

# BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter

Volume 1 Number 1 June 2012

## Western Port Survey

Since its inception in 1973 the Western Port Survey has provided regular counts of waterbirds from various daytime high-tide roost sites throughout Western Port.

In the initial few years of the survey some of the highest counts were recorded. Several major events have impacted on the local environment. The loss of seagrass beds beginning in late 1970s (causes unknown) impacted on many species. Seagrass (*Zostera* species) is extremely important as it stabilises the substrate, improves water quality, reduces turbidity, acts as a nursery for fish and is a food source for herbivores. Closure of several open refuse sites also began as Hastings tip closed in late 1970s effecting scavenging species. Reduced rainfall between 1997 to 2009 caused local swamps to dry out and reduced water inflows. Commercial fishing in Western Port ceased in 2007.

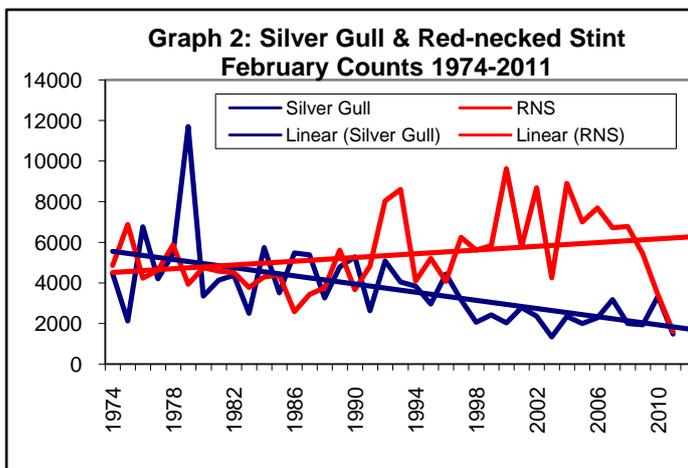
Western Port Waterbirds 1974-10 (Graph 1, over page) shows the "long term" winter counts and trends for Little Pied Cormorant, Pacific Gull and Red-capped Plover from the fishers, gulls and waders guilds. Little Pied Cormorant mainly eat small fish in shallow waters and their numbers have not recovered from the seagrass crash. Pacific Gulls eat fish, crustaceans and may scavenge, show several increases, however the overall trend line for both is down. Red-capped Plover a small littoral zone specialist appears slightly down.

Silver Gull numbers peak in February and Graph 2 (below) initially showed increasing numbers of these opportunistic scavengers, followed by a large and sustained decline, probably due to tip closures. Numbers of Red-neck Stint also peak in February as this small Holarctic wader migrates after breeding to spend the Austral summer in Western Port. Following several successful breeding seasons in the Arctic from mid 1990s onwards the trend line is increasing, but the last three years show a significant decline and this is very



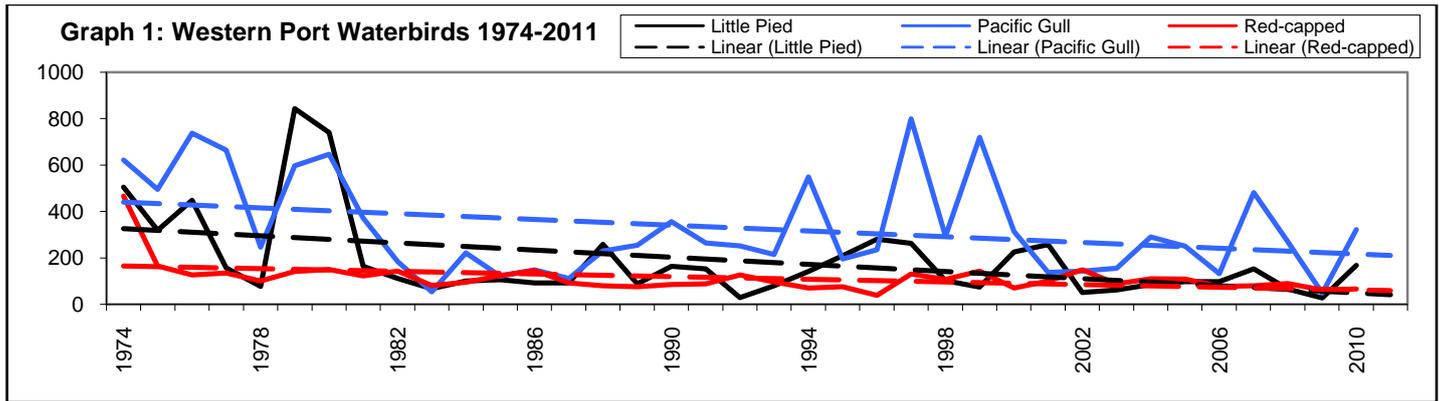
Some Curlew Sandpipers spend the austral summer in Western Port and moult their worn feathers prior returning to the Arctic breeding grounds. Chris Wickham, Trish Teesdale and Uris Ozols scanning for waterbirds at Stockyard Point, note the mangroves in the shallows (Photos: XD)

concerning. Perhaps local factors along their "supply routes" as they migrate to and from their breeding grounds in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (Minton et al, 2006) are most significant. Graph 3 (over page) also shows February counts for the last 21 years. The herbivorous Black Swan, breeding in adjacent wetlands, uses Western Port as a summer refuge, and declined significantly after seagrass losses (data not shown) but were recovering by 1995, before further declines. Although mapping of seagrass beds show recoveries in various sites (BOCA, 2003; Hansen et al, 2011) perhaps all is still not well or birds have moved away. For the small Palearctic breeding



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Curlew Sandpiper all is most certainly not well numerically. After several good breeding years in 1990s the last decade has shown a consistent decline. For example, in 1996 over 7000 birds were counted whereas in 2011 only 36. Optimistically this may be due to the recent abundance of ephemeral wetlands occurring over much of inland Australia following exceptional rain events Curlew Sandpipers and other species including Sharp-tailed Sandpipers (Minton, Jessop, Hassel, 2011) have not needed to continue onto their traditional "R&R" sites in SE Australia, but this remains to be seen. Declining figures from New South Wales have already resulted in applications to have the Curlew Sandpiper placed on the Endangered Species list in New South Wales (Dawes, 2011).

Graph 4 (below) shows 1990-2010 count and trends for three waders. Although the long term (1974-2010) trend for Bar-tailed Godwit is positive (data not shown), the last 20 year period now shows a decline. The migrating population of Double-banded Plover from the inland regions of South Island New Zealand to SE Australia (Barter & Minton, 1987; Pierce, 1999), also shows a similar small decline. Although the long term trend for Red-capped Plover was slightly down (Graph 1, above) the 20 year has improved and is stable.

Most of the potential threats to waterbirds in Western Port concern people, pests and pollution. Climate change will undoubtedly cause very significant loss of high tide roosts. Continuing observations and analysis are essential to provide unique insights into the health or otherwise of this remarkable embayment. The Western Port Survey will continue to need dedicated observers and reliable access to a suitable boat to continue counting Barralier Island and other new and potentially vital roosting sites.

As this is a very brief and selective update full details are available in Wings over Western Port (BOCA, 2003; Dennett

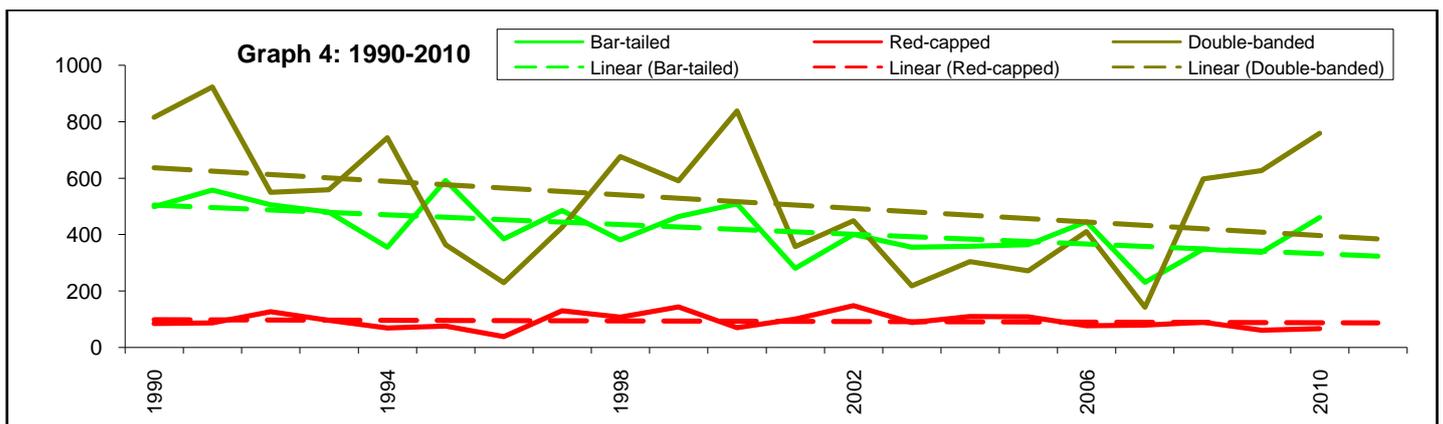
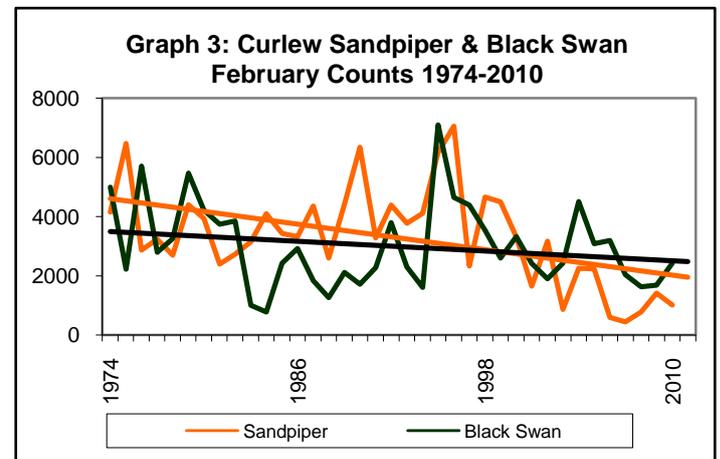
and Loyn, 2009).

It is a pleasure to thank Richard Loyn for initiating the project and for continuing to "provide the glue", Laurie Living for maintaining the database, the coordinators and all the dedicated volunteers who have made it possible - to you all, thank you.

*Dr Xenia Dennett, BOCA WPS Coordinator*

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# Welcome to BirdLife Melbourne

## The inaugural BirdLife Melbourne committee meeting was held on 10 April

I can now say that BirdLife Melbourne is up and running. Emails between committee members and BirdLife Australia have been running hot.

The first business of the Committee was to decide on office bearers and co-ordinators for the various activities and functions carried out by BirdLife Melbourne. From the list opposite it can be seen that BirdLife Melbourne plans to continue with all MELBOCA activities and the BA Vic Group Melbourne-based activities.

The Committee is aware that there is a lot to get through in the next few months so the members have agreed to meet monthly until August and then revert to bi-monthly meetings.

At present we have nine committee members and we would welcome a few more. Please consider stepping forward. Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month, commencing 7:30pm at BirdLife Australia National Office.

By the time this edition of the newsletter is published, the BirdLife Melbourne homepage on the BirdLife Australia Website should provide contact details for committee members and co-ordinators. To check these out, and for all the latest on what is happening in your branch, go to [www.birdlife.org.au](http://www.birdlife.org.au) and select 'Victoria' from the menu at the bottom, and then 'BirdLife Melbourne' from the list of Victorian Branches displayed. A link at the bottom of the BirdLife Melbourne Home Page will take you to the 'Local Website' of BirdLife Melbourne.

Hopefully the Committee will provide you with what you expect as BirdLife Melbourne Members. If you have any questions or any issues of concern, please talk to a committee member, or send us an email on [melbourne@birdlife.org.au](mailto:melbourne@birdlife.org.au)

*Bill Ramsay*  
*President/Convenor*  
*tel: 9803 1493*  
*email: [melbourne@BirdLife.org.au](mailto:melbourne@BirdLife.org.au)*

## VOLUNTEER FOR THE BIRDLIFE MELBOURNE NEWSLETTER

We are urgently seeking some fresh faces to help us put together the newsletter. Currently we're looking for volunteers who can help out at all stages of the editorial process.

If you are looking for a way to advance your communication skills, contribute further to the birding community and meet with a fascinating array of contributors, then consider volunteering with the BirdLife Melbourne editorial team.

Contact current editor Andrew Fuhrmann on 0413 138 578 or email at [melbourne@BirdLife.org.au](mailto:melbourne@BirdLife.org.au).

# The Committee

## Appointed at the Committee Meeting on 10 April

President/Convenor	Bill Ramsay
Vice President/Deputy Convenor	Stuart Dashper
Secretary	Fiona Parkin
Treasurer	To be advised
Newsletter Editor	Andrew Fuhrmann
Other Committee Members	Tim Bawden, Alan Crawford, Chris Lester, Sonja Ross, John Young

## Appointed Positions

Assistant Newsletter Editors	Penny Johns, Barbara Burns & Naomi Hall
Activities Coordinator	Tim Bawden
Balwyn Meetings Guest Speaker & Member's Topic Coordinator	John Young
Carlton Meetings Guest Speaker Coordinator	Fiona Parkin
Communications Officer	Fiona Parkin
Conservation Liaison Officer	Stuart Dashper
Education Officer	Janet Hand
Beginners' Outings Leaders	Hazel & Alan Veevers
Eastern Treatment Plant Surveys Leader	Mike Carter
Melbourne Water Wetlands Surveys Coordinator	Graeme Hosken
Weekdays Outings Coordinator	Diane Tweeddale
Yellingbo Bird Walk Coordinator	Maryanne Anderson
The You Yangs Birding & Boneseeding Leader	Merrilyn Serong
Photography Group Coordinator	Sonja Ross
Website Manager	To be advised



Eastern Great Egret,  
Trin Warren Tam-boore, Royal Park

# Education Report

Your Education volunteers have been out and about promoting our new "BirdLife" identity.

In March, Graeme Hosken travelled to Ballarat to give a presentation "A Challenging Count" about our annual Challenge Count in December. In April, he delivered a training program on identifying "The birds of Blackburn Lake". I have given two PowerPoint presentations on local birds and how to identify them to the Bupa Aged Care facility in Croydon and the Burwood Evening VIEW Club. On 2 May a small group distributed brochures and shared information at the Whitehorse Volunteers Day at the Box Hill Town Hall. We have other activities planned for later in the year and you will hear about these closer to the date.

We are always looking for volunteers to assist us with talks and walks and also we would like to hear from organisations and school groups who need speakers about birds and related topics. If you have any spare time or contacts please speak to Annette Cook (Education Manager at BirdLife Australia) or myself.

*Janet Hand*  
*BirdLife Melbourne Education Officer*  
*tel: 9842 4177*

## Branch Liaison Officer

BirdLife Australia has now appointed Fiona Blandford as Branch Liaison Officer.

Fiona begins in the role 1 June 2012.

The Branch Liaison Officer will manage relations between the National Office and the various BirdLife branches, special interest groups, observatories and reserves, providing support and advice.

She will also be our first point of contact for support and advice on conservation and education issues, activities, finance, occupational health and safety and governance.

Fiona will already be known to many members – she worked with Birds Australia for nearly two years.

Her experience includes working with volunteers at BA, BOCA and BirdLife, and working on community projects, including as a Board member for Seventh Gallery in Melbourne. She can be contacted with branch-related queries at [branchliaison@BirdLife.org.au](mailto:branchliaison@BirdLife.org.au).

### Correction

On page 5 of the final *The Melbirdian*, number 79, the VNPA is described as celebrating its fiftieth anniversary in 2012. John Stirling, who was a VNPA Councillor at the time and chaired the fiftieth anniversary celebration committee ten years ago, writes to inform us that this should read sixtieth anniversary.



## Balwyn Meetings

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

Date	Guest Speaker	Topic
22 May	Lindy Lumsden	Bats, fascinating creatures of the night
26 Jun.	Mark Antos	What's happening in the long grass – the changing fortunes of grassland birds in Victoria's northern plains
24 Jul.	TBA	TBA
28 Aug.	Marian Weaving	Tawny Frogmouths. Marian is a PhD Candidate from Deakin University who has been monitoring breeding Tawny Frogmouths in the Melbourne area. Currently she is monitoring 54 breeding pairs.
25 Sep.	Dr Jenny Lau	Volunteering and bird monitoring. What's in it for birds? Jenny is BirdLife Australia's Head of Conservation. For several years Jenny has been reporting on data collected by volunteers for the Melbourne Water Wetlands Surveys.

**The Member's Topic** segment is a five- to fifteen-minute slot before the guest speaker for BirdLife Melbourne members to share a topic of their choice with the meeting. 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, a favourite birding spot, a collection of birding photographs, a tale of birding obsession or even just a question you'd like answered? Let us know!

John Young is the coordinator, so if you think you have a topic that would make for a suitable Member's Topic segment, or just want to run some ideas past us, please get in touch on email [melbourne@birdlife.org.au](mailto:melbourne@birdlife.org.au) or by phone **03 9844 2842**.

*(Photo, Balwyn meeting, John Stirling)*

## Balwyn Meeting Reports

### 24 January 2012

The attendees were welcomed to this, the first BirdLife Melbourne Balwyn meeting, by **Sonja Ross**; and we applauded a visitor in our midst. Sonja asked me, **Daphne Hards**, to come forward to present my Members Topic segment about feathers.

The main speaker was **Chris Lester**, relating his September 2011 trip to Uganda, titled *Birding in the Pearl of Africa*. Their guide for five weeks was Brian Finch, based in Kenya. The tour started in Kampala, the capital, and they spent a couple of days looking around the city, the port of Entebbe, and islands on Lake Victoria. Good birds whetted the appetite. Their itinerary was first to go north towards Kenya, and then visit parks down the western border, where the land rises in parts.

They flew to Kidepo Valley NP where recent rain left the country very wet and green. The lodge was excellent. They saw Abyssinian Grand Hornbill, Abyssinian White-eye and Long-crested Eagles; and many animals. The scene at sunset looked magnificent, peaceful; but because they were close to South Sudan they had to be accompanied by guards with AK47s.



Long-crested Eagle  
(photo, Wikipedia)

The next birding spot was Murchison Falls NP; in the Victoria Nile, hippopotami. Up on the plateau were great animals and a breathtaking collection of birds. On a boat-trip they saw Purple and Goliath Heron, and Long-tailed Cormorant. Elephant made an awesome appearance.

In Semuliki NP they birded in steaming rainforest; then next to Kibali Forest NP, where they joined a chimpanzee trek. The rangers located 10-20 animals, the mixed group led by the dominant male. They were strikingly noisy. Chimps are territorial over feeding sites and the troop got anxious about the approach of baboons, and left. The rangers found another photogenic family.

In Queen Elizabeth NP the prime focus was a boat trip, which turned out to be very rich in waterbirds. A lioness lazed, hippos wallowed and crocodiles lurked in the shallows. Many water-birds and waders were found in this riverine habitat.

### Feathers – in a class of their own

For the past two years Daphne Hards has been preparing bird skins to add to our impressive skin collection, and wished to promote this resource. A brief summary of the procedure led to examples of Tawny Frogmouth plumage, adult versus juvenile. In layman's terms it was demonstrated how a feather grows out of the skin, emphasising that it is the most complex skin appendage in the animal kingdom. A diagram showing the timescale of evolution had insects emerging 300million years ago, and the appearance of feathers on Archaeopteryx at 150 million years ago. So perfect in design, the feather remains virtually unchanged; and affords a bird aerodynamic lift, insulation and display colour. So wowed am I by bird plumage that it seems fair to conclude with "feathers, in a class of their own".

*Member's Topic Segment, January 2012*

In the far SW corner of Uganda is Bwindi NP. The accommodation just outside the park was mediocre but the spotlighting and day-birding were excellent. The local guide assisted in brief views of Red-chested Fluff-tail. At higher altitude they walked 7km in to a swamp area to see the globally threatened African Green Broadbill.

While at Bwindi NP they went on a gorilla watch. After walking one hour a family group was located, firstly up in the trees feeding. About 20 Mountain Gorillas descended and entered into grooming and playing. The silverback male was very impressive and unconcerned. One hour's observation came up to all Chris' expectations of a lifetime event.

They returned to Kampala via Lake Mburo NP where more great mammals and birds were seen.

**Pat Bingham** came forward to thank Chris. Sonja invited **Graeme Hosken** to report on the Melbourne Water surveys, Challenge Count results and Interesting Sightings. Sonja covered outings and camps.

*Daphne Hards*

### 28 February 2012

The February BirdLife Melbourne Balwyn meeting got off to a flying start with **John Young** at the helm. He introduced **Merrilyn Serong** to tell us about the Boneseed program at The You Yangs, which she co-ordinates.

The main speaker was **Chris Doughty**, who always delights with his tour presentations. Chris has lead 186 birding tours and has ticked 7000 species across the globe; in September 2011 he sought to satisfy another passion and offered a tour to Ladakh, Northern India, in search of the Snow Leopard. While looking for this rare mammal Chris counted on the group seeing lots of special birds, and they were splendidly rewarded.

Grab the atlas – Ladakh is the eastern part of Jammu-Kashmir, so far north as to be north of the Himalayas. They flew into the capital, Leh, and had a day looking round the ancient city. Next day they visited sites along the Indus Valley including Trisul Lake, where there were plenty of migratory birds in passage; and then Shey Marshes where they saw Temminck's Stint. Leaving Leh, they journeyed southward and upward towards Tsokar Lake, and en route



**Black-necked Crane,  
Brahmaputra Valley,  
1938 (photo, Wikipedia)**

visited Thiksey Monastery, home to some great birds. At Tang Lang La Pass at 5,350m, there was a flock of Brandt's Mountain-Finch. Coming to Tsokar Lake the party camped at 4595m, and spotted some special birds on a late ramble – Tibetan Sandgrouse and the endangered Black-necked Crane. Next day at the lake they saw grebe, ducks, some waders and five Tibetan Grey Wolf; and then returned to Leh before the six day search for Snow Leopard in Hemis National Park.

Helping them in their quest was guide, Smanla, a native of the park who is part of the Snow Leopard Conservancy, which counts and protects the leopards in these high-altitude deserts. Chris's group set off for their base camp in Rumbak Valley, with their bodies every day acclimatising to the thin oxygen. On a short walk they had good views of Blue Sheep, which are the favourite prey of the Snow Leopard. The following day they explored Tarbung Valley, with special birds to reward the tough going. Next day they hiked in the Husing Valley, and though no leopards, Spotted Rose-finch were added to the excellent bird list. At dinner time Smanla spotted their first Snow Leopard high on a cliff above camp – great excitement! On day four they hiked to a tiny isolated outpost, Urutse, 3810m, where Chris was delighted to find Coca Cola for sale! And here they enjoyed a homestay.

Next morning they climbed up to Kandala Pass at 5029m, and back to their base camp in Rumbak Valley. A gruelling day rewarded with great birding. On their last full day they planned to explore Rumbak village, and on the way Smanla spotted a Snow Leopard on the mountainside. They had four hours watching this magnificent animal, Chris topping it off with a Coke! Then Back to Leh and home.

**Dianne Tweeddale** gave the vote of thanks, and John brought the meeting to a supper closure.

*Daphne Hards*

### 27 March 2012

**Dianne Tweeddale** led this meeting and welcomed Rodger Scott to the microphone for a Member's Topic segment mysteriously titled, "The Bird Week That Wasn't". Dianne then introduced our CEO, **Graeme Hamilton**, to give his take on the merger. Graeme's credentials include a zoology degree from La Trobe University, and post-graduate degrees

from London and Queensland Universities. His career has encompassed public sector management, ecological research and university teaching; and after being Chief Plant Protection Officer for the Australian Government in Canberra, he joined Birds Australia(BA) as CEO in 2004. Following the merger vote in May 2011 Graeme agreed to be joint CEO of BA and BOCA. He titled his talk "*The Merger: 1 + 1 = 11*", meaning that the combined organisation had little to lose and much to gain.

Reasons for the merger were primarily to create a stronger voice for bird conservation, and to pool resources for conservation and education. Financial reasons were not uppermost, however it makes sense to reduce waste in administrative costs. Graeme believes there is great scope to rethink and reinvent in all areas – to embrace change.

The current activity at BirdLife Australia stems directly from the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan:

1. Promotion of the appreciation and understanding of Australian birds.
2. We have 10,000+ members, and Graeme would like to promote and expand regional groups.
3. Improve outcomes for birds through science, research, advocacy and education.
4. Graeme is already noticing recognition of BirdLife Australia at the highest levels.
5. To make BirdLife Australia a well-known organisation, with financial strength and efficiency.



Market research has shown that 4% of those surveyed are passionate about birds, but 80% had not heard of BA or BOCA. Most indicated that they were interested in learning more about birds, but are not keen on group activity. Graeme believes that our website will be the key to engaging these bird fanciers. Already a webcam showing the day to day activity at a White-bellied Sea-Eagle's nest in Sydney has created huge interest. Graeme also foresees an exciting future for the journal *Australian Field Ornithology*. He senses that it will bridge a wide intellectual gap between *Emu* and *Australian Birdlife*; a publication where many papers generated by BirdLife Australia's own people can be published.

Are we there yet? Much has been achieved already since January 2012, e.g. membership lists, but transfer of assets will continue through 2012. BOCA and BA(RAOU) will continue as entities for at least 10 years for receipt of bequests; currently bequests run at \$3-400,000p.a. Restructuring work is ongoing, and Graeme envisages that integration will proceed over several years.

A plan of the organisation suggested support for some regional groups by a regional committee; and Graeme hopes to employ a branch liaison officer dedicated to branch affairs (see page 3 of this newsletter for an update). There are also dedicated communication/IT staff, a fundraising manager, a conservation team, and a national Education Manager.

Referring specifically to BirdLife Melbourne, Graeme assured the audience that we would retain a high level of self-determination and autonomy. We retain control of our finances but can expect support when needed. Distribution of our newsletter, and all other branch newsletters, will continue to be combined with the national magazine.

Graeme answered a flurry of questions and then **John Barkla** thanked Graeme for taking the time to come and speak to us. Dianne and **Graeme Hosken** took us through several announcements till meeting closure.

*Daphne Hards*

## Carlton Monthly Meeting

Monthly meetings at the BirdLife Australia National Office are held on the second Thursday of the month. Meetings begin at 8:00pm at the BirdLife Australia National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton. Plenty of free street parking nearby. Tea and coffee served after the meeting with time to chat with other attendees. Contact Fiona [fionamariemarkin@gmail.com](mailto:fionamariemarkin@gmail.com) for details.

Date	Guest Speaker	Topic
14 Jun	Golo Maurer	Threatened Little Wonders? Golo is BirdLife Australia's Shorebirds 2020 Project Manager
12 Jul	Alan Lill	TBA. Alan is Associate Professor of Biological Sciences, Monash University Clayton
9 Aug	Clive Minton	Chairman, VWSG, Revelations from geolocators – migration and incubation strategies of shorebirds
13 Sep	Dean Ingwersen	Woodland Birds for Biodiversity Project Manager, BirdLife Australia, 'Rushworth Banding Project'.



## Boneseed Program at The You Yangs

Merrilyn Serong is the co-ordinator of the BirdLife Australia project to help eradicate boneseed infestation at The You Yangs RP, 50km south west of Melbourne. Four outings take place per year, and the day starts with birding near the park office – Swift Parrots a possibility – followed by several spots on Great Circle Drive. After lunch the quest turns floral. The seeds of South African Boneseed stay viable for more than 10 years, so though Eastern Flat was under control during our drought, vigilance is for the long term. Please watch for these satisfying outings which happen in March, June, September and December. Contact: [merrilyn@wirejunkie.com](mailto:merrilyn@wirejunkie.com).

*Photo: Jacky Winter, resident of The You Yangs, Merrilyn Serong*



## The Bird Week That Wasn't

What to do when a planned tour is cancelled? Rodger Scott, wildlife artist, decided to go to Fraser Island anyway, in May 2011, and there he met Celia Browne in the same circumstance. Reached by car ferry from Hervey Bay, the resort is tucked into the bushland lining the shore. Fraser Island has a bird list of 354, and Rodger was keen to photograph as many as he could, from his balcony, on beach and in bush. We enjoyed many of the results; Scarlet, Mangrove and White-cheeked Honeyeaters were three special ones.

*Photo: White-cheeked Honeyeater at Fraser Island, Rodger Scott*

## Your BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter

We'd love to hear from more of our BirdLife Melbourne members, so why not slip us a letter or flick us an email?

Have you recently seen something unusual? In your own backyard, perhaps? Do you have a favourite birding spot you'd like to share?

Let us know your bird watching experiences. Unusual sightings, tips, questions, photos – definitely photos – observations, answers – it all goes toward making this *your* BirdLife Melbourne newsletter.

You can reach the editors at **BirdLife Melbourne, c/- BirdLife Australia National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton, Vic 3053**, or email us at [birdlife.melbourne.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:birdlife.melbourne.newsletter@gmail.com)

The deadline is 20 July 2012.

## Birdline Briefs

### SOUTH-WEST VICTORIA

The highlight came early with an Australian Bustard that camped in a couple of paddocks on the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Research Farm south of Hamilton in early February. It seemed to be feeding on caterpillars of abundant cabbage white butterflies. Several weeks after this bird disappeared another was seen on a farm at Wannon, some 30 km to the north west.

The annual wetland count of the Hamilton Field Naturalists in February actually had water to work with this year. All the wetlands had some water and high numbers of birds were counted. The highlights were 104 Banded Stilts, 1 Blue-billed Duck and a Black Falcon.

Pelagics from Port Fairy were highly productive. The February trip highlights were a Great Shearwater, Hutton's and Fluttering Shearwaters and Common Diving-Petrel. The March trip highlights were a Campbell Albatross, several Buller's Albatross, 2 Little Shearwaters, Common Diving-Petrel, Arctic Jaeger, Pomarine and Brown Skuas.

Portland district highlights in April were, Australasian Bitterns (singles) along the Glenelg River and a swamp west of Heywood, a Spotted Quail-thrush in the northern section of the Lower Glenelg National Park, Azure Kingfishers in the Crawford River Regional Park and the return of Flame Robins in early April.

Hamilton district highlights were a Black Falcon and a Spotted Harrier at the DPI Research Farm in February, a Common Myna (lowlight!) on the southern edge of town. A Scarlet Robin made a rare visit to town with a male bird in suburban gardens from 13-20 April (at least), a Painted Button-quail (1 Feb) and a Speckled Warbler (25 Feb and 8 March) visited a north Hamilton garden.

An Azure Kingfisher at the Wannon (4 April) was the first recorded there in 36 years.

Two Black Falcons were seen hunting Banded Stilts at Lake Linlithgow in March and another was seen at Hawkesdale, also in March.

A Major Mitchell's Cockatoo was seen with a large flock of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Galahs and Long-billed Corellas at Melville Forest on 16 and 18 April.

*Steve Clark*

### NORTHERN VICTORIA

This summer has seen the shallower wetlands dry up whilst some of the larger, deeper wetlands are beginning to attract more birds as their water levels drop. Nankeen Night-Herons, rails and crakes, Brown Quail, egrets and spoonbills are all widespread and in high numbers across the region. Some flocks of Plumed Whistling-Duck remain with 150+ near Peechelba, a very large number. Migrant waders have made an appearances this year with inland records of Pacific Golden Plover (Benjeroop and Winton wetlands) and Bar-tailed Godwit (Fosters swamp) being very rare. Up to 2000 Banded Stilts have been around the shores of Lake Tutchewop, and a Wood Sandpiper was seen at Hird's swamp as it dried up in the new year, where there were also 200+ spoonbills. Darters have been breeding in the Hattah lakes this summer, and Brolga numbers may have picked up in numbers a little after the floods, with a flock of 17 seen near Corop in November, though overall their numbers seem not to have bounced back to where they were in the 1990's.

Budgerigar numbers have been the highest for many years, with breeding taking place and some flocks of 200+ recorded. Little Button-quail have been rare in the grasslands this summer but seeding porcupine grass in the mallee woodlands has attracted them, and even Painted Button-quail have been seen in the drier far north-west. More Red-backed Kingfishers than normal were sighted in the mallee country. A couple of Pied Honeyeater remained at Goschen through November at least, and Black Honeyeaters were in about average numbers. Other rarer sightings included a White-throated Gerygone in the Kamarooka forest in November, a Blue Bonnet near Yarrowalla on the northern plains, 16 Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos at Raywood on 9 November, Eastern Koel in Bendigo (now an annual occurrence), and 3 Elegant Parrot in the Little Desert along the Nhill- Harrow road.

By later in summer White-throated Needletails were being seen, mostly over forested areas such as the Bendigo region. On 13 January hundreds were feeding over the Kamarooka forest.

*Simon Starr*

### Birds in the News: Penguin Population a Happy Feat

A satellite mapping study of penguins on the Antarctic coast has found the population of Emperor Penguins to be twice as large as previously believed. Forty-four colonies were studied, including seven that were previously unknown.

However, scientists believe that these penguins are vulnerable to climate change in the more northerly areas, as earlier spring warming is causing loss of sea-ice habitat in some regions.

The results of the study were published in online *Journal Public Library of Science ONE*.

*The Age, 14/4/12*

## Friends of Royal Park

Nine participants attended the Friends of Royal Park autumn Bird survey in Royal Park West on 15 April on a mild and sunny morning.

Four sites were surveyed for 20 minutes with a total of 284 birds and 36 species counted.

The water levels in the wetlands were low, which attracted a variety of water birds. Interesting species were Royal Spoonbill, White-faced Heron and Little Black Cormorant. Other interesting species were a pair of Brown Goshawk, a large flock of at least 21 Silvereye and a male Mistletoebird in a tree with fruiting Mistletoe, which all participants had a close look at.

Further information on the surveys can be found at [www.friendsofroyalpark-parkville.org](http://www.friendsofroyalpark-parkville.org).



### You can help!

Friends of Royal Park bimonthly survey, 9-11am. Meet at the Trin Warren Tam-boore carpark, Oak Street, Parkville. Contact Nicole Spillane 0401276948 information is also available on [www.friendsofroyalpark-parkville.org](http://www.friendsofroyalpark-parkville.org).

24 June 2012, 9am to 11am  
29 July 2012, 9am to 11am  
23 September 2012, 9am to 11am  
2 December 2012, 9am to 11am

### Birds in the News: Scientists to study psychological benefits of birdsong

A three-year research project at the University of Surrey will study the effects of birdsong on our creativity and sense of wellbeing. The study will examine different kinds of birdsong to attempt to determine whether these sounds, believed by birdlovers to be restorative, do have an effect on human brains and behaviour.

*The Guardian, 21/12/11*

## Regent Honeyeater Project

Our friends at the Regent Honeyeater Project recently sent around their March newsletter, alerting us to some of their excellent work in the Lurg Hills near Benalla.

The wet summer made for a strong season of planting, with more than 1120 students involved over 31 school planting days, and 447 community volunteers over 4 planting weekends, giving a grand total 32,500 seedlings planted for the year.

The annual bird survey weekend in October found a record number of species, almost 150 in total, including a range of threatened species. Significant sightings on this seventh survey included large numbers of nesting birds, and juveniles already on the wing, heaps of honeyeaters and many migratory species. Together with the two Regent Honeyeater sightings earlier in the year, co-ordinator Ray Thomas believes the survey says a lot about the value and condition of the Lurg Hills habitat.

Other activities recently undertaken included planning for a freeway wildlife crossing to help Squirrel Gliders and other threatened species cross the Hume Freeway and continued monitoring of the ecological thinning carried out in 2009 at a site in the Lurg Hills.

To find out more about Regent Honeyeater Project activities, look up their website on [regenthoneyeater.org.au](http://regenthoneyeater.org.au), or contact **Ray Thomas**, Regent Honeyeater Project Co-ordinator, on 03 57 611 5115 or at [ray@regenthoneyeater.org.au](mailto:ray@regenthoneyeater.org.au).



Volunteers with the Regent Honeyeater Project planting a 1600m buffer strip along the bush edge.

## Birdline Victoria: Melbourne and Geelong

Excerpt from Birdline Victoria's recent sightings for late January to March in the Melbourne and Geelong areas, courtesy of Magaret Alcorn.

Please head to <<http://www.ereamae.com/BirdlineRecentSightings.aspx?Birdline=1>> to report your rare and unusual sightings and assist BirdLife Melbourne in supporting this excellent resource for all birders.

Date	Species	Suburb	Notes	SeenBy
19/01/2012	Red-chested Button-quail	Beattys Road, Plumpton	Also 2 Brown Quail flushed close by. Site is 200m west of Kororoit Creek, looks to be old farm site.	Colin Mulvogue
20/01/2012	Eastern Koel	Hampton, Linacre Rd	Calling from large block - with Moreton Bay Figs - opposite the hospital.	Michael Norris
21/01/2012	Intermediate Egret, Blue-winged Parrot(8), Glossy Ibis(16)	Hospital Lake, Connewarre	BirdLife Australia's Summer Shorebird Survey. At least one Intermediate Egret keeping to itself and 42 Eastern Great Egrets in vicinity; also Glossy Ibis; Blue-winged Parrots in more open "non-breeding habitat".	Craig Morley, Wendy Busch, Grace Lewis
28/01/2012	Freckled Duck(8)	Balbirooroo Wetlands, Balnarring	Birds on the private property dam next to Balbirooroo. Seen from the viewing platform that overlooks it.	Brian Thomas
29/01/2012	Long-toed Stint, Wood Sandpiper	Western Treatment Plant, Werribee	Long-toed Stint at 1.30pm at Pond 35E-8 (Eastern Conservation Ponds) and also present was one Wood Sandpiper.	Maarten Hulzebosch
6/02/2012	Intermediate Egret	Westgate Park, Fishermans Bend	Regular monthly survey. A first record we have of this species in the park.	Andrew McCutcheon, Euan Moore & Rob Youl
7/02/2012	Plumed Whistling Duck, Black-faced Cormorant, Nankeen Night-Heron	Western Treatment Plant, Werribee	PWD on Paradise Rd Lagoon, BFC on 15E Jetty (with the 4 other species of cormorant and Darters), immature Night-Heron at corner 15E and 280S	Dave Torr et al
8/02/2012	Broad-billed Sandpiper	Western Treatment Plant, Werribee,	Single BBS today feeding in the shallows of the last lagoon on the left hand side of the track that runs parallel to The Spit.	Hedley Earl
22/02/2012	Brown Quail (9), Swift Parrot	Eastern Park, Geelong	Covey of 9 Brown Quails found in tussock grass. First record in 30+ years observation in this urban parkland! Also heard characteristic "swit swit" calls of Swift Parrots passing through a distance away along east edge of East Geelong Golf Club.	Brendan Slingo, Ben Wilkinson, Craig Morley
23/02/2012	Black Falcon (2)	Western Treatment Plant, Werribee	2 Black Falcon on Beach Rd, one harassing a Brown Goshawk.	Dave Torr, Christine Shelley, Iian Denham
26/02/2012	Broad-billed Sandpiper	Western Treatment Plant, Werribee	BBS at the Beach Rd ponds.	Kevin Bartram
26/02/2012	Broad-billed Sandpiper, White-faced Storm-Petrel	Western Treatment Plant, Werribee	BBS in first pond inside Beach Road gate was seen in the morning and relocated in the same spot in the afternoon. White-faced Storm-Petrel was found dead on the coast road east of Beach Road.	John Barkla, Fred Smith & Jim Murray (NZ)
3/03/2012	Broad-billed Sandpiper	Western Treatment Plant, Werribee	The bird was still present on the first coastal pond inside the Beach Road gate at around 9am.	John Barkla et al
8/03/2012	Hooded Plover (17)	Sorrento Back Beach	Approx. 17 Hooded Plovers including two juveniles sighted feeding on rocky shoreline 500 metres down the beach from the Sorrento Back Beach lookout (towards Portsea).	Andrew Williams
27/03/2012	Royal Spoonbill	Royal Park, Trin Warren Tam-boore Wetlands	The first record of Royal Spoonbill at Royal Park.	Jan Thomas
28/03/2012	Black Falcon (3)	Western Treatment Plant, Werribee	A pair of Black Falcons soaring over paddocks to the south of the Beach Rd gate. Joined by a third Black Falcon to give a brief aerobatic display without evidence of malice. Dispersed in different directions.	Peter Thomson

## Weekdays Outings

### Bellarine Peninsula

14 February 2012, species count: 83

The golf club car park highlights were an Australian Reed-Warbler feeding a juvenile and a clearly seen Little Grassbird. Next at Balyang Sanctuary the highlight was Australian Darter roosting and nesting beside the river. We ate lunch among gulls.

At Tait Point on Lake Connewarre the best birds were a pair of Black-tailed Native-hen. A Swamp Harrier flew low over the reed beds where a female Musk Duck swam near the reed edge. Some Australian Shelduck flew past and a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagle were over the paddocks.

At the beach there were views of Striated Fieldwren and calls of Singing Honeyeater. A flock of Red-necked Stint and a few Curlew Sandpiper foraged with several showing orange leg flags. The highlight was extremely good views of two adult Hooded Plover.

The last stop was the Barwon River estuary where a flock of maybe 50 Bar-tailed Godwit and a lesser number of Red Knot followed the rising tide toward us. Unusually, no Eastern Curlew were sighted here. At the fine day's finish 13 people had 83 species and we thanked our leader Fred Smith wholeheartedly.

### Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne

7 March 2012, species count: 49

A strong wind made canopy viewing challenging for 21 people, however the day was fine and sunny. Fantails and honeyeaters were common but parrots were absent. Raptors soaring were voted best birds; Brown Falcon, Brown Goshawk, Swamp Harrier and Wedge-tailed Eagle were all present. Down in the wetlands, cormorants, ducks and swamphens were initially seen then Eastern Great Egret, Yellow-billed Spoonbill and White-faced Heron joined the list.

At lunch time we voted "Bird of the Day" to an atypical lone Sugar Glider which ran across the ground before climbing a wattle to feed on the sap, it was much photographed. No birds were flying around the windy Trig Point Lookout so the final birds were observed in the Australian Garden area. Total species seen for the day numbered 49, not bad in the wind.

### The You Yangs RP

26 March 2012, species Count: 51

The weather was calm, mild and sunny and 22 sets of alert eyes scanned the park. After the Brushtail Possum in the ladies the birding highlights were Tawny Frogmouth near the information office, Rufous Whistler on Big Rock track, Scarlet Robin and Weebill at the Lower Car Park where we lunched and Varied Sittella, Red-capped Robin and Diamond Firetail seen by small groups at the eastern flat.

Boneseed was weeded opportunistically as we walked. Raptors soaring above provoked the usual vigorous raptor identification debate but the final decision was Square-tailed Kite, Whistling Kite, Brown Goshawk, Collared Sparrowhawk, Wedge-tailed Eagle and Nankeen Kestrel. Honeyeaters were dominated by New Holland with White-plumed coming

second in frequency. The final bird list was 51 species – a good day.

### Murrindindi

17 April 2012, species count: 36

We met at Devlins Bridge (cleared farmland, many Pied Currawong and Little Raven) then drove along Murrindindi Rd, stopping and birding at Suspension Bridge, Water Gauge and Bull Creek where regeneration after the 2009 fires was seen in the leafing of the surviving eucalypts and the dense growth of the young acacias. Here the dominant birds were Superb Fairy-wren, Brown Thornbill and Crimson Rosella but few honeyeaters and no raptors were recorded.

The highlights were a female Scarlet and a male Flame Robin, both in vivid colour. After lunch we drove to an unburnt but very quiet area.

Bird call totalled 36 species for a group of 16 people on a mild, clear, windless day and we thanked Graeme Hosken our leader for introducing the area. Many are planning return visits.

*Reports by Diane Tweeddale  
Coordinator, BirdLife Melbourne Weekdays Outings*

## Beginners' Outings

### Hawkestone Park and Mill Park Lakes

24 March 2012, species count: 60

Meeting at Red Gums Picnic Area, 22 members were greeted by Eastern Rosellas and Crested Pigeons feeding nearby. The group walked down towards Le Page Homestead and lake where Australasian Grebe, Dusky Moorhen and Eurasian Coot were all raising young.

A Brown Goshawk flew overhead as a Black-shouldered Kite was driven away by Little Ravens. A large flock of Red-browed Finches feeding in the grasses provided an excellent sight for beginners. At the end of the ridge track a pair of Red-rumped Parrots were unconcerned by our presence, providing a good opportunity for photographers.

After lunch, most of the group drove to nearby Mill Park Lakes. Almost immediately, an Australian Spotted Crake strolled out of the lakeside bushes for all to see. Australasian Darters and three Cormorant species were also early sightings.

A Little Wattlebird announced itself and stayed around long enough for its distinguishing features to be explained. The highlight was a lengthy sighting of two pairs of Blue-billed Ducks, one with four chicks and the other with one chick. The males provided diversions whilst the females shepherded their chicks away.

At the end of the walk the closing bird count came to 60 species in just a few enjoyable hours.

*Hazel and Alan Veevers  
Leaders, Beginners' Outings*

# BirdLife Melbourne Easter Campout

## Over Easter 2012 a number of BirdLife Melbourne members headed to Wyperfeld.

To break the long drive, members stopped in a number of places on the way up like Little Desert, Lake Tyrrell and Gama seeing a range of great species like Malleefowl, Elegant Parrot, Rufous Fieldwren and Black-faced Woodswallow. On arrival at the Wonga campground the wind sprung up to gale force and it was quite amusing to watch other people's tents cartwheeling through the campsite. As the weather was hardly conducive to bush birding the group went for a drive and some members were rewarded with a Malleefowl crossing the Dattuck Track and small groups of Regent Parrots.

The next day dawned beautiful and still, a perfect day for mallee birding. The group hit the Discovery Walk and found a suite of good birds – Redthroat, Southern Scrub-Robin and

an elusive Chestnut Quail-thrush. A midday visit to the Desert Track kept the honeyeater count climbing with Striped and Tawny-crowned as well as the first shy Gilbert's Whistler. An evening walk along the Dattuck Track had heaps of White-fronted Honeyeaters and the first visible Shy Heathwrens. That night after a couple of quiet drinks we were serenaded by Southern Boobooks and the screams of Barn Owls.

Sunday was a visit to Northern Wyperfeld where the White-browed Treecreeper was found quiet easily in some of the lovely callitris forest along the Meridian Track. Leaving some of the keener photographic people, the rest of the group bounced around the north of the park where a number of groups of Major Mitchell's Cockatoo's were a highlight. A drop in at Lake Albacutya on the way back revealed it is still a lake in name only – none of the recent rains has reached the dusty lake bed.

A number of members had an exploratory drive through Wathe Flora and Fauna Reserve on the way back, but the deep sand made it an exciting trip with little birding of note. All in all a very successful trip with most target species found. Keep an eye out for further campouts planned for later this year. Full list at: <http://www.ereamae.com/Lists.aspx?List=127172>.

# Activities for BirdLife Melbourne July to September

This calendar includes field activities for BirdLife Melbourne. For details on the meetings held at Balwyn and Carlton, please refer to pages 4 and 7 respectively. Should you have any ideas for an activity, or would like to volunteer as a leader, please contact the BirdLife Melbourne Activities Coordinator, Tim Bawden at [tbawden@live.com.au](mailto:tbawden@live.com.au) or on 0405 184 100

## July

Sunday 1/07/2012	Yellingbo Birdwalk	Yellingbo Reserve. Melway 305 G11. Take Warburton Hwy to Woori Yallock, turn right to Yellingbo. At Yellingbo, turn right towards Seville, then left into Macclesfield Rd. After 2.5km turn right at large pine trees. Gate opens 10:00am, walk starts 10:30am. Toilets available. Bring lunch and gumboots. Contact Maryanne, 0402 283 080 or <a href="mailto:onlyme53@bigpond.com">onlyme53@bigpond.com</a>
Tuesday 10/7/2012	Devilbend Reservoir Survey	Devilbend Reservoir survey at 9.00 am. Contact Roger Richards 0419384636 or <a href="mailto:ornithology3@yahoo.com.au">ornithology3@yahoo.com.au</a> .
Saturday 21/07/2012	Photography Group Outing	Braeside Park. Meet in the Southern Car Park, entrance off Governor Rd at 9:00 am (Melway 93 F1, GPS 38°00'28"S, 145°08'03"E). Leader is John Stirling. Contact John, <a href="mailto:Avocet@autospeed.com">Avocet@autospeed.com</a> (preferred method) or 03 9561 2446.
Sunday 22/07/2012	ETP Survey	Eastern Treatment Plant, Bangholme. Meet at 9:00 am for a survey that will continue until the evening. The survey is carried out by 4WD. Numbers are restricted and booking is essential. Survey date may change at short notice due to operational constraints. Leader is Mike Carter. Contact Mike, 9787 7136 or <a href="mailto:pterodroma@bigpond.com">pterodroma@bigpond.com</a>
Tuesday 24/07/2012	Weekdays Outing	Cape Schanck, Mornington Peninsula NP, 10:00am to 3:00pm. Leader Pat Bingham. Melway 257 Inset Map F10. From Boneo Rd (Melway 259 E4) follow Cape Schanck Rd to end. Park near toilets. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or <a href="mailto:melbourne@BirdLife.org.au">melbourne@BirdLife.org.au</a>
Saturday 28/07/2012	Beginners' Outing	Braeside Park, Braeside. Meet at 10:00am in the car park by the Visitor Centre off Lower Dandenong Rd. Melway 88 D8. Contact Hazel, 9876 3712 or <a href="mailto:melbourne@BirdLife.org.au">melbourne@BirdLife.org.au</a>
Saturday 28/7/2012 and Sunday 29/7/2012	Orange-bellied Parrot Surveys	Mainland Surveys for Orange-bellied Parrot. See <a href="http://www.BirdLife.org.au/projects/orange-bellied-parrot-recovery">http://www.BirdLife.org.au/projects/orange-bellied-parrot-recovery</a> for more details or contact Chris Purnell <a href="mailto:chris.purnell@BirdLife.org.au">chris.purnell@BirdLife.org.au</a>

## August

Sunday 5/08/2012	Yellingbo Birdwalk	Yellingbo Reserve. Melway 305 G11. Take Warburton Hwy to Woori Yallock, turn right to Yellingbo. At Yellingbo, turn right towards Seville, then left into Macclesfield Rd. After 2.5km turn right at large pine trees. Gate opens 10:00am, walk starts 10:30am. Toilets available. Bring lunch and gumboots. Contact Maryanne, 0402 283 080 or onlyme53@bigpond.com
Tuesday 14/08/2012	Devilbend Reservoir Survey	Devilbend Reservoir survey at 9.00 am. Contact Roger Richards 0419384636 or ornithology3@yahoo.com.au.
Wednesday 15/08/2012	Weekdays Outing	Yan Yean area, 10:00am to 3:00pm. Leader John Prytherch Melway 391 D1. From Plenty Rd turn into Arthurs Creek Rd then left into Recreation Rd. Entrance first on right. Turn next left into first car park. Toilets available. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@BirdLife.org.au
Sunday 19/08/2012	Favourite Birding Site	Come along for a pleasant morning's birding at the R.J. Chambers Reserve, Pakenham Upper. Contact Tim Bawden, 0405 184 100 or tbawden@live.com.au
Thursday 23/08/2012	Photography Group Study Night	Sonja's home at 7:30pm. Topic: "Improving our images" – come prepared to share ideas and ask questions. You will need to bring a camp chair too. Contact Sonja after August 3, sonja.ross@yahoo.com.au or 9846 5380.
Saturday 25/08/2012	Beginners' Outing	Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne. Meet at 10:00am in the Stringybark Car Park. Melway 133 K12. Contact Hazel, 9876 3712 or melbourne@BirdLife.org.au
Sunday 26/08/2012	ETP Survey	Eastern Treatment Plant, Bangholme. Meet at 9:00 am for a survey that will continue until the evening. The survey is carried out by 4WD. Numbers are restricted and booking is essential. Survey date may change at short notice due to operational constraints. Leader is Mike Carter. Contact Mike, 9787 7136 or pterodroma@bigpond.com

## September

Saturday 1/09/2012	Boneseeding & Birding	You Yangs Regional Park. Meet at 10:00am in the car park just past the Park Office, approx 300 m from the Branch Rd entrance to the park. Melway Key Map Page 11 C12. Until late afternoon the day is spent birding and removing the invasive weed Boneseed. Bring all you need for a normal days birding plus gardening gloves and a trowel for Boneseed removal. Contact Merrilyn, 9889 4924 or merrilyn@wirejunkie.com
Sunday 2/09/2012	Yellingbo Birdwalk	Yellingbo Reserve. Melway 305 G11. Take Warburton Hwy to Woori Yallock, turn right to Yellingbo. At Yellingbo, turn right towards Seville, then left into Macclesfield Rd. After 2.5km turn right at large pine trees. Gate opens 10:00am, walk starts 10:30am. Toilets available. Bring lunch and gumboots. Contact Maryanne, 0402 283 080 or onlyme53@bigpond.com
Monday 3/09/2012	Weekdays Outing	Hallam Valley Rd, Hampton Park, 10:00am to 3:00pm. Leader Rob Grosvenor. Melway 95 K3. Enter Hallam Valley Rd from South Gippsland Hwy, continue to end of Hallam Valley Rd and park beyond gate. Gate locked at 10:10am sharp. Late lunch, no toilets. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@BirdLife.org.au
Saturday 8/9/2012 and Sunday 9/9/2012	Orange-bellied Parrot Surveys	Mainland Surveys for Orange-bellied Parrot. See <a href="http://www.BirdLife.org.au/projects/orange-bellied-parrot-recovery">http://www.BirdLife.org.au/projects/orange-bellied-parrot-recovery</a> for more details or contact Chris Purnell <a href="mailto:chris.purnell@BirdLife.org.au">chris.purnell@BirdLife.org.au</a>
Sunday 9 Sept 2012	Favourite Birding Site Outing	Come along for a great day of Box-Ironbark Birding around the Bailieston district. Contact Stuart Dashper; 9387 8734 (AH); <a href="mailto:stuartgd@unimelb.edu.au">stuartgd@unimelb.edu.au</a>
Tuesday 11/09/2012	Devilbend Reservoir Survey	Devilbend Reservoir survey at 9.00 am. Contact Roger Richards 0419384636; ornithology3@yahoo.com.au.
Saturday 15/09/2012	Photography Group	The BirdLife Melbourne Photography Group will usually have an outing on this day. Please go to the top of the Photography Group Page for the latest information. Contact Sonja <a href="mailto:sonja.ross@yahoo.com.au">sonja.ross@yahoo.com.au</a> or 9846 5380.
Tuesday 18/09/2012	Weekdays Outing	Endeavour Fern Gully, Red Hill, 10:00am to 3:00pm. Leader Joan Peters. Melway 190 J3. From Arthurs Seat Rd turn into Red Hill Recreation Reserve and park. Toilets available. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@BirdLife.org.au
Saturday 22/09/2012	Beginners' Outing	Newport Lakes and Jawbone Conservation Reserve. Meet at 10:00am in the car park off Mason St. Melway 55 G3. Contact Hazel, 9876 3712 or melbourne@BirdLife.org.au
Sunday 23/09/2012	ETP Survey	Eastern Treatment Plant, Bangholme. Meet at 9:00 am for a survey that will continue until the evening. The survey is carried out by 4WD. Numbers are restricted and booking is essential. Survey date may change at short notice due to operational constraints. Leader is Mike Carter. Contact Mike, 9787 7136 or pterodroma@bigpond.com
Sunday 23/09/2012	New members BBQ and Birding day	New Members BBQ and birding day at the You Yangs. All Welcome, come for along for some birding followed by a BBQ at the You Yangs. Meet and Greet. Contact Tim Bawden 0405 184 100 or <a href="mailto:tbawden@live.com.au">tbawden@live.com.au</a>

# Dandenong Catchment Survey Summary

## January to March 2012

BirdLife Melbourne Branch is surveying eight of ten wetland sites for Melbourne Water in the Dandenong Creek catchment. The sites are located in the south-eastern suburbs of Hampton Park, Braeside, Endeavour Hills, Narre Warren and Rowville.

In the past survey period, six sites recorded new species with highlights listed below.

N = New to site. Ns = A new species seen on a non-survey day.

- Frog Hollow (FH): Nankeen Night-Heron (N), Black-shouldered Kite (N, previously Ns)
- Kilberry Boulevard (KB): Verreaux's Tree-Frog (N, first sighting for all wetlands).
- Rivergum Creek (RG): Nankeen Night-Heron (N), Wedge-tailed Eagle (N), Long-Necked Tortoise (N) and Brown Rat (N).
- South Golf Links Road (SGR): Black Falcon (N, first sighting for all wetlands), Red-kneed Dotterel (N).
- Hallam Valley Road (HVR): no new species for this period.
- Waterford Wetlands (WW): Crested Pigeon (N), Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (N), Song Thrush (N).
- Troups Creek (TC): Eastern Rosella (N), Shining Bronze-Cuckoo (N), Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike (N), Golden Whistler (N).
- Mordialloc Creek (MC): no new species for this period.

The influx of Nankeen Night-Herons has extended to FH and RC, perhaps in the coming months, KB, WW and MC sites will have the box 'ticked' for this species.

In March, Fred Smith's experience with raptors resulted in a Black Falcon being recorded at SGR. Not only a new species for this site but new to all sites.

Cuckoo sightings fluctuated again this period with only two species recorded. Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo at KB and WW in January and WW again in February. A lone Shining Bronze-Cuckoo at TC in January, a new species for this site.

The Song Thrush recorded at WW in March was a first for the site and only the fourth time it has been recorded since the start of the survey. Perhaps the sighting may be a good omen that breeding has taken place locally as the Song Thrush seems to be disappearing from the suburbs.

### Bird Species to End of March 2012 (End of December 2011):

- FH – 88 (86), KB – 82 (82), RG – 110(108), SGR – 107 (105), HVR – 112 (112), WW – 61 (58), TC – 105 (101) and MC – 109 (109)

Combined total for the eight sites: 159 (158)

### Frog Species:

- FH – 2, KB – 5 (4), RG – 4, SGR – 2, HVR – 4, WW – 3, TC – 5 and MC – 3.

Frogs recorded include Eastern Common Froglet, Eastern Banjo Frog, Spotted Marsh Frog, Striped Marsh Frog, Brown Tree Frog and new for this period, Verreaux's Tree Frog.

### Other species recorded at various sites

Lowland Copperhead Snake, Long-necked Tortoise, Red Fox, European Rabbit, Brown Hare, Feral Cat, Brown Rat and European Carp.

### Help required

The team that was surveying South Golf Links Road in Narre Warren (Melway: 110 F 11) is unable to continue and a new team of at least three people is required. The survey is conducted on a monthly basis and this site takes up to three hours and Melbourne Water requested that the survey starts before 9.00am, in most instances teams start before 8.00am.

If you are interested in assisting with this important project on a permanent (monthly) or non-permanent basis, I may be contacted on 9802 5250 or email, melbourne@birdlife.org.au.

I shall be on holidays from 5 May to 17 June.

The project is funded by Melbourne Water and fuel costs are reimbursed through BirdLife Australia.

A full tally of the three month sightings may be found on the BirdLife Website [www.birdlife.org.au](http://www.birdlife.org.au). Go to 'BirdLife Melbourne Branch' then click on link to 'Local Website'.

*Graeme Hosken  
BirdLife Melbourne DCS Recorder*



### Birds in the News: Tourists Take Wing

Birdwatching is becoming an increasingly popular reason for visiting Victorian country towns, and has bolstered tourism in locations which give access to sightings of endangered birds, such as Chiltern, Mallacoota, Sherbrooke and Port Fairy.

Birdwatching has apparently moved from being "weird" into the mainstream. According to our *Australian Birdlife* editor Sean Dooley, this may be because many people are suffering from "nature deficit disorder".

*Herald Sun 29/2/12 (photo: Sean Dooley, editor Australian BirdLife)*

# Victorian Wader Study Group Report

## April 2012

### Catching

The main catching programme for the Northern Hemisphere migratory waders which spend the non-breeding season in south-east Australia has now been successfully completed.

As usual there were highlights and lowlights, but in the end we managed to obtain an adequate sample of all our main study species (see below, Table on "Percentage Juveniles in Catches"). It was a relief that after a barren year for Curlew Sandpipers and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers in 2010/11 (when most remained inland at ephemeral wetlands numbers returned to their usual sites and we were again able to sample them).

The last good catch in Victoria was 47 Godwits, 5 Red Knot and 2 Whimbrel at Rhyll on 11 February. Subsequent to that seven days in late March in the south-east of South Australia could only produce 163 birds, with our key species Ruddy Turnstone (60) and Sanderling (50) proving hard to catch after a storm disrupted their feeding areas. We fared slightly better on King Island in eight days in early April, with 118 Turnstone caught, 53 of which (45%) had been banded previously.

Our prime attention now turns to overwintering Sooty and Australian Pied Oystercatcher. We aim to obtain catch samples of 50 / 150 respectively between now and the end of August.

### Geolocators

Our greatest success this season has been with Turnstone, particularly on King Island (KI). 11 geolocators were retrieved – 9 being from the 22 put on in early April 2011 and 2 from April 2010. Northward departure dates ranged from 12 to 26 April. Most birds stopped off initially in the Taiwan area but two used the Vietnam coast. All subsequently spent time, in May, in the northern half of the Yellow Sea before flying on to their Arctic breeding grounds.

Return migrations started at the end of July and most birds returned through Asia, with the Yellow Sea again featuring strongly. The earliest return to KI was on 27 September and all but one were back there by 18 October. That one appeared to have spent most of the non-breeding season in South Australia (SA) and returned to KI in March 2012.

Nearly all birds showed signs of incubation in the Arctic. Some incubated for over 20 days and almost certainly hatched young. Others, which appeared to fail after a shorter period, re-nested, with some of these re-layings apparently being successful too. This aspect of our geocator work is now being collated for publication. 32 new geolocators were put onto Ruddy Turnstone on KI and 44 onto Sanderling in the south-east of SA.

### Flag Sightings

Since the end of March there's been a huge escalation in the number of sightings of flagged birds, particularly from Asia.

Northward migration appears to have been earlier than usual this year. One of our SA Curlew Sandpipers was seen in Hong Kong on 22 March and a Victorian one reached there by 2 April. The median passage date for Curlew Sandpiper from Victoria through Hong Kong is around 23 April. Also a Sanderling flagged in SA had reached Hong Kong by 17 April. Departures of this species do not normally occur until late April or early May. And finally a Victorian-flagged Eastern Curlew was seen in South Korea on 20 March. Visual observations and geocator studies indicate that many Eastern Curlew depart Victoria in the first days of March. The 8000km flight to Korea was probably made non-stop in about 7 days.

Flagged Terns have also given some good results. The first of the Caspian Terns to which we applied flags this year had reached Newcastle, New South Wales, by 20 March. It had been flagged as a chick on Clonmel Island in Corner Inlet on 18 December.

An even more surprising record was 2 juvenile Fairy Terns with lime green leg flags seen at Western Treatment Plant on 17 February. These were eventually traced to having been banded and flagged as chicks at a colony on the southern New South Wales coast in January. This is a movement of around 700km – large for a Fairy Tern – and it is amazing that both birds were still being fed by accompanying adults.

### 2011 Arctic Breeding Season

All the data has now been collected and this shows that 2011 was a generally average to very poor breeding season for all the species of waders which visit Victoria from breeding grounds in the Northern Hemisphere. Details are given in the table below.

The worst breeding performance was experienced by Sanderling, Curlew Sandpiper and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper which were all rated very poor/poor with percentage juvenile figures in the range 2.0 to 5.2%. The breeding outcome of three other species – Ruddy Turnstone, Bar-tailed Godwit and Red-necked Stint was close to the long-term median (9.6, 18.5 and 15.8% respectively). Only Red Knot appeared to have a better than normal performance (67.6% juveniles vs. 58.0% long-term median). However the total sample (34) of this species was only small. Note that the figures for Red Knot are always inflated, compared to other species, because young birds from the New Zealand adult population spend their first year in south-east Australia.

(See over page for table.)

### Future Fieldwork and AGM

The detailed fieldwork programme to the end of June has already been circulated. Copies can be obtained from Roz Jessop: moonbird@waterfront.net.au The programme for the remainder of 2012 will be circulated in June.

The VWSG AGM will be held at Clive Minton's house on Saturday 8 September.

Anyone wishing to take part in VWSG activities should contact me at mintons@ozemail.net.au or phone 9589-4901 or Roz Jessop.

*Clive Minton  
22 April 2012*

# Conservation

## Percentage of juvenile/first-year waders in cannon-net catches in south-east Australia in 2011/2012

Species	No. of catches		Total caught	Juv./ 1st year		Long term median* % juvenile (years)	Assessment of 2011 breeding success
	Large (>50)	Small (<50)		No.	%		
Red-necked Stint <i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	8	5	3869	611	15.8	14.3(33)	Average
Curlew Sandpiper <i>C. ferruginea</i>	2	4	304	11	3.6	10.0(32)	Very poor
Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>	2	1	184	34	18.5	18.5(22)	Average
Red Knot <i>C. canutus</i>	0	4	34	23	67.6	58.0(18)	Good
Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	2	6	177	17	9.6	9.6 (21)	Average
Sanderling <i>C. alba</i>	2	2	348	7	2.0	12.2(20)	Very poor
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper <i>C. acuminata</i>	1	4	115	6	5.2	10.7(30)	Poor

All birds cannon-netted in period 15 November to 28 February except for Red-necked Stint, Ruddy Turnstone, and Sanderling, for which catches up to 29 March are included.

\* Does not include the 2011/2012 figures

## New Members

We give a very big welcome to the following new members and look forward to seeing you at the BirdLife Melbourne activities and meetings.

Bonnie Ashley KINGSVILLE  
 Thomas Sonderegger-Frei NEWPORT  
 Bonnie Gelman WILLIAMSTOWN  
 Rob Lucas WILLIAMSTOWN  
 Alvin Kuan LAVERTON  
 Madeleine Richards WERRIBEE  
 Peter Deutschmann PRINCES HILL  
 Andrew Innes BRUNSWICK WEST  
 Mary Macmillan BRUNSWICK WEST  
 Amy O'DaI BRUNSWICK WEST  
 James Henry Whitmore BRUNSWICK EAST  
 Alice Taysom FITZROY NORTH  
 Susan P NORTHCOTE  
 Paul Deuber MILL PARK  
 Mark Kliene MILL PARK  
 Chris Willocks ROSANNA  
 Richard Peters BUNDOORA

Oscar Schultz ELTHAM  
 Ira Cooke HURSTBRIDGE  
 Joe Forgione DONCASTER EAST  
 Finn Evans PARK ORCHARDS  
 Beverly Rangott HAWTHORN  
 Mary & David Sutherland HAWTHORN  
 Garry Warne HAWTHORN  
 Douglas Devine CAMBERWELL  
 Maud Berlincourt SURREY HILLS  
 Parthasarathy Bhagavatula BOX HILL  
 Lynn Smith RINGWOOD NORTH  
 Dennis & Carol Easterby CROYDON NORTH  
 Christine Heath MALVERN EAST  
 Julie Stewart FERNTREE GULLY  
 Suzanne & Andrew Marty CAULFIELD  
 Mark Phillips GLEN HUNTLY  
 Sandra Rodrigues CARNEGIE  
 Brendan McDonald MULGRAVE  
 Margaret Cole HAMPTON  
 Jannet Manins BLACK ROCK  
 Thomas Landgraf PARKDALE  
 Rebecca Readhead HEATHERTON  
 Patricia McGuire FERNY CREEK  
 Karan Millard THE PATCH  
 Fiona Mittag BEACONSFIELD  
 Andrea Beel MORNINGTON  
 Matthew Wegner MOUNT MARTHA

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Help us create positive outcomes for birds and their habitats