

BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter

Volume 4 Number 4 December 2015

Saving feathered royalty

Recently, BirdLife Melbourne Committee Member, Emily Scicluna participated in two worthwhile projects to save the endangered Regent Honeyeater from extinction. She writes here about their progress.

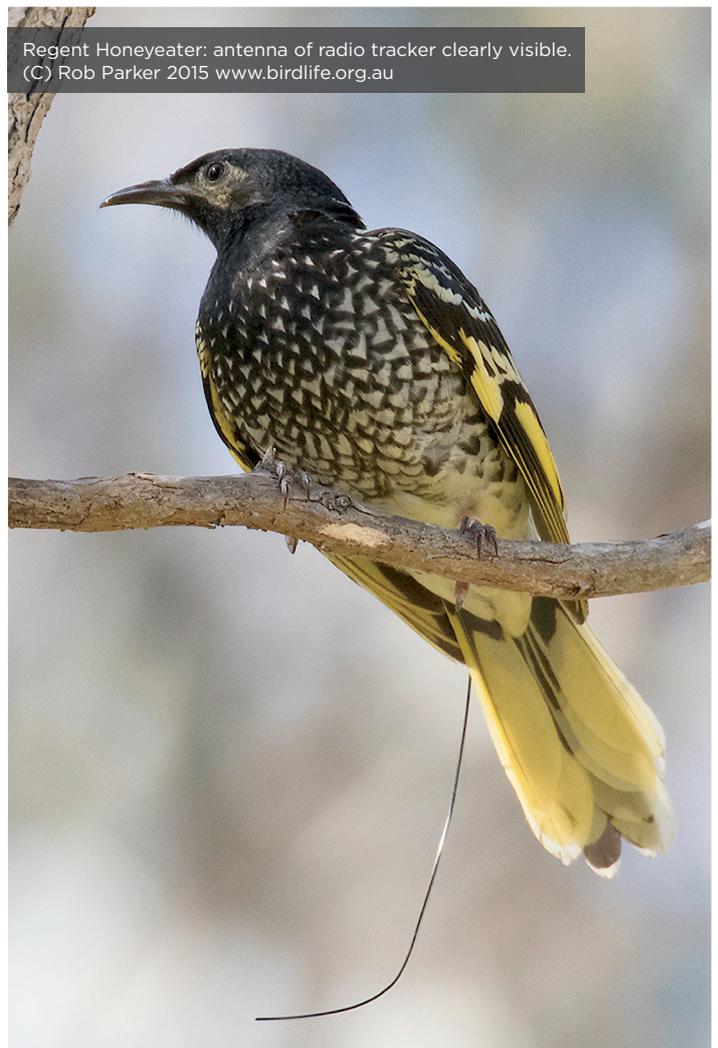
A complex operation to save the Regent Honeyeaters is taking place in the Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park where a number of organisations (BirdLife Australia, the National Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team, Parks Victoria, Department of Environment, Water, Land and Planning (VIC), Office of Environment and Heritage (NSW), Taronga Zoo and Friends of Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park) have joined forces in a long-term captive breeding and release program.

In 2008, the first release of captive-bred birds from Taronga Zoo took place in the Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park. Since then, more birds have been released in 2010, 2013 and 2015, and regular radio-tracking by volunteers ensures careful monitoring of their movements. This year, Regents were released in April after being transported from Taronga Zoo, and spent a day and night in holding tents to have their harnesses (with transmitters) fitted before release. The harnesses are a unique design by BirdLife's Regent Honeyeater Recovery Coordinator, Dean Ingwersen, and each harness is custom fitted for the individual bird.

September marked the beginning of breeding season for the Regents and several birds had successful nest building attempts that reached egg laying stage, before being predated. Several chicks have hatched, however at this stage only one has successfully fledged. Predation by both pest and native species is thought to be a limiting factor to breeding success in Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park. In early stages of the monitoring project, a few transmitters were found on the ground with feathers in the area, suggesting predation from a local Goshawk or Sparrowhawk. A couple of birds have been found cached in hollow logs etc, indicating small mammals cannot be exempt from blame either.

The second project, the Regent Honeyeater Project in Benalla, is now one of the most active volunteer conservation projects in Australia. In more than 20 years of running the project, Ray Thomas (Project Coordinator) has achieved phenomenal results through the restoration of vital habitat and has prompted the return of locally extinct species. This project operates in the Lurg Hills which features both natural habitat and vast expanses of agricultural areas, spread across picturesque hills, valleys and waterways. The main aim is to protect and restore this natural habitat, and create and maintain ecological corridors between remnant patches.

Target species are of course the Regent Honeyeater, but also the Grey-crowned Babbler, Squirrel Glider and Brush-



Regent Honeyeater: antenna of radio tracker clearly visible.
(C) Rob Parker 2015 www.birdlife.org.au

tailed Phascogale (an Australian carnivorous marsupial), which are species that were once abundant but are now threatened or extirpated. Other locally rare species have benefited as well, including Hooded Robins and Turquoise Parrots. Within four to five years of the sites being planted, woodland birds are observed moving back into desperately needed habitat. The restored ecological corridors have substantially benefited the populations of Grey-crowned Babblers, which can now be observed in over 40 of the revegetated sites. In eight years, the population rose

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Activities Calendar

Activities for BirdLife Melbourne December 2015 to March 2016

This calendar includes field activities for BirdLife Melbourne including the 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, Philip Peel at kbutlerppeeel@bigpond.com or on 0499 169 500.

Wednesday 2 December 2015	Weekdays Outing	Karkarook Park, Heatherton. 10am - 3pm. Leader: Diane Tweeddale. Melway 78 D7. From Warrigal Road turn into Fairchild Street and then into park. Meet in car park near information centre and toilets. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au .
Saturday 5 December 2015	Boneseeding & Birding	You Yangs Regional Park. Meet at 10am in the car park just past the Park Office, approximately 300m from the Branch Road 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 6 December 2015	Yellingbo Birdwalk	Note early start time, October to March. 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 9am, walk starts 9.30am. Due to Parks Victoria operational requirements the gate will be closed at 9.30am and not opened until after Bird Call at approximately 2pm. Toilets available. Bring lunch and gumboots. Contact Maryanne, 0402 283 080 or onlyme53@bigpond.com
Thursday 10 December 2015	Carlton Monthly Meeting	8pm at BirdLife Australia National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton. Plenty of free street parking nearby. Guest Speaker & Subject: TBA. Tea and coffee served after the meeting with time to chat with other attendees. Contact Claire, melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Sunday 27 December 2015	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.
Saturday 16 January 2016	Photography Group Outing	Venue to be decided. Leader: Peter Bennet. For details, contact Peter, 9435 4249 or teacherpeterb@gmail.com
Saturday 23 January 2016	Beginners' Outing	Point Cook Coastal Park. Meet at 10am in the Beach Picnic Area, second car park on left near toilets. Melway 199 E3. Contact Hazel, 9876 3712 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Sunday 24 January 2016	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.
Tuesday 26 January 2016	Balwyn Monthly Meeting	8pm at Balwyn Community Centre, 412 Whitehorse Rd, Balwyn. Melway 46 F8. Good on-site parking at rear of venue. Guest Speaker: Ian Smissen. Subject: Two weeks in paradise - a photographic tour of the Galápagos Islands. Member's Topic: Speaker: Bill Ramsay. Subject: The Okavango Delta, Botswana. Stay for supper and a chat after the meeting. Contact Bill, 9803 1493 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Sunday 7 February 2016	Yellingbo Birdwalk	Note early start time, October to March. 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 9am, walk starts 9.30am. Due to Parks Victoria operational requirements the gate will be closed at 9.30am and not opened until after Bird Call at approximately 2pm. Toilets available. Bring lunch and gumboots. Contact Maryanne, 0402 283 080 or onlyme53@bigpond.com
Thursday 11 February 2016	Carlton Monthly Meeting	8pm at BirdLife Australia National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton. Plenty of free street parking nearby. Guest Speaker & Subject: TBA. Tea and coffee served after the meeting with time to chat with other attendees. Contact Claire, melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Tuesday 16 February 2016	Weekdays Outing	Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne. 10am to 3pm. Leader: David Plant. Melway 2G B10. Gate H. Coins needed for Alexandra Avenue parking meters. Tram, train and bus close to gardens. Toilets available. CARRY LUNCH. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au .
Saturday 20 February 2016	Photography Group Outing	Venue to be decided. For details, contact Peter, 9435 4249 or teacherpeterb@gmail.com
Tuesday 23 February 2016	Balwyn Monthly Meeting	8pm at Balwyn Community Centre, 412 Whitehorse Rd, Balwyn. Melway 46 F8. Good on-site parking at rear of venue. Guest Speaker & Subject: TBA. Members Topic: Speaker & Subject TBA. Stay for supper and a chat after the meeting. Contact Bill, 9803 1493 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Saturday 27 February 2016	Beginners' Outing	Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne. Meet at 10am in the Stringybark car park. Melway 133 K12. Contact Hazel, 9876 3712 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Sunday 28 February 2016	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.

Wednesday 2 March 2016	Weekdays Outing	Reef Island, Coronet Bay. 10am to 3pm. Leader: Bill Ramsay. Melway page 18 P23. From Bass Highway turn right into Soldiers Road (approximately 9km past Grantville, Caltex service station on corner). Drive straight on into Bluff Road to car park at end. Toilets at Tooradin near bridge and Grantville near jetty. Scopes useful. Some rock hopping probable. CARRY LUNCH. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au .
Saturday 5 March 2016	Boneseeding & Birding	You Yangs Regional Park. Meet at 10am in the car park just past the Park Office, approximately 300m from the Branch Road 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 6 March 2016	Yellingbo Birdwalk	Note early start time, October to March. 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 9am, walk starts 9.30am. Due to Parks Victoria operational requirements the gate will be closed at 9.30am and not opened until after Bird Call at approximately 2pm. Toilets available. Bring lunch and gumboots. Contact Maryanne, 0402 283 080 or onlyme53@bigpond.com
Saturday 19 March 2016	Photography Group Outing	Venue to be decided. For details, contact Peter, 9435 4249 or teacherpeterb@gmail.com
Tuesday 22 March 2016	Balwyn Monthly Meeting and BirdLife Melbourne AGM	8pm at Balwyn Community Centre, 412 Whitehorse Rd, Balwyn. Melway 46 F8. Good on-site parking at rear of venue. The BirdLife Melbourne AGM will commence at 8pm and will be followed by the Guest Speaker: Sonja Ross. Subject: Wrangell Island and/or Cape York. Stay for supper and a chat after the meeting. Contact Bill, 9803 1493 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Saturday 26 March 2016	Beginners' Outing	Pound Bend, Warrandyte. Meet at 10am in the car park near toilets. Melway 23 A11. Contact Hazel, 9876 3712 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Sunday 27 March 2016	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.
Wednesday 30 March 2016	Weekdays Outing	Coburg Lake/Merri Creek, North Coburg. 10am to 3pm. Leader: Elsmaree Baxter. Melway 17 J10. Turn into Newlands Road from Murray Road. Immediately take first driveway (unmarked) on left directly opposite Golf Road into car park. Toilets available during walk. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au .

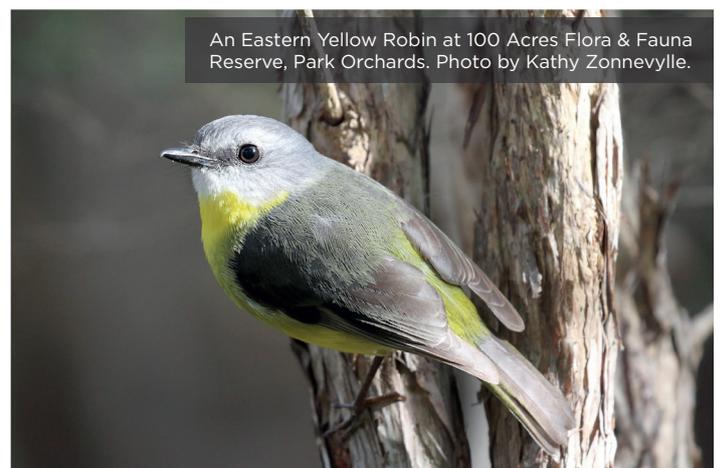
The BirdLife Melbourne blog has so much more

If you haven't visited the BirdLife Melbourne blog yet, you are missing out. This is where you will find all the latest news, photographs and videos on BirdLife Melbourne activities, including Weekend and Beginners' Outings, meetings, education activities and more.

Recently on the blog, we heard about:

- the (impressive) 76 species seen on a Beginners' Outing to Newport Lakes and Jawbone Reserve. View the video of an Australian Reed-Warbler, singing while perched on a tall reed;
- Weekdays' Outings to Gobur Flora and Fauna Reserve and Mt St Leonard (the weather does not seem to bother the birds!)
- the 'ice birds' of Svalbard in a report of a talk given by Andrew Silcocks at the August Balwyn meeting.

Don't miss out. See www.birdlifemelbourne.wordpress.com



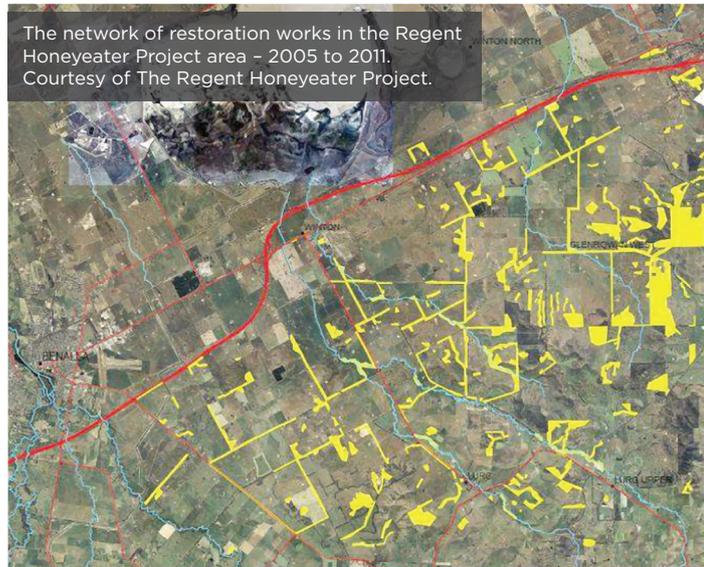
An Eastern Yellow Robin at 100 Acres Flora & Fauna Reserve, Park Orchards. Photo by Kathy Zonneville.

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from 50 birds to almost 120 individuals. Overall, avifaunal surveying at 150 sites over seven years, showed a total of 146 bird species in the area, which is one of the highest numbers for any farming region in South Eastern Australia. This includes a very impressive 16 species that are regionally threatened, which have been observed nesting in the restoration sites. The benefits of habitat restoration are of course much wider reaching, with phascogales observed to recover from local extinction. Their nests are frequently seen in boxes as well as those of endangered Squirrel Gliders which have also been recorded breeding in 75% of nest boxes.

In summary:

- over 600 planting sites
- 154 landholders and farmers involved/ have donated land
- 530 existent sites restored
- 1540ha habitat restored
- 586,410 seedlings planted
- 32,000 volunteers involved



Much of Ray's success can be attributed to his dedication to public engagement, and educating farmers on the benefits of habitat restoration on their property. An entire farming community has been galvanised to restore their remnant box-ironbark habitat, for the benefit of the endangered species still present in the district, as well as those that had become locally extinct. The Regent Honeyeater Project works with a key aim to not only recover habitat, but to also restore the key biological processes that support healthy environment in order to maintain their resilience in the face of dramatic landscape or climate change. Restoring ecosystem function, for example, by restoring habitat on farmlands, restores and improves ecosystem services. This results in measurable differences in ecology that have the potential to assist humans and the agricultural industry. Salinity and erosion reduction, improved water quality, stock shelter and natural pest control are all direct benefits to agricultural property. To farmers, these projects represent long term investments and demonstrate that outstanding conservation outcomes can be achieved in agricultural landscapes, making this a particularly significant restoration example.

BirdLife Melbourne Committee

President: Tim Bawden (Tel: 0488 017 781)

Vice President: Bevan Hood

Secretary: Alan Crawford

Treasurer: Greg Hempenstall

Committee Members: Adriana Bianchi, Ron Garrett, Mark Hall, Owen Lishmund, Philip Peel, Millie Scicluna, Scot Sharman, Joab Wilson

Activities Coordinator: Philip Peel

Conservation Liaison Officers: Joab Wilson and Claire Lowe

Newsletter and Blog Editor: 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. Contributions for the next issue are due 20 January 2015 and can be emailed to bianchiadriana8@gmail.com. Any ideas for future newsletter stories or contributions are welcome.

BirdLife Melbourne is now on Twitter and Facebook. We also have a blog reporting on all BirdLife Melbourne activities and more at www.birdlifemelbourne.wordpress.com.

Every year, planting days are organised and attract hundreds of volunteers from schools, universities, church groups, and environmental groups among others, who unite for a common cause. Ray also runs nest box placement and monitoring weekends, which provide valuable distribution data as well as motivational experiences for volunteers.

Other restoration activities that the Regent Honeyeater Project coordinates include mistletoe removal, weeding, feral species control, kangaroo reduction, and surveying of threatened and declining woodland birds. If you'd like to be involved with the planting weekends and nest box surveys, feel free to check out <http://regenthoneyeater.org.au/index.php> for dates. Next year will be my fourth year participating, and the weekends never fail to inspire!

Emily Scicluna is a BirdLife Melbourne Committee Member and regular contributor to the newsletter.

Australia's voice for birds since 1901

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

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