

The Melbirdian

MELBOCA Newsletter Number 77 Winter 2011

Recent Regent Sighting in the Lurg Hills



Photo, Dean Ingwersen, Regent Honeyeater recovery coordinator, bird currently on Asbury Rd, Lurg

There has been a happy rash of wild Regent Honeyeater sightings in the Lurg Hills. In early June, **Ray Thomas** reported the good news that there have been two further Regent Honeyeater sightings in the Lurg Hills, 180km N-E of Melbourne, near Benalla. One was near the Lurg Quarry and the other just south of Greta West.

According to Ray, the copious Ironbark blossom has attracted hordes of honeyeaters this year. "It was really just a matter of time before someone spotted a Regent," he said.

Back in Easter of this year, a Regent Honeyeater was spotted near Kelly Gap, where it stayed for a week on the Ironbark blossom.

Ray is optimistic about chances for a local recovery for this critically endangered bird: "There are surely others

out there in the hills, no doubt hiding from the more aggressive honeyeaters. And that's where our denser plantings really help, by giving these shy birds the cover they need to get a fair share of the honey."

His optimism has been justified as there have been several more sightings since, including a bird that Chris Tzaros spotted and Dean Ingwersen subsequently banded.

The return of the Regent is a huge fillip for the community-based Regent Honeyeater Habitat Restoration Project, which is working in the Lurg Hills.

But there's still more good news because **Annette Cook** in the BOCA National Office is organising a two day camp at Lurg for birders. There will be one day of planting followed by one day of birding, exploring the

local remnant bushland as well as some of the earlier planting sites.

This camp is also a great opportunity for BOCA members to meet and work with Birds Australia members and to consolidate the recent agreement to merge the two organisations. Dates are Wednesday to Thursday, 8 to 9 September 2011. Contact the BOCA National office for details.

There are also planting weekends scheduled for August and September, again, please contact the BOCA National Office for details.

In the meantime, if anyone does spot a Regent Honeyeater, please report it to the Regent Honeyeater recovery coordinator Dean Ingwersen of Birds Australia on 1800 621 056 or via e-mail at d.ingwersen@birdsaustralia.com.au.



MELBOCA Branch Meetings: Upcoming Guest Speakers

Tuesday 27 September 2011
8:00pm

Janet Hand: "Courting bird: The Romeos and Juliets of the bird world."

Ah, there is a whiff of romance in the air! Join Janet in exploring the "softer" side of bird life.

Tuesday 25 October 2011
8:00pm

Ken Gosbell: "The Future for our Shorebirds in a changing world."

Ken is a very active member of the Australian Wader Studies Group. He is well qualified to discuss the critical problems being faced by our migratory Shorebirds, particularly in the Yellow Sea.

Tuesday 22 November 2011
8:00pm

Matt Ruchel: "Victorian Nature - values and challenges."

We welcome Matt Ruchel, the Executive Director of the Victorian National Parks Association to give us an up-to-date overview of the changes to and demands on our National Parks.

MELBOCA branch meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of every month (except December) in the Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn, not far from the library (Melway 46 E8). The meeting begins at 8:00pm and features a guest speaker and a Member's Topic segment. Entry is by a donation of \$4. Out-of-town members and visitors are always welcome!

MELBOCA and the Birds Australia / BOCA merger

MELBOCA and BA Vic Group are still working out details of how both a new Melbourne Branch of BirdLife Australia and a Victoria Region Council of BirdLife Australia will operate.

The start date for these has been deferred until early 2012 to coincide with the official launch of BirdLife Australia.

For reports of all meetings to date, refer to the MELBOCA News Page on the MELBOCA Website

www.melboca.org.au

I attended the Consultation Meeting on 24 June 2011 as MELBOCA's representative. The day was not a day for decision making but an opportunity for the representatives of numerous BOCA Branches, BA Regional Groups, Special Interest Groups, BA Bird Observatories and Gluepot, members of BOCA and BA staff and BirdLife Australia Board Members to express their views on a wide range of issues.

It was a very successful day. For more details check out the August edition of *The Bird Observer* and BOCA and BA websites.

Based on inputs made at the meeting, the Board of BirdLife Australia was to prepare a questionnaire seeking the

views of all BOCA and BA Members on a wide range of issues. The proposed timing was for the questionnaire to be available online by mid July 2011, with responses required by the end of August 2011.

If you are not connected to the web, call BOCA National Office and request a

hard copy. All MELBOCA Members are strongly urged to complete the questionnaire as this is your opportunity to help shape the future of BirdLife Australia.

Bill Ramsay



Inside This Issue:

Regent Honeyeater returns to Lurg	1	Interesting Sightings	8
President's Report	3	Australian Ravens	9
Treasurer's report	4	Education Report	10
Past Meeting Reports		Swift Parrots	11
– Living Marine Treasures	5	Vale Reg Johnson OAM	14
– A New Model for conservancy	6	Dates to Remember	15
– Frogmouths in the City	7	BOCA/MW Update	16
Outing Reports:		Contact MELBOCA	16
– Beginners Outings	6		
– Yarra Bend Park	11		
– Historic Woodlands	12		
– Crosbie Nature Reserve	14		



President's Report

Fifth President's Report for the Melbourne Branch of Bird Observation and Conservation Australia

The year was a momentous one for BOCA, its Branches and affiliate groups.

Discussions spanning the past three years on the possible merger between BOCA and Birds Australia (BA) have finally resulted in a new organisation, BirdLife Australia, being formed.

Your Melbourne Branch (MELBOCA) has been in discussion over the past year with the BA Victoria Group on how a BirdLife Melbourne Branch would operate in the new calendar year. Discussions are continuing, with a proposed outcome by the end of the year.

Due to the merger, MELBOCA committee members agreed to continue in their respective positions until a new Melbourne Branch of BirdLife Australia is formed in 2012.

It has been a busy year for the MELBOCA Committee, with only one activity unable to continue. Coach Outings have been an agenda item as long as I can remember and it was to continue this year, but, based on inquiries made by **John Young**, it proved impossible to offer a coach outing at a reasonable cost to members.

Arthur Carew indicated he was unable to continue as Conservation Officer during the year but still continued with the role of proof reading *The Melbirdian*.

The Wednesday Wanderings monthly segment came to a close in May after completing a second adventure over three years, visiting parks along the Yarra from Warandyte to Melbourne. My thanks to **Celia M Browne** for organising and leading this activity for over six years.

Of course, bird observers enjoy observing, and what better way to do so than visit areas around Melbourne with suitable guides. Weekday Outings are the domain of **Diane Tweeddale**, finding the places to visit and securing a guide with local knowledge.

Beginners' Outings have also been successfully continued under guidance from **Alan and Hazel Veevers**, with 'older' members providing assistance as well. This activity has been an excellent venue to introduce our new members to the finer points of bird watching.

Another outing that has been going for many years is the 'first Sunday of the month' visit to Yellingbo under the guidance of **Maryanne Anderson**. This used to be an outing to see the Helmeted Honeyeater, but, due to the ongoing captive breeding program, areas where it occurs are off limits, but, nevertheless, other interesting species are often recorded.

Janet Hand performs two roles on the MELBOCA committee, one being Secretary, the other Education Officer, the latter of which entails allocating volunteers to fulfil the many requests received from the BOCA National Office for school-holiday programs and guest speakers for different organisations, as well as many other tasks.

Requests for bird photos are often made to the MELBOCA Photography Group and **Sonja Ross** obliges from an extensive library of members photos.

The monthly meeting at Balwyn is a major activity, providing members with a range of excellent speakers covering a range of subjects. **Sunny Fernie** has continued her excellent work in obtaining the services of these speakers, as well as co-ordinating the Member's Topic segment. Unfortunately, Sunny will be unable to continue from September but has organised speakers well into the New Year.

Eleanor Stephenson will continue to assist in receiving your donation as you enter the hall; **Barb Longmuir** has many items she has picked up from the BOCA Shop displayed on 'the table' for sale; at the end of the meeting, supper is arranged by **Heather Mitchener**; and, at this time, **Daphne Hards** collects the electronic recorder so she can download the nights activities for her report for *The Melbirdian*.

In my 2010 President's Report, I indicated the surveys that BOCA are doing in the Lower Dandenong Catchment for Melbourne Water would continue for another three years. Unfortunately, funding from Melbourne Water was only available for one year with the project to conclude in June 2011. All volunteers indicated they would continue the surveys until December 2011, with the possibility of a grant becoming available to continue the project in the New Year under the BirdLife Australia banner.

At the beginning of this report I mentioned the discussions that the MELBOCA Committee has been having on the merger with the BA Victoria Group on a bi-monthly basis. I am indebted to **Bill Ramsay** for instigating these discussions. His reports at MELBOCA monthly meetings, in *The Melbirdian* and on the MELBOCA website have kept members up-to-date on the merger process. Bill is also treasurer of MELBOCA and maintains the MELBOCA website.

In the future, we will see changes under the new title, BirdLife Australia, Melbourne Branch. A new committee will be formed in the New Year that will meet in the city at the BirdLife Australia National Office which will be at the same location. Some activities will not change. Monthly meetings and outings will continue, perhaps with additions.

It's going to be a new challenge which I am sure will be successful.

My thanks for all the assistance I have received throughout a very busy year.

Graeme Hosken
MELBOCA President





MELBOCA Treasurer's Report for the year ended 31 December 2010

	2010		2009	
<u>Income Statement</u>	\$	\$	\$	\$
Revenue				
Meeting receipts	2,427		2,543	
Bequest by Linda Stock	0		1,000	
Wader Course fees	0		975	
Miscellaneous	36		138	
Donations	<u>0</u>		<u>382</u>	
		<u>2,463</u>		<u>5,038</u>
Less Expenses:				
Hire of meeting hall	1,304		1,260	
Gifts to guest speakers	303		332	
Sundry meeting expenses	125		215	
Computer and computer accessories	20		836	
MS Office 2007	24		0	
Data projector and data projector accessories	952		0	
Data projector extended warranty	181		0	
Meeting recorder and extended warranty	0		119	
Website hosting fee	199		139	
Website domain registration fee	0		19	
Wader Course expenses	0		256	
Miscellaneous	<u>0</u>		<u>285</u>	
		<u>3,108</u>		<u>3,441</u>
Net Surplus (Loss) for the year:	<u>(645)</u>		<u>1,597</u>	
<u>Balance Sheet</u>				
Equity:				
Accumulated Funds				
Balance at start of year	3,735		2,138	
Add Net Surplus (Loss) for the year	<u>(645)</u>		<u>1,597</u>	
Balance at end of year		<u>3,090</u>		<u>3,735</u>
Represented by:				
Cash at Bank	3,090		3,767	
Less unrepresented cheque	<u>0</u>		<u>32</u>	
		<u>3,090</u>		<u>3,735</u>

Notes:

1. Cash at Bank is an at call cheque account.
2. There were no outstanding liabilities at the end of the year.
3. Printing expenses for *The Melbirdian* are paid by BOCA and do not form part of the MELBOCA accounts.
4. MELBOCA is responsible for organizing Coach Tours but all income and expenses are included in BOCA's accounts.

Bill Ramsay
MELBOCA Treasurer



Past Meeting Reports

26 April 2011 – Living Marine Treasures

Sonja Ross convened the April meeting and welcomed all. She then invited **Chris Doughty** to give his Member's Choice segment recounting his trip to Ashmore Reef, September to October, 2010. He began with a reminder about north-south migration: that waders spend our winter months in Siberia, then, come August/September, when insects start to disappear, they depart southwards. Approximately twenty wader species come to Australia; many passerines also migrate as far as S-E Asia, and some birds overshoot their destination, and may alight at Ashmore Reef, 50km south of Timor. Rare seabirds may also be seen en route, the charter boat taking 3 days sailing from Darwin. Such trips have shown that Streaked and Arabian Shearwaters winter off the west coast of Australia, previously unknown.

Once on land, one can walk around the whole reef in one hour. Bushes line the shore and the middle is grassy. Chris showed Oriental Plover, Little and Long-toed Stint and a dozen passerines, including Middendorff's Grasshopper Warbler, Arafura Fantail, Island Monarch, Tiger Shrike, and a first for Australian territory, a Grey-streaked Flycatcher. All in all a very rewarding trip for those needing more ticks for their Australian tally or a spot of adventure. Chris still has a few places for this year's tour.

Sonja introduced **Jeff**

Weir, who is Executive Director of the Dolphin Research Institute. Geoff's talk was titled *Victoria's Living Marine Treasures* in which he strove to highlight the treasures in our marine parks, and on our doorstep. 90% of sea creatures in our waters are endemic to Victoria, and we have 13 marine national Parks and sanctuaries to protect them, from Cape Howe Marine NP in the east to Discovery Bay NP in the west.

Westernport has special ecosystems, with the southernmost communities of mangroves, seagrass meadow (protection to young fish), unusual soft corals, a colony of fur seals and, off the pier at Flinders the amazing Weedy Seadragon can be seen. This small creature is related to the seahorse and is known by marine biologists worldwide; it is even featured in the souvenir guide of the world's oldest aquarium, the Monaco Oceanographic Museum.

Port Phillip Bay encompasses one marine national park and three marine sanctuaries. It is home to about 100 Bottle-nosed Dolphins and approximately two dozen

smaller Common Dolphin. Port Phillip is the only place in the world where the Common Dolphin leaves the ocean environment. They occupy the eastern shore between Frankston and Safety Beach. Jeff showed us a short film of dolphins. The Bottle-nosed Dolphins breed in the bay and the newborn are about two foot long. The southern part of the bay has great sandbanks and it is this area that the dolphins favour. At the Heads is the Rip Canyon, 97 metres deep with walls covered by prolific sea creatures, such as soft corals, sponges and sea stars. In a cavern called Portsea Hole can be found the Blue Devil fish, very aggressive in the mating season. The march of the spider crabs, the world's largest stingray, bryozoans, sea spiders, Humpback Whales, the list of marine treasures went on and on.

The largest whale species, the Blue Whale, spends part of the year in the waters off southern Victoria. These whales favour our waters because the marine systems are so productive. Nowhere in the world do approximately four million people live so close to 13 marine national parks and sanctuaries, and Victorian marine treasures are too good to lose.

Jeff is a Director of Westernport UNESCO biosphere and knows that Westernport is at risk. The seagrass beds are in decline, the mangroves are receding, and the cliffs along the Lang Lang shoreline are being

eroded. Polluted creeks entering the bay are a problem. High E. coli levels in Port Phillip often get into the press. All these problems are man-made.

The Dolphin Research Institute has recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. Their staff monitor the populations of dolphins in Port Phillip, Westernport and the Gippsland Lakes. Many thousands of photographs of dolphin dorsal fins have allowed individual dolphins to be identified by nicks and notches. 10 years of careful observation has shown that these communities are breeding, and data suggests that the communities in Port Phillip and Westernport intermingle. There are hazards however: Killer Whales enter both Port Phillip and Westernport, and there is the occasional stranding event. Dolphins found dead have exhibited skin lesions due to a virus called dolphin pox; high levels of mercury in the water cause immunosuppression and susceptibility to this virus. The cause of high mercury levels is unknown but there have been suggestions it may be due to historic gold mining in



World famous Weedy Seadragon. Photo, Wikipedia.

Continued on page 6



Continued from page 5

the waterways, or waste from dental surgeries, or indeed natural leaching from rocks and soils. The licensing of dolphin tours has reduced the injuries to dolphins by boats, but there are still problems with jet skis and propellers.

The institute does a lot more than watch dolphins. Their education program addresses both children and adults, up to 15,000 people per year. They have started an ambassador program whereby 22 schools have their own dolphin ambassadors, and thus 1300 children are instructed about dolphins in local waters taking the message of rubbish collection and preserving the environment to their classmates. In addition, 37 graduate scholarships have been given to worthy recipients to further the knowledge of dolphins in the wider community. The institute gets little government funding and relies heavily on their Adopt-a-Dolphin Program. Their website is www.dolphinresearch.org.au

John Barkla rose to give answers to questions raised by MELBOCA members in response to the proposed merger information package. Topics included the continuity and perpetuity of ABEF, the autonomy of our regional groups, any obligations the new entity would have to BirdLife International, and the future for BOCA if the merger fails.

24 May 2011 – A New Model for Conservancy

John Young opened this, the first meeting since the merger vote was passed, and introduced our main speaker, Atticus Fleming, whose talk was titled *A New Model for Conservation in Australia – Making a Difference in the Field*. After a law degree, and a post as a government advisor with the Federal Environment Minister, Atticus became the inaugural Chief Executive of Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) in 2001. Driven by the woeful national mammal extinction record, the goals of AWC are to:

- Establish sanctuaries
- Deliver on ground management (there are no staff in many national parks)
- Conduct good scientific research
- Foster public education

The organisation now has 22 sanctuaries covering 2.7 million hectares, which encompass 300 threatened species. They have 80 staff of which, proudly, 80% are in the field. Their annual budget nudges \$10 million; approximately 90% is spent on conservation and less than 10% on administration and fundraising. 3% of their budget comes from government and the rest is raised privately. Recent acquisitions have followed careful research to identify properties of importance, and then approaching the owner. In this way they aim to safeguard varied and critical habitats. Details of all their activities can be seen at www.australianwildlife.org

Atticus then spoke about successes at specific properties. Brooklyn, bordering Mt. Lewis, Qld., has a bird list of 300, about 90 mammals and 37 frog species. Fauré Is., at the southern end of WA's Shark Bay, is the third largest island in the world from which cats have been eradicated.

Five endangered species have been reintroduced there: Burrowing Bettongs have gone from 30 to in excess of 500. At Scotia, 8000 hectares are feral-free, and 7 endangered species are protected. The national count for Bridled Nailtail Wallaby is approx.1400, 1200 of which are at Scotia.

Extinction is still occurring in northern Australia. Kakadu NP is our largest national park and has the biggest budget, \$19million a year, and yet there has been a 75% decline in small mammals in the last 10 years. Atticus cited the following reasons for this: poor fire regimes, predation by feral cats and the impact of feral herbivores – donkeys, horses and cattle. AWC has purchased a property of similar habitat, Wongalara, and it is hoped that procedures learnt there will influence management in Kakadu NP.

At Mornington Station in the Kimberley, (60,000 ha.) AWC has found clear evidence that with feral-proof fencing and changed fire-management, there has been a big increase in mammal numbers in just a few years. Riparian surveys have shown recovery of Purple-crowned Fairy-wren numbers after removal of herbivores. Return of Buff-sided Robins has been even more dramatic. A big contributor has been new fire management, coined EcoFire.

An EcoFire is burning in the early dry season, rather than later in the dry, thus preventing big hot fires. This produces a patchy burn which recovers well. At Mornington, 52,000 incendiary (golf) balls were dropped while flying 23,000km, plus ground-based burning was also conducted by local aborigines. The total cost was 20% of government-run burning, and AWC can demonstrate dramatic outcomes. For an example, Atticus described everyone's favourite Gouldian Finch, which needs different grasses in its feeding cycle, including three-year-old Spinifex (best seed) at a certain time in that yearly cycle.

AWC's most recent purchase is Charnley River Station in the Artesian Range in the Kimberley, and this was acquired by entering into a share agreement with the owner. Stock continue to run on grazing country, but are excluded from land deemed critical for conservation – land rich in diversity and great mammal densities, managed by AWC. Photographs showed magnificent gorges reminiscent of the Bungle Bungles, with the area home to the Black Grasswren.

Feral cats are the scourge of native wildlife. It is estimated that they take 2 million native animals per day across northern Australia. Cats do not take bait, they like a moving target. Dingoes, fitted with radio collars, have been shown to kill cats, with surveys over time demonstrating that an increase in dingo numbers reduced feral cats, which then lead to an increase in small reptiles. AWC therefore are advocating the reversal of the dim view of dingoes.

AWC seeks at all times to work collaboratively with neighbouring property owners, and enters into partnerships with indigenous communities. At Newhaven, they have a consent agreement. Volunteers play a huge role in surveys, as much research is in the form of "trap-

Continued on page 7



Continued from page 6

nights” – setting up and recording the findings from overnight traps. As a volunteer one can get to visit AWC properties which are closed to the public, but all financial contributors can attend open-day and working-bees.

In thanking Atticus, **Graeme Hosken** recalled his own trip to Mornington Station. He was rewarded there with sightings of Gouldian Finch and Purple-crowned Fairy-wren, and recognises the excellent ethos of AWC in preserving our natural landscapes.

John invited **Sonja Ross** to present her Member’s Topic, an entertaining trivia quiz, testing more our general knowledge, with bird connections, rather than birds per se.

Daphne Hards rose to inform members of the death of **Reg Johnson OAM**, on 22 June. He had a fall at his beloved Nagambie property and died later at Shepparton hospital. Please read about his great contribution to conservation and BOCA in the August edition of *Bird Observer*.

John Young announced an interesting group of outings, including a planting working-bee of Regent Honeyeater habitat near Benalla on 8-9 September. **Graeme Hosken** gave the results of the 2010 Challenge Count and took interesting sightings. **Barbara Longmuir** advertised her shop items and we broke ranks for shopping and supper.

28 June 2011 – Frogmouths in the City

Chairing this meeting was **Bill Ramsay**, and having welcomed one new member and one visitor he called on **John Young** to talk about his recent visit to Cocoparra National Park. Situated 35km north of Griffith, NSW, this park lies at the junction of the wet eastern climate and the dry west; and is directly north of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation System. It is 40km north to south and about 10km east-west. The country consists of sandstone outcrops with revegetated gullies and grassy plains. There is just one campground with typical NP amenities. It was hopping with birds, parrots were prominent, including Ring-necks, Blue Bonnet, Red-rumped and Mulga Parrots. Thornbills were busy; and amongst the thornbills John and Trina got their first views of Speckled Warbler. They had good photographs of Double-barred Finches and Diamond Firetails. Three species of babbler – Chestnut-crowned, White-browed and Grey-crowned – were present, and Crested Bellbird called in. Doves, raptors and robins were there in numbers, and on their way home they called in at Narrandera, on recommendation, and saw Glossy Black Cockatoos. John was well pleased by his visit to Cocoparra NP.

Bill then introduced bird and wildlife artist **Janet Flinn** to the audience. Janet has exhibited her work widely, received awards, and also teaches and conducts workshops. She and husband Peter moved to their home in Glen Waverley some 20 years ago, and found that another family already occupied the block – Tawny Frogmouths. The birds have become a source of great interest and pride, and Janet came to tell us much of what they had learnt in *House in Appletree Drive*. Much of the

activity Janet has recorded on camera, and she has also completed many paintings, particularly capturing the haughty roosting posture and the wide-eyed gaze of attention. Apparently, when attention turns to antagonism, the frogmouths open their mouths to reveal a yellow gape, and their eyes cross as they fixate the enemy.

The frogmouth family of Appletree Drive comprises a resident nesting pair with offspring have come and gone. Janet says the adults have raised a pair of chicks in each of the last 10 years, and, despite such close and diligent observation there seems no guarantee of telling male from female birds. Photos confirmed this – no difference in size or plumage.

Janet and Peter’s bird family came to the attention of **Gisela Kaplan**, who wrote the book, *Tawny Frogmouth*. She radio-tagged the adults, the birds oblivious of an antenna poking out from beneath the mantle feathers. Their movements showed that they have several roost spots, in eucalypts on adjacent properties or in neighbouring parkland, Shepherd’s Bush. Janet told us that in their garden, which has several eucalypts, the frogmouths roost in most of them, but that they favour *E. nicholii* and stringybarks, presumably for best camouflage. They enjoy sun in the winter, especially with a main trunk as backrest, and will move to shade if the sun gets too hot.

Over the past 2-3 years, Janet and Peter have been taking notes on their frogmouths’ activity; and whenever a pattern of movement seems to be emerging it gets changed. So this is a species that bucks routine. A common occurrence amongst animals is that the young from one clutch move away once they are old enough to fend for themselves. And one would expect previous years’ immature birds to have departed when the next brood has arrived. However, this did not happen at Appletree Drive in 2009-10. Chicks reared in 2009 hung around all winter as a family of four, and when the 2010 chicks fledged, Janet was amazed to often see five birds roosting together. The juveniles can be readily recognised by their fluffy white breast plumage; with one 2010 chick tending to roost some way apart from the others. Whether this was a hint of an independent streak or ostracism is unknown.

Marian Weaving, whose PhD project is about Tawny Frogmouths in suburbia, came to the rescue one very hot day when one bird was clearly limp. She caught the bird, took it to a carer, who gave it regular food till it was strong again, and then released it. A Tawny Frogmouth’s diet consists significantly of moths taken from around street lights. Janet has seen one with a mouse’ tail hanging from its mouth, and they also spend considerable time foraging in leaf litter.

Barbara Longmuir expressed our thanks to Janet for speaking at short notice. **Janet Hand** reported on education and **Graeme Hosken** flagged that the Eyre Bird Observatory is seeking volunteer wardens for November, December and January. Graeme also reported interesting sightings. Bill returned to the microphone to tell of successful outings and also forthcoming outings. And then we enjoyed a welcome supper.

Daphne Hards



Interesting Sightings

Field Note Reports – Entered 11 July 2011

The following Field Reports were received from members attending the MELBOCA monthly meetings held at Balwyn on 26 April, 24 May and 28 June, email and web reports to the BOCA National Office.

19-Mar-11	Buff-banded Rail (1 - in back yard/paddock on 10 acre hobby farm)	Batesleigh Rd	Selby
20-Apr-11	Buff-banded Rail (1)	Back Creek	Camberwell
28-Apr-11	Noisy Friarbird (1 - bird feeding in garden and drinking from bird bath)	Pinewood Dve	Templestowe
4-May-11	White-necked Heron (1)	Cranbourne Botanic Gardens	Cranbourne
22-May-11	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (50+)	Albert Park Lake, East side	Albert Park
22-May-11	Little Corella (300)		Bulleen
23-May-11	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (37)	North Balwyn	North Balwyn
23-May-11	White-necked Heron (2)	Coolart Reserve	Somers
23-May-11	Cattle Egret (7)	Coolart Reserve	Somers
24-May-11	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (50)	Blackburn High School	Blackburn
25-May-11	Lewin's Honeyeater (1)	Ferny Ck	Upper Ferntree Gully
29-May-11	Little Corella (21)	Mont Albert Rd	Balwyn
30-May-11	Flame Robin (1)	Sunshine Rd	Sunshine
8-Jun-11	Crested Tern (1 - above Dights Falls, recorded on a MELBOCA Weekday Outing)	Yarra Bend Park	Fairfield
14-Jun-11	King Parrot (8)	Boroondara Pk	Camberwell
18-Jun-11	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (90+)	Gladstone and High St	Kew
18-Jun-11	Australasian Bittern (2)	Troups Creek Wetland	Hallam
23-Jun-11	Australian Ringneck (2 – escapees - race <i>semitorquatus</i> ('Twenty-eight Parrot'), normally in SW of WA)	Falkingham Rd	Mt Evelyn
23-Jun-11	Spotless Crake (1)	Monash Uni.	Clayton
25-Jun-11	Red-capped Robin (8 – recorded with Flame Robins on MELBOCA Beginners Outing)	The Woodlands Historic Park	Greenvale
27-Jun-11	Wedge-tailed Eagle (1)		Eltham
30-Jun-11	Little Corella (500+)	Near Cnr Highbury & Huntingdale Rds	Burwood
7-Jul-11	Long-billed Corella (102)	Rieschieck's Reserve	East Doncaster

Members Comments – Corella Sightings

Over the past few years, MELBOCA was receiving records of Little and Long-billed Corella sightings within 40km of Melbourne. Many sightings were received and it would seem that fluctuations occurred, with flocks up to 100 to 150 being recorded. Since April this year, flocks in excess of 300 have been reported.

On 20 April, at 5:50pm, Helen Aston recorded at least 300 Corella species flying over Hazel St, Camberwell. Due to the dark conditions, actual species could not be determined and as their flight was rapid, heading in a South-Easterly direction they left the area within a minute.

On 2 May, this time between 8:25 and 8:35am, with much

better light and at the same location, Helen recorded in excess of 300 Little Corella over the 10 minute period. At 9:15am around 50 returned, taking up residence in nearby garden trees, with 15 feeding in Plane Trees in Hazel St. It would seem that the flock of Corella seen on 20 April were probably Little Corella.

Two other large flocks of Little Corella were reported: on 22 May, 300 in Bulleen, and on 30 June, 500+ in Burwood.

If any members have recorded similar size flocks of Little Corella recently, your records would be most welcome.



Interesting Sightings (cont'd)

Backyard Birds!

At the end of June, I had a visit from Len Robinson who lives in Murrumbena and has recorded bird species within the suburb's surrounds since 1947. Len produced three lists entered in BOCA's Little Blue Birdlist booklet, from 1947 to 1977, 1977 to 1983 and 1983 to 2011 which also has breeding records noted. There are many highlights in Len's records. Some species recorded in the late 1940s are no longer to be seen in the area due to urban development, with the most notable being the Regent Honeyeater feeding in eucalypts opposite his parents' home in Murrumbena Road, and Grey-crowned Babbler, which are long gone where Monash University now exists.

Records like Len's are invaluable as an indicator of what has been lost from an inner suburb of Melbourne in just over 60 years. What will be seen in an outer suburb in 60 years time? If you start recording now, someone looking at your lists will probably not believe you had Eastern Spinebills in your garden in 2011.

I am still digesting Len's records and in a future *Melbirdian* I will publish a further report.

All MELBOCA Outing reports may be found on the MELBOCA website, www.melboca.org.au

Graeme Hosken
Recorder

Australian Ravens: How close to Melbourne are they found?

Many of you will know Ren Millsom, a member of Andrew Silcocks' team reviewing data posted to Birddata. As I get time, I post the Bird Lists from all the MELBOCA Outings on BA's Birddata and the sightings are put on BA's database. Ren has sent me a few queries on Outing Reports of Australian Ravens in areas close to Melbourne where the presence of Australian Raven is considered doubtful. The following note, sent by Ren, summarises the situation.

"We have recently had cause to review all Australian Raven records in the greater Melbourne area. In starting this review, we asked very experienced observers resident in Melbourne for advice. None could recall ever hearing this raven in the Melbourne area (one had two personal records supported by documentation over 12 years ago) and also were doubtful about the presence of this raven on the grass plains west of Melbourne stretching to Geelong. A common theme is that the Australian Raven prefers large heavily timbered areas eg the Dandenongs, Brisbane Ranges and avoids urban areas.

"All acknowledged that there is a fair degree of difficulty amongst observers in separating Australian and Little Ravens. People hear Little Ravens give their long-

drawn-out note and assume they must be Australian Ravens (though the calls are quite different really). Some popular field guides do not even mention this drawn-out call of the Little Raven. Both ravens have throat hackles and using this to separate them is considered not reliable.

"But HANZAB vol. 7, p. 692 states – Australian Raven call 'powerful, high-pitched and slow, usually ending with a drawn-out, far-carrying and strong wail'. Little Raven (in part) 'while call often ends with a drawn-out descending somewhat wailing note, it differs ... by being much lower and shorter'. We also refer you to the BOCA CD No. 10 which gives both calls, including the shorter wail of the Little Raven."

So to all Melbourne Birders, especially MELBOCA Outings Leaders, please pay particular attention to sightings of ravens in the Melbourne and Outer Melbourne Area to make sure they are recorded correctly.

If anybody does have a sighting of Australian Raven close to Melbourne, please contact Ren Millsom at Birds Australia, Tel: 9347 0757 or email:

r.millsom@birdsaustralia.com.au

Bill Ramsay



This illustration of a "White-eyed Crow or Raven" comes from Walter W. Froggatt's Some Useful Australian Birds, 1921, published 46 years before the Little Raven was separated from the Australian Raven as a distinct species. So, can we tell what species the illustrated bird would be considered today? Or would we need to hear it's call?





Education Report

Education activities have been limited this quarter to a joint meeting between interested Education members of MELBOCA, Penboc and Wesboc with Annette Cook at the National Office in early June. Items were shared and we all benefited from this exchange of ideas.

Spring is coming and this brings Education activities with it. Please come and support the following two major events.

AUSTRALIAN PLANT EXPO 2011

Saturday 10 September and Sunday 11 September 2011,
10:00am – 4:00pm.

Organised by the Australian Plant Society Yarra Yarra Inc.

Huge native plant sales, books, art and other gifts too. Magnificent native flower show with displays by BOCA, Field Nats, Wildlife Victoria, etc. Speakers and workshops, activities for children. Lots of prizes to be won.

\$5 Adults, \$4 Concessions, Children free. (My helpers get free pass) Wheelchair friendly with ample car parking.

Venue:

Eltham Community & Reception Centre
801 Main Road, Eltham. (Melways 21 J6)

Website: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~apsyarrayarra>

BREAKFAST WITH THE BIRDS AT BANYULE FLATS

Sunday 23 October 2011, 7:30am

This annual event has been a joint activity between the Banyule City Council and BOCA since 1999. Come and join a bird walk that starts at 7:30am in the car park at the end of Somerset Drive, Viewbank (Melways 32 F2) and ends with breakfast at the Old Shire Offices, Beverley St, Viewbank (Melways 32 D3).

We usually see 70-80 birds before breakfast. Wear comfortable shoes and bring your binoculars.

Limit to 120 people. Usually one leader allocated to each 10 people.

Bookings essential at BOCA 9877 5342. Monday – Friday 10am -4.30pm. This is so Banyule has enough food and I know how many leaders I need. Please cancel your booking if you later find you are unable to attend.

HELP NEEDED for the above events. I need members to assist on our display at the Plant Expo and leaders to take small groups around Banyule. Please contact me on 9842 4177.

*Janet Hand
(MELBOCA Education Officer)*

GOOD HOME WANTED FOR DUPLICATE JOURNALS

When the BOCA and BA libraries merge, the journals listed below will be duplicated because we exchange and purchase many of the same journals. Expressions of interest are invited from other libraries, universities/colleges/schools, conservation organisations, LOTE organisations, or other interested persons so that we can find useful places for these publications.

Contact library@boca.org.au or library@birdsaustralia.com.au to express your interest or if you need further information.

Complete or incomplete runs of the following journals are held:

Albatross; Atlas News; Audio Wings; Audubon; Auk; Australasian Raptor Association News; Australasian Seabird Group Newsletter; Australia Plants; Australian Aviculture; Australian Bird Bander; Australian Bird Study Association Newsletter; Australian Bird Watcher; Australian Birds; Australian Field Ornithology; Australian Natural History; Australian Wildlife Research; Bird Conservation International; Bird Lover; Bird Notes; Bird Notes (& News); Bird Study; Birding; Birding in Southern Africa; Birdlife International Update; Birdlife South Africa; Birds; Birds International; Birdscapes; Birdscope; Blue Mountains Bird Observers Newsletter; Bokmakierie; Boobook; Butletti del Grup Catala d'Anellament; Canberra Bird Notes; Circus; Common Ground; Corella; Cumberland Bird Observers Club Newsletter; Drongo; Dutch Birding; Ecos; Emu; Environment South Australia; Far South Coast Birdwatchers Newsletter; Field Nats News; Forest & Bird; Fur Feathers & Fins; Gang-gang; Geelong Naturalist; GEO Australia; Glossy Black Cockatoo; He Ho Herald; Ibis; Land for Wildlife News; Living Bird; MURUK; Nature Australia; Nature in Eurobodalla; Nature Territory; North American Birds (previously named National Audubon Society Field Notes and American Birds; Northern Territory Naturalist; Notornis; OSNZ news; Ostrich; Papua New Guinea Bird Society Newsletter; Queensland Bird Notes; Queensland Ornithological Society Newsletter; RAOU Newsletter; Rivista Italiana de Ornitologia; Rotamah Island Network Newsletter; Scottish Bird News; Scottish Bird Report; Scottish Birds; South Australian Ornithologist; Southern Bird; Stilt; Strix; Sunbird; Swans; Talon Talk; Tasmanian Bird Report; Tasmanian Naturalist; Tattler; Toowoomba Bird Observers Inc. Newsletter; Torgos; Vic Babblers; Victorian Bird Report; Victorian Naturalist; Volunteer; VORG Notes; Western Australian Atlasser; Western Australian Bird Notes; Western Australian Naturalist; Wetland Warbler; Where the Regents Roam; Wilson Bulletin; Winging It; Wingspan; World Birdwatch; World Wildlife Fund Australian Newsletter; Wren; Yellow Throat.



Outing Report: Yarra Bend Park

Wednesday 8 June 2011

Fourteen birders met at the Yarra Bend Park Westfields Reserve picnic area on a cold, damp and windy day to walk the Merri Creek and Yarra River surrounds, led by Leonie Robbins, assisted by Elsmaree Baxter and Pat Smith. Again, it was found that several members were having their first look at this interesting area.

Before the walk Leonie paid tribute to the late Reg Johnson OAM who founded the Weekdays Outings in 1974 and whose recent death has been felt by many. He will be a great loss to BOCA.

Interest in the day's activities was sparked by the list provided by Leonie of the 39 species noted on a previous outing to this spot – way back in July, 2004. Our aim was to compare the birds spotted on the present outing with this past list.

As is often the case, the car park area began our recording in good form, with Musk and Rainbow Lorikeets and Noisy Miners providing a good introduction to the newcomers to our group.

We set off, well rugged up and in a hopeful mode, heading downstream along the Merri's east bank cliff top and pausing at the viewing platform.

Flowering eucalypts produced more lorikeets and miners and we 'followed the flowers' across country pausing by the fenced grassland area which promises well for the future.

Crossing the freeway via the Yarra Bend Road bridge in-

duced a touch of vertigo in a few sensitive souls but brought us out at a promising bit of shrubbery and on to the riverside path opposite the playing fields and leading us on to the confluence of the Merri and the Yarra. Red-rumped Parrot and Brown Thornbill were picked up along the way, and good views of Bell Miner and male and female Red-rumped Parrot introduced these species to our newcomers.

The day's highlight was a Crested Tern flying downstream towards Dights Falls.

On-going engineering work to rebuild the falls and construct an improved fishway to foster preservation of seven native fish species provided added interest but may have contributed to a lack of birds in this area.

We returned under the freeway and by the cycle path, making a detour across the footbridge for a short distance. Elsmaree and Pat led some of the group a little further on to check out the shrubbery on the opposite Merri Creek bank. Grey Butcherbird was seen as the footbridge was crossed.

Sheltering for lunch in the sports ground grandstand, we watched five-species fly past which included Grey and Pied Currawong. We skirted the puddle-strewn oval and crossed the Yarra via the Pipe Bridge. Bird call was held back at the grandstand – our total of 34 species was only five short of the 2004 list.

Leonie Robbins
Joint leader

Swift Change to Habitat Rules

You may have noticed over the last several months a spike in the number of Swift Parrot sightings in and around Melbourne. Swift Parrots are traditionally passing migrants in SE Australia. During the winter months, they travel across Bass Strait and through Melbourne on their way up either the west side of the Great Dividing Range to the Box-Ironbark forests in northern Victoria and New South Wales, or up the east side of the Great Dividing Range to coastal New South Wales.

It now seems, however, that they are able to remain in Melbourne for a longer period of time.

Tim Dolby, author of *Where to See Birds in Victoria* and former president of Birds Australia, suggests that this may be due to the maturing of native urban street trees such as Spotted Gum (*Corymbia maculata*), and to a less extent Yellow Gum (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*) and Mugga Ironbark (*Eucalyptus sideroxylon*).

While Spotted Gums are not indigenous to the Melbourne area, being native to the south and east coast of NSW, they have now been planted in here for such a long period, that they seem native. "They've all reached maturity," says Tim, "and the relatively good conditions in Melbourne

mean that they've been flowering heavily."

Another factor might be global warming, where, due to slight temperature changes, trees such as Spotted Gum in Melbourne start flowering in a similar pattern to areas further north and east. As a result, Tim predicts that Swift Parrot may now be considered a winter resident of Melbourne.

A similar change in habitat rules around Melbourne has recently been observed with Scarlet Honeyeater. Their preferred food source has long been present in Melbourne parks and gardens, but not until slight changes in temperature affected the flowering patterns of these plants in Melbourne did the local environment become conducive to Scarlet Honeyeater. Thus, the right plants might now be flowering for longer and at the right time to be a food source for Scarlet Honeyeater.

These two instances provide stark (and colourful) examples of the way our climate and environment are changing, even changing across relatively short historical spans, proving that nothing can be taken for granted.



Outing report: Woodlands Historic Park, Glenvale

18 July, 2011

The western horizon was clearing, though grey clouds still stood overhead, as 22 birdwatchers met in the cold car park. Geoff Russell had nobly stepped into the breach at very short notice when our scheduled leader, Graeme Hosken, was taken ill.

The car park was filled with calls. Lorikeets included Purple-crowned, Rainbow and Musk while Crimson and Eastern Rosella and Red-rumped Parrot added more parrots. Cockatoos were represented by Galah, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo and both Little and Long-billed Corella. Australian Wood Duck disputed tree space with lorikeets and cockatoos while Little Raven and White-plumed Honeyeater called in the trees and Superb Fairy-wren in the understorey.

The introduced species, Common Myna and Common Starling were also prominent, to our regret. There seemed little reason to leave the car park, but still, we set off. The bird list included few honeyeaters, probably because the eucalypts were bearing nuts and buds but no visible blossom. After so many years of dry walking it was a pleasant challenge to be coping with puddles and potentially slippery ground. Bright green moss covered the ground beneath the trees and Common Froglet was heard by the creek. Eastern Grey Kangaroo mobs watched us warily but didn't panic. The fauna list for the area included cat and fox – we saw scat of rabbit and fox but no cat traces. An amusing verbal slip led to "Purple-crowned" becoming renamed "Blue Bonnet", but the actual sighting was the thing.

Up to the homestead where we were met by Claire, who talked of the history of the property and of its current life

as *Living Legends* where famous retired race horses are agisted. Claire also doubled as a barista, turning out coffees for those who wanted them. This led to the request that future weekday outings include a mid-morning cappuccino break! Hmm. After we toured around the open parts of the homestead, it was downhill again to our car park and lunch, though not after sampling the delights of a "purple patch" with lots of activity. Magpie-lark, Welcome Swallow and Tree Martin joined most lists and a small group of White-winged Chough was unexpected. The car park added Laughing Kookaburra and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike during lunch and then it was time to drive to Providence Rd and look for robins.

After a good search, most people saw brilliantly-coloured male Flame and Red-capped Robin and several of the group added a female Scarlet to the day's list. At least one smiling member added a life "tick". White-throated Treecreeper and Yellow-rumped Thornbill were also foraging in the area. A negative sighting was an active feral honey bee nest in a burned trunk.

Back to the cars and bird call but we weren't done yet. The obligatory bird call sighting of a Wedge-tailed Eagle interrupted proceedings. We resumed, but another call. Tawny Frogmouth! A pair sat quietly and characteristically on a branch behind the group. Once the calling was over we claimed 51 species for the day and thanked Geoff very much for his sterling efforts for the day.

Diane Tweeddale
Convenor MELBOCA Weekdays Outings

Bonus for Banyule

There was good news in the Friends of Banyule autumn newsletter with a report that Banyule City Council will provide \$50,000 funding in their 2011/2012 Council Budget for Stage 1 of a Banyule Flats Heritage and Environment Study for Local State and National Heritage status.

Together with Warringal Conservation Society and Protectors of Public Lands Victoria, the "Friends" have been campaigning strongly on the issue of protecting the parklands from inappropriate development and providing these beautiful and unique areas with the recognition they deserve. This is the first step towards this important recognition.

The Banyule Flats parkland is a favourite destination for MELBOCA-organised outings and this is great news for all Melbourne birders.



Red-capped Robin at Woodlands Historic Park on 25 June 2011. Photo by Merrilyn Serong



Beginners Outings

Braeside Park 20 May 2011

Community volunteers were already busy planting around the car park as twenty-three members arrived on a cold misty morning for the outing to Braeside Park.

Our group set off down Cypress Drive and soon reached a number of huge old stags of River Red Gums which provided perches and nesting hollows for several parrot species, thus giving the beginners excellent views of Red-rumped Parrots and Eastern Rosellas. Australian Wood Ducks were also much in evidence as they too investigated the aerial real estate.

The weather improved as the group reached the bird hide where it was good to see plenty of water after the years of drought. From the hide, many waterbirds could be seen, including Pied Cormorant and Australasian Grebe. From outside, an Australasian Darter and a Whistling Kite were seen flying overhead, whilst a Fan-tailed Cuckoo perched nearby.

A few smaller bush birds such as Grey Fantail and Silver-eye were seen on the return walk to the car park.

After lunch, most of the group drove to the southern car park and scopes were carried to the nearby wetlands where there was plenty to see. Highlights included an immature Great Crested Grebe, Blue-billed Ducks and Great Cormorant.

The large trees near the car park were searched in vain for the resident Tawny Frogmouth. However, Cattle Egrets sighted nearby beyond an ephemeral wetland were an unexpected bonus. It provided a satisfying conclusion to a great day birding on which fifty-five species were recorded.

Woodlands Historic Park 25 June 2011

Several pairs of Red-rumped Parrots claiming nest hollows in the massive, old River Red Gums by the car park were joined by four Purple-crowned Lorikeets, easily seen by those present. This provided an exciting start to the Beginners Outing at Woodlands Historic Park where the

weather was bright and sunny, with little wind, making ideal conditions for bird watching.

Many small birds, such as Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Red-browed Finch and Superb Fairy-wren were feeding on the ground as we walked the banks of Moonee Ponds Creek. Moving away from the creek and beginning the climb towards the old Homestead, a Brown Falcon was observed perched in a nearby tree, shortly to be joined by its mate.

Two Fan-tailed Cuckoos were visible in bushes nearby, whilst up in the paddocks near Woodlands Homestead a huge mob of Eastern Grey Kangaroos were reclining amongst the "Living Legends" retired racehorses.

As the group returned to the car park for lunch, a Brown Goshawk flew overhead, shortly followed by a pair of Brown Falcons, no doubt those spotted earlier in the walk. The species count for the morning was 39, including a female Red-capped Robin.

After lunch, almost the entire group drove the short distance to the other side of the Park, near Gellibrand Hill, in the expectation of seeing robins. We were not to be disappointed.

First, a pair of Tawny Frogmouths was separately seen in a tree next to the cemetery car park. Then, alongside the track heading towards the wildlife enclosure, several Flame Robins were seen, then Red-capped Robins, followed by Scarlet Robins! Beginners were able to get good views of males and females of each species, appearing just as shown in the field guide.

Once inside the enclosure, many more robins were seen, often in mixed groups, and a local expert pointed out a Red-capped Robin's nest from a previous season. As the group returned to their cars, yet more robins were seen and everyone agreed it had been an exceptionally rewarding day in this somewhat unusual tract of "bush" close to Melbourne Airport. Forty-four species were recorded for the day.

Leaders, Hazel and Alan Veevers

Member's Choice Segment – Call for Contributors

Every fourth Tuesday of every month, at the MELBOCA branch meeting, we dedicate five to ten minutes for a Member's Choice segment. This segment is an opportunity for members to share a topic of particular interest to them with all of us.

We are currently on the look out for contributors for this segment. It could be a bird species you have a special interest in. It could be a report on a recent tour, either in Australia or abroad.

Perhaps there is an area that you've been visiting for many years that you'd like to share. Or maybe you have a collection of birding photographs. A tale of birding obsession? A quest? Or just a question? Let us know!

Sunny Fernie is the coordinator, so if you think you have a topic that would make for a suitable Member's Choice segment, or just want to run some ideas past us, please get in touch with Sunny through MELBOCA on email info@melboca.org.au or by phone **03 9592 7728**.



Vale Reg Johnson OAM 1921-2011 :

As was so aptly put by the celebrant at Reg's farewell, he was a man on a dash through life. He would not die wondering. He tackled many things. He loved his family, his garden, his bush block out back of Nagambie. Many members have enjoyed Reg and Kathleen's hospitality there. He was very proud of his WWII RAAF service when he was a Lancaster pilot, and oozed knowledge of Victoria gained from his years in the Lands Department.

His concern for the land and wildlife led him, at age 54, to pick up the chain for Conservation in this state, for which he received his Order of Australia medal. Read elsewhere that worthy story. He loved and served BOCA, and said it had given him and Kathleen untold pleasure and lifelong friendships.

Through BOCA, Reg and Kathleen travelled to many parts of Australia. He loved a plan; one sniff of an outing and he bubbled with enthusiasm. He played tennis in his prime, he



bowled, he swam; he propagated umpteen plants for stalls to help the less able. He was an active member

of Warrigal Conservation Society, joining in many submissions to council and many a working bee.

Late in life he was a valued member of Latrobe University's Animal Ethics Committee till he pulled the plug aged 80.

He liked things to be shipshape and was a man moulded by his humble beginnings in the Mallee. And when the job was done he liked nothing better than being the joker – writing a song, doing a skit, waitressing in black dress and pinny.

He will be missed by the members of his prostate cancer support group to whom he brought his usual cheer. And his last act of commitment led to his death – he was helping a PhD student from Albury with his bush bird records for her thesis, *Birds of the Goulburn Valley*.

He achieved so much. Always on a dash, and giving us a big dash of colour. Thanks, Reg.

Daphne Hards

Outing Report: Crosbie Nature Conservation Reserve and Mt Ida, Heathcote

11 May 2011

With a forecast for Melbourne of rain, hail, and snow down to 700m, it was not a good day to go birding north of the Divide. The meeting point was 10:00am at Heathcote, with the temperature round 11°C and no rain. **Pat Bingham**, the leader for the day, handed out to the six that braved the proposed weather a brochure called *Forest Notes – Heathcote and Rushworth State Forests*, indicating the southern section of the Crosbie Forest that we would be visiting: Box-Ironbark country.

On arrival at the forest, approximately 20km north of Heathcote, only a few tree species were in flower, but due to recent rains, trees looked very healthy with strong leaf regrowth. Nectar feeders were almost absent, only White-plumed Honeyeater and Noisy Miner present but on the ground it was a different story, robins were plentiful, with Scarlet, Red-capped, Flame and Eastern Yellow recorded. At one stage, a Red-capped Robin male showed a contrast in colour as it perched on the side of a blackened Ironbark.

A species of orb spider were very active with their large

meter square webs between the trees. Fortunately all were noticed preventing entanglement and a possible cry for help. A Painted Button-quail was flushed from an area showing the characteristic small hollows this species makes in the soft soil.

Other areas in the forest also showed where the button-quail had been making the depressions but no more were flushed. King Parrots were recorded, being an occasional visitor to the area, and a lone White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike was the highlight for the morning, being a new species for two observers in the party.

At lunch, the tally for the morning was 44 species. Not bad for a cold, late Autumn morning.

A patch of bush on the corner of the road to Mt Ida from the Northern Highway was our afternoon stop with possible sightings of Speckled Warbler and Diamond Firetail. We were rewarded with the latter, a new one for the day, a single bird initially heard calling. Again, a Painted Button

Continued over page



Dates to remember

Weekday Outings

Tue. 16 Aug. – Coranderrk Bushland, Badger Creek

10:00am to 3:00pm (Mel 278 F8). Leader Arthur Carew. Meet in main car park Healesville Sanctuary. Bushland gate locked 10.10am *sharp* till 3pm. Toilets available. *Contact Diane, 03 9836 8692.*

Wed. 7 Sept. – Wonthaggi

10:00am to 3:00pm (Mel X912 R12. Vicroads 102 C3/ 713 P6). Leader Nola Thorpe. Park near toilet in Guide Park on South Dudley Rd. Convoy. *Contact Diane, 03 9836 8692.*

Tue, 20 Sept. – Pound Bend, Warrandyte

10:00am to 3:00pm (Mel 23 A11). Leader Hazel & Alan Veevers. Enter from Pound Rd, park near toilet. *Contact Diane, 03 9836 8692.*

Tue. 4 Oct. – Three Chain Rd area

10:00am to 3:00pm (Mel X910 L8; Vicroads 60 H6). Leader John Prytherch. Meet start of Three Chain Rd (about 4km N of Kilmore) at Kilmore-Broadford Rd C311. Bear right off Northern Hwy 3km N of Kilmore. Toilets Kilmore. Convoy. *Contact Diane, 03 9836 8692.*

Wed. 19 Oct. – Banyule Flats, Viewbank

10:00am to 3:00pm (Mel 32 F2). Leader Lyn Easton. Enter from Somerset Dve via Banyule Rd. No toilets. *Contact Diane, 03 9836 8692.*

Mon. 7 Nov. – You Yangs Regional Park

10:00am to 3:00pm (Mel page 11 C12). Leader Peter Gibbon. Enter from Branch Rd, park near toilets. Convoy. *Contact Diane, 03 9836 8692.*

Mon. 29 Nov. – Mill Park Lakes, South Morang

10:00am to 3:00pm (Mel 183 A8). Leaders Pauline and Arthur Spurgeon. Enter The Promenade car park from The Lakes Bvd. No public toilets. *Contact Diane, 03 9836 8692.*

Wed. 7 Dec. – Karkarook Park, Heatherton

10:00am to 3:00pm (Mel 78 D8). Leader Diane Tweeddale. Enter from Fairchild St off Warrigal Rd. Park near toilets. *Contact Diane, 03 98368692*

Beginners Outings

Sat. 27 Aug. – Lillydale Lake

10:00am (Mel 38 G7). Meet first car park on left off Swansea Road. *Contact Hazel, info@melboca.org.au*

Sat. 24 Sept. – Jumping Creek, Warrandyte

10:00am (Mel 24 A10). Meet in car park by toilets. *Contact Hazel, info@melboca.org.au.*

Sat. 22 Oct. -- 100 Acres Reserve, Park Orchards

10:00am (Mel 35 E9). Meet in the car park to the right at Domeney Reserve, Knees Road. *Contact Hazel, info@melboca.org.au.*

Sat. 26 Nov. – You Yangs Regional Park

10:00am (Mel key map page 11, C12). Meet in the first car park on the left, just past the Information Centre. *Contact Hazel. info@melboca.org.au.*

Birdwalk at Yellingbo Reserve (Contact Maryanne, 0402 283 080)

First Sunday of the month (4 Sep., 2 Oct., 6 Nov.)

Take Warburton Hwy to Woori Yallock and 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 at 10:00am. Walk starts at 10:30am. On-site toilets available. Bring lunch and gumboots. Mel 305 G11.

MELBOCA branch 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).

See page two of this edition of *The Melbirdian* for more details, including upcoming guest speakers.

Continued from over page

-quail was flushed, but not observed by all present.

A wire fence made a good perch for Jacky Winters and Scarlet Robins, and on the ground, a party of White-winged Chough, another tick for the day. Sixteen species were recorded at the Mt Ida site, with the two additional here, taking the total for the day to 46 species.

For members unable to attend the outing, a springtime visit is recommended. Drop into the Visitor's Centre at Heathcote and pick up the following brochures: *Forest Notes – Heathcote and Rushworth State Forests* and, *Birds – Discovery Guide to Heathcote Forests*, both offer excellent information for the area.

Graeme Hosken
Recorder for the day



Contact

Mailing address:

MELBOCA
C/O BOCA National Office
PO Box 185
Nunawading VIC 3131

The Melbirdian editor,
Andrew Fuhrmann, can be
contacted at the above
address or via email at
melbirdian@gmail.com

MELBOCA Committee:

President

Graeme Hosken
info@melboca.org.au
tel: 9802 5250

Secretary

Janet Hand

Treasurer

Bill Ramsay

Members

Sunny Fernie

Andrew Fuhrmann

Diane Tweeddale

Sonja Ross

John Young

We're on the Web!

www.melboca.org.au



MELBOCA is the
Melbourne Branch of Bird
Observation &
Conservation Australia

Dandenong Catchment Survey

April to June 2011

How the seasons have changed during the past three months! As indicated in the last report, water levels had been high due to heavy, persistent rain in January, but levels have now stabilised. At some sites, where below average levels have been recorded, rocks, logs and mud banks have been exposed for species to either rest on, or, in the latter case, as a place to feed. In June, temperatures dropped to zero on some survey days, with frost covering the grasslands. It took survey team members' feet a while to thaw out after their mornings' survey.

At Kilberry, the frost didn't deter a small flock of Yellow-rumped Thornbill from feeding on the ground, a species not often recorded at any of the wetlands.

The June survey at River Gum saw the return of Australasian Shoveler and Hardhead, which have been missing there for nearly 18 months. Perhaps this could be a sign that species are returning to the south after a successful breeding during the floods to the north. Hardhead were also recorded each month at Waterford Wetland.

New species keep popping up at individual wetlands with an Eastern Great Egret noted at Waterford Wetland in June, a Collared Sparrowhawk at Hallam Valley Rd, Spotted Pardalote at Kilberry, Little Corella at Waterford Wetlands and Brown Falcon at South Golf Links Rd in May. In April, Spotted Pardalote was new at River Gum and South Golf Links Rd with Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and Grey Fantail firsts at River Gum.

A Golden Whistler decided to turn up at three sites this period. It was previously recorded on a non-survey day during a MELBOCA outing at River Gum; it is now official, being seen on a survey day at South Golf Links Rd in April, River Gum in May and Hallam Valley Rd in June.

A Pied Currawong, only recorded at Frog Hollow previously, was noted at Waterford Wetlands during May and June. Flame Robins found their way to River Gum in April, Kilberry and South Golf Links Rd in May as new species,

and as a previously recorded species at Hallam Valley Rd in April and June.

On non-survey days the following species were recorded during the period:

- Brown Quail at River Gum (a new species for all MELBOCA sites);
- Common Bronzewing at South Golf Links Rd;
- Little Egret and Striated Pardalote at Kilberry.

At the end of June, the following MELBOCA sites have recorded the following number of bird species on survey days:

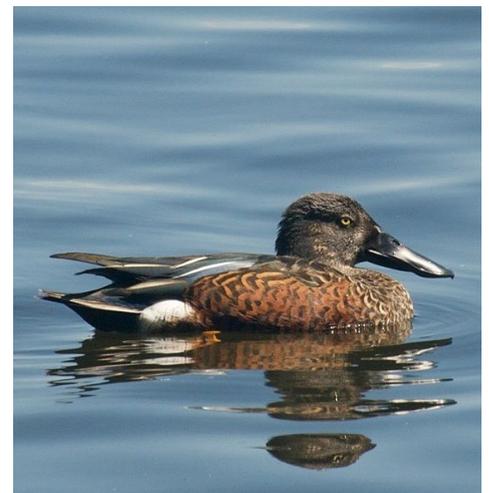
FH – 85, KB – 69, RGC – 106,
SGR – 101, HVR – 104, WW – 55

The total for the six MELBOCA sites across both survey and non-survey days now stands at 145.

The Dandenong Catchment Survey was to end after four years in operation in June 2011, but volunteers surveying 8 of the 10 wetlands, six of which are surveyed by MELBOCA, have agreed to extend the operation until December this year. Due to the amalgamation of BOCA and BA, there may be the possibility of securing funding to continue this worthwhile project for at least another three years.

A full tally of all species recorded may be found on the MELBOCA website www.melboca.org.au

Graeme Hosken



Australasian Shoveller. Photo, Wikipedia

The *Melbirdian* is published four times a year. Member birding-related stories and articles are invited. The deadline for receipt of information for inclusion in the Summer Edition is 17 October 2011.

