

THE MELBIRDIAN

MELBOCA (BOCA's Melbourne Branch) NEWSLETTER NO. 55
June 2007



MELBOCA Branch Meetings

Meetings are held at the Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Avenue, Balwyn, not far from the Balwyn Library, Melway 46 E8, on the fourth Tuesday of each month (with the exception of December) commencing at 8.00 pm. Entry is by a donation of \$4.

Out-of-town members & visitors very welcome.

Future Speakers

Tuesday 26 June 2007 8pm. Robert Bender, "Waterbirds of the Coorong". Robert spends much of his spare time doing volunteer conservation work with Friends of Organ Pipes, with Friends of Wilson Reserve, doing long-term research on bat roost boxes, with Frogwatch, and with fungi-mapping. He is also keenly interested in Earthwatch projects and has studied palaeobotany, Echidnas, Platypus, Hawksbill Turtles and other fascinating subjects such as Orang-utans, insects and bats, so we are in for an interesting evening when Robert speaks about work with the waterbirds of the Coorong in SA.

Instead of Bird of the Evening, the MELBOCA AGM will be held at 8.00 pm prior to the Guest Speaker.

Tuesday 24 July 2007 8.00 pm. Ken Simpson "Rare Penguins in Australia":- Ken Simpson, long-time BOCA and MELBOCA member, top-notch birder, author of field guides and many bird-related articles, speaker, and all-round nice guy, needs no further introduction, so you will need to be early to get a good seat for what will be a very special July meeting.

MELBOCA Committee

President:	Graeme Hosken
Vice-President:	David Plant
Secretary:	Janet Hand
Treasurer:	Bill Ramsay
Celia Browne	Barb Longmuir
Linda Stock	Diane Tweeddale
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Past Meetings

27 March 2007. Linda Stock introduced the evening, welcoming all and introduced **Dr Xenia Dennett** who gave the **Bird of the Evening** segment, "Rabbit Eradication on Macquarie Island". Macquarie Island is about half way between Australia and Antarctica and comprises a unique geological land mass 35 x 6 km. It lies just north of the Antarctic Convergence where the cold and very cold waters meet, making a very fertile marine environment. It became a Wildlife Sanctuary in 1933, a Biosphere Reserve under UNESCO and now is World Heritage listed. The geological uniqueness is due to magma having been squeezed upwards between two moving plates, not ejected volcanically, and giving insight into the deepest rocks on Earth. The island has also never been glaciated and has many areas of pillow basalt. It is still emerging and because of the frost erosion, the surface is extremely fragile, thus any degradation due to animal (rabbit) action is likely to have devastating effects on the ecosystem.

There are 72 species of birds present, of which 29 species breed on the island, which is also home to unique plants and marine mammals. Four million seabirds, including four species of albatross and penguin live there. The Royal Penguin only breeds on the island. The rabbits are having a devastating impact on the landscape, causing the breakdown of vegetation especially the Macquarie Island Cabbage and allowing erosion and land slips by rainfall. Early settlers introduced goats, horses, Wekas, cats, rabbits, rats and mice. The last three are still present. As regards the rabbits, at first the *myxomatosis* virus was effective but is no longer so. The *calici* virus is useless in a cold and wet environment so now there are estimated to be 180,000 rabbits present. Apart from the damage to the vegetation, the burrowing exposes burrowing birds to predators. The poa tussocks that the Wandering Albatross rely on for nesting sites are also degraded. Thus it is essential to exterminate the rabbits, rats and mice. A Pest Management Plan by the Tasmanian and Federal Governments has been researched but requires considerable funding (in excess of \$15 billion) and a definite commitment by these Governments to solve this problem.

The **World Wildlife Fund** is appealing for your action and more information is available from wwf.org.au or via email kirkwood@wwf.org.au

The **Guest Speaker** this evening was **Ken Gosbell**, a retired Civil Engineer and active member of the Victorian Wader Study Group who has been catching and banding migratory waders in Victoria and other states and following their progress world wide. Ken entitled his talk, "Following our Migratory Shorebirds to the Kamchatka Peninsula. This peninsula lies in far north-east Russia, north of Japan.

With the assistance of a very photogenic and informative powerpoint display, Ken stated that many of these birds make an annual return journey of 13-14,000 km. Birds such as Eastern Curlew, Red-necked Stint and various plovers, which ply between Australia and the far NE reaches of Russia. He showed a very up-to-date map of the pathways, especially some Bar-tailed Godwits which have been fitted with tracking devices and whose progress may be followed by courtesy of **Google Earth** on

www.werc.usgs.gov/sattrack/shorebirds/overall.html.

During this migratory flight the 2 million waders from Australia and New Zealand have to refuel, mainly in the Yellow Sea area off Japan and Korea. It is these areas that are under threat from natural predators, hunting, the changed weather patterns due to global warming and habitat change due to human intervention (see Ken's Bird of the Evening on the Saemangeum project in Korea in *The Melbirdian* April 2007, Meeting of 23 January Report). It is the intention to return to Saemangeum later this year to gather further information for the Ramsar seminar in 2008.

In 2004 Ken, along with an international party from Russia, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and England, traveled to the Moroschechnaya Estuary on the Kamchatka Peninsula to document the southward migration of the shorebirds, along with banding and leg-flagging to enable tracking to take place. The Peninsula is a very wild and remote place with only one town of any size, Petropavlovsk, from which a bus trip was taken 500 km northwards to Esso in order to connect with a helicopter—the only method of transport to the Moroschechnaya Estuary, over some very wild 'tiger country', definitely not the place for a forced landing! The party was left for 15 days in this remote area (after first emphasising the necessity for the helicopter to return on time). Two of the inhabitants of this remote area were the Stellar Sea-Eagle and Brown Bear, the former not seen and the latter only in the distance (thankfully).

The shorebirds were surveyed every two days—every bird—including Black-headed Gull, Dunlin, Red-necked Stint, Terek Sandpiper and many Bar-tailed Godwits. Counts were taken as the tide went out exposing the vast mud flats for up to four hours. Ken showed some pictures of the lovely Tundra flowers and berries, the Whimbrel and Bar-tailed Godwit feasting on these. The Russian hunter who was attached to the party to prevent attack from Brown Bears, indulged in some welcome salmon fishing to supplement the food supply. Mist-netting was employed in order to be able to take biometric measurements and samples for DNA testing on the Dunlins. Spoon-billed Sandpipers and passerines such as Yellow Wagtail and Siberian Rubythroat were also seen. Ken said Bar-tailed Godwits appeared to be getting ready to migrate south. Samples were also taken for evidence of Avian influenza amongst the bird population but fortunately, after testing back in

Australia, none was detected. During the time on site the Russian members of the party were given assistance in the methods employed for this research. A great deal more research is needed as only a small area of the Kamchatka Peninsula could be included at this time and it is believed that between 1-2 million birds migrate southward via the sea of Okhotsk. The length of the stopover is estimated to be only 2-10 days for the Dunlin--the DNA samples showed these to be a Sakhalin subspecies.

All this work is very expensive due to the remoteness of the terrain. The Russian economy does not support this sort of expense and therefore international support is the only way further research can be enabled. Upon questioning Ken after the talk, he said that one of the problems is the interest being taken in the area by the "hunting, shooting and fishing members of the USA" who can afford to pay the Russian officials a considerable amount of money to allow them to come over to hunt Brown Bears and return to the USA with their trophies. Partaking in a genuine survey would be a great opportunity for the adventurous. Many thanks to Ken and Xenia for their talks on the far away places of this world.

Linda gave a short resumé of the Labour Day Camp at Clarksdale at which 74 species were seen in the Sanctuary area with 82 species for the wider camp area. The actual number of birds was well down, no doubt due to the dry conditions. Thanks are due to David and Sue Ap-Thomas and David Coutts, the Manager, for the successful running of this enjoyable camp. The old cottage at Clarksdale is now semi-derelict, due to the attention of termites. The plan to erect a large shed encompassing accommodation and a learning/environment area has proved too expensive at \$100,000. However, there have been some very generous donations made and the \$70,000 raised is to be used in the erection of a smaller building by apprentices from the Ballarat School of Mines, to house an education area, with shower, kitchen and toilets accessible to outside campers. This project is being drawn up at present and I gather the site is to be just south of the existing cottage.

Notice was given of the AGM of MELBOCA to take place on 26 June 2007, details of which are enclosed. After the Interesting Sightings by Graeme Hosken, details of future outings and recent information regarding the "Bird of Prey—the Derby Cathedral Peregrines",

see <http://derbyperegrines.blogspot.com>, the evening was rounded off by refreshments and general socialisation.

Linda Stock

24 April 2007. Two new members were welcomed to the meeting by our Chairperson for the evening, Bill Ramsay. **Bird of the Evening.** This was filled by the showing of a DVD on Mornington Station in the Kimberley (BOCA has an organised tour there in July which is booked out). Mornington Station is in the heart of the Kimberley and covers 3000 square km. In 2001 Australian Wildlife Conservancy purchased the property. Plans did exist to dam the Fitzroy River but this would have flooded much of the area. 180 species of birds have been recorded on the property including Purple-crowned Fairy-wren, Australian Bustard and Gouldian Finch. Fire and cattle grazing have caused the most damage to the environment but AWC are now working with the traditional owners of the land to improve the habitat. Tax-deductible donations and visitors are most welcome. You can camp in their up-market tents or bring your own, but they need our help to save the endangered species and reverse the diminishing numbers of many other species.

Guest Speaker, Dr Xenia Dennett gave a very informative presentation entitled, "The BOCA Western Port Survey—an ongoing 35 year survey". BOCA's Western Port Survey was started in 1973 and is believed to be the longest running bird survey in Australia. Western Port is east of Port Phillip Bay and contains two large islands, has two tides daily, extensive mudflats, with some mangrove edges, farmland and several industrial complexes. The various sea grass or eel grass beds within Western Port attract many species of birds. Surveys are currently done in February, June and November at high tide roosts, although originally they were carried out monthly. Western Port is now a designated Ramsar site, part of the East Asian – Australasian Flyway and a Biosphere Reserve. Eastern Curlew, Common Greenshank, Curlew Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint, Double-banded and Hooded Plovers and Pied Oystercatchers are all significant species under the Ramsar Convention. Xenia showed graphs of many species to indicate the seasonal rise and fall of species numbers and their overall trends during the 30 plus years. Eastern Curlew numbers are dropping but Grey-tailed Tattlers have

decreased dramatically with only a few being seen recently. Xenia thanked the 200 plus volunteers, and the coordinators and asked for more help. While there are some 20 sites covered on each survey, there are another nine which **could** be surveyed with more volunteers.

Howard Plowright gave us a special presentation of "Bird Calls of Mallacoota" which was recorded while working on the 10 part *Field Guide to Australian Birdsong*. We listened enthralled as Fairy Terns chattered away, Glossy Black-Cockatoos cracked cones before calling loudly, a White-bellied Sea-Eagle screamed as a falcon attacked it and finally an Australian Magpie warbled away just outside the cottage where they were staying.

Janet Hand

The C5 Plantation at Banyule Flats—an update

Two years on and the Plantation is looking great! Most of the plants, especially the River Red Gums *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, Swamp Gums *Eucalyptus ovata* and Blackwoods *Acacia melanoxylon* are doing really well. You'd never know there has been a drought; the plantation has benefited greatly from the proximity of the creek and the hand watering and weeding carried out in the first year. Many birds—Crimson Rosella, Eastern Rosella, Red Wattlebird, Grey Fantail, thornbills, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike—are using the corridor between the wetlands and the Yarra.

Replacement trees were planted during the winter of 2006 to replace some which had died and, as the trees grow, labels are being moved from the wire 'cages' onto the trees themselves where they are placed at head height so they can be easily found over the coming years.

You are encouraged to visit the C5 site at Banyule Flats to enjoy the difference we have made to this important area.

Celia M Browne

Weekdays Outings Notes

12 December 2006 Karkarook Park (not printed earlier due to lack of space). Again we were fortunate with the weather when we assembled in the carpark at Karkarook. The day was clear with a light southerly blowing which cooled us in the sunshine. The group comprised 30 people as we set off after hearing a

short history of the site from Ian Parsons who has been involved with the park since the planning stages. The area had certainly come a long way from the night soil depository, horse paddock and sand mine of its previous incarnations. We started our walk around the lake but didn't progress very far before the sightings became riveting. After the Noisy Miners in the carpark area no one expected that the first body of water would yield such interest. There were Eurasian Coots feeding young, but the cry, "Baillon's Crane" had everyone scouring the far bank of the lake until most had glimpsed this elusive species. Then a Buff-banded Rail was sighted by many, though not all. While we swept glasses across the far side of the water, a Little Pied Cormorant was spotted with a prey item in its bill. Was it a fish, a frog? No, it was identified as a baby tortoise. Our sympathy went out to the youngster but we watched as the Cormorant determinedly shook and repositioned the tortoise until it was able to swallow its prey. Rough on the tortoise, and possibly the start of an attack of indigestion for the Cormorant. The park has not been in existence beyond a decade but the birds have certainly discovered it as reliable habitat. Silver Gulls had been the dominant species in the beginning but, though they are still present in large numbers, other species have arrived and appear to be holding their own. Eurasian Coot is probably the most numerous species of waterbird currently, but a colony of Hardhead and many Pacific Black Ducks, Grey and Chestnut Teals are also present. Black Swan, Australian Pelican and Australian White Ibis are also regularly seen. Blue-billed Duck (male and female) are using the smaller lakes and Pink-eared Duck and Australasian Shoveler were also present. Purple Swamphen and Dusky Moorhen were nesting and had young, while Australasian Grebe used the small lakes and Hoary-headed Grebe was seen on both the large bodies of water and the small ones.

Several people expressed an affection for the Black-winged Stilts which were foraging on the mud flats—they are striking birds and their calls as they fly over the water, raise smiles for many watchers. The mudflats must be productive, though small in area, as both Red-kneed and Black-fronted Dotterels were feeding with the Stilts and several Magpie-larks. We were astonished to observe a Baillon's Crane come out on the mudflats and forage in full view for a couple of minutes before it retreated behind the

vegetation. The sun behind us and no plants meant that clear views were enjoyed by many.

Superb Fairy-wrens and Clamorous Reed-Warblers were frequently heard and occasionally seen as they moved among the grasses and reeds. The absence of mature trees with nectar-producing flowers meant that there were few honeyeaters beyond the Noisy Miners near the trees of the carpark. However a few Red Wattlebirds and White-plumed Honeyeaters indicated the potential of the site once the plantings have grown. Some saw a Golden-headed Cisticola on the waterside grasses and others heard a Little Grassbird calling plaintively while a Skylark was heard by still others in the group. Some had seen Latham's Snipe before lunch but many had missed that sighting and they were pleased when another bird flushed during the afternoon walk. It will be interesting to see how the bird list for the area changes with time. At the end of the day there were smiles all round and the list was 53 species, which is a very creditable total for such a new area.



Baillon's Crake photographed by Duncan Turnbull at Numurkah Nov 2006

6 March 2007 Point Cook Coastal Park. The carpark for Spectacle Lake bird hide was our rendezvous point and the group totalled t26 when we were all assembled under the leadership of Graeme Hosken. The plan was to walk to the bird hide, but the appearance of a raptor perched in the top of a dead tree promptly modified this. Instead we took advantage of the dry ground to approach more closely and identify it as a young Brown Falcon. It was joined by another, much darker bird which was also an immature Brown Falcon and we were extremely

interested to compare the colouration. Circling back around the lake bed we encountered several rabbits and two foxes. There was no moisture in the lake edges and rabbit scat and dust were underfoot as we proceeded. Several Richard's Pipits were foraging on the far side of the lake but their presence rather served to emphasise the paucity of birds. The nesting boxes on posts at the lake edge were a sign of wetter times. However, the lignum was flowering and promised to remain as habitat for small birds.

We drove in convoy to RAAF Lake where recent rain seemed to have left a small sheet of water. The lake bed was white with salt beyond the water and no birds were using the area. Australian Magpie and Straw-necked Ibis foraged in the grass nearby and New Holland Honeyeaters were flying among the trees in the carpark. In the distance there seemed to be a group of waders so we walked closer to find a collection of small, wader-sized stones at the lake edge. However, our disappointment was reversed when a Little Eagle soared low across and gave excellent views of its markings and conformation.

Driving to the picnic area carpark, we found that the dense vegetation here was habitat for numbers of species. Willie Wagtails were so common that they were almost, but not quite, despised by the end of the day. Searches for Brown Quail proved fruitless but close views were obtained of Yellow (Little) Thornbill in the she-oaks and tea-tree. Silveryeyes were more heard than seen and Grey Fantails foraged acrobatically. Lunch was accompanied by Superb Fairy-wren, Willie Wagtail, Yellow-rumped Thornbill and Crested Pigeon. Crested Pigeons seem to be thriving despite, or because of, the dry conditions and at least one pair was observed in courtship mode. After lunch we walked down to the beach but again birds were scarce. Silver Gulls were plentiful and distant views were had of a few Black Swans, Pacific Gull and unidentifiable cormorants.

Next we drove to the Cheetham Wetlands where Skylark was heard and seen by a few. Then we were all excited by the sight of Brown Quail which flushed and provided quite extensive views before they descended into the heath. We walked out to the tower and from that vantage point we were able to train scopes on the birds using the lakes and shores in the strong wind. Mixed flocks of waders, Red-necked Stint, Sharp-tailed and Curlew Sandpipers were sheltering from the south-easterly wind which had

increased considerably since the early morning. A hare ran along the lake edge and caused some movement of the flock, but they quickly settled again. A few Common Greenshanks appeared briefly in the centre of one of the lakes but then retreated to the quieter zone of the edge where shrubs provided shelter. Even the Australian Shelducks and Pacific Black Ducks preferred the less exposed area of the lake edges. A few White-fronted Chats were seen flying in this area. It had been surprising that they had not been observed earlier as the coastal heath was likely habitat. Striated Fieldwren was also listened for and looked for but without success. However, another raptor was a Swamp Harrier which quartered over the paddocks near the tower as we were returning to the cars.

Bird call at the cars resulted in a total for the day of 47 species and a vote of thanks to Graeme for leading us in very challenging conditions which nevertheless had several people smiling broadly over their 'Lifer' ticks for the day.

21 March 2007 Warburton area. The road toward Donna Buang up from Warburton passed through sunlit mist. The greens of the tree ferns, beeches and eucalypts were fresh after the showers of the previous day. We were admiring the magic of the drive when "It's a Lyrebird", was gasped. Slowing to a stop, we watched and tried for photos through the windows (not bad but somewhat distant). After he retreated into the bush we continued, to slow and halt twice more for the same reason. Counting the male which moved out of the carpark as we arrived, we saw four Superb Lyrebirds, three males and a female, within a short stretch of road. Calls were heard as the rest of our party assembled and later arrivals reported their sightings on the road which included more females than we had observed. The Lyrebird population in the area seemed to be a rather healthy one.

Sixteen people had made the drive to the rendezvous and we started our birdwalk under the leadership of Bill Ramsay, assisted by his wife, Shirley. Initially we spent time on the Rainforest Gallery Skywalk, an excellently-designed metal walk suspended among the lower canopy. At one point you are 15 m above the forest floor and the close views of epiphyte-covered beeches and more distant views through gaps in the tree cover, are memorable. Birds in dense forest are both hard to see and fewer in number than

in other systems, but the enjoyment of the location more than compensated. Green immature Crimson Rosellas were present in small flocks. Moving back to the road we walked carefully listening for both birds and vehicles. The most common species was Eastern Spinebill with numerous individuals and pairs foraging energetically among the foliage. They included immature birds, so the breeding season seemed to have been successful. A chorus of frog calls halted several people near a small spring and streamlet, but no sightings were achieved. A couple of us collected leeches on our clothing but they were easily shaken off before they bit.

The road provides an edge in the forest and more birds were seen along this walk as the cool of the early morning dissipated. Good views of Lewin's Honeyeater, Crested Shrike-tit and Golden Whistler were had by most of us. Heading back to the cars for lunch we encountered Eastern Yellow Robin and these trusting little birds also came out of the bush while we were sitting. Also present at the lunch break were a pair of Grey Shrike-thrushes and a small flock of Brown Thornbills. A Rufous Fantail, which had clearly not yet flown north, delighted several of us by flashing overhead as we sat. After lunch we walked downhill along the road for a short way, seeing a New Holland Honeyeater which was rather unexpected in this forest. Treecreepers had been heard all day but it was now that we actually observed a White-throated Treecreeper foraging up the tree trunks. Another juvenile observed was a very young Silvereye which was perched precariously on a roadside tree fern and calling continuously. Some birds were only heard and these included Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Pilotbird, Crescent Honeyeater and Pied Currawong. The only introduced species was Common Blackbird which was heard briefly by a couple of people. The bird list for the day totalled 23 species, but the quality outweighed the quantity and at least one member ticked two 'Lifers'. Our thanks went to Bill and Shirley for leading us on a memorable day.

*Diane Tweeddale
Convenor MELBOCA Weekdays Outings*

STOP PRESS. Digital Photography for Beginners 3rd lecture "Introduction to Photo Editing" will now be held on Thursday 12 July 2007. Still room— ring BOCA to book if you would like to attend.

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

Entered 25 April 2007

The following Field Reports were received from members attending the MELBOCA monthly meetings held at Balwyn on 27 March and 24 April 2007, Email and WEB reports to the BOCA National Office.

The reports include currawong, corella, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Brown Thornbill, Song Thrush and Crested Pigeon sightings within 60km Melbourne, plus other Field Reports.

Currawong Sightings

Pied

All 2007	3-4	McEvoy St	Kew
	8-10	Almond St	Nth Balwyn
30 Jan '07	4	Taroona Ave	Mt Waverley
05 Feb '07	1		Sorrento
13 Feb '07	8	Taroona Ave	Mt Waverley
March '07	1-4	Franklin Crt	Glen Waverley
	4-12	Winters Way	Doncaster
20 Mar '07	1	Mullum Mullum Ck Res	East Doncaster
21 Mar '07	2	Sweetland Rd	Box Hill
26 Mar '07	1	Minto St	East Kew
01 Apr '07	6	Glen Iris Wetlands	Glen Iris
8/16 Apr '07	6/1	Central Reserve	Glen Waverley
11 Apr '07	1	Andersons Ck Rd	East Doncaster
14 Apr '07	7	Wattle Park	Burwood
17 Apr '07	10	Vista St	Bulleen

Grey

19 Apr '07	1	Royal Pde	Parkville
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Corella Sightings

Long-billed Corella

20 Mar '07	2	Mullum Mullum Ck	East Doncaster
24 Mar '07	3	Banyule Flats	Heidelberg
26 Mar '07	2	Wattle Park	Burwood
09 Apr '07	25-30	Cnr Burwood Hwy/FTG Rd	Ferntree Gully
22 Apr '07	80	Monash Fwy/Princes Hwy	Dandenong

Little Corella

28 Mar	200	Football Oval	Montrose
03 Apr '07	200	Deep Creek	Sunbury

(1st sighting of Little Corella, normally Long-billed in area)

Corella Species

09 Jan '07	5	Taroona Ave	Mt Waverley
02 Mar '07	25	Taroona Ave	Mt Waverley
April '07		Ascot St	East Doncaster

(several heard in the evening)

Crested Pigeon Sightings

Oct '06 – Mar '07	19-5	Edward Rd (breeding on property)	Lilydale
Late Nov '06	2	Falconer Rd	Park Orchards
Daily '07	10	McLeod Rd	Patterson Lakes
Jan-Feb '07	3-5	Footscray Park	Footscray
12 Feb '07	3-5	Westgate Park	Port Melbourne
26/28 Feb '07	2	Koonung Ck Reserve	North Balwyn
01 Mar '07	2	Netleton Park Reserve	Glen Iris
24 Mar '07	2	Blyth St`	Brunswick

28 Mar '07	1	Koonung Ck Reserve	North Balwyn
12 Apr '07	1	Cherry Rd	Balwyn
02 Apr '07	2	Huntindale Rd Wetlands	Mt Waverley
19 Apr '07	12	Doris St	Murrumbeena
	3	Lawrence Rd	Mt Waverley
20 Apr '07	60	Zerbe's Reserve	East Doncaster

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo Sightings

13 Jan '07	2	Taroona Ave	Mt Waverley
08 Feb '07	4	Waverley Rd Wetlands	Mt Waverley
18 Mar '07	30+	Lysterfield Park	Lysterfield
02 Apr '07	2	Andersons Ck Rd	East Doncaster
20 Apr '07	3	Blackburn Lake	Blackburn

Brown Thornbill Sightings

Daily '07	3-6	Disraeli St	Kew
	6-10	McEvoy St	Kew
	2-5	Bluff St	Hawthorn East
	2-4	Russell St	Surrey Hills
27 Feb '07	2	Harrington Ave	North Balwyn
12 Mar '07	2	Odessa St	St Kilda
6-8 Apr '07	1	Andrew St	Oakleigh

Song Thrush Sightings

No sightings reported this period.

Other Sightings

01 Jan –21 Mar '07	Aust. Hobby (2)	Truman St	South Kingsville
12 Jan – 28 Feb '07	New Holland Honeyeater (?)	Truman St	South Kingsville
25 Jan '07	Wedge-tailed Eagle (2)	Braeside Pk	Braeside
25-26 Jan '07	Powerful Owl (1juv)	Cnr Raleigh & Sandra Sts	Forest Hill
06 Feb '07	Rainbow Lorikeet (Lutino 1)	Standfield Dve	Carrum Downs
12 Feb '07	Australian Ringneck (1)	Buena Vista Rd	Montmorency
14-28 Feb '07	Collared Sparrowhawk (4 Juv)	Edinburgh Gardens	North Fitzroy
	(birds seen daily-initial sighting from the birds calling)		
12 Mar '07	Rufous Fantail (1)	Mc Lachlan St	Northcote
15 Mar '07	White-throated Needletail (30-40)	Truman St	South Kingsville
20 Mar '07	Rufous Fantail (1)	Back Creek	Camberwell
21 Mar '07	Silvereye (200)	Odessa St	St Kilda
26 Mar '07	Noisy Friarbird (1)	Banyule Flats	Viewbank
	Noisy Friarbird (3)	Wattle Park	Burwood
29 Mar '07	Peaceful Dove (1)	Yarra Bend Park	Fairfield
01 Apr '07	Australian White Ibis (12)	Glen Iris Wetlands	Glen Iris
04 Apr '07	Cockatiel (1)	Sparkes Reserve	Box Hill Sth
05 Apr '07	Cockatiel (1)	Landale St	Box Hill Sth
	(possible escapee?)		
6-8 Apr '07	Grey Fantail (1)	Andrew St	Oakleigh
	Rainbow Lorikeet (2 with fledgling)		
07 Apr '07	Australian King Parrot (2)	Mullum Ck Park	East Doncaster
	Gang-gang Cockatoo (1)		
09 Apr '07	Straw-necked Ibis (16)	Sparks Reserve	Box Hill
12 Apr '07	Scaly-breasted Lorikeet (2)	Foreshore	Hastings
14 Apr '07	Australian King Parrot (2)	Wattle Park	Burwood
20 Apr '07	Australian Hobby (1)	Cnr E.Boundary/Centre Rds	East Bentleigh
25 Apr '07	(first sighting in this street in 43 years)		

Little Wattlebird

Do you have this species in your garden or a park near you?

MELBOCA is examining the spread of the Little Wattlebird from the inner-city, coastal areas to the outer suburbs of Melbourne. MELBOCA welcomes your reports.

Information required: Observers Name, Address, Date of Record, Location of sighting, ie. Street, Suburb, Post Code, Melway Ref, Number of birds optional. How long have you noticed this species in your area. Eg. 1983

Forward info to BOCA PO Box 185 Nunawading 3131 or Email: gahosken@bigpond.com

Melbourne suburbs recorded so far where Little Wattlebirds have been observed. Is your suburb listed?

Balwyn	Doncaster East	Langwarrin	South Melbourne
Balwyn Nth	Gembrook	Lower Plenty	South Yarra
Blackburn	Glen Iris	Mont Albert Nth	Surrey Hills
Burwood	Glen Waverley	Mount Waverley	Viewbank
Canterbury	Greensborough	Newport	Williamstown
Carlton North	Hawthorn East	Patterson Lakes	
Clifton Hill	Ivanhoe	Richmond	
Doncaster	Kew	St Kilda	

Please note that the above records cover the area within 60km of the Melbourne GPO.

Refer to Melway Street Directory, Pages 1 & 2.

Graeme Hosken, Recorder

Sex life of Swans on Albert Park Lake

Between March and October 2007 a research team from the University of Melbourne's Zoology Department, led by Dr Raoul Mulder, will be carrying out detailed research on the promiscuous mating habits of Black Swans. The research involves recording mating behaviour by means of a miniaturised electronic tracking system that works much like the way toll bridges detect e-tags in cars. 'Decoder' units fitted to females act like toll-bridges, detecting microchips attached to the male's tail, registering the male's identity, as well as the time of copulation.

There are almost 300 Swans on the lake, so the researchers would be very grateful for any assistance with capturing and measuring of Swans from interested members. If you would like to participate in the research as a volunteer, please contact Raoul via email: r.mulder@unimelb.edu.au or by telephone 03 8344 6245 (office) or 0410 412 825 (mobile).

Dr Raoul Mulder will be a Guest Speaker at a future MELBOCA Meeting where he will be talking about the Swan Project.

Little Wattlebird

It is the third day of March 2007 and I am watching a Little Wattlebird feeding from the blossom on our cherry plum tree. The tree has been without leaves for some time because Brush-tailed Possums ate them, and it has responded just as it does after losing its leaves naturally in winter! Although the flowers are smaller than usual because of the continuing dry weather, they no doubt provide some welcome sustenance for honey-eating birds.

Virgil Hubregtse, Notting Hill



J. Rogers

Coach Tours

Advance notice - spring Coach Tours

Booking details in the August issue of *The Bird Observer*

Bailleston Area Sat 8 September 2007

Birding with Fred Smith

Maryborough Area Sat 13 October 2007

Leader: Garry Cheers

Wonthaggi Area Sat 10 November 2007

Leader to be advised

Editor's note:

The Phillip Island Coach Trip Report which appeared in *The Melbirdian* No. 54, April 2007, was written by Christine Shelley, and the last venue for the day was Fishers Wetlands, not Oswin Roberts Reserve as stated.

Bus Trip to Geelong and the Bellarine Peninsula

It was on an overcast morning on Saturday 14 April, that a full busload set off from the Arts Centre under the astute leadership of Fred Smith, prepared for a rewarding day's birding on the Bellarine Peninsula. Though the sky was overcast, it held no real threat of much rain, particularly, as we were to find out, on the drought-affected peninsula.

First stop was the Balyang Sanctuary on the banks of the mighty Barwon River. Those early off the bus were rewarded with views of a single Nankeen Night Heron roosting on the river's edge. Several Darters were also roosting along the river, and at least three Darters were nesting along the banks. We were further treated to a sighting of a male Darter feeding three offspring.

The next two stops, Belmont Common and Hospital Swamps are usually able to produce some worthwhile wetland species, but due to the drought, both are bone dry and only provided Purple Swamphen as a wetland bird. A single Crested Shrike-tit was sighted at Belmont Common and a lone Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater was the highlight of Hospital Swamps.

It was then on to Tait Point at Lake Connemara. Here we had great views of a Common Greenshank considerably positioning itself on a jetty. Two distant Royal Spoonbills seemed brilliantly white next to an Australian White Ibis. A Black-shouldered Kite was perched in the crown of a tree, and was joined by a pair of Red-rumped Parrots. As the bus was leaving, a stunning Caspian Tern was seen in flight.

It was then on to Black Rocks Beach. The first major highlight of the day came in a paddock on Black Rock Road where 24 Banded Lapwings were present.

On a previous visit in this area a couple of years ago there were eight in a neighbouring paddock, but 24 was certainly the largest single population most of us had seen. Further down the road to the beach, a Whistling Kite kindly perched itself on a fencepost affording all of us excellent views. Then down to the beach where we saw Singing Honeyeaters, a Ruddy Turnstone in its stunning breeding plumage and a couple of Red-capped Plovers darting around in the shallows.

Lunchtime was spent by the mouth of the Barwon River. Some nearby eucalypts were flowering and Purple-crowned Lorikeets were spotted here.

Point Lonsdale Lighthouse was our next port of call and we all took in the marvelous views across The Rip to Point Nepean. A Nankeen Kestrel was roosting on top of a flagpole. Several Australasian Gannets flew by out to sea. On exposed rocks we sighted Black-faced Cormorants, Pacific Gulls and we managed to turn a few of the ubiquitous Silver Gulls into Crested Terns.

Then it was on to the nearby Lake Victoria (part of the Lonsdale Lakes State Nature Reserve) and the other major sighting of the day. We all shared excellent views of 15 Hooded Plovers, of which eleven were adults and four juveniles. Most of us had only previously seen this species singly or in pairs, so to see this number was a treat. A single Banded Stilt was a further highlight at this stop.

Then it was off to Lake Lorne, Drysdale, the final stop of the trip before heading home. Unfortunately, this lake is at the lowest level I had seen from previous visits. We had views of Black-fronted Dotterel, Chestnut Teal and Black-winged Stilt.

The bird count was halted when a Fan-tailed Cuckoo perched in a nearby shrub, and became our 79th bird of the trip—not a bad day's work! Also of interest was that all cormorant species residing in Australia, were sighted on this trip throughout the day. Not a bad effort!

We had the odd spot of rain during the day, but certainly nothing of any consequence in an area that is crying out for plenty—and soon!

A great day, beautifully organised by the MELBOCA Committee and superbly led by Fred Smith, and not to forget Diane Tweeddale's always-entertaining bird count.

There won't be any coach trips over winter, but there are three in the pipeline for spring. I suggest you book early!

Martin Dwelly

Deadline

Please submit articles for the August edition of *The Melbirdian* by 1 July 2007. Send to Jenny: membership@birdobservers.org.au or post to PO Box 185, Nunawading Vic 3131