monthly Meeting | 8:00pm at Balwyn Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn. Melway 46 E8. Good street parking nearby. Speaker: Peter Menkhorst, "Helmeted Honeyeater Project". Peter is a Principal Scientist at the ARI, DSE and a well known author. Stay for supper and a chat after the meeting. Contact melbourne@birdlife.org.au |
| Saturday, 27 July 2013 | Beginners' Outing | Braeside Park, Braeside. Meet at 10:00am in the car park by the Visitor Centre. Melway 88 D8. Contact Hazel, 9876 3712 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au |
| Sunday, 28 July 2013 | 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 |
| Sunday, 4 August 2013 | Yellingbo Birdwalk | Yellingbo Reserve. Melway 305 G11. Take 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 |
| Sunday, 4 August 2013 | Weekend Outing | Woodlands Historic Park, Greenvale. Meet at the Providence Road Car park at 9:30 am. Contact Philip Peel kbutlerp@bigpond.com |
| Monday, 12 August 2013 | Weekdays Outing | Troups Creek Wetland, Hampton Park. 10:00am to 3:00pm. Leader John Bosworth. Melway 96 G5. Park on east side of Hallam South Road in gravel layby. Gumboots advisable. No toilets, nearest at Hampton Park Shopping Centre, Melway 96 F8. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au |

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.

The committee is looking for interested BirdLife Melbourne members who may be **able to assist co-ordinating speakers at the Monthly Carlton or the Monthly Balwyn meetings**. The position mainly involves phone calls and sending emails to arrange guest speakers. If you are interested or would like further information please contact Bill Ramsay on 9803 1493 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au

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. Out-of-town members and visitors are always welcome.

The Member's Choice 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.

If you think you have an idea that would make for a suitable Member's Choice segment, or require any other information about the Balwyn meetings, please get in touch with the committee on melbourne@birdlife.org.au.

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|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Thursday, 15 August 2013 | Carlton Monthly Meeting | 8:00pm at BirdLife Australia National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton. Plenty of free street parking nearby. Speaker: To be advised. Tea and coffee served after the meeting with time to chat with other attendees. Contact melbourne@birdlife.org.au |
| Saturday, 17 August 2013 | Photography Group Outing | Phillip Island. For details contact Sonja, 9846 5380 or sonja.ross@yahoo.com.au |
| Saturday, 17 August 2013 | Weekend Outing | Spotlighting and Birding at Bunyip State Park. Meet at Mortimer Picnic Ground at 2:00 pm. Please contact Tim Bawden ahead of time for further details and information tbawden@live.com.au 0407 158 638 |
| Sunday, 18 August 2013 | ETP Survey (note: this outing is one week earlier than usual program) | 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 |
| Saturday, 24 August 2013 | Beginners' Outing | Coolart Wetlands, Somers. Meet at 10:00am in the car park. Melway 193 H9. Contact Hazel, 9876 3712 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au |
| Tuesday, 27 August 2013 | Balwyn Monthly Meeting | 8:00pm at Balwyn Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn. Melway 46 E8. Good street parking nearby. Speaker: Clive Minton "Waders & Geolocators" - more details to follow. Clive needs no introduction, he is Australia's Waders Legend. Stay for supper and a chat after the meeting. Contact melbourne@birdlife.org.au |
| Sunday, 1 September 2013 | Yellingbo Birdwalk | Yellingbo Reserve. Melway 305 G11. Take 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 |
| Wednesday, 4 September 2013 | Weekdays Outing | Newport Lakes, Newport. 10:00am to 3:00pm. Leader Jane Moseley. Melway 55 G3. From Mason Street enter Lakes Drive. Park near toilets. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au |
| Saturday, 7 September 2013 | 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 to the park. Melway Key Map Page 11 C12. Until late afternoon the day is spent birding and removing the invasive weed Boneseed. Bring all you need for a normal days birding plus gardening gloves and a trowel for Boneseed removal. Contact Merrilyn, 9889 4924 or merrilyn@wirejunkie.com |
| Thursday, 19 September 2013 | Carlton Monthly Meeting | 8:00pm at BirdLife Australia National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton. Plenty of free street parking nearby. Speaker: To be advised. Tea and coffee served after the meeting with time to chat with other attendees. Contact melbourne@birdlife.org.au |
| Saturday, 21 September 2013 | Photography Group Outing | Western Treatment Plant, Werribee. For details contact Sonja, 9846 5380 or sonja.ross@yahoo.com.au |
| Sunday, 22 September 2013 | 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 |
| Sunday, 22 September 2013 | Weekend Activity | 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, 0407 158 6380 or tbawden@live.com.au |
| Tuesday, 24 September 2013 | Balwyn Monthly Meeting | 8:00pm at Balwyn Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn. Melway 46 E8. Good street parking nearby. Speaker: Annette Rypalski "Mt Rothwell Biodiversity Interpretation Centre". Annette is the Centre's Manager and will tell us what goes on at the Mt Rothwell. Stay for supper and a chat after the meeting. Contact melbourne@birdlife.org.au |
| Saturday, 28 September 2013 | Beginners' Outing | Pound Bend, Warrandyte. Meet at 10:00am in the car park near toilets. Melway 23 A11. Contact Hazel, 9876 3712 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au |

Citizen Scientists, Arise!

In the first of a series of articles looking at the howcommunications technology allows even amateur birders to contribute meaningfully in large-scale conservation efforts, **Margaret Alcorn** discusses Eremaea.

In a recent article in this magazine Peter Doherty raised the issue of bird watching and citizen science and suggested that now is the time to get involved. Eremaea Birds has been created to let you do this.

Eremaea Birds (www.ereamae.com) performs two major functions. Firstly it is a global birding atlas built from lists provided by members, and secondly it hosts the Birdline web sites which publish unusual and interesting bird sightings. Experienced moderators review both lists and Birdline reports and the moderated data is made freely available to research and conservation groups. Eremaea Birds is a major provider of data to the Birdlife Australia Atlas Project. Eremaea Birds thus qualifies as a good example of citizen science.

We have found that citizen science works best in a social environment where the work of collecting and entering the data is fun and rewarding and where there is frequent communication and interaction between participants. This devel-

“Citizen science works best in a social environment where the work of collecting and entering the data is fun and rewarding”

ops a strong feeling of community amongst members (those who contribute lists) and visitors to the web site to the extent that participation in Eremaea Birds has become a part of daily life for many birders.

The Latest Lists report, which shows recently-entered lists, is popular with members and visitors alike. People are social creatures and like to know what other people are doing, and

in the case of birders, where other birders are going and what birds they are seeing. When a member enters a list they know that their list will appear immediately on Latest Lists and will be read by a wide audience, and that they will be making a direct and immediate contribution to the birding community. Equally popular are the Birdlines.

Eremaea Birds provides a fun environment that encourages birders of all levels of experience. A member can enter a list for their backyard, their walk to work or a favourite birding spot. A member may mount an expedition to an area that no-one else has visited, try to find a rare species or spend a day trying to beat the best day list for a site. In whatever way they enjoy birding members know that their efforts will be noticed and appreciated by the wider birding community.

Eremaea Birds is also a personal birding record keeper. For example, a member can look up their Life List, their Year List or their Trip List. Eremaea Birds can suggest strategies to help find birds that a member has never seen before. For the competitive, Top Birders lets a member see where they are ranked in the top 50 birders in their region for the year.

Eremaea Birds applies quality control through both automated data checks and review by experienced moderators. Feedback from moderators to contributors occurs daily and allows observations and reports to be discussed and a contributor helped with a difficult identification.

Collaboration is an important part of citizen science projects. In Eremaea Birds all sites are shared in order to build up a comprehensive species list for each site. Any member can create a site, and in a collaborative way, other members can update and improve the site definition. The final result is a well-edited atlas of thousands of birding sites around Australia and the world.

Eremaea Birds has become an everyday part of many people's lives with over 14,000 people visiting the web site each month and 80% of these making repeat visits. With close to 3 million observations of nearly 7,000 species Eremaea Birds has become a valuable resource for birders within Australia and overseas.

Margaret Alcorn is one of the top moderators for Eremaea and has made a vital contribution to the running of BirdLine and the Latest Lists



Eremaea Birds

A birding atlas built from members' bird lists.

[Overview](#) [Login](#) [Registration](#) [Enquiry](#)

Atlas

Find A Bird

[Best sites](#)
[Most recent sightings](#)
[Species distribution map](#)
[Species records](#)

Sites

[Great places to go birding](#)
[Top birding sites by region](#)
[Species lists for any site](#)
[Species richness map](#)

People

[Top birders](#)
[Top moderators](#)

Latest Lists

Australia: Australian Capital Territory (5)
Australia: Cocos Keeling Islands
Australia: New South Wales (21)
Australia: Norfolk Island
Australia: Northern Territory (7)
Australia: Queensland (15)
Australia: South Australia
Australia: Tasmania (1)
Australia: Victoria (21)
Australia: Western Australia
Austria
Canada: Ontario (2)
Canada: Quebec (4)
Costa Rica
Ecuador: Galapagos
Germany
Hungary

Birdlines

Birdlines are moderated web sites for posting interesting and unusual observations.

Birdline Australia

[Birdline Australian Capital Territory \(2\)](#)
[Birdline Central & Southern Queensland \(1\)](#)
[Birdline Christmas Island](#)
[Birdline Cocos Keeling Islands](#)
[Birdline New South Wales \(5\)](#)
[Birdline North Queensland \(1\)](#)
[Birdline Northern Territory](#)
[Birdline South Australia \(3\)](#)
[Birdline Tasmania](#)
[Birdline Victoria \(3\)](#)
[Birdline Western Australia](#)
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Sharing information is an important tradition in the birding community, and a strong network of contacts has long been a twitcher's most valuable resource. Using the web to combine these networks makes for better birding and has the potential to aid bird and habitat conservation.

The Eremaea website (www.ereamae.com).

Dandenong Catchment Survey Summary

January to March 2013

Mostly dry conditions were experienced during the three-month survey period which created varied habitat at the eleven wetlands, with low water levels exposing mud flats at some sites and a form of floating water plant at others. Both Black-fronted and Red-kneed Dotterel took up the advantage by feeding on the mud flats with the Red-kneed being a new species at Frog Hollow (FH), Hallam Valley Rd (HVR) and Heatherton Rd Sth (HRS). Black-winged Stilt found a new home at HRS. The only site to record a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was Mordialloc Ck (MC) in February, a new species for the site. The floating water plant provided an excellent habitat for Spotted Crake at Kilberry in February



Great-crested Grebe
Photo, Wikipedia

The smallest site being surveyed, Waterford Wetland (WW) produced a Freckled Duck on the January survey, a first for this site. Two other sites have recorded this species, HRS on a survey day and MC on a non-survey day. WW took out a hat-trick in January also adding Musk Lorikeet and Australian Reed-Warbler to the site total. Not satisfied with the Freckled Duck, in February a Black Kite presented itself. The only other site to record this species was South Golf Links Rd in the June–August period 2007.

Musk Lorikeet were plentiful, recorded at nine sites, being new species for three, FH, WW and Rigby's (RW). With Rigby's now in full swing after the initial survey in December last, 11 species were added this period with seven previously recorded on a non-survey day, and four new, Musk Duck in February, Great-crested Grebe and Little Eagle in March and on a non-survey day in March, a Lewin's Rail. A Lewin's Rail was also recorded and photographed at River Gum on a non-survey day in January. We're still waiting for a team to record this species on a survey day.

The Musk Duck, Great Crested Grebe and Lewin's Rail have increased the total of bird species for the eleven sites to 175.

Latham's Snipe was recorded at most sites in January and February but only three in March with the last sighting at Troups Creek on 29 March. Australian Reed Warblers were late stayers at HVR and WW being the only sites recording this species in March.

No frog species were heard at the 11 sites in January and seven in February. Things improved a little in March with seven sites recording at least one species with the Eastern Common Froglet at six sites. At Rigby's, four additional frog species were added to the list making five for the site.

A Red Fox was only recorded at one site, HRS, in February.

A full tally of the three months' of 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*

Birdline Vic Highlights

Reports for October 2012 to mid-January 2013 Melbourne and Geelong

In mid-January an Australian Painted Snipe was seen at Hospital Swamp at Lake Connewarre and another was spotted right out in the open at the Western Treatment Plant southern T-Section Lagoon. Grey-Tailed Tattlers were reported once from the Western Treatment Plant and on two occasions at Reef Island. Also regularly seen at the Western Treatment Plant were a Broad-billed Sandpiper and a Wood Sandpiper.

Freckled Duck have been reported throughout the Melbourne area from the Eastern Treatment Plant, Seaford Swamp, Jells Park, Banyule Flats, to the Western Treatment Plant with the highest number being 400 at Lake Lorne at Drysdale.

A late January report of a Ruff at Braeside Park Wetlands failed to be resighted by any of the many birders who tried to re-find it.

An Osprey was spotted in January and February at Cheviot Hill in Point Nepean National Park. This species has now been here since at least October 2012.

Fork-tailed Swifts were reported by many observers in early February and then again in mid-March both times in stormy weather.



Ruff, Wikipedia

A passenger aboard the Queen Mary berthed at Station Pier Melbourne reported a Noddy Tern flying around the ship being battered by a wind storm. He was not able to determine which species and no one else managed to see it. Both Common and Black Noddy are very rare anywhere in Victoria.

It was wonderful to receive a report of a large flock of over 2000+ Magpie Geese (and 40 Cape Barren Geese) in stubble fields opposite Serendip Sanctuary. Magpie Geese were once common in Victoria and are now endangered but it is looking like their reintroduction may be successful. Magpie Geese were also reported from the Western Treatment Plant and Westgate Park at Port Melbourne.

There was also a report of a Lewin's Rail with many Spotted and Spotless Crakes at Rigbys Wetland, Scorseby [ed: see our DSC Report]. This is a newly constructed storm water quality improvement wetland between Dandenong Creek, East Link, Ferntree Gully Rd and Wellington Rd. The wetlands can be viewed, from the Eastlink end, at the back of the service station but please note there is no general public access.

Margaret Alcorn

Beginners Outings

Point Cook Coastal Reserve

19 January 2013, species count: 61

From the beach car park, 32 participants walked down to the shore and then south-west along the heathland track. Clear sightings of Singing Honeyeater and Golden-headed Cisticola (male and female) were early highlights. Spotted and Swamp Harriers, with a Brown Falcon perched nearby, provided excellent material for discussing raptor identification with the beginners. Yellow Thornbill awaited us back at the car park.

At Spectacle Lake, we were pleased to see many water birds, of which Black-winged Stilt and Black-fronted Dotterel were highlights. Fourteen Black-tailed Native Hens provided an unusual sighting for many of the group.

Lunch was taken near the Homestead where a perched juvenile Fan-tailed Cuckoo allowed everyone a good look. After a short walk to see Australasian Pipits, we walked up the beach to the point and, using scopes, saw many Cormorants, Red-necked Stints, Sharp-tailed and Curlew Sandpipers, together with Crested Terns. As the group was leaving, 14 Pacific Golden Plovers flew onto the point.

The final noteworthy sighting, seen by a few of the group back at the cars, was a Leucistic New Holland Honeyeater, showing a touch of yellow when perched but looking totally white when flying. "A most enjoyable day" was the unanimous verdict.

Mt Macedon Regional Park

23 February 2013, species count: 46

Arriving at Centennial Park, 18 members were seemingly vetted by a Crimson Rosella watching from its nearby nesting hollow. A short drive down Manorama Way led to wetlands, where Little Pied and Little Black Cormorants perched with an Eastern Great Egret whilst other water birds occupied the ponds. An Australasian Darter circled above and an unconcerned Long-billed Corella fed on the grass verge. These sightings gave us much to discuss before we departed

Weekdays Outing

Bellarine Peninsula

11 February 2013, species count 85

Fine weather and many birds made a good day for nine people. Belmont had many waterbirds but crakes or rails were not seen. At Balyang Sanctuary there were nesting Darters, Buff-banded Rail, Australian Reed-Warbler and Little Grassbird. Black-winged Stilt (plus a solitary Banded) crowded Hospital Swamp and at least 3 Australian Spotted Crake foraged near shelter. Scopes confirmed Sharp-tailed, Marsh and Curlew Sandpiper, Common Greenshank and Australasian Shoveler and a lone Intermediate Egret. Lunch at Tait Point added Caspian Tern, Great Cormorant and Musk Duck. At 13th Beach high tides had scoured the sand, and the rocks at the point sheltered Silver and Pacific Gull and a flock of Masked Lapwing. An Australian Gannet flew past and shearwaters fished, only visible through scopes. A pair of

for the rainforest around Sanatorium Lake.

The cooler conditions were welcomed as we tuned in to the rainforest birds. A female Golden Whistler was observed feeding a juvenile and White-throated Treecreepers and Eastern Yellow Robins were heard and seen. Several honey-eater species drank from the lake and both male and female Rose Robins were seen by a fortunate few. During lunch a Wedge-tailed Eagle, the only raptor for the day, floated past in the distance. After a short drive followed by a walk to the Memorial Cross, we had lengthy sightings of Flame Robins of both sexes.

A new stop on the Beginners Outing programme, Mt Macedon was declared a worthwhile venue, especially when the temperature at the summit was 10 degrees cooler than in the very hot city.

Westerfolds Park and Banyule Flats

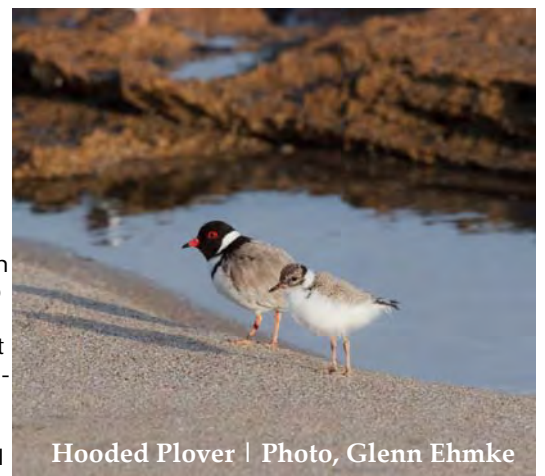
23 March 2013, species count: 47

A mild day suited the 32 members assembled at the meeting point, where many watched an Australasian Darter flying along the Yarra River. From the canoe ramp, we saw Little Pied Cormorant and a foraging Dusky Moorhen. Few birds, apart from Noisy Miner, were seen from the downstream track, although a Brown Goshawk being mobbed by Welcome Swallows generated some excitement. Two well-camouflaged Tawny Frogmouths were spotted in a nearby gum tree. Heading towards the centre of the park, birds were again scarce with Eastern and Crimson Rosellas and a Common Bronzewing affording the best views. Back at the cars for lunch, another Tawny Frogmouth was seen close by.

After, most members drove to Banyule flats to see what birdlife the lagoon and grotty pond would reveal. We were not disappointed, getting good looks at a Yellow Spoonbill, Great Cormorants, another Australasian Darter and both Australasian and Hoary-headed Grebes amongst the common ducks on the lagoon. "Bird of the day" came at the pond, where a Buff-banded Rail gave everyone excellent views. Yet another Tawny Frogmouth was well-photographed before the outing closed. Though dominated by Noisy Miner at both places, it was agreed that we had a most enjoyable day.

Outing Leaders, Hazel and Alan Veevers

Hooded Plover among distant seaweed piles was challenging to see because of wind shaking the scopes. Water was still very high at Barwon estuary due to the strong on-shore wind but Bar-tailed Godwit on the far side was the highlight. Final stop was Lake



Hooded Plover | Photo, Glenn Ehmke

Lorne at Drysdale where Hardhead, Blue-billed and Freckled Duck were added. Everyone was smiling.

Reef Island

6 March 2013, species count 48

The heat did not deter 17 people from assembling. Bill Ramsay had chosen the time with an eye to the tides and we walked over the causeway and back dry shod. Highlights were: a Cape Barren Goose flying overhead, at least one Kelp Gull, several Ruddy Turnstone and numerous Pacific Golden Plover (seen clearly through scopes on this windless day). Cries alerted us to one Crested Tern in pursuit of another which was carrying a fish. The shallows contained many Eastern Great Egret, a lone Little Egret and uncounted Red-necked Stint. Black Swan and Grey Teal were most numerous and a flock of about 100 Masked Lapwing was impressive. Drifts of sea grass marked the tide lines and buckshot ironstone and basalt needed attention while walking. As expected, bushbirds were not common but White-fronted Chat flew around the higher part of the island. The paddock adjacent to the car park contained at least 6 Australasian Pipit plus a couple of hovering Black-shouldered Kite. We thanked Bill for his planning of a successful day's birding.

Glenfern Valley Bushland

19 March 2013, species count 52

Eighteen people assembled in clear, warm, calm conditions. Geoff Russell was our leader and David Moncrieff, the president of Friends of Glenfern Valley Bushlands (FGVB), gave us a brief history of the reclamation and future plans for the area. Mike Sverus of FGVB also joined us. The car park birds included Noisy Miner, Australian Magpie, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo and Gang-gang Cockatoo. Yellow-faced and White-eared Honeyeater joined Grey Fantail on the list. Red Wattlebird and Superb Fairy-wren were seen but Spotted Pardalote and Pied Currawong were only heard. We recorded 37 species before lunching in comfortable style in the FGVB clubroom area. Thank you, David.

Birding and Boneseeding

The You Yangs

Saturday 2 March 2013, species count: 44

This windy, sunny boneseeding day began as usual near the park office, a few hundred metres in from the Branch Rd entrance. It was pleasing to see three Tawny Frogmouth perching in one tree. Another highlight was finding Brown-headed and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, Weebill, Silvereye, Striated and Spotted Pardalotes and a Grey Shrike-thrush all moving about and foraging in a small group of trees to the east of the dam.

Our plans for the rest of the day altered dramatically when we were stopped in our tracks by 'road closed' signs on the Great Circle Drive. Instead of visiting Gravel Pit Tor, our usual lunch spot and our boneseeding site, we stopped at the Lower Picnic Ground for lunch, then drove around to the west end of Toynes Road, where we parked our cars and walked into the Park on the east side. At the nearby intersection of Great Circle Drive and Branding Yard



The You Yangs Geoglyph

After lunch waterbirds at Gilmour Park complemented the morning's bushbirds. Australian Wood and Pacific Black Duck joined Grey and Chestnut Teal with numerous Eurasian Coot and a few Hardhead, Australasian Grebe, Dusky Moorhen and Purple Swamphen. Welcome Swallow outnumbered Martins (Tree and Fairy) here. Australian White Ibis flew high overhead and a White-faced Heron foraged on the mudflats. The count here was 29 species. We thanked Geoff and David for introducing us to this good new area.

Coolart, Somers

15 April 2013, species count 70

The intermittent rain didn't deter 23 people from gathering and Pat Bingham from leading. Car park highlights included Black-shouldered Kite, Eastern Rosella and the first "wanted" bird observed, a Crested Pigeon. A dark-plumaged Sothern Boobook roosting in the old stable was surprisingly difficult to see. A Brown Goshawk flew low, spooking several species, then we arrived at Minsmere hide where at least 21 Freckled Duck and 3 pairs of Australasian Shoveler were present. An immature Nankeen Night Heron flew low over the pond track and a Yellow Spoonbill was closely observed. Into the woods and honeyeaters included White-eared, Yellow-faced, White-naped, White-plumed and New Holland. Spotted Pardalote foraged close and several sightings of Mistletoebird were achieved. A pair of Tawny Frogmouth was delightful and well-photographed. The beach walk did not yield much as the strong onshore wind and spray kept all sensible birds away. Adjacent paddocks added Willie Wagtail and Red-browed Finch. Varied habitats gave an excellent day's birding and at day's end individual lists were satisfactorily long and several people had recorded "lifers".

*Diane Tweeddale
Coordinator, BirdLife Melbourne Weekdays Outings*

Road stood a thick understorey of large Boneseed plants. These could not be ignored; with 12 of us working together we quickly pulled them all out. It was hot and tiring work, but satisfying. There were thousands of seeds about, so we will have to return to remove any seedlings that come up in future. This can be our secondary site to visit when access to our usual boneseeding site is difficult.

After our efforts we rewarded ourselves with a walk to the Bunjil Geoglyph area, a kilometre or so west of our cleared Boneseed patch. The Geoglyph was constructed in 2006. It is a representation of a Wedge-tailed Eagle with its outline made of huge rocks. It is close to 100m from wing tip to wing tip and can be seen from above on the satellite view in Google maps if you go to -37.952138, 144.434058 and zoom in as far as possible. Next time we hope to visit our usual places, but it was interesting to go somewhere different for a change.

Newcomers are very welcome on our You Yangs Birding and Boneseeding days. If you are not up to pulling out plants, you can still look for birds and other wildlife.

Merrilyn Serong

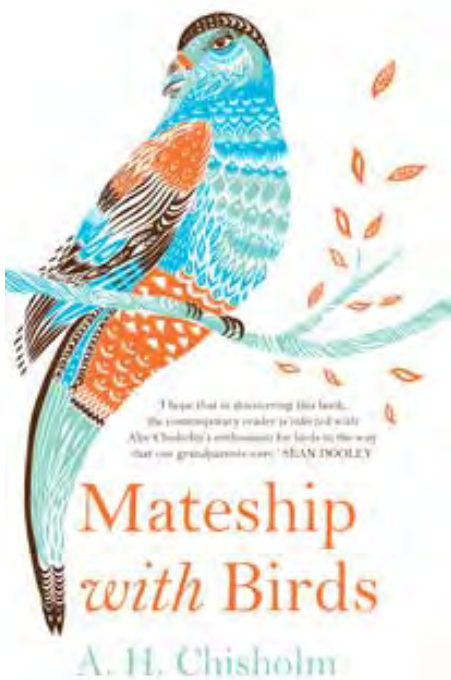
New Members

A very big welcome to the following new members who joined BirdLife Melbourne from 2/01/13 to 6/03/13 to and look forward to seeing you at the BirdLife Melbourne activities and meetings.

| | | |
|----------------|------------|-----------------|
| Elizabeth | Bolitho | BOX HILL NORTH |
| Jennifer | Martin | NORTHCOTE |
| Geoffrey | King | EAGLEMONT |
| Anne | Pitkethly | ROSANNA |
| Emma | Bond | CAMBERWELL |
| Brenda | Horsnell | LYSTERFIELD |
| Fyn | Betteridge | BRIGHTON |
| Gerard | Ryan | MIDDLE PARK |
| Nicole | Sommer | KENSINGTON |
| Martin | Lockett | BRUNSWICK |
| Emma | O'Neill | BRUNSWICK |
| Carl | Handreck | COLLINGWOOD |
| Alanna | Vivian | COLLINGWOOD |
| Vanessa | Westcott | PORT MELBOURNE |
| Martin | Fripp | LAVERTON |
| Keir | Bristow | CARLTON NORTH |
| Robert | Signorini | EAST DONCASTER |
| Michael & Emma | Duncan | RESEARCH |
| Vicky | Stewart | KEW |
| Erin | Gibb | SUNSHINE WEST |
| Noah | Summers | BLACKBURN SOUTH |
| Michael | Raymakers | PRAHRAN |
| Claire | Miller | ALBERT PARK |

| | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Sarah | Carter |
| David | Gooding |
| Robert | Weller |
| Barbara | Ward |
| Paul & Michelle | Sullivan |
| Noah | Grant |
| Sara | Morton |
| Mick | Morley |
| Robert | Burnet |
| Suzanne | Simpfendofer |
| Simon | Scott |
| Gordon & Lyhn | Barfield |
| Lauren | Catanchin |
| Richard | Halford |
| Nic | Gear |
| Oanh | Tran |
| Sally | Heeps |
| Christine | Price |
| Megan | Erm |
| Richard | Arnold |
| Jennifer | Patterson |
| Tara | Cull |
| Claire | Lowe |
| Sandra & Don | Redman |
| Hernan | Morales |
| Gwen | Arnold |
| Cedric | Vodd |
| Libby | Proud |
| Warren | Cousins |
| Kathy | Walker |
| Mary | Moon |

| |
|-----------------|
| LILYDALE |
| COBURG |
| DONCASTER |
| PACKENHAM |
| WILLIAMSTOWN |
| THORNBURY |
| BAYSWATER NORTH |
| FOOTSCRAY |
| PARKVILLE |
| PRINCES HILL |
| NORTHCOTE |
| RESEARCH |
| EDITHVALE |
| GLENHUNTLY |
| BRUNSWICK |
| BRUNSWICK |
| BOX HILL NORTH |
| MULGRAVE |
| WILLIAMSTOWN |
| BRUNSWICK |
| ELTHAM |
| MONT ALBERT |
| BURWOOD EAST |
| WANTIRNA |
| CAULFIELD NORTH |
| BRUNSWICK |
| IVANHOE |
| HAWTHORN |
| VERMONT SOUTH |
| ELWOOD |
| BERWICK |



In April of this year, Melbourne-based publisher Scribe put out a handsome new edition of A.H. Chisholm's *Mateship with Birds*, an Australian literary classic and a hymn to birds and birdwatching. Written in 1922 by one a pioneer of Australian ornithology and an heroic example of the citizen scientist, *Mateship* is a study in enthusiasm which many in the BirdLife community will be able to relate with.

Chisholm's is a happily lyric style, blend-

ing careful observation with poetry and colourful metaphor. There are plenty of fascinating details on bird behaviour, striking contrasts between conditions in the 20s and today, and a theory of mateship that encourages a more attentive and sensitive relationship not only with birds, but bird habitats. Includes a new Foreword by Sean Dooley.

Mateship with Birds, by A.H. Chisholm. Scribe. \$24.95, 178 pp.

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

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melbirdian@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. 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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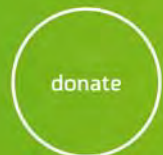
Add your voice



Enjoy the rewards of membership, making a real difference for our native birds



Contributing your time is one of the most effective ways to help



Help us create positive outcomes for birds and their habitats