

The Melbirdian

BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter Number 79 Autumn 2012

The Last of the Melbirdians

A grid of 40 thumbnail images representing the front pages of the newsletter 'The Melbirdian' from issue 59 to issue 79. Each thumbnail shows the title 'The Melbirdian', the issue number, and a date. The thumbnails are arranged in a 10x4 grid. The dates range from February 2008 to November 2011. The thumbnails show various articles, photos of birds, and meeting information. The grid is titled 'The Last of the Melbirdians' at the top.

A montage of *The Melbirdian* front pages going back four years to issue 59, February 2008, when the newsletter was edited by Chris Wichems. A new newsletter — name as yet undecided, suggestions welcome (melbirdian@gmail.com) — will be published by BirdLife Melbourne and sent to all current Melbourne members in June. Please see the back page for further information about the new BirdLife Melbourne arrangements and contacts.

Branch Meetings (Balwyn): Upcoming Guest Speakers

Tuesday 28 February 2012
After the MELBOCA AGM

Victor Hurley: "Regent"

Regent Parrots are a special sight in the north of the state, but sightings aren't common. Victor discusses the breeding success or otherwise of these beautiful birds along the Murray River catchment.

Tuesday 27 March 2012
8:00pm

Graeme Hamilton: "Life with BirdLife."

Graeme Hamilton, CEO of the newly merged BirdLife organisation, discusses the potential synergies and benefits for members and birds alike now that the new organisation has officially launched.

Tuesday 24 April 2012
8:00pm

Amanda Dare: "Bad, Mad and Dangerous to Grow: BMAD in Eucalypt Canopies"

Some species have thrived in human-altered landscapes, even to the point of overabundance. Amanda presents a talk on Bell Miner colonies, Bell Miner-associated dieback (BM

AD) in eucalypt canopies.

Tuesday 22 May 2012
8:00pm

Lindy Lumsden: "We only on come out at night"

Lindy researches animal ecology for the DSE. Her talk focuses on those seldom seen night creatures, bats. Her talk will range from microbats to the largest bat, the flying fox.



Errata

In issue 78 of *The Melbirdian*, in our report on Anthea Fleming's Member's Choice segment on page 3, "Karingal Conservation Society" should read "Warringal Conservation Society". Warringal is an old name for the Heidelberg district and a nearby park is Warringal Park.

In issue 78 we also incorrectly attributed the sighting and photographing of a leucistic Australasian Grebe in South Morang to John Forster. It was in fact John Ford who both took the picture which appeared on the cover and who, with John McKenzie, alerted MELBOCA to grebe's existence.

John also writes to us with an update:

I have finally got down to the pond for a good look and have seen another white grebe – its markings are different, so it must be the offspring. The parent I haven't seen, but it may have moved like the earlier one did. Or it could have been taken as there are plenty of raptors in the area (have recently seen Wedge Tailed Eagles, Brown Hawks and Nankeen Kestrels).

A picture taken by John of the new bird is included above.

Under BirdLife Melbourne, branch meetings will continue to be held on the fourth Tuesday of every month (except December) in the Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn, not far from the library (Melway 46 E8).

The meeting begins at 8:00pm and features a guest speaker and a Member's Topic segment. Entry is by a donation of \$4. Out-of-town members and visitors are always welcome!

Look out for an expanded calendar of activities advertised in the next newsletter, including additional guest speakers and outings, as MELBOCA and Birds Australia (Melbourne) join forces.

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Future of Shorebirds: Meeting Report

Tuesday 25 September 2011

John Young steered the evening and welcomed a new member. The first presentation was given by **Pat Bingham** on Tawny Frogmouths, which she has been recording in Melbourne's Wattle Park for seven to eight years.

Stuart Rae published a paper on the distribution of Tawny Frogmouths in suburban woodland (*Emu* 2009) based on his observations in Canberra. The study showed that three pairs of frogmouths nested per 100ha in grassy woodland type, whereas 0.6 pair nested in closed forest. Pat divided 40ha of Wattle Park (55ha total) into sections encompassing three vegetation types: grassy woodland; conservation trees and shrubs, which is never mown; and open grassland. In 2004 there were four nests, in 2007 six nests, and in 2010 eight nests in the 40ha study area. The trees used were Yellow Box, Narrow-leaved Peppermint and Southern Mahogany. Survival success in 2010 was three chicks from the eight nests. Threats to survival include ravens, Pied Currawong and Brush-tailed Possums, and also bad weather during 2010 spring. Pat noted that similar tree availability existed outside the park, and she could not explain the much higher distribution than in the Canberra study.

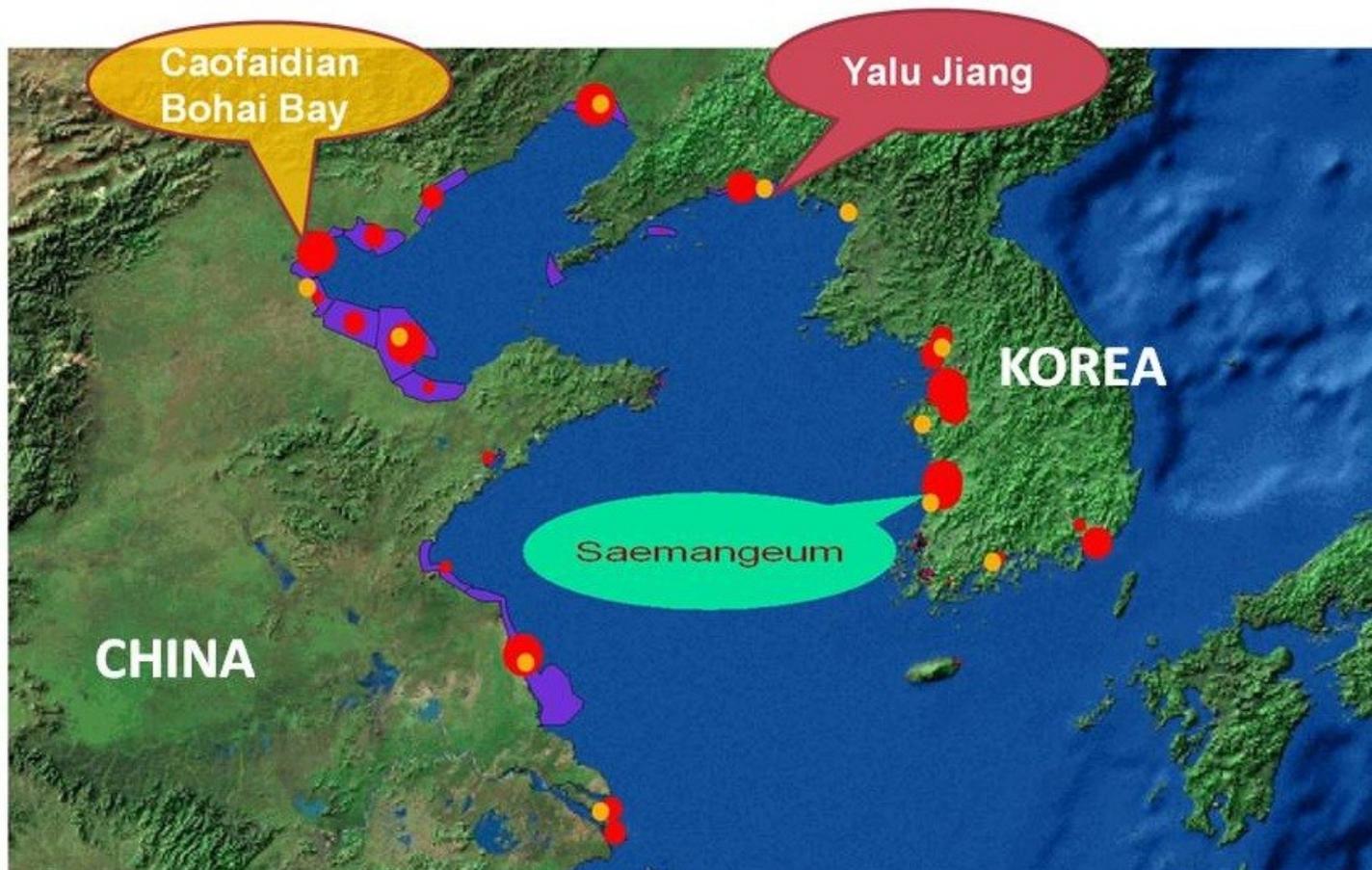
Ken Gosbell gave the main talk titled *The Future of Shorebirds in a Changing World*. Ken was a civil engineer,

but in retirement he follows conservation issues and migratory shorebirds. He is International Liaison Officer for the Australasian Wader Study Group (AWSG), which is a special interest group of Birds Australia. The 55 species of migratory shorebirds can be viewed as global citizens, and a barometer of the health of our planet. There are eight migration pathways, and ours, the East Asia-Australasia Flyway (EAAF), stretches from Australia/New Zealand to Russia and Alaska. It passes through 23 countries, home to 2 billion people, in the fastest growing region of the world.

Destination sites for migratory waders in Australia include Corner and Shallow Inlets, Westernport Bay, the Coorong, and Roebuck Bay and 80 Mile Beach in north-west WA. As yet, all the rest stops between Australasia and Alaska are not known, but the Yellow Sea is recognised as the main rest area for both large and small waders, and is where they may spend 4-8 weeks, fattening up before proceeding north to breed. The land reclamation around the Yellow Sea is a huge threat to the wader life cycle. Records show that 62% of species have declined or become extinct, 27% are stable, and 10% show an increase.

Ken showed graphs of counts made by AWSG from 1980 to 2007, which illustrated worrying trends for Eastern Curlew, Curlew Sandpiper, Red Knot and Great Knot. These

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Map image showing resting sites for migratory shorebirds around the Yellow Sea, on the East Asia-Australasia Flyway. Courtesy of K. Gosbell



records led to the creation of Shorebirds 2020, with the aims of conducting consistent counts every year, thence to identify trends with which to influence decision makers. Only smart data can draw attention to what is happening.

Records so far from the Coorong, Corner Inlet, Westernport, Anderson Inlet, WTP, Roebuck Bay and 80 Mile Beach mostly show marked declines. Red Knot and Curlew Sandpiper at Corner Inlet show approximate 65% declines, whereas Red-necked Stint show a slight increase. MYSMA counts from N-W WA show declines in the 12 most common species, and four species show a decline in numbers greater than 50%.

Banding and flagging has enabled birds to be identified in

50,000. Great Knot declined from 116,000 to 26,000. Bohai Bay in China is the most important site for Red Knot, owing to a specific food item. But here a new port is being built to receive Australian iron ore. Yalu Jiang is important for Bar-tailed Godwit, where the adjoining city of Donggang, the fastest growing city in the world, is developing on reclaimed land.

There needs to be international collaboration at the highest level. Fifteen governments and eight NGOs are represented in the EAAF Partnership, an international forum dealing with the issues of migratory birds. Governments are always sceptical; the work of Shorebirds 2020 is critical to understanding bird movements in Australia – popu-



Critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper. Image courtesy of K. Gosbell

many countries. From this data, migration maps have been created for each species; and from these, the Yellow Sea has been identified as the key location for resting. Tiny electronic geolocators, strapped to birds, measure light and thence latitude and longitude. These devices have revealed truly remarkable journeys of individual birds. A Great Knot flew north via Asia and returned via the Pacific Ocean two years running. An Eastern Curlew flew 8,700km from Inverloch to its Siberian destination via the Yellow Sea in just seven days.

The Yellow Sea, bordered by China and Korea, covers 20,000km², two-thirds of which has been reclaimed or damaged. Two million birds use it. Detritus and silt from the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers bring nutrients, and huge tides form vast mudflats.

The main threats are large-scale aquaculture and land reclamation: land for port development, oil refineries and wind farms. At Saemangeum, in South Korea, a 33km wall was built to reclaim land for industry.

From 2006-8, observers monitored the effects of completing the wall: wader numbers dropped from 200,000 to

lation numbers, where they stop en route, alternative sites, food items and local threats. The data must be published and presented to governments at the highest levels, to highlight the critical issues on the Yellow Sea.

Lastly, Ken stressed the importance of taking the message to the community and schools. One such message could be the plight of the magnificent Spoonbill Sandpiper which now warrants a captive breeding program, commenced in 2011. We must stop the decline of any more migratory birds.

Xenia Dennett thanked Ken for his full and comprehensive presentation, and spoke of the thrill of holding and banding a tiny wader, and seeing it again in 12 months' time.

Bill Ramsay brought us up to date on BirdLife Melbourne and **Janet Hand** reported on BOCA's Breakfast with the Birds at Banyule. **Barbara Longmuir** touted her colourful stall; **Graeme Hosken** reported on outings past and John Young announced outings ahead. Everyone was ready for a cuppa.



Victoria, Naturally: Meeting Report

22 November 2011

The last monthly meeting to be held under the "MELBOCA" banner was led by **Bill Ramsay**. He introduced **Elizabeth Ainsworth** to give her Member's Topic on *Birds in Literature*.

This presentation was part visual, part aural, starting with hieroglyphics of birds on an Egyptian coffin, then the white dove which led Jason and the Argonauts safely between rocks. A fourteenth-century tale of cranes and a Bible reference followed. In *Peter Pan*: "Do you know," Peter asked, "why swallows build in the eaves of houses?"; "To listen to the stories!" Sad stories, funny stories, Australian stories and Aboriginal stories. There were also beautiful poems by Judith Wright, many of which feature birds.



Hieroglyphics featuring images of birds – Wikipedia

Bill then introduced **Matt Ruchel**, whose talk was *Victorian Nature – Values and Challenges*. Matt is Executive Director of the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA), and has a long background in non-governmental state, national and international environment policy. As VNPA's fiftieth anniversary, in 2012 approaches, he came to talk about Victoria's natural environment, beginning with a reminder that we are blessed with about 100,000 species, covering vertebrates, vascular plants, and invertebrates, which together make up our precious and diverse ecosystems, from desert to forest to alpine plains, to seashore and marine. But huge damage has occurred since European settlement: 44% of native plants and 30% of animals are extinct or threatened. Parks and reserves are the most effective and efficient way of protecting biodiversity/whole ecosystems. A map of Victoria shows 30% of the state is public land; in prominence are large national parks, e.g., Grampians, Alps, Little Desert, Big De-

sert and Murray-Sunset country. There are many small parks surrounded by cleared land. Small pockets of bush suffer from isolation – the larger tracts are much higher quality. Of privately owned land, 12% is native vegetation remnants; 60% of this is under threat. Estimates show that each year 4,000ha of land is still cleared, mainly grassland.

The VNPA has a history of working alongside many groups to halt adverse practices. It has a small staff of 10-12, and a huge volunteer base. Its conservation programmes involve campaigns, research, science and policy. It is active in community education through its publication *Nature Watch*, and activities such as bushwalking, survey excursions and bush restoration projects. VNPA's conservation strategy has four interlinked foci: protecting special places; park protection; seas and shores; and biodiversity and ecosystems. The following are examples of VNPA's work:

- Their campaign to save our northern floodplain forests contributed to the declaration of Victoria's Red Gum National Parks, which encompasses Barmah NP, Gunbower NP and Murray-Sunset NP. They are now fighting to ensure the Murray Darling Basin Plan delivers regular flooding, approximately every two years
- 100 years ago, all river frontage was public land, and most was licensed for grazing, with the outcome that 53% river frontage is severely modified, and only 14% can be considered in good condition. Matt suggests the need for modified conservation licences
- VNPA is working with Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne (RBGC) to protect habitat for the Southern Brown Bandicoot; to create bio-links/corridors of vegetation from the gardens to other reserves to the south and west, so that the RBGC population is not isolated
- The most endangered ecosystem is grassland, most threatened by Melbourne's expansion. A map showed

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Southern Brown Bandicoot – Wikipedia





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Victoria's historic grasslands, now approximately 10% of those remain. Only 1% can be considered in good condition. Destruction has been wrought by cropping and use of superphosphate. Plans and submissions for the protection of our grasslands are imminent.

- Pre-1950s grazing in the High Country was common, but it was established that cattle cause severe damage to alpine sphagnum moss. In 2005, Premier Bracks closed the alpine parks to grazing, but Premier Baillieu allowed cattle back in six grazing sites during summer 2010-11. The experiment, whereby 400 cattle were run by fuel reduction contractors, was criticized by 125 scientists, with a strong public backlash, such that in April 2011, Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke re-closed the parks to cattle. There is an urgent need for stronger laws, laws to protect not only species and habitat types but whole ecosystems. There is currently no legislation to protect national parks from this sort of violation.
- The Bushfires Royal Commission, in which VNPA participated, has advocated prescribed burning, for which there is contention for and against. Significantly, wisdom would suggest that ecosystems need different fire regimes, viz., the Mallee will be destroyed by too frequent fires. VNPA is pushing for no state-wide targets, but regional targets; also improved fire management and community education.
- The wealth of marine life in Victorian waters warrants

close attention, e.g. soft sponge coral at Pt. Adidas. VNPA has identified 10-12 coastal areas, not within reserves, that are worthy of conservation protection. The Blue Groper, a fish common to NSW, has been identified in Port Phillip Bay after many years absence. It is data such as this that can help drive policy change.

VNPA is part of the Victoria Naturally Alliance, which is pushing to get biodiversity back on the agenda of this state government. They want to see connectivity of habitat via bio-links and healthy roadside vegetation; and are looking at 50 years or so to link our parks with corridors of green. The state budget for national Parks Victoria is \$150-190million p.a., of which about \$90 million goes to metropolitan parks. \$20-30million is spent on jetties and waterways, and the remaining \$30-40 million goes to our national parks, which is patently inadequate to safeguard our natural areas.

Matt invited us to look at the VNPA website at www.vnpa.org.au. **John Young** thanked Matt for an illuminating talk which so highlighted all the valuable work done by such a small VNPA staff.

Bill updated us on merger activities, and signalled the final MELBOCA AGM on 28 Feb 2012. **Barbara Longmuir** shut up shop for the last time, and **Graeme Hosken** gave his reports on outings, sightings and wetland surveys. Following Christmas wishes from our host we hoed into Christmas fare.

Daphne Hards

Outing Report: Karkarook Park, Heatherton

7 December 2011
species count 47

The sun shone uninterrupted on our group of 22. A single-person sighting of a Buff-banded Rail well before the walk began could not be repeated, nor could a similar sighting of a Nankeen Night-Heron, despite our efforts. Neither was included in the official list. Still, the birds seen from the car park and then from the lookout were rewarding and the list soon numbered around 20. Breeding had been successful with Black Swan, Pacific Black Duck, Chestnut Teal, Dusky Moorhen, Eurasian Coot and Red Wattlebird all tending young. The stripe-headed young of the Australasian Grebe were particularly cute.

The area is still mostly open grass, so bush birds are very much in the minority, but the variety of waterbirds compensates. For many years the area was used as a sand quarry and is now part of water management, collecting, filtering and purifying run-off water before it flows to Port Phillip.

Butterflies and dragonflies were everywhere and their flight frequently caused brief confusion when checking for bird movement. No frogs were heard but the warm sunny conditions were probably keeping them quietly in shelter.

Waterbird highlights included Eastern Great Egret and both male and female Blue-billed Duck. A lowlight was the "dinner duck", a white immature feral near the bridge. Australian Reed Warbler called loudly from every clump of reeds and were finally seen by most of us, especially those birds near the bird hide. This gave several people their first "tick" for this species. The Little Grassbird population, however, lived up to its reputation as very seldom seen but often heard (if you still hear their high notes).

It took a few minutes to positively identify a Baillon's Crake as views were brief, partly obstructed and lacking convenient scale, but later in the walk a mud flat supported both a Baillon's and an Australian Spotted Crake simultaneously and unambiguously. This was definitely the bird sighting of the day and gave several people lifers.

A Horsefield's Bronze-Cuckoo was heard, glimpsed, but then decided to perch in the open on a low fence, allowing everyone unobstructed study.

By the walk's end we had a bird list of 47 species and a further appreciation of the readiness of birds to utilise well-designed rehabilitation areas.

Diane Tweeddale, leader.



Dandenong Catchment Survey

October to December 2011

The Good News. BirdLife Melbourne, previously MEL-BOCA, has been advised by BirdLife Australia that funding is available to continue the Dandenong Catchment Surveys, now in their fifth year.

As indicated in my previous report, Troups Creek Wetland (TC) in Hampton Park and Mordialloc Creek Wetland (MC) in Braeside are now being surveyed by BirdLife Melbourne teams on a monthly basis. The Team Leaders are John Bosworth for Troups Creek and Vic Poke for Mordialloc Creek. Both wetlands are impressive sites with a total of 96 species recorded by PENBOC up until June 2011 for Troups Creek and 108 for Mordialloc Creek. The combination of the two new sites with the existing six, has added the following bird species to the total for the eight sites:

Magpie Goose (MC), Brush Bronzewing (MC & TC), Tawny Frogmouth (MC), Fork-tailed Swift (TC), Red-capped Plover (MC), Whiskered Tern (MC), Little Lorikeet (MC), Blue-winged Parrot (MC), Black-eared Cuckoo (MC) and Rufous Whistler (MC), with the Brown Tree Frog at (TC).

In the past survey period, all sites recorded new species with the exception of Frog Hollow. Highlights are listed below (N = New to Site. Ns = A new species seen on a Non-survey day):

Frog Hollow (FH) No new species recorded.

Kilberry Boulevard (KB) Brown Quail (Ns), Australasian Darter (N, previously Ns), Eastern Great Egret (N), Yellow-billed Spoonbill (N), Black-shouldered Kite (N, previously Ns), White-bellied Sea-Eagle (Ns), Swamp Harrier (Ns), Wedge-tailed Eagle (Ns), Baillon's Crake (N), Australian Spotted Crake (N), Spotless Crake (N, previously Ns), Eurasian Coot (N previously Ns), Caspian Tern (Ns), Long-billed Corella (N) and Striped Marsh Frog (N).

River Gum Creek (RG) Long-billed Corella (N, previously Ns).

South Golf Links Road (SGR) Australasian Bittern (N), Rufous Songlark (N) and Nankeen Night-Heron (N).

Hallam Valley Road (HVR) Nankeen Night-Heron (N), Buff-banded Rail (N) and Rufous Songlark (N).

Waterford Wetland (WW) Buff-banded Rail (N) and Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (N).

Troups Creek (TC) Australian Shelduck (Ns), White-faced Heron (N, previously Ns), Nankeen Night-Heron (N) and Red-kneed Dotterel (N).

Mordialloc Creek (MC) White-necked Heron (N).

were new species at three sites. A lone Swamp Harrier likes visiting most of the surveyed sites and during this period was recorded at HVR once and TC twice. Buff-banded Rail seem to be moving south with five sites noting it on a survey day.

In my last report I mentioned cuckoo sightings were low for the period, but during this period, Horsfield's Bronze was recorded at six sites and Shining Bronze at two. The Rufous Songlark recorded for the first time at SGR and HVR was an addition to the previous total for the BirdLife Melbourne sites.

The teams also keep an eye or ear out for species other than birds with Melbourne Water interested in Frog, Mammals, Fish and Snake sightings.

The first snake sighting was made at Troups Creek in November last. With grass recently cut at the wetland, one Copperhead was seen several meters from the waters edge. Ruth Akie's team at SGR in December decided not to venture onto the northern section of the wetland due to the very long grass. A wise decision.

Frog species have been recorded since the survey began four years ago with the following noted: Eastern Common Froglet, Eastern Banjo Frog, Spotted Marsh Frog, Striped Marsh Frog and Brown Tree Frog. Mammals include the Red Fox, European Rabbit, Brown Hare and Feral Cat. Fish can be elusive, although the people seen fishing must be confident. Only species recorded on a survey being European Carp.

At the end of December the BirdLife Melbourne sites recorded the following number of species on Survey Days:

End of Dec (End of Oct)

FH – 86 (86), KB – 77 (71), RG – 108 (107), SGR – 105 (102), HVR – 114 (107), WW – 58 (56), TC – 100 (96) and MC – 109 (108).

On Survey Days plus non-Survey Days:

FH – 94, KB – 100, RG – 118, SGR – 109, HVR – 116, WW – 58, TC – 102 and MC – 109.

Combined Total for the eight sites: 158 (146)

If you are interested in assisting with the survey on a permanent (monthly) or non-permanent basis, perhaps as an emergency contact, I may be contacted on 9802 5250 or email melbourne@birdlife.org.au. Fuel costs are reimbursed by BirdLife Australia from the contract monies received from Melbourne Water.

Survey times are in the morning before 9.00am, of no more than three hours once a month.

A full tally of all the species recorded may be found at present on the MELBOCA website.

Graeme Hosken
BirdLife Melbourne DCS Recorder





Outing Report: Mill Park Lakes, South Morang

Tuesday 29 November, 2011
species count: 53

A warm, cloudy day with a strong wind did not deter a group of 15 from assembling in the car park. An early arrival, who breakfasted beside the lake, was besieged by the beggars, mainly Eurasian Coot (at least 100 adult and immature) but also several Black Swan and Pacific Black Duck with a few Silver Gull, Hardhead, Australian Wood Duck, Dusky Moorhen, Purple Swamphen and House Sparrow plus a Crested Pigeon. Somewhat reminiscent of Hitchcock's "The Birds". A foot tumour on an immature Pacific Black Duck may have been the result of incorrect feeding.

Sightings from the car park added both Straw-necked and Australian White Ibis, an Eastern Great Egret, a briefly perched Red-rumped Parrot, over-flying Rainbow Lorikeet and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike. A Little Raven was being harassed by a pair of Common Myna over possession of some litter.

We walked under the lead of Arthur and Pauline Spurgeon.

Crossing the bridge, we observed, but didn't list the white "dinner ducks". We were much more interested in the crake at the water's edge below the shrubs. Yes, it was an Australian Spotted Crake, and there was another! By the walk's end it was almost (never quite) "another crake" as at least 4 were seen. Spotless Crake and Buff-banded

Rail were also on the list by the finish of the walk. Clearly the return of the rain had all waterbirds breeding well.

The heavy rainfall the previous Saturday had left flood lines of small debris and wet earth at least a metre above the days' water level. New Holland and White-plumed Honeyeater plus Little and Red Wattlebird were the only honeyeaters seen. No Noisy Miner in this area which had always been open treed plain and then grazing before being subdivided for housing.

Blue-billed Duck, male and female, dived while Latham's Snipe and Australasian Darter flew past.

Australian Reed Warbler called loudly from every reed bed and visibly darted, perching occasionally. Little Grass-bird, however, was heard, not seen.

Four birds below a tree were stalked, then identified as Black-tailed Native-hen, which led observers quite a challenging chase until most of us had at least glimpsed them.

Back at the cars we realised the sparrows included not only House but also Eurasian Tree Sparrow, another infrequent sighting. By lunchtime the bird list was 53 species and we thanked Arthur and Pauline for their preparation and guidance. It was encouraging to see how water management has led to good wildlife habitat as well as passive recreation areas in the suburbs.

*Diane Tweeddale,
Convenor MELBOCA Weekdays Outings*

Education Report

Breakfast with the Birds at Banyule

On Sunday, 23 October, MELBOCA held its final education activity. This was our thirteenth Breakfast with the Birds at Banyule Flats Reserve on the Yarra River at Viewbank.

With 75 bookings and 9 MELBOCA leaders at the ready, the weather was perfect. Fog had been forecast for parts of Melbourne but this didn't affect our area. As usual, we started our groups walking from the Somerset Drive car park and this year ended at the Old Shire Offices off Beverley Street for breakfast. The delicious breakfast was again supplied by the Banyule City Council.

The new breakfast venue was voted a winner and eliminated the worry of unfavourable weather when eating outside.

As well as groups covering the Banyule Flats Reserve, this year we extended our boundary to include the Warringal Wetlands along Beverley Street. This area was listed separate to our Banyule bird list and added Long-billed Corella, Little Black Cormorant and Masked Lapwing to our day's count as they were not seen within Banyule Reserve this year.

The highlights of Banyule included Great Cormorant (second time in 11 years), 3 Nankeen Night-Heron (second time sighted) and our first sighting of a Yellow-faced Honeyeater. The list for our October Breakfast with the Birds now totals 115 species. The Warringal Wetlands totals 43 species.

Keep the fourth Sunday in October free as we plan to keep this activity running.

I would like to speak to anyone in BirdLife Melbourne who would be willing to assist with education activities. In the past years we have supplied speakers for schools, Probus Clubs, Church groups, Garden Clubs, and retirement facilities. We have manned information tables at Community Fairs and Flower Shows as well as supplying leaders for bird walks. Our Education activities are only limited by the assistance available.

Please consider volunteering – all assistance will be given. You can even serve an apprenticeship if you wish.

*Janet Hand
MELBOCA Education Officer
(03) 9842 4177 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au*



Outing Report: You Yangs Regional Park

7 November 2011
species count: 62

The weather was good, clear, dry and calm, as we assembled in the information centre car park. Our group finally totalled 16 and was led by Peter Gibbons.

Initial birding around the meeting area had mixed success. Tawny Frogmouth were not detected and appeared to have left the area at least a month or more ago, but Musk Lorikeet and Red-rumped Parrot passed through while Red Wattlebird and White-plumed Honeyeater were numerous. Welcome Swallow nests under the verandah roof contained several young. These, and Superb Fairywren, were watched by Lucy, our visitor from Germany.

There was not much activity around the dam near the car park. A short walk up the Big Rock Track included a sighting of a small bird high on a bare tree – was it a bronze-cuckoo? No, the local Jacky Winter population apparently favoured high perches.

Male and female Rufous Whistler and numerous New Holland Honeyeater were in evidence, as was an Eastern Yellow Robin which seemed to be tending a nest in a low shrub, causing us to move on rather than stress the bird. Another nest was that of a pair of Willie Wagtail in a pile of fallen branches with the adults taking turns to sit.

An immature Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike initially challenged identification skills but was ultimately distinguished from a White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike. Cuckoos were more heard than seen but by the end of the day, both Shining and Horsefield's Bronze-Cuckoo had been seen, although Fan-tailed and Pallid Cuckoo stayed unseen by most of

us. The Olive-backed Oriole remained invisible but clearly audible.

It wasn't all birds - butterflies and dragonflies "flew interference", while frog calls came from the now-watered dams. A Jacky Lizard posed on a log beside the track giving the photographers a very good subject.

We lunched at the Lower car park where a pair of Common Bronzewing did a fly past and a young Australian Magpie importuned adults noisily. A White-necked Heron near the toilet block may have been hunting frogs along the drainage line.

On the Great Circle Drive, we stopped to walk near Cressy Gully. A call alerted us and then a flycatcher was finally observed – a male Satin Flycatcher, which was voted "bird of the day". It narrowly won the title from a male and female Mistletoebird and a male and female White-winged Triller on the eastern flat. Raptors were present in the warm, calm conditions and we recorded Whistling Kite, Brown and Peregrine Falcon and Collared Sparrowhawk.

The eastern flat also added Dusky Woodswallow, Diamond Firetail and Brown-headed Honeyeater as well as repeat sightings of earlier-observed species. The drive at the end of the day saw a colony of White-winged Chough join the list which then totalled 62 species.

A very satisfactory day's birding and we thanked Peter for his care and forethought which led to such an enjoyable result.

Diane Tweeddale
Convenor MELBOCA Weekdays outings

Beginners Outing to Point Cook

Point Cook Coastal Reserve 28 January 2012
species count: 69

The inaugural Birdlife Melbourne Beginners Outing was held at Point Cook Coastal Reserve on a hot and sunny day. After meeting at the beach car park, 28 participants walked slowly to the shore and then along the heathland track towards the airfield. Only the six people at the rear of the group saw an equal number of Brown Quail, in single file, hurry across the track and disappear into the dense vegetation. However, everyone saw a perched Black-shouldered Kite and a hovering Nankeen Kestrel. An immature Swamp Harrier and a passing Hobby brought the raptor count to 4, an excellent start for the day. On the return track to the cars, more Brown Quail appeared, foraging beside the bracken just over the roadside fence, this time for all to see.

Spectacle Lake was the next stop, where we were rewarded with a magnificent gathering of water and bush birds. Highlights were a Black-tailed Godwit, Red-kneed and Black-fronted Dotterels, Pink-eared Ducks, Australian

Spotted Crakes, a large colony of Tree Martins and a wide variety of other species.

Afterwards, a satisfied, but hot, group drove to a shady spot near the Homestead where a welcome sea breeze cooled us as we ate our picnic lunch. Most people stayed for the afternoon walk up the beach to the actual Point Cook, where lots of Cormorants and Crested Terns were well studied. A single Common Tern could be seen resting on a seaward rock amidst the larger Crested Terns.

The final venue was the RAAF Lake where many birds could be seen congregated on the opposite bank, their identities being obscured by the mirage effect of the hot sun on the water. The large flock of Banded Stilts that some of us had seen on the way in were finally located through the haze, but didn't afford a good view for beginners. We settled for a nearby Red-capped Plover, which brought the outing to a very satisfactory conclusion. The closing bird count came to a gratifying 69 species.

Leaders, Hazel and Alan Veevers



Interesting Sightings

Field Note Reports – Entered January 11

The following Field Reports were received from members attending the MELBOCA monthly meetings held at Balwyn in October and November 2011 plus email and web reports to the BOCA National Office.

Graeme Hosken, Recorder

3-Oct-11	Powerful Owl (1 – sitting on letter box, late in the evening)	William St	Mt Waverley
3-Nov-11	Musk Duck (1)	Newport Lakes	Newport
8-Nov-11	Pink-eared Duck (30) Newport Lakes	Newport Lakes	Newport
9-Nov-11	Baillon's Crake (1)	Newport Lakes	Newport
11-Nov-11	Plumed Whistling-Duck (20)	Newport Lakes	Newport
12-Nov-11	Zebra Finch (1)	Western Treatment Plant	Werribee
18-Nov-11	Lt Black Cormorant (20)	OH Riversdale Stn	Camberwell
19-Nov-11	White-faced Heron (1)	OH Cooloongatta Rd	Camberwell
21-Nov-11	Australian White Ibis (1)	Cooloongatta Rd	Camberwell
24-Nov-11	Australian Raven (2)	Yarra Brae	Bend of Islands
22-Dec-11	Latham's Snipe (150+)	Berwick Springs Wetland	Narre Warren North
01 Jan '12	Corella Sp (200+ – celebrating New Years morning (12.15am) in the trees round the station)	Mt Waverley Railway Station	Mt Waverley

The records below are from a wetland approximately 800m south of River Gum Ck Wetland, near Coral Gve, Hampton Park, a Melbourne Water site being surveyed by MELBOCA. A large ibis rookery is at the site on private land. Mel: 96H 11.

05 Dec 11 7.15- 8.00am	Buff-banded Rail, Latham's Snipe (40), Australasian Grebe, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Australian Hobby, Little Corella (35), Long-billed Corella (2), Hardhead (2).
06 Dec 11 7.10- 8.00am	Little Corella (40), Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (8), White-bellied Sea-Eagle (1), Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Buff-banded Rail (2), Swamp Harrier (2), Latham's Snipe (23), Brown Quail (2), Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (2).
14 Dec 11 7.10- 7.50am	Australian Hobby, Latham's Snipe (37), Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (6), Spotless Crake

Members Comments

Common Myna

Have you noticed a decline of Common Myna in your area? Perhaps someone in the neighbourhood may be trapping them?

In Canberra, a project is underway to eliminate the Common Myna from the area by trapping and disposing of them in a humane way. In Victoria, the **Yarra Indian Myna Action Group Inc.** has recently been set up to reduce the impact of Common Myna on our native birds and animals. Traps of a similar design to those being used in Canberra can be purchased through their website (www.yimag.org.au). You can request information by emailing info@yimag.org.au.

RJ Chambers Reserve

Looking for a new 'birding spot'? The RJ Chambers Reserve is an area set aside for fauna and flora in the Cardinia Shire, located off Bourke's Creek Road, Upper Pakenham (Mel 313 G8).

There are six different walking trails and the reserve is home to 88 bird species and 336 indigenous plant species. Robert Wright paid a short visit of three hours to the reserve on 24 November 2011 and recorded 44 bird species with highlights being Gang-Gang Cockatoo, King Parrot, Pallid and Fantail Cuckoo, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, Superb Lyrebird, Scarlet Robin, Crested Shrike-tit, Satin Flycatcher and Bassian Thrush.

Graeme Hosken, Recorder



Dates to remember

Under the BirdLife Melbourne brand, **branch meetings** will continue to be held through 2012 at Balwyn, along with Weekday Outings, Beginners Outings and the Yellingbo Birdwalk

Branch meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of every month (except December) in the Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn, not far from the library (Mel 46 E8).

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

Weekday Outings

Wed. 7 Mar. – Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne

10:00am to 3:00pm (Mel 133 K12). Leader Diane Tweeddale. Turn from South Gippsland Fwy into Ballarto Rd then into Botanic Dr. Meet at Stringybark picnic area. Toilets available. *Contact Diane 03 9836 8692.*

Mon. 26 Mar. – You Yangs Regional Park

10:00am to 3:00pm (Mel 11 C11). Leader Geoff Russell. Travel Princes Fwy to Little River. Follow You Yangs signs. Park near information centre at first car park. Toilets available. Convoy. *Contact Diane 03 9836 8692*

Tue. 17 Apr. – Murrindindi

10:00am to 3:00pm (Mel X910 R10/Vicroads 61 J8). Leader Graeme Hosken. From Melba Hwy turn right at Devlins Bridge into Murrindindi Rd. Park inside corner just beyond intersection. Convoy 10.10 SHARP. No toilets. *Contact Diane 03 9836 8692*

Wed 16 May – Braeside Park, Braeside

10:00am to 3:00pm (Mel 88 D8). Leader David Ap-Thomas. From Lower Dandenong Rd meet near visitor centre, Cockatoo car park. Toilets available. *Contact Diane 03 9836 8692*

Beginners Outings

Sat. 24 Mar. – Hawkestone Park

10:00am (Mel 183 H7). Meet in the car park at Red Gums Picnic Area off Gordons Road. *Contact Hazel. 03 9876 3712.*

Sat. 28 Apr. – Lillydale Lake

10:00am (Mel 38 G7). Meet first car park on left off Swansea Road. *Contact Hazel. 03 9876 3712.*

Sat. 26 May – O'Donohue Picnic Ground, Sherbrooke Forest

10:00am (Mel 75 G3). Meet the car park. *Contact Hazel. 03 9876 3712.*

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

First Sunday of the month (6 November, 4 December, no outing for January)

Take Warburton Hwy to Woori Yallock and turn right to Yellingbo. At Yellingbo, turn right towards Seville, then left into Macclesfield Rd. After 2.5km, turn right at large pine trees. Gate opens at 10:00am. Walk starts at 10:30am. On-site toilets available. Bring lunch and gumboots. Mel 305 G11.

Member's Choice Segment – Call for Contributors

Every fourth Tuesday of every month, at the Birdlife Melbourne branch meeting in Balwyn, we dedicate five to ten minutes for a Member's Choice segment. It could be a bird species you have a special interest in. It could be a report on a recent tour, either in Australia or abroad.

Perhaps there is an area that you've been visiting for many years that you'd like to share. Or maybe you have a

collection of birding photographs. A tale of birding obsession? A quest? Or just a question? Let us know!

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



MELBOCA and the BirdLife Melbourne Committee

The last MELBOCA Annual General Meeting was held at the Evergreen Senior Citizens Centre, 45 Talbot Avenue, Balwyn, on Tuesday 28 February 2012 at 8:00pm, prior to the monthly MELBOCA Meeting.

MELBOCA has now combined with the Melbourne members of Birds Australia (Victoria) to form BirdLife Melbourne, the Melbourne Branch of BirdLife Australia.

The new organisation will be officially launched in March. Until BirdLife Melbourne becomes fully operational, the current MELBOCA Committee will continue to manage MELBOCA's business.

BOCA National Office at Nunawading has now closed and the new office is the BirdLife Australia National Office in Carlton.

The BirdLife Melbourne Committee consists of the 5 members elected by MELBOCA at the February AGM, and 5 to 7 Members elected by the Melbourne members of BA Victoria.

MELBOCA Members, Alan Crawford, Andrew Fuhrmann, Bill Ramsay, Sonja Ross and John Young accepted to serve on the BirdLife Melbourne Branch Committee at Tuesday's meeting.

Half the members on the BirdLife Melbourne Committee serve for a one year term and the other half for a two year term. The term will commence when BirdLife Melbourne becomes operational.

BirdLife Melbourne Committee Meetings will be held at BirdLife Australia's National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton. The provisional dates for BirdLife Melbourne Committee Meetings are the second Tuesday of April, June, August, September and December, commencing at 8:00 pm.

At the time of printing, there are no details available as to roles within the BirdLife Melbourne Committee. These will be voted on at the first meeting of the BirdLife Melbourne Committee scheduled for Tuesday 10 April 2012 at BirdLife Australia National Office.

BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter—Can You Help?

This will be the last edition of MELBOCA's flagship newsletter, *The Melbirdian*. A new newsletter will be launched for all BirdLife Melbourne members as an insert with the next number of *Australian Birdlife*.

The newsletter will be published four times annually.

A new name?

The projected newsletter is as yet un-named, and we welcome suggestions — send them through to melbirdian@gmail.com. Perhaps *Mag-pie-azine*? No, we'll come up with something better than that. Promise.

Volunteer as an editor?

Current *Melbirdian* editor, Andrew Fuhrmann, will be taking the reins to begin with, assisted by Penny Johns, the current *Vic Babbler* editor (newsletter of BA Victoria), Naomi Hall and Barbara Burns. We are however urgently seeking some fresh faces willing to help us transition to a new team.

If you are looking for a way to advance your communication skills and experience, and would like to contribute further to the birding community, all while meeting with a

fascinating array of contributors, from professional ornithologists and environmental scientists to local members who may have seen something interesting in their backyard, then consider volunteering with the BirdLife Melbourne editorial team.

Submissions?

Member birding-related stories and articles are still being sought for the future newsletter. The deadline for receipt of information for inclusion in the winter (June) edition is 20 April 2012.

For the moment, the editors can be contacted at the BirdLife Melbourne offices:

BirdLife Melbourne
c/- BirdLife Australia National Office
60 Leicester St, Carlton, Vic 3053

Or via email at melbirdian@gmail.com. BirdLife Melbourne will shortly be launching a new website, but for the moment you can still find details at www.melboca.org.au



*BirdLife Melbourne is the
Melbourne Branch of
BirdLife Australia*



MELBOCA Committee will continue until the BirdLife Melbourne Committee officially meets later in March 2012:

President: Graeme Hosken (e: melbourne@birdlife.org.au; ph: 9802 5250)

Secretary: Janet Hand

Treasurer: Bill Ramsay

Members: Sunny Fernie, Andrew Fuhrmann, Diane Tweeddale, Sonja Ross, John Young