

# THE MELBIRDIAN



MELBOCA (BOCA's Melbourne Branch) NEWSLETTER NO. 58  
December 2007

## MELBOCA Branch Meetings

Meetings are held at the Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Avenue, Balwyn, not far from the Balwyn Library, Melway 46 E8, on the fourth Tuesday of each month (with the exception of December) commencing at 8.00 pm. Entry is by a donation of \$4.00.

Out-of-town members & visitors very welcome.

## Future Speakers

**Tuesday 22 January 2008 8.00pm. Speaker Dr Grainne Maguire "Conserving the Hooded Plover on the Victorian Coast"**. Grainne will speak about the vulnerability of the dainty Hooded Plover because of the increase in beach users. We look forward to hearing about the measures being taken to protect it and the part the public can play in this.

**Tuesday 6 February 2008 8.00 pm. Chris Tzaros "Orange-bellied Parrot Survey Update"**. The Orange-bellied Parrot has been making headlines in recent times. Chris will give us a talk on the status of this endangered bird which should be of interest to us all.

## MELBOCA Committee

President	Graeme Hosken
Vice-President	David Plant
Secretary	Janet Hand
Treasurer	Bill Ramsay
Sunny Fernie	Linda Stock
Diane Tweeddale	Chris Wichems
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## Past Meetings

**25 September 2007.** The Bird of the Evening was replaced by a talk by Chris Wichems about the Education Committee's plans for Bird Week which takes place between 21 and 28 October 2007. The Committee has chosen to highlight the parrot species since Australia is home to about one-sixth of the world's parrot population. Very informative identification sheets for parrots, instructions for building a cockatoo mobile, sighting reports, daily identification of a parrot on line and bird drawings can be found on the BOCA website [www.birdobservers.org.au](http://www.birdobservers.org.au)

Our **Guest Speaker** was Chris Lester and his topic was "To Antarctica in search of the Emperor Penguin". He and his wife, Rosemary, sailed from Ushuaia in Tierra del Fuego aboard a Russian research vessel turned tourist ship. While waiting in Ushuaia for the ship to arrive, they made good use of their time. They visited the Martial Glacier, took a boat down the Beagle Channel for a visit to a Magellanic Penguin breeding island, and visited the Tierra del Fuego National Park. Chris's photos of the birds, mountains and scenery were excellent and gave the audience a feeling of the splendour



## Christmas Shop Hours

The Blue Wren Gift Shop will be closed between Christmas and New Year for stocktake. It will not be open on Saturdays during January.

Except for public holidays, staff will be in the office and you may ring 9877 5342 if you wish to pay your subscription or for any enquiries



and bleakness of Tierra del Fuego. Among the birds Chris photographed we saw Yellow-bridled Finch, Ochre-naped Ground-Thrush, Imperial and Rock Cormorants, Snowy Shearwaters and several species of Geese—Kelp, Upland and Ashy-headed.

When the ship sailed down the Beagle Channel the search for the Emperor Penguins had begun. Chris and Rosemary had secured a luxurious corner cabin with windows on both sides. The bridge provided a windbreak and excellent viewing. With a terrific wine list and great meals on board, the audience was beginning to envy the Lesters. The ship sailed directly south to the South Shetland Island Group, through seas that are reputedly the roughest in the world. The first day's sailing was smooth and Chris showed us photos of the birds seen—Blue Petrel and Southern Fulmar were common. Also caught on camera were Southern Giant-Petrel, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Cape Petrel and several Albatross species—Wandering, Black-browed and Grey-headed. The second day was also smooth at first, but very cold with snow. Antarctic Prion and Light-mantled Sooty Albatross were sighted. Chris was very excited to see an Antarctic Petrel through the porthole. The weather worsened and a planned landing on South Shetland Island was aborted. Luckily the third day was calm and they went ashore on Paulet Island where there was an extensive Adelie Penguin colony, an Antarctic Cormorant nesting colony as well as Brown Skuas.

The ship had to sail far down the Peninsula to see Emperor Penguins coming to sea. We saw beautiful photos of ice—pack ice, sheet ice and icebergs. The birds were not so plentiful. Chris had photos of Giant, Cape and Snow Petrels, and Adelie Penguin. At the end of the first day in Antarctica they saw Emperor Penguins at Snow Hill Island. They went ashore in the zodiacs and managed to see Emperor Penguins with a young chick.

The second day the plan had been to keep going south but the pack ice was too thick, so they headed back up along the edge of the Peninsula. We were shown some spectacular scenery. At Devil's Island they went ashore to see an Adelie Penguin colony with many Antarctic Terns present.

They headed north on the third day with plans to land on the Peninsula. The ship often had to find alternative routes through thick ice and managed to land at Brown Bluff where there were Adelie and Gentoo Penguin colonies, as well as Cape Petrels, Kelp Gulls and Brown Skuas. Chris noticed that the Penguins seemed more apprehensive because of the presence of seals. They also toured Esperanza, an Argentinian Antarctic Base. After three sunny days the

weather turned cold and miserable. From Esperanza they sailed to Deception Island, an active volcano. There was an abandoned Norwegian whaling station where they saw one Chinstrap Penguin. On the fourth day there was a pre-breakfast trip to Orne Island to see a Chinstrap colony. The island was mostly snow and ice and the Penguins were breeding on rocky outcrops. In the afternoon on Danko Island they saw a Gentoo Penguin colony also on rocky outcrops up steep vertical slopes. Chris noted the enormous rumblings of icebergs collapsing. They also saw Snowy Sheathbill and finally, a South Polar Skua. In the afternoon they headed for Melchior Island and headed north in calm, easy sailing, seeing Humpback Whales and Minkies in the distance. They sailed past Cape Horn and the islands of the Beagle Channel back to Ushuaia.

We want to thank Chris for an absorbing talk accompanied by stunning photography. Many of us will never make it down to Antarctica, so it was wonderful to have armchair viewing. It was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Thank you Chris.

*Sunny Fernie*

**23 October 2007.** Bill Ramsay welcomed all to this meeting including a visitor from South Africa and then introduced Chris Wichems who was to give the **Bird of the Evening** talk on Hawk Migration in North America. During the autumn prodigious numbers of raptors migrate from north to south following their food supply. The Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) has been active for many years in researching this annual event and Chris pointed out many sites where the birds can be observed. In order to conserve energy the many types of raptors use thermals and updrafts to assist their flight. They follow mountain chains, rivers and coastlines, avoiding crossing large stretches of water. They utilise the prevailing weather and may 'back up' behind cold fronts awaiting the following tail winds. Sixteen species of raptors take part in this annual migration, some in flocks of 100,000 plus birds. Chris showed some wonderful photographs of the Broad-winged Hawk, American Kestrel (the smallest bird involved), Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Red-shouldered Hawk, Goshawk, Northern Harrier, Turkey Vulture and Bald Eagle. October is the best month to observe this wonderful event especially from the Hawk Watch areas around the Great Lakes or the Appalachian Mountains. Over 7000 raptors passed over one site in 2006 to be duly identified and sexed. Further details can be found on the website: [www.hmana.org](http://www.hmana.org)

The **Guest Speaker** Dr Raoul Mulder was then introduced. He studied for his PhD in animal behaviour at the Australian National University and has worked in Botswana, Madagascar and Australia for the Australian Research

Council. In 2000 he took up a senior lectureship at the University of Melbourne and has been studying Black Swans under a three year research grant from the ARC. The title of Raoul's talk was "**The Love Life of Black Swans**".

Although iconic Australian birds, not much is known about them. There are seven species of swans worldwide and in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Europeans thought the Black Swan was a mythical bird. It was first captured in WA by William de Vlamingh.

Some research has been done in New Zealand but the best known studies were by Braithwaite in Canberra during the 1970s, where a captive population was studied for ten years. Black Swans appeared to have somewhat flexible mating arrangements with single parents, male pairs and threesomes (1 f to 2 m birds).

One of Raoul's areas of study regards the number of curly wing feathers which are peculiar to the Black Swan. Although they don't appear to have an obvious function, it is noted that paired birds have more curly feathers. The bright red beak with the white stripe also varies from bird to bird and may have a signaling function to attract the opposite sex. Studies centered around Lake Wendouree in Ballarat showed long term partnerships with 'divorce rates' less than 5%. The breeding season can extend from July to December with one nest per season and an average of 5-8 eggs per clutch. Not all birds breed however. With modern DNA techniques available it was found that 15% of cygnets were fathered by another male and there was 'infidelity' in 37% of broods.

The research had to be moved to Albert Park Lake after Wendouree dried up and it was found the 200 Swans on Albert Park were ideal subjects because of the ease of capture, and localisation of nests. Tagging the legs to identify birds was superseded by the use of loose neck collars because the latter can be read whether the bird is in or out of the water, and a database is being set up to access each tagged bird and its location. An E-tag system is being used for the tracking of mating procedure. The male bird is fitted with a small microchip on his tail feathers and the female with a backpack receptor. When copulation takes place (during which the female is submerged by the male bird), a record of this is received by the female and can be downloaded to a computer. It was found that 'extra pair' matings were taking place at night!

Raoul was ably assisted by his students and field assistants and left us with an invitation to join in the capture process at Albert Park. He would also like the location of any collared bird to be reported. The females have white collars with black numbers and the males black collars with white

numbers. Reports may be made via email to: [r.mulder@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:r.mulder@unimelb.edu.au)

A lively question session followed with voiced concerns regarding the neck collars. There have been no problems noted to date in Australia though a swan was seen in the UK having difficulty feeding and in distress, presumably due to a tight collar. The effect of the Formula 1 Grand Prix on the Albert Park Swan population is unknown as the site is locked down during the event.

Bill Ramsay reported on the death in September of Nicolette Hooper and extended condolences to her family.

Barbara Longmuir showed gift items available from the Blue Wren Gift Shop and Janet Hand reported on the Native Flower Show at Templestowe and the Gold, Gem and Treasure Expo in Ararat.

The Melbourne Water Wetlands Bird Survey is underway and Graeme Hosken would appreciate names of volunteers who would be willing to fill in for those unable to attend. Further information is available on the MELBOCA website. The evening ended with the usual cuppa and conversation.

*Linda Stock*

## **Native Flower Show at Templestowe**

On Saturday and Sunday 13-14 October 2007 the Yarra Yarra Branch of the Australian Plant Society held a very successful native flower show at Templestowe College. The BOCA display also created a lot of interest with the 900 people who attended. We had two display boards—one about BOCA and its activities and the other featuring the Bird Week theme of **Parrots on Parade**. A display of field guides and bird books were viewed as well as leaflets and children's colouring pages (from the BOCA website). Of course the leaflets on *Attracting Birds to your Garden* and *Bird Attracting Plants* were big hits. Children gazed at the cut outs of honeyeaters and parrots placed in appropriate plants supplied by Yarra Yarra members.

My thanks go to Jean Cuthbert who helped set up the display on the Friday and assisted, as required, on the Saturday and Sunday.

From discussions I learnt of an Eastern Rosella nesting in a school library roof (for the fifth consecutive year), a pair of Rainbow Lorikeets which moved into a roof cavity before the builder got the eaves lining up, an albino Magpie in North Box Hill and that Noisy Miners are the best alarms to let people know when there are snakes in backyards. Everyone was happy to share their bird stories. A valuable weekend activity.

*Janet Hand*

## Gold, Gem & Treasure Expo at Ararat

It was a case of having the display boards already done, and travelling. The venue was The Great Hall, Gum San Chinese Heritage Museum in Ararat. This was an all-day Saturday and Sunday morning display (20-21 October 2007) where again the attendance figure was over 900 people. The neighbouring stall by Parks Victoria got more attention, but we were not ignored. Table space was limited to one trestle but a wide range of our activities was promoted. Obviously some people visited the museum and then thought they would look upstairs. I spoke to a lady from the Gold Coast who wanted a guest speaker for her retirement village and a gentleman from Albany in WA. The Ballarat Branch of BOCA supplied me with local bird lists, Branch outing and meeting schedules and contact details which I gave to the many local visitors from the Ballarat, Ararat and Stawell areas. People from across Victoria attended. With lots of discussion about birds, I consider this was another successful BOCA promotion.

Janet Hand



Janet on the loudspeaker

## Breakfast with the Birds at Banyule

With the temperature already 26 degrees at 6.00 am on the first day of daylight saving (28 October 2007) the scene was set for an interesting morning. Strong winds were forecast but they were not as bad as later in the day. Seventy-seven people had booked to attend and with ten leaders at the ready, I anticipated a busy morning. I also had an added bonus as two very experienced leaders arrived who had not been sure that they could attend. The crowd was slow to arrive but they were quickly dispatched in groups of 6-8 with a leader for each group. By 7.45 am it was obvious that a lot forgot to set their clocks and I was left with leaders and no customers. The leaders formed themselves into a group and went walkabouts with two late arrivals. It was disappointing

that only 55 people attended but that was where the disappointment ended. A large marquee was set up between the ovals and housed our BOCA display boards, a display by the Banyule City Council and the Warrigal Conservation Society. Banyule City Council again put on a wonderful breakfast of fresh fruit platters and bakery goodies, served with tea, coffee and fruit juice.



Enjoying the breakfast

A bird call reached the grand total of 71 species—one more than in 2006. Some of the more interesting sightings were Australasian Shoveler, Great and Cattle Egrets, Buff-banded Rail, Spotless Crake, Latham's Snipe, Black-winged Stilt, Australian King-Parrot, Pallid Cuckoo and Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, White-winged Triller and Olive-backed Oriole. A Tiger Snake and several Rabbits were noted also.

My thanks go to my leaders—Celia Browne, Geoff Deason, Lyn Easton, Anthea Fleming, Daphne Hards, Robin Harry, Reg Johnson, Elizabeth Lloyd, Bill Ramsay, Sonja Ross, Fred Smith and Diane Tweeddale. Also special thanks to my telescope operators/wetland guides, Brian Fleming and Linda Stock. Thank you Celia for the bird lists and maps and Barbara Longmuir for your experience and guidance.

Janet Hand, Coordinator 2007



BOCA display. Photos by Bill Ramsay

## Weekdays Outings Notes

### 5 September 2007 Nagambie/Baillieston.

On a bright and balmy Wednesday leader Fred T H Smith, together with the interesting old gold area, showed 32 members just what a good day's birding is all about. After warning us we'd have to work hard for our birds, Fred proceeded to summon up almost 80 species to keep us on our toes.

We began with 20 species at Nagambie Lake, including Caspian Tern, Little Pied, Little Black and Great Cormorants, Black Swan and Australian Pelican; then headed via the Heathcote Road to the old Chinaman's Bridge—a nostalgic stop for many—and where we were joined by Reg and Kathleen Johnson and Daphne Hards.

After a frosty start the weather was superb with a clear blue sky making an open frame for the five species of raptor seen during the day—Swamp Harrier, Little and Wedge-tailed Eagles, Whistling Kite and Brown Goshawk. Rufous Songlark was heard here and seen by a few, along with Clamorous Reed-Warbler. Three Baillon's Crakes showed up in the telescopes kindly shared by their owners. By the time we set off for Baillieston proper, our tally had reached the 40 mark and included Little Lorikeet.

To finish our morning's activity we walked through the bush and open country abutting Baillieston Road and had a great time tracking down a small party of White-browed Babblers. We were alerted to their presence by their almost cat-like churring calls but they cunningly kept about 50 metres ahead of us until suddenly doubling back to perch in a small dead tree, so most got good views. Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters were also a good sight for our city-side group.

A Wedge-tailed Eagle drifted overhead and the 'eagle-eyed' among us made out Dusky Woodswallows even higher. On our way back to lunch we had good views of the display flight of a Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, another bird we seldom see.

We ate at the old settlement site—hard to imagine the lives and activities of the 2000 or so old Baillieston residents when there is so very little remaining today. Reg Johnson took this opportunity to fill us in on a bit of the local history. During lunch Gina Hopkins and Fred scouted across the road and stirred up Jacky Winter, Red-rumped Parrot, Mistletoebird and Crested

Shrike-tit, although they had taken off in search of flycatchers!

Our afternoon walk was undertaken by most of the group and added Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Brown Treecreeper, Rufous Whistler, Varied Sittella, White-winged Triller, Black-chinned and Brown-headed Honeyeaters—and three active Sugar Gliders—to the list. Grey Shrike-thrush sang harmoniously during the day—as if to remind us of its old name Harmonious Thrush—and Gold-dust Wattles showed appropriate colour along most of the route. Fred was disappointed we did not find the Crested Bellbird present on his 'reccie', but hey! We must leave something for next time, right?

Our tally for this inspiring day: 78 species.

**15 September 2007.** A lone Pink-eared Duck floating serenely on the Yarra River seemed surprising—but is actually typical of the surprises Banyule Flats Reserve can spring on even wide-awake birdwatchers.

This was one of the 68 species observed by 28 Weekdays Outings members on a clear day after one light shower. Of the total, three were listed as heard only, by the requisite three people, and more. These were Little Lorikeet, Crested Shrike-tit and Golden-headed Cisticola.

Nine species were listed as nesting including Tawny Frogmouth (male on nest and female in nearby Black Wattle) and Black Swan. This last pair had sadly lost their two cygnets only the previous week but seemed interested in rebuilding, according to the day's leader, Lyn Easton, a local birder who keeps a daily watch on what is going on in this fascinating spot.

Recent loss of canopy in several areas has affected roosting and nesting of several species, Lyn told us, especially for her favourite Powerful Owl which she says is getting harder to find (although she had seen one two days before our outing).

Eagle-eyed and eared, the modest Ms Easton has built up a wealth of knowledge during several years of daily walks and very generously imparts all the details on the reserve's inhabitants and their nest sites.

Our morning's walk took us around the wetland and through the six kilometre river loop via the bike path and old cattle yards. Several members stopped off to inspect the BOCA Centenary tree planting, now thriving through the care of Celia Browne and her team of weeder/waterers.

Australasian Grebes were on the wetland with Hardhead and both species of Teal (Chestnut and Grey), as well as a male Darter and Latham's Snipe were spotted erupting from the dried reeds in several places. Buff-banded Rail was heard calling and seen further on, along the creek that crosses the bicycle path. A Koala sat in the trees along the river walk, and Olive-backed Oriole called and was later seen, as well as Mistletoebird. Common Bronzewing, Grey Fantail and Eastern Yellow Robin were added to our list during our return to the carpark.

During lunch a Swamp Harrier and Long-billed Corella were spotted by one group. Our afternoon walk took us to the powerlines past the Plenty River Bridge hoping to see Peregrine Falcon (seen earlier by Lyn) and also the Powerful Owl, but both kept themselves hidden. The White-winged Trillers seen by Lyn two weeks previously (and in advance of their 'normal' arrival time) were also absent.

Pallid and Fan-tailed Cuckoos called and the Pallid showed itself—a new bird for one or two newer members. A very handsome male Darter perched in the river was admired for its deep chestnut face and throat colour and the creamy/black iridescence of its wings against its black body.

Surely Banyule Flats must be one of Melbourne's better-kept secrets?

*Leonie Robbins*

**22-23 October 2007 Phillip Island.** Our group of eighteen assembled while Cape Barren Geese grazed and Masked Lapwing called beside the dam across the road. Three small black and white Lapwing chicks scurried near the dam shore. Then a beach-washed specimen was presented, tentatively identified as a Southern Fulmar from the field guides. None of our party had seen a bird like it before.

After the previous days of heat, the developing rain had arrived and rain gear was the order of the day. Off to Surfies Point where we were able to compare Kelp and Pacific Gulls then on to The Nobbies where the rain was becoming cold, but not enough however to deter us and we walked the boardwalk near nesting Silver Gulls. Most of our group had not been in a seabird colony and we checked out the young in their mottled plumage. They ranged in size from recently hatched to nearly adult and some must have been challenged by the weather extremes they had experienced over the previous 24 hours. Aggressively

protective adults called and threatened but other adults attacked unprotected small chicks. Little Penguins had been provided with nesting boxes to supplement the hillside holes. Though no box appeared occupied, one Penguin was seen in a burrow and at least four were sheltering under the boardwalk. That seemed such a good idea that we also sought shelter in the café, where warm drinks were most welcome. From the café Australian Fur Seals were visible on the rocks and a lone Sooty Oystercatcher foraged on an outcrop.

Proceeding to the freshwater Swan Lake we walked in to the hide, adding bushbirds by calls as we went. Black Wallabies dotted the hillside across from the hide and a lone Common Sandpiper bobbed along the lake shore. Short-tailed Shearwater burrows riddled the hillside near the hide but the only bird had been seen near The Nobbies. Raptors had been limited to a Brown Goshawk at Surfies Point but at Swan Lake we observed Swamp Harrier, Whistling Kite and Brown Falcon. The rain and cold continued so we disbanded as the light fell, to meet again in the morning.

Next day was mild and sunny and good birding was had in the carpark. Cormorants and ibis flew over while honeyeaters foraged in the bush. The Lapwings and Geese were beside the dam, along with the ubiquitous Australian Magpie and Common Starling. Soon we drove to Oswin Roberts Reserve which lived up to its reputation. Here were Wedge-tailed Eagle, Satin Flycatcher (two pairs), Dusky and White-browed Woodswallows, Pallid and Fan-tailed Cuckoos, Rufous Whistler and Sacred Kingfisher. After morning tea it was Rhyll Inlet with a falling tide. The exposed mud and sandbank had Great Egret, White-faced Heron, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint, Pied Oystercatcher, Whimbrel, Crested Tern and about 200 Bar-tailed Godwits. The bush beside the inlet included the usual Superb Fairy-wren, Brown Thornbill and Red Wattlebird plus New Holland and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters. Australian and Little Ravens were present and at least 35 Masked Lapwings were in view in the paddock beside the track.

After lunch here we rather reluctantly moved on to Fishers Wetland. Here Black-winged Stilt, Australasian and Hoary-headed Grebes, Australian Shelduck, Chestnut Teal and Black-fronted Dotterel were at ground level while Galah, Swamp Harrier, Whistling Kite and Brown Goshawk flew over. Several Black

Swans had young cygnets and juvenile Cape Barren Geese stayed near an adult. Good views of White-browed Scrubwren and White-fronted Chat were achieved in this area. Then it was time for bird call before departure. A total of 95 species was recorded over the two days and much thanks go to our leaders, Leonie Robbins and Sally Whitehead for all the work and preparation they had put into such a successful outing.

*Diane Tweeddale*

*Convenor MELBOCA Weekdays Outings*

## **Community Monitoring of Bird Utilisation of Constructed Wetlands**

The continued monitoring of the five wetlands assigned to MELBOCA Branch during September and October has added 13 species for a progressive total of 77 since June 2007. It is interesting to see the summer migrants appearing. Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Horsfield's and Shining Bronze-Cuckoos and Clamorous Reed-Warbler. Two highlights were the recording of a Pink-eared Duck and Australian Spotted Crake at the Rivergum Creek Wetland, Hampton Park. This wetland is well worth a visit, not only for the duck species but Red-kneed Dotterels have been there on each survey day.

Continuing results will be published in *The Melbirdian*.

*Graeme Hosken, Recorder for MELBOCA*

## **Hunters and hunted—an old story**

Although a cold August morning, the view across the Bay was clear as I took my usual walk along the Brighton foreshore. Well out to sea several container ships lay at anchor waiting to enter Port Melbourne. A couple of hundred metres off Green Point some Crested Terns were diving enthusiastically on a school of fish. Under this attack the fish began to move towards deeper water, but not before four or five Caspian Terns joined the fishing, plunging in with larger splashes.

Attracted by this activity, some Australasian Gannets came flying low from different directions to join the feeding. Soon Gannets out-numbered the Terns and their numbers rapidly increased. It was as if the Gannets were widespread over the Bay searching for fish schools and were able to quickly congregate wherever fish were located. The water surface in the vicinity of the fish was now boiling with plunging and emerging Gannets.

A pattern began to form; the Gannets plunged in on the moving fish, rising to the surface to pause briefly, presumably to finish swallowing their prey. Next, they were off, avoiding the area of plunging birds, flying up clockwise to about ten metres which brought them into the mass of birds hovering above the fish prior to plunging in again. Most adopted this pattern.

With large numbers of birds plunging, emerging, resting momentarily before circling and the hovering, it is difficult to accurately number how many were in the hunt, but conservatively, perhaps 80-100. While this was going on, the fish continued to move off-shore and perhaps were dispersing or going deeper. Gradually the frenzy diminished and the number of Gannets reduced. About 10-15 minutes had elapsed since I first noticed the Terns.

It is worth noting that the Caspian and Crested Terns soon retired from the scene. Maybe they were unwilling to risk injury among the wildly plunging Gannets or perhaps the fish were driven too deep for them. While the feeding was on I did not notice the arrival of four Australian Pelicans and they began swimming about busily, with half-furled wings, on the outskirts of the main onslaught. Perhaps they were scooping up injured fish or fish fragments.

I remember last winter while walking I witnessed a similar episode, though not as concentrated or dramatic. It would be interesting to discover which fish species run in Port Phillip Bay in late winter. The number of Gannets present indicates they know when the fish are schooling.

*Max Melvin*



*Australasian Gannet, Port Phillip Bay. J Rogers*

*This article was sent in by Michael Seyfort who writes that "Max, who is now retired, worked with ICI and was Australia's expert on saltfields. He located, designed and constructed several large saltfields around Australia and with his life-long interest in birds, he ensured that they were 'bird friendly'"*

## INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

Entered 25 October 2007

The following Field Reports were received from members attending the MELBOCA monthly meetings held at Balwyn on 27 September & 23 October 2007, Email and WEB reports to the BOCA National Office. The reports include Currawong, Corella, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Brown Thornbill, Song Thrush, Little Wattlebird and Crested Pigeon sightings within 60km Melbourne, plus other Field Reports.

### Currawong Sightings

#### Pied

From 1962

03 Sep '07	1	Bushy Park Wetlands	Eltham Glen Waverley
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#### Grey

No reports this period.

### Corella Sightings

#### Long-billed

05 Sep '07	1	Dandenong Road	Armadale
21 Sep '07	3	Wattle Park	Burwood
07 Oct '07	8		Eltham North

#### Little

No reports this period.

### Crested Pigeon Sightings

From May 2006

30 Aug '07	12		Eltham
14 Aug '07	1	Coburg Lake Park	Coburg
31 Aug '07	1	Faulkner Street	Blackburn South
Sep '07	8	Whitehorse Road	Balwyn
03 Sep '07	4	Braeside Park	Braeside
15 Sep '07	1	Maribyrnong River	Footscray
23 Sep '07	8	Springfield Park	Box Hill
1-14 Oct '07	3	Lawrence Street	Blackburn South
	3	Holmes Road	Moonee Ponds
16 Oct '07	1	Maribyrnong River	Avondale Heights
17 Oct '07	1	Springfield Park	Box Hill
19 Oct '07	2	Kingsley Gardens	Box Hill
20 Oct '07	10	Koonung Creek Reserve	Balwyn North
21 Oct '07	1	Toroodun Street	Mount Waverley
23 Oct '07	2	Sampson Drive	Mount Waverley
		Hardner Road	Mount Waverley

### Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo Sightings

03 Sep '07	4	King's Domain/Linlithgow Ave	Melbourne
	12	Children's Farm	Collingwood
08 Sep '07	12	Shepherds Bush	Glen Waverley
02 Oct '07	??	Toolangi State Forest	Toolangi
04 Oct '07	6	Calder Hwy	Gisborne
15 Oct '07	5	Eastern Fwy/Station Street	Box Hill North

### Brown Thornbill Sightings

4/5 times a week	??	Marriott Street	Parkdale
02 Oct '07	1	Deep Creek Drive	East Doncaster

### Song Thrush Sightings

28 Sep '07	1	Marriott Street	Parkdale
29 Sep '07	1	Tenderden Place	Mill Park
?? Oct '07	2	Kernan Street	Strathmore
?? Mar '07	2	Holmes Road	Moonee Ponds

## Other Sightings

28 Aug '07	Chestnut Teal (2)	Mullum Mullum Creek	Mitcham
Early Sep '07	Grey Fantail (1)	Marriott Street	Parkdale
Mid Sep '07	Willie Wagtail (1)	Marriott Street	Parkdale
?? Jun '07	Dusky Woodswallow (12)	Maribyrnong River	East Keilor
02 Sep '07	Gang Gang Cockatoo (2)	Ringwood State Park	Ringwood
07 Sep '07	Australasian Bittern (1)	Flood Plain Wetland	Hallam Valley
14 Sep '07	Swift Parrot (1)	Valley Reserve	Mount Waverley
18 Sep '07	Powerful Owl (1)	Minna Street	Blackburn
7/8 Oct '07	Gang-gang Cockatoo (10)	Browns Nature Reserve	Greensborough
05 Oct '07	Gang-gang Cockatoo (3)	Koonung Reserve	North Balwyn
11 Oct '07	Gang-gang Cockatoo (2)	Syndal South Primary School	Syndal
15 Oct '07	Buff-banded Rail (1)	Proutwebb Road	Shoreham
	Glossy Ibis (1)	Mulgrave Wetlands	Wheeler's Hill
16 Oct '07	Common Bronzewing (6)	Centenary Pk Golf Club	Frankston
	Chestnut Teal (4)		
	Pacific Black Duck (2)		
	Purple Swamphen (2+1y)		
18 Oct '07	Southern Boobook (1) (Bird headless-roadkill)	Riversdale Road	Riversdale
23 Oct '07	European Greenfinch (2)	Lakeside Boulevard	Braeside

- NOTES:
- 1 The Australasian Bittern was recorded on 7 Sep by the Penboc Team as part of the Melbourne Water Survey of the Lower Dandenong Catchment contracted to BOCA.
  - 2 A report has been received of Long-billed Corellas roosting in the timbers of the Big Dipper at Luna Park.
  - 3 An abundance of Musk Lorikeets are at present in many Melbourne suburbs. What are they feeding on?
  - 4 Looking for a White-browed Scrubwren? One may be seen in the garden section of the Bunnings Store in Ferntree Gully Road.

**Little Wattlebird.** Do you have this species in your garden or a park near you? Where are they breeding? One pair is raising young at Daisy Street, Murrumbeena. Is this activity taking place in your garden?

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

**Information required:** Observer's name, address, date of record, location of sighting (street, suburb), postcode, Melway ref, number of birds optional. How long have you noticed this species in your area? Eg. 1983  
Forward info to BOCA PO Box 185 Nunawading 3131 or Email: [info@melboca.org.au](mailto:info@melboca.org.au)

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

Armadale*	Carlton North	Lower Plenty	Ringwood
Ascot Vale*	Clifton Hill	Lower Templestowe	St Kilda
Balwyn	Doncaster	Macleod	South Melbourne
Balwyn North	Doncaster East	Mont Albert North	South Yarra
Belgrave Heights*	East Malvern	Montrose*	Sunbury*
Berwick*	Elwood	Mount Waverley	Surrey Hills
Black Rock	Fitzroy North*	Murrumbeena*	Thomastown
Blackburn	Gembrook	Newport	Vermont South
Blackburn North	Glen Iris	North Fitzroy	Viewbank
Blackburn South	Glen Waverley	Nunawading*	Westgate Park
Box Hill South	Greensborough	Oakleigh	Williamstown
Brunswick	Hawthorn East	Parkdale*	
Burwood	Ivanhoe	Patterson Lakes	
Camberwell	Kew	Point Cook	
Camberwell East	Langwarrin	Reservoir	
Canterbury	Lilydale	Richmond	

\* Suburbs added, September & October 2007.

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

Refer to Melway Street Directory, Pages 1 & 2.

Graeme Hosken, Recorder

## *Autumn Coach Tours*

**Advance Notice. Please look for booking details in *The Bird Observer* February 2008.**

### **Western District Wetlands**

**Saturday 15 March 2008**

Leader: Robert Missen

### **Werribee Plains area**

**Saturday 19 April 2008**

Leader: Dave Torr

### **Coach Tour to Maryborough area**

**Saturday 13 October 2007**

These tours continue to be popular with a full bus again.

A misty rain started to fall as we arrived in Creswick for morning tea, easing on leaving at 10.00 am with Paddys Ranges State Park the next destination.

The weather at the park was fine with an overcast sky—not a good light for birding in a Box-Ironbark forest but, thankfully, no wind. This park is not unlike Crosbie Forest Park, so our hopes were high for some robin sightings. White-browed Babblers were heard and seen flitting through the undergrowth, Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters were numerous and several appeared to be nesting. A Mistletoebird was spotted by one observant birder and a Black-chinned Honeyeater obligingly stopped still long enough to provide good views of it.

We were remarking on the stillness of the forest when suddenly, a Dusky Woodswallow was spotted displaying on a branch. This was a real treat and as we watched the female flew in and mating took place. More excitement for the onlookers when several more Dusky Woodswallows arrived and they all nestled against each other along a branch—as they do. A magical pre-lunch highlight! An immature Olive-backed Oriole was sighted on return to base in Paddys Ranges State Park.

We enjoyed our lunch using the tables and seating in Paddy Granges Picnic Ground, leaving the park at 1.30 pm headed for Havelock Nature Reserve. The reserve was alive with waterbirds in the lake area and bushbirds were active in the surrounding vegetation. Walking through the vegetation, excellent views of Restless Flycatcher were possible in the understorey. Black Swan, grebes, Masked Lapwing and Eurasian Coot were some of the waterbirds seen here.

At 3.00 pm we left Havelock Nature Reserve en route to Tullaroop Reservoir. Yellow-rumped Thornbills were abundant here and a Red-rumped Parrot was our first parrot for the day. The reservoir itself was alive with activity—grebes, Black Swan and Blue-billed Duck being some of the sightings.

Bird Call was held at Tullaroop with a total of 52 birds recorded. Alas, no robins today. Our sincere thanks go to Veronica and Jenny for their excellent research and organisation and also to Martin for recording the numbers and taking the Bird Call.

*Margie Reeves*

### **Wilson Botanic Park**

MELBOCA provides assistance as guides to the Friends of Wilson Botanic Park at Berwick on at least two 'Bird Walks' in the park each year. Their 2007 Spring Walk took place between 8.00 and 9.45 am on 14 October with twelve persons attending on a fine, cool morning. The area contains plantings of established species of both exotic and native plants with an ongoing planting program. Two large lakes attract waterbirds with protection provided on the water's edges by reed beds. A bird hide overlooks the northern lake. Twenty-six species of birds were recorded on the morning—the only highlight being several Hardheads. There was recent evidence of a visit by Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos as many crunched-up pine cones were on the ground under one of the several stands of pine trees.

*Graeme Hosken, MELBOCA Leader*

### ***The Melbirdian* Deadline**

Please submit articles for the February 2008 edition of *The Melbirdian* by 1 January 2008. Send to Jenny: [membership@birdobservers.org.au](mailto:membership@birdobservers.org.au) or post to PO Box 185, Nunawading VIC 3131

## Wednesday Wanderings – Warrandyte to Westgate



After a six month recess, Series 2 of the Wednesday Wanderings commence in 2008. You are warmly invited to join our ramblings through the reserves and parks adjacent to the River Yarra between Warrandyte and the Westgate Bridge.

There will be a small change next year—the walks are programmed for the **fourth** Wednesday of each month, February to November. Easy to remember—the day **following** MELBOCA's monthly branch meeting. So that you can mark your diary now, the following are the dates for 2008.

- 27 Feb** Warrandyte State Park, Jumping Creek – upstream to Blue Tongue Bend. Mel 24 A11
- 26 Mar** Warrandyte State Park, Jumping Creek – downstream to Black Flat. Mel 24 A11
- 23 Apr** Warrandyte State Park, Pound Bend – upstream. Mel 23 A11
- 28 May** Normans Reserve, Warrandyte – upstream walk. Mel 23 B12
- 25 Jun** Glynn's Reserve & Bob's Wetland, Nth Warrandyte. Mel 22 K11
- 23 Jul** Parks Victoria, Longridge Farm, Warrandyte. Mel 22 H10
- 27 Aug** Parks Victoria, Laughing Waters, Reynolds Rd, Eltham. Mel 22 E10
- 24 Sep** Tikalara Park, Templestowe. Mel 34 F2
- 22 Oct** Parks Victoria, Sweeneys Flats, Eltham. Mel 22 B11
- 26 Nov** Parks Victoria, Candlebark Park & Lenister Farm from Westerfolds Park. Mel 21 F12

Full details of each walk will appear in future *The Melbirdians* starting with the February edition. We look forward to welcoming you to these popular, morning walks beside the Yarra.  
Celia M Browne (03) 5982 1314

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<b>Location:</b>	<b>Melway Ref.</b>
1 Frog Hollow Wetland, Endeavour Hills	91 G 09
2 Kilberry Boulevard, Hampton Park	96 J 09
3 Rivergum Creek Wetland, Hampton Park	96 H 09
4 South Golf Links Road, Narre Warren	110 F 11

Location No	1	2	3	4	Location No	1	2	3	4
Blue-billed Duck			X		Galah	X		X	
Black Swan	X		X	X	Long-billed Corella				
Australian Wood Duck	X		X	X	Little Corella				
Pacific Black Duck	X	X	X	X	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo				
Australasian Shoveler			X	X	Rainbow Lorikeet	X	X	X	X
Grey Teal			X	X	Eastern Rosella			X	
Chestnut Teal	X	X	X		Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo *				X
Pink-eared Duck *			X		Shining Bronze-Cuckoo *				X
Hardhead			X		Superb Fairy-wren				X
Australasian Grebe		X	X		White-browed Scrubwren *		X		
Hoary-headed Grebe			X		Brown Thornbill *		X		X
Darter	X				Yellow Thornbill				
Pied Cormorant *				X	Red Wattlebird	X	X	X	X
Little Pied Cormorant	X		X	X	Little Wattlebird *		X	X	
Little Black Cormorant	X		X	X	Noisy Miner			X	
Great Cormorant					White-plumed Honeyeater	X	X	X	X
Australian Pelican			X	X	White-naped Honeyeater				
White-faced Heron	X	X	X		New Holland Honeyeater		X	X	X
Little Egret *			X		Magpie-lark	X	X	X	X
Great Egret	X		X	X	Willie Wagtail		X	X	X
Australian White Ibis		X	X	X	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike		X		X
Straw-necked Ibis	X	X	X	X	Grey Butcherbird *			X	
Royal Spoonbill					Australian Magpie	X	X	X	X
Yellow-billed Spoonbill					Little Raven	X	X	X	X
Black Kite					Singing Bushlark				X
Australian Spotted Crake *			X		Skylark *				X
Purple Swamphen	X	X	X	X	House Sparrow	X	X	X	
Dusky Moorhen	X		X	X	European Goldfinch	X	X		X
Eurasian Coot	X		X	X	Welcome Swallow	X	X	X	X
Latham's Snipe			X	X	Fairy Martin			X	
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *			X		Clamorous Reed-Warbler *	X	X	X	X
Black-winged Stilt			X		Little Grassbird	X		X	X
Black-fronted Dotterel	X				Golden-headed Cisticola	X			X
Red-kneed Dotterel			X		Common Blackbird	X	X	X	X
Masked Lapwing	X	X	X	X	Song Thrush				
Silver Gull	X		X		Common Starling	X	X	X	X
Rock Dove					Common Myna	X	X	X	X
Spotted Turtle-Dove	X	X	X	X					
Crested Pigeon			X		Feral Duck	X			X
					<b>Total:</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>42</b>

• \* Species added (Sep–Oct 2007)

**Progressive Total from June 2007: 77 Species**

*Entered: Graeme Hosken*

Frogs:	1	2	3	4
Common Froglet	X	X	X	X
Southern Bullfrog				X