

BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter

Volume 3 Number 1 March 2014

Grey-crowned Babbler project update 2014

With the recent, generous donation from Alcoa and BirdLife Melbourne to assist Friends of the Grey-crowned Babbler with their conservation efforts, it is timely to reflect on what has been achieved with regards to this species' conservation in Victoria and what remains to be done

It is now more than twenty years since Birds Australia initiated its Grey-crowned Babbler (babbler) conservation project in Victoria, thanks to a one-year grant from the Australian Government's National Estate funding program. It is also twenty years since Birds Australia and other community organisations first applied for funding to do on-ground works to assist with the babblers' survival. So how is this charismatic and sociable bird faring?

Population trends

Overall, the babbler population in Victoria has declined by at least 90% over the past 150 years and has disappeared from more than 50% of its former range, so the species is still at a high risk of extinction. Collectively it is estimated that there are about 500-600 family groups persisting in Victoria, with key strongholds located around Violet Town, Euroa, Benalla, Rutherglen, Barmah, Boort and Kerang. Even in these stronghold districts, though, there is a general downwards trend in total numbers and the size of each family group. During the lifetime of this project, moreover, family groups or populations have disappeared from some well-known former parts of their range, including the Mornington Peninsula, Maryborough, Castlemaine, Kiata, Nagambie and Rupanyup.

Importantly, however, in those districts where community groups and conservation agencies have focused their conservation efforts, there have generally been positive responses in terms of population size and breeding success. We know, therefore, that it is possible to help babblers – it is just a matter of having the resources and the time to do it.

The major cause of the babbler's decline in Victoria has been the loss of their preferred woodland habitat. Over the past 150 years these woodlands have been largely cleared for agriculture, mining, urban development and firewood collection. As a consequence, babbler populations have shrunk in size and become isolated from each other. The number of birds in each family group has also declined, because smaller populations produce fewer young. For this highly social species, therefore, habitat fragmentation has caused major social disruption.

Given this understanding of the threats to the babbler, the Friends of the Grey-crowned Babbler and other



Photograph by Chris Tzaros

community groups have focused their efforts on three main conservation actions:

- increase the total amount of habitat available for babblers in priority areas by encouraging the protection and restoration of habitat on private and public land
- increase the quality and availability of habitat at known babbler sites to increase group size and breeding success, and
- increase the connectivity between isolated groups or patches of habitat. This creates more opportunities for birds to disperse and colonise.

Achievements to date

One of the stand-out demonstrations of the success of this approach to the babbler's conservation has been in the Lurg district, northeast of Benalla. Here, the local landcare group, Regent Honeyeater Project group, BirdLife Australia and many other groups and individuals have steadily protected and restored habitat and habitat corridors since the early 1990s. When monitoring of babbler numbers began in 2001, the babbler population here was estimated to comprise 13 groups and 53 birds. Now the population has increased to 21 groups and 106 birds, with average family size increasing from four birds to five. In the Euroa-Violet Town districts, where Friends of the Grey-crowned Babbler have targeted most of their on-ground conservation efforts, the responses by babblers to more, improved habitat has not been as dramatic as at Lurg but nonetheless positive.

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Activities Calendar

ACTIVITIES FOR BIRDLIFE MELBOURNE MARCH TO JUNE 2014

This calendar includes field activities for BirdLife Melbourne including the monthly meetings held at Balwyn and Carlton. 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

March

Saturday 1 March 2014	Boneseeding & Birding	You Yangs Regional Park. Meet at 10am 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 March 2014	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 10am. Walk starts 10:30am. Toilets available. Bring lunch and gumboots. Contact Maryanne, 0402 283 080 or onlyme53@bigpond.com
Tuesday 4 March 2014	Weekdays Outing	Bellarine Peninsula 10am to 3pm. Leader Glen White. Balyang Sanctuary. Melway 451 F9. From the Geelong Ring Road take either Hamilton/Newtown or Belmont/Ceres exit. From Shannon Ave turn into Marnock Rd at Melway 451 F7. Park near toilets. Convoy driving to different locations. Scopes useful. Contact Diane 9836 8692.
Thursday 13 March 2014	Carlton monthly meeting	Note: This meeting is on the second Thursday of the month. 8pm at BirdLife Australia National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton. Plenty of free street parking nearby. Guest speaker & subject to be advised. Tea and coffee served after the meeting with time to chat with other attendees. Contact Claire, melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Saturday 15 March	Photography Group outing	Meet at the Sorrento Pier, Melway 157 C7 (38°20'12"S 144°44'40"E) at 9am to enable time to sign everyone on, collect the fare and to board the boat. The boat will leave at 9:30am and will return to Sorrento at about 4pm. Please bring the correct money (\$40 per person) on the day in a sealed envelope with your name on it. You will need to wade onto Mud Islands from the boat, but it should not be more than knee-deep. Bring lunch, plenty to drink, sunscreen and shoes for wading as Mud Islands is actually two sand islands and we will be wading between them. Even on a hot day, it can be quite cool on the islands so bringing some warmer clothing is also advisable. There are no facilities or shelter on the islands. There is all-day parking adjacent to the pier at \$1 per hour. The trip will <u>not</u> be cancelled if a total fire ban is declared. If the boat skipper decides that the weather forecast for the day will prevent the trip from going ahead, you will be contacted before 10pm on the Friday evening via email. Booking is required for this outing. To book and for any queries, contact John Stirling on 03 9561 2446, 0400 903 411 or email at Avocet@autospeed.com . BirdLife Melbourne Photography Group Members will have booking priority until 1 Feb 2014, then bookings are open to all BirdLife Melbourne Members.
Wednesday 19 March 2014	Weekdays Outing	Royal Park (Trin-Warren-Tam-Boore) 10am to 3pm. Leader Elsmaree Baxter. Melway 29 C11. From Flemington Rd/Mt Alexander Rd enter Church St then follow Manningham St to Oak St or enter Oak St from north via Park St. Meet near toilets in Oak St car park. Contact Diane, 9836 8692.
Saturday 22 March 2014	Beginners Outing	Longridge Farm, Warrandyte. Meet at 10am on Alexander Rd, opposite entrance to farm. Melway 22 J11. Contact Hazel, 9876 3712 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Sunday 23 March 2014	ETP Survey	Eastern Treatment Plant, Bangholme. Meet at 9am 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 March 2014	Balwyn monthly meeting	Note: revised venue. 8pm. BirdLife Melbourne AGM will be held before the monthly meeting at Balwyn Community Centre, 412 Whitehorse Road, Balwyn (300m east of Talbot Avenue). Melway 46 E8. Good on site parking at rear of venue. Guest Speaker: John Barkla. Subject: A trip to West Papua. Stay for supper and a chat after the meeting. Contact Bill, 9803 1493 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
April		
6 April 2014	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 10am, walk starts 10:30am. Toilets available. Bring lunch and gumboots. Contact Maryanne, 0402 283 080 or onlyme53@bigpond.com
Tuesday 8 April 2014	Weekdays Outing	Altona area 10am-3pm. Leader Gina Hopkins. Melway 208 K1. From West Gate Fwy take Millers Rd exit and turn right into Queen St. Turn at Andrew Park Dr into H.D.Graham Reserve. Meet at far end of Altona Sports Centre car park where toilets available. Contact Diane, 9836 8692
Thursday 10 April 2014	Carlton monthly meeting	Note: This meeting is on the second Thursday of the month. 8pm at BirdLife Australia National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton. Plenty of free street parking nearby. Guest speaker & subject to be advised. Tea and coffee served after the meeting with time to chat with other attendees. Contact Claire, melbourne@birdlife.org.au

Activities Calendar

Tuesday 22 April 2014	Balwyn monthly meeting	Note revised venue. 8pm at Balwyn Community Centre, 412 Whitehorse Road, Balwyn. Melway 46 E8 (300m east of Talbot Avenue). Good on site parking at rear of venue. Guest speaker & subject to be advised. Stay for supper and a chat after the meeting. Contact Bill, 9803 1493 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Saturday 26 April 2014	Beginners Outing	Braeside Park. Meet at 10am in the Cockatoo Car Park by visitor centre. Melway 88 D8. Contact Hazel, 9876 3712 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
May		
Sunday 4 May 2014	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 10am, walk starts 10:30am. Toilets available. Bring lunch and gumboots. Contact Maryanne, 0402 283 080 or onlyme53@bigpond.com
Sunday 4 May 2014	ETP Survey	Eastern Treatment Plant, Bangholme. Meet at 9am 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
Thursday 8 May 2014	Carlton monthly meeting	8pm at BirdLife Australia National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton. Plenty of free street parking nearby. Guest speaker & subject to be advised. Tea and coffee served after the meeting with time to chat with other attendees. Contact Claire, melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Saturday 17 May 2014	Photography Group outing	For details contact Sonja, 9846 5380 or sonja.ross@yahoo.com.au
Tuesday 20 May 2014	Weekdays Outing	The Briars Park, Mount Martha 10am-3pm. Leader David Ap-Thomas. Melway 145 E12. From Melbourne, entrance is on the left just after Balcombe Creek bridge. Park near the information centre. Toilets available. Contact Diane, 9836 8692
Saturday 24 May 2014	Beginners Outing	Hawkestone Park. Meet at 10am in the car park at Red Gums Picnic Area off Gordons Road. Melway 183 H7. Contact Hazel, 9876 3712 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Sunday 25 May 2014	ETP Survey	Eastern Treatment Plant, Bangholme. Meet at 9am 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 27 May 2014	Balwyn monthly meeting	Note revised venue. 8pm at Balwyn Community Centre, 412 Whitehorse Road, Balwyn (300m east of Talbot Ave). Melway 46 E8. Good on site parking at rear of venue. Guest speaker & subject to be advised. Stay for supper and a chat after the meeting. Contact Bill, 9803 1493 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
June		
Sunday 1 June 2014	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 10am, walk starts 10:30am. Toilets available. Bring lunch and gumboots. Contact Maryanne, 0402 283 080 or onlyme53@bigpond.com
Saturday 7 June 2014	Boneseeding & Birding	You Yangs Regional Park. Meet at 10am in the car park just past the Park Office, approx 300m 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 12 June 2014	Carlton monthly meeting	8pm at BirdLife Australia National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton. Plenty of free street parking nearby. Guest speaker & subject to be advised. Tea and coffee served after the meeting with time to chat with other attendees. Contact Claire, melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Wednesday 18 June 2014	Weekdays Outing	Wilson Botanic Park, Berwick 10am-3pm. Leader John Bosworth. Mel 111 B7. Enter from Princes Hwy, Berwick. Meet in car park. Toilets available. Will be combined with South of Golf Links Rd, Narre Warren Mel 110 H12 (no toilets) for lunch. Contact Diane, 9836 8692
Saturday 21 June 2014	Photography Group Outing	For details contact Sonja, 9846 5380 or sonja.ross@yahoo.com.au
Sunday 22 June 2014	ETP Survey	Eastern Treatment Plant, Bangholme. Meet at 9am 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 24 June 2014	Balwyn monthly meeting	Note revised venue. 8pm at Balwyn Community Centre, 412 Whitehorse Road, Balwyn (300m east of Talbot Ave). Melway 46 E8. Good on site parking at rear of venue. Guest speaker & subject to be advised. Stay for supper and a chat after the meeting. Contact Bill, 9803 1493 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Saturday 28 June 2014	Beginners Outing	Woodlands Historic Park. Meet at 10am in the car park off Somerton Road. Melway 178 B6. Contact Hazel, 9876 3712 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au

Branch business

Vale Norman Eyre-Walker

Many members of BirdLife Australia, and particularly those of BirdLife Melbourne's Weekdays Outings group, will be saddened by the death of Norman Eyre-Walker on 27 December 2013 following many months of deteriorating health.

Norman was a stalwart of what we now know as BirdLife Australia, joining the then Bird Observers Club after his retirement. He enjoyed both the monthly meetings and the Weekdays Outings, of which he acted as co-convenor for several years. He led many outings for the group and his meticulous research and knowledge of the chosen area and its birds was always a highlight.

He carried his birding knowledge and enthusiasm into several areas of his life, especially enjoying private trips with experts like John Barkla and the late Fred TH Smith. Another great friend and birding mentor has been Graeme Hosken.

Together with his wife Bonnie, a knowledgeable plantswoman and a keen-eyed birder, Norman relished life at their holiday home at Kennett River and the two explored most of the Otway Ranges as well as much of Australia.

He was always a low-key birder and even when his personal bird-list was well past a total aspired to by many, he took as much pleasure in showing newcomers the brilliance of an Eastern Rosella in bright sunshine or an Eastern Yellow Robin perching quietly on a tree trunk as he did in adding something new to his own list.

Leonie Robbins, Weekdays Outings, BirdLife Melbourne

BirdLife Melbourne Committee

President: Bill Ramsay (Tel: 9803 1493)

Vice President: Stuart Dashper

Secretary: Alan Crawford

Treasurer: Sonja Ross

Members: Tim Bawden, Andrew Fuhrmann, Susan Pepper, Scot Sharman and Adriana Bianchi

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

This newsletter is published quarterly, in March, June, September and December by BirdLife Melbourne, the Melbourne branch of BirdLife Australia.

Adriana Bianchi is the current editor of this newsletter. Contributions for the next issue are due 20 April 2014 can be emailed to bianchiadriana8@gmail.com

Have you visited the BirdLife Melbourne blog?

All your BirdLife Melbourne newsletter favourites and more can be found on the new BirdLife Melbourne blog: <http://birdlifemelbourne.wordpress.com>. Read the latest on Beginners Outings, Weekdays Outings, Birding and Boneseeding, educational activities and Dandenong Catchment surveys. You can contribute to the blog by emailing birdlife.melbourne@gmail.com

Grey-crowned Babbler project cont.

In 2009, researchers from The University of Melbourne and Trust for Nature found that babbler groups were more likely to have persisted at sites where there had been habitat works, breeding success was higher at sites with additional habitat and the number of young raised per family at sites with additional habitat was nearly double that of babbler families at sites with no additional habitat. Based on these findings, Friends of the Grey-crowned Babbler continue to implement or support the implementation of their key conservation actions for babblers across these districts. Since the project began, twenty years ago, the Friends group, working with local landcare groups, conservation agencies and Trust for Nature has protected and restored more than 2,000 ha of habitat through the Euroa-Violet Town districts.

The Group's conservation mantra is plan big, based on good science, and then try to save the species one family at a time. The recent grant from BirdLife Melbourne will help support the group continue with delivering these aims and the Friends group gratefully acknowledges the support of BirdLife Melbourne and Alcoa for its work.

(A full version of this article and more photos can be found on the [BirdLife Melbourne blog](#))

Contribution by Doug Robinson, [Trust for Nature](#)

Acknowledgement of Alcoa of Australia's contribution to BirdLife Melbourne

In appreciation of Rob Ganly's efforts in carrying out recent surveys at Alcoa's Point Henry site, Alcoa of Australia has made another generous contribution of \$1,000 to BirdLife Melbourne. BirdLife Melbourne Committee thanks Alcoa of Australia for making this valuable contribution which is greatly appreciated and also thanks Rob for his dedicated field work. In keeping with tradition of donating the money to a worthy conservation project, this year's contribution has been forwarded to the Regent Honeyeater Project.

Australia's voice for birds since 1901

BirdLife Australia is dedicated to achieving outstanding conservation results for our native birds and their habitats.

With our specialised knowledge and the commitment of an Australia-wide network of volunteers and supporters, we are creating a bright future for Australia's birds.

birdlife.org.au

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