

BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter

Volume 2 Number 4 December 2013

Robins in the 'hood

Christine Connelly exploring the effects of urbanisation on Eastern Yellow Robins

With half of the world's population living in cities, urbanisation is a major threat to biodiversity worldwide. It is critical that we try to understand the effects of this threat.

There has been lots of fantastic work done on understanding the effects of urbanisation on bird communities, and there is a general consensus that urbanisation leads to homogenisation of species assemblages, favouring the more robust generalist species. But, if we want to protect those species that urbanisation doesn't favour, we really need to understand what is happening at the species level.

I chose to study the Eastern Yellow Robin for several reasons. They are relatively common and widespread, which means that I will be able to collect enough data to make meaningful inferences. They are also known to be sensitive to habitat fragmentation and urbanisation, so we can expect a measurable response to urbanisation. Eastern Yellow Robins do occur in some reserves surrounded by urban development in Melbourne (check out Wilson Reserve, Ivanhoe or Shepherds Bush and Jells Park, Glen Waverley), but are known to disappear as urbanisation increases.

My study area is greater eastern Melbourne, extending past Sugarloaf Reservoir in the north and the Dandenong Ranges in the east. It also includes a number of isolated reserves like Braeside Park, where robins have recently been known to occur but are unlikely to have an unimpeded habitat connection to other reserves.

To understand the effects of urbanisation, I aim to answer the following questions:

1) What is the functional connectivity of the urbanisation gradient in eastern Melbourne? That is, where are the important habitat corridors? What parts of the landscape are providing real barriers to movement and dispersal? To answer these questions, I am doing spatial modelling to predict the distribution and gene flow of Eastern Yellow Robins across the entire study area, using data from present surveys at more than 230 sites.

The results show, perhaps not surprisingly, that the distribution closely follows forest habitat along waterways and is driven primarily by land use. The connectivity modelling shows that Eastern Yellow Robins are unlikely to successfully cross the highly urbanised area in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne, west of the Dandenong Creek. Braeside Park and other similarly isolated reserves are likely to be very difficult for robins to reach or disperse from.

2) Does habitat use and home range size differ in urban

(Continued on page 7)



Contents

2. Branch News
3. Education Activities
4. BirdLife Melbourne AGM
5. To the Brink and Back: Helmeted Honeyeater
- 6-7. Activities Calendar
8. Mt Rothwell: A Habitat Close to Home
9. Dandenong Catchment Survey Summary
- 10-11. Outing Reports
12. New Members

President's Report

Carlton Meetings Guest Speaker Coordinator

Our thanks to Claire Lowe who has accepted the role of Carlton Meetings Guest Speaker Coordinator. Our thanks also to Fiona Parkin who has retired from this position after many years' service, initially for BA Vic Group and more recently for BirdLife Melbourne.

Newsletter Editor

BirdLife Melbourne is pleased to advise that Adriana Bianchi has agreed to become the new editor of the *BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter* and also to join the BirdLife Melbourne Committee. Adriana will work with Andrew on the December 2013 and March 2014 issues and then take the reins for future newsletters. Our thanks to Andrew Fuhrmann for many years service, initially as editor of *The Melbirdian* and then as editor of the *BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter*.

Revised Taxonomy

BirdLife Australia has released the Working List of Australian Birds. BirdLife Melbourne has now changed to this new taxonomy for recent outing bird lists and reporting in the news-

letter. For the birds likely to be seen on BirdLife Melbourne Outings the changes are minimal. The main change is that "Eastern" has been dropped from three species which now revert to Great Egret, Osprey and Barn Owl.

For more information on why the change has come about refer to Glenn Ehmke's article in the September issue of Australian BirdLife. For details of splits, lumps and species added to and deleted from the list refer to www.birdlife.org.au/taxonomy. The list, which includes all subspecies, can be downloaded from this site.

Carlton Monthly Meetings in 2014

We have secured bookings for the Carlton Monthly Meetings in 2014 for the second Thursday of the month, reverting to the regular night for many years previous to 2013. The first meeting for 2014 will be held on Thursday 13 February.

Balwyn Monthly Meetings in 2014

We have been advised by the Evergreen Centre that extensive renovations are planned for 2014 which will require an alternative venue for the Balwyn Meetings probably after February. The Evergreen Centre will help us find a new venue. When known we will advise Members of the location.

Bill Ramsay, President
Tel: 9803 1493

Email: melbourne@birdlife.org.au

BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter: New Approach

The cost of BirdLife Melbourne's newsletter has been a concern for BirdLife Australia's National Office for some time. Like many branches, BirdLife Melbourne has for the last two years been producing and printing a full-colour newsletter of between 12 and 16 pages for its members. However, under new budget limits set by the National Office, it is no longer possible to continue in this way. After canvassing a number of options, the BirdLife Melbourne Committee has decided to switch to a quarterly four-page newsletter which will be printed and distributed to all members.

As a result, there will no longer be room for many of our regular newsletter segments in the printed copy of the newsletter. Instead, the Committee will launch a new BirdLife Melbourne blog where this material – and more – will be made available to all members. This new approach will commence with the March 2014 newsletter.

The printed copy of the newsletter **will still include the activities calendar** for the coming three months. It will also continue to carry the usual organisational notices, such as the AGM notice, alerts regarding changes to the monthly meetings, calls for volunteers, requests for help with research projects and other branch news and announcements. With our new editor, Adriana Bianchi, we will also deliver new and interesting birding features, as well as selected highlights of material published on the blog. The newsletter will remain a forum to connect with other members and to find out more about the work of the branch.

Regarding the blog, we have put together a sub-committee to work out an innovative approach to presenting relevant and topical information in a timely and easily accessible

online format. This will be a place for members to contribute outing reports, meeting reports, interesting sightings and behaviours and requests for help. The aim is to provide a user friendly interface that will encourage maximum participation by our members.

Apart from cost-cutting, this approach has several advantages. Information can be uploaded in a timely fashion and shared with other members instantly, without the long lead times needed for the newsletter. There is also no limit to the length of contributions, nor to the number of photographs. An online platform will also enable the branch to engage with other social media networks.

The BirdLife Melbourne Committee is working hard to strike a balance to ensure that members get access to as much information as possible. More information on this will follow in the next months.

The BirdLife Melbourne Committee

BIRDLIFE MELBOURNE COMMITTEE

President: Bill Ramsay (tel: 9803 1493 email: melbourne@birdlife.org.au).

Vice President: Stuart Dashper. **Secretary:** Alan Crawford. **Treasurer:** Sonja Ross

Members: Tim Bawden, Adriana Bianchi, Andrew Fuhrmann, Susan Pepper & Scot Sharman

All the above can be contacted by email at melbourne@birdlife.org.au

To contact the BirdLife National Office in Carlton (03) 9347 0757, Mon to Fri 9am - 5pm.

Meet Our New Editor

Adriana Bianchi takes over the reins as our new *BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter* editor

When Andrew asked me to write a paragraph introducing myself, I wondered what I might say that would interest you. Instead of giving you the boring details of my life, I thought I might touch upon the subject we have in common: birding.

I came to birding quite late in life. A few years ago, and grieving the loss of a parent, birding became my saviour. Prior to that, birds to me were just part of the general landscape. I can still recall the moment when, through the fog one day, a small bird going about its business caught my eye, and from then the intriguing world of birds has fascinated me. This new interest helped me through the grieving process. Birds are my father's gift to me — a wonderful and

daily reminder of him and the joy of life.

I hope I can fill Andrew's shoes as the new editor of the *BirdLife Melbourne Newsletter*. I look forward to meeting many of you in the coming months. Any ideas and contributions for the newsletter are always welcome. You can email me at bianchiadriana8@gmail.com.

Adriana Bianchi, Editor

The newsletter is published quarterly, in March, June, September and December by BirdLife Melbourne, the Melbourne branch of BirdLife Australia.

Andrew Fuhrmann, the current editor is stepping down, and all contributions should now go to Adriana Bianchi.

You can reach Adriana at BirdLife Melbourne, c/- BirdLife Australia National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton, Vic 3053, or email us at bianchiadriana8@gmail.com.

Contributions for the next issue are due 22 Feb 2014.

Education Report

Spring: the busiest time of the year for BirdLife Melbourne's education team.

What a hectic time it has been in the past months. I have to thank the more than 40 people who have made it possible to carry out these activities. As this goes to press we still have another five functions planned before the end of November. Late spring is certainly a busy time of the year.

In the past weeks we have given seven PowerPoint presentations to various community groups and assisted with bird walks and surveys for two "friends of" groups. One member was invited to observe how well he had taught the Kingswood College students about birds. He watched 'Kids teaching kids' in action. Then we had the two day Yarra Yarra

Australian Plant Expo at Greensborough over the election weekend. Saturday was quiet but Sunday picked up and they had over 700 paying guests through the door, not to mention all the volunteers on hand. Saturday 6 October I attended the Mitchell Plant Expo at Kilmore. The weather was lovely but the crowd was down on past years.

Watch the March edition for a report on our upcoming activities.

Many thanks to everyone who has helped to make 2013 our busiest ever. We can always find room for more education volunteers. Just give me a telephone call.

Season's Greeting and a happy and safe holiday period. .

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

Education News: Kids Teaching Kids

Wednesday 11 September saw the Kids Teaching Kids program take place at Blackburn Lake Visitors Centre, part of the 2013 Target Kids Teaching Kids Week. The program was officially opened by Cr Andrew Munroe (Mayor) of the City of Whitehorse and attended by Blackburn Lake Primary School, Box Hill North Primary School, Kingswood College Junior School and Laburnum Primary School, bringing a total of more than 60 students.

After the official opening, the various groups went to their allocated areas to start their sessions, Box Hill North Primary School in the main Centre and the three Kingswood College groups to their respective portable gazebos.

Kingswood used the theme "Australian Birds" as their subject for the various sessions. The young "teachers" initially showed photos of selected local birds and discussed food sources, preferred habitat and nesting requirements. They then followed up with quiz sessions to reinforce the information discussed.

The next phase included activities such as search and find, complete the picture, etc. One group conducted a birdwalk using the BirdLife identification sheets from their Box Hill Golf Course Bird Survey earlier in the year. The sessions were rounded off with all students being declared winners and receiving a jelly snake.

All the sessions that I observed were well constructed with Inform, Assess, Play and Reward. The "teachers" were well informed and the students were very attentive – a very good effort.

The day was fine and sunny, the background music, provided by Rainbow Lorikeets, wattlebirds, Common Miners and Little Ravens, was very appropriate, making for a very good day.

Thank you to Howard and Jason from Kingswood College for inviting me to the Kids Teaching Kids program. And a very special thanks to the BirdLife Melbourne volunteers Bill Ramsay, Janet Hand, Fiona Parkin, Anthea Flemming and Ruth Akie for support with the Box Hill Golf Course bird surveys conducted by Kingswood College, an important preliminary to this event.

Duncan Turnbull

BirdLife Melbourne Annual General Meeting Tuesday 25 March 2014

The second BirdLife Melbourne Annual General Meeting will be held at the Balwyn Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Avenue, Balwyn, on Tuesday 25 March 2014, commencing at 8:00 pm, prior to the Balwyn Monthly Meeting.

There is a possibility that the meeting venue may have to be relocated due to proposed renovations at the Balwyn Evergreen Centre, which are due to commence on 1 March 2014. If the renovations require a new venue, the new venue will be posted on our website and included in the e-news bulletin. For members who do not have internet access please contact Alan Crawford on (03) 9495 1616 after 1 March 2014 for the latest information.

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. President's Report for year ending 31 December 2013
3. Treasurer's Report for year ending 31 December 2013
4. Election of Committee Members
5. Other Business

Nominations for Committee Members

Nominations are called for five Committee Members for a two year term commencing 1 April 2014. The meeting program for 2014 and 2015 is provisionally the first Tuesday of February, April, June, August, October and December, with meetings held at BirdLife Australia's National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton, commencing at 7:30 pm.

Current Committee Members Andrew Fuhrmann and Bill Ramsay are retiring and do not seek re-election.

Current Committee Members Tim Bawden and Alan Crawford are retiring and seek re-election.

Current Committee Members Adriana Bianchi, Stuart Dashper, Susan Pepper, Sonja Ross and Scot Sharman will remain on the BirdLife Melbourne Committee as their term expires on 31 March 2015.

A Nomination Form will be available after 3 February 2014. It may be downloaded from the BirdLife Melbourne website <http://www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-melbourne/latest-news-mel> or a hard copy may be obtained by contacting the Secretary, Alan Crawford.

BirdLife Melbourne members wishing to nominate should complete the Nomination Form and return or mail it to Alan Crawford, BirdLife Melbourne Secretary, c/- BirdLife Australia, Suite 2 - 05, 60 Leicester St, Carlton, Vic 3053, to be received by 5:00 pm, 24 February 2014. A scanned copy of a signed Nomination Form emailed to melbourne@birdlife.org.au by 5:00 pm, 24 February 2014 will also be accepted.

The Secretary will post a list of nominations received on the BirdLife Melbourne website <http://www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-melbourne/latest-news-mel> by 3 March 2014.

If the number of nominations exceeds five an election may be held at the AGM on 25 March 2014.

The Secretary will advise members whether an election for Committee Members will be held at the AGM on the BirdLife Melbourne website <http://www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-melbourne/latest-news-mel> by 3 March 2014.

Copies of the President's and Treasurer's Reports for year ending 31 December 2013 will be put on the BirdLife Melbourne website <http://www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-melbourne/latest-news-mel> by 3 March 2014. Hard copies may be obtained by contacting the Secretary, Alan Crawford.

Instrument of Proxy

An Instrument of Proxy will be available after 10 February 2014. It may be downloaded from the BirdLife Melbourne Website <http://www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-melbourne/latest-news-mel> or a hard copy may be obtained by contacting the Secretary, Alan Crawford.

If an election of Committee Members is not required there will be no need for proxy votes.

If an election for Committee Members is required, BirdLife Melbourne Members wishing to submit a proxy vote should complete the Instrument of Proxy and return or mail it to Alan Crawford, BirdLife Melbourne Secretary, c/- BirdLife Australia, Suite 2 - 05, 60 Leicester St, Carlton, Vic 3053, to be received by 5:00 pm, 20 March 2014. A scanned copy of a signed Instrument of Proxy emailed to melbourne@birdlife.org.au by 5:00 pm, 20 March 2014 will also be accepted.

Alan Crawford
Secretary, BirdLife Melbourne.
Tel: 9495 1616



Left: Helmeted Honeyeater, captive-bred and released, Yellingbo May 2009. Above: Radio-transmitter being attached to sedated bird by veterinarians. Below: Release aviary at Bunyip State Park. All photos, Peter Menkhorst.

To the Brink and Back

Peter Menkhorst shares his experiences with the National Recovery Plan for the Helmeted Honeyeater

Peter Menkhorst was our guest at the Balwyn meeting, updating us on the conservation status of the Helmeted Honeyeater. This honeyeater is one of four subspecies of the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater *Lichenostomus melanops*.

Found at Yellingbo, the honeyeater is not nomadic and keeps to a distinct habitat of low mountain swamp gum with a sedge undergrowth, feeding on insects, lerps and honeydew. It is classified as critically endangered and the honeyeater's entire range is less than 10 km². There were two other small populations but these were wiped out in the Ash Wednesday bushfires.

Attempts are currently underway to secure a second colony in Bunyip State Park. If a viable population can be established here as well as Yellingbo, the conservation status of the Helmeted Honeyeater could be reduced from critically endangered to endangered.

As a part of the recovery plan an Operations Group was created and field ornithologist Bruce Quinn was appointed to lead. A full habitat description was undertaken and enhancement of the habitat was also begun. Between 1991 and 1996 the entire population was banded. A range of measures were also sought to reduce nest predation, and a captive management program was begun at Healesville Sanctuary.

The Captive Breeding Program now maintains 16 to 18 pairs of birds. These produce between 20 to 30 fledglings every year. Seventy percent of these are available to be released into the wild. Two pairs of the Helmeted Honeyeater are now kept at Tooronga Zoo. Releasing the captive bred birds into the wild is done in autumn with two aims.

The first is to create a new population in a different area and the second is to reinforce the existing population at Yellingbo.

Releases in the Bunyip State Park went well at first. There was evidence of the birds breeding. Between Bunyip and Yellingbo the Captive Breeding Program had released 205 birds. But over the recent couple of years the population at Bunyip has crashed due to nest predation and from birds of prey. Reintroductions to this site have been suspended. Did the drought contribute to the loss of fledging birds? Has food declined with the onset of wetter weather? How do we stop nest predation? Is Eucalypt dieback a problem?

So where are we in saving the Helmeted Honeyeater from extinction? At the moment we have Yellingbo and the Captive Breeding Program. A new population at Bunyip State Park must be established. We need to regenerate the Mountain Swamp Gum and control nest predation. As Peter pointed out, this requires a commitment from the entire community.

Scot Sharman



Activities Calendar to March 2014

This calendar includes field activities for BirdLife Melbourne. Activities are open to every member of BirdLife Australia. Should you have any ideas for an activity, or if you are available to lead an outing, or would like to volunteer as a leader, please contact the BirdLife Melbourne Activities Co-ordinator, Tim Bawden at tbawden@live.com.au or on 0405 184 100

Sunday, 1 Dec 2013	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
Sunday, 1 Dec 2013	ETP Survey	Eastern Treatment Plant, Bangholme. Meet at 9:00am 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
Saturday, 7 Dec 2013	Boneseeding and 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
Tuesday, 10 Dec 2013	Weekdays Outing	Mullum Mullum Park (Schwerkolt), Mitcham. 10:00am to 3:00pm. Leader Diane Tweeddale. Melway 49 D7. From Deep Creek Road turn into Schwerkolt Cottage and park in car park near toilets. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Sunday, 15 Dec 2013	ETP Survey	Eastern Treatment Plant, Bangholme. Meet at 9:00am 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
Thursday, 19 Dec 2013	Carlton Monthly Meeting	8:00pm at BirdLife Australia National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton. Plenty of free street parking nearby. Guest speaker and subject to be advised. Tea and coffee served after the meeting with time to chat with other attendees. Contact Claire, melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Saturday, 18 Jan 2014	Photography Group Outing	Bunyip State Park. For details contact Sonja, 9846 5380 or sonja.ross@yahoo.com.au
Saturday, 25 Jan 2014	Beginners' Outing	Point Cook Coastal Park. Meet at 10.00am in the Beach Picnic Area, first car park on left near toilets. Melway 199 E3. Contact Hazel, 9876 3712 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Sunday, 26 Jan 2014	ETP Survey	Eastern Treatment Plant, Bangholme. Meet at 9:00am 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
Tuesday, 28 Jan 2014	Balwyn Monthly Meeting	8:00pm at Balwyn Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn. Melway 46 E8. Good street parking nearby. Guest Speaker & Subject: To be advised. Member's Topic: Bill Ramsay - BirdLife Australia's Working List of Australian Birds. Stay for supper and a chat after the meeting. Contact Bill, 9803 1493 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Sunday, 2 Feb 2014	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, 11 Feb 2014	Weekdays Outing	Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, Gate H. 10:00am to 3:00pm. Leader David Plant. Melway 2G B10. Coins needed for Alexandra Ave parking meters. Train, tram and bus close to gardens. Toilets available. CARRY LUNCH. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Thursday, 13 Feb 2014	Carlton Monthly Meeting (Note: second Thursday of the month)	8:00pm at BirdLife Australia National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton. Plenty of free street parking nearby. Guest Speaker & Subject: To be advised. Tea and coffee served after the meeting with time to chat with other attendees. Contact Claire, melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Saturday, 15 Feb 2014	Photography Group Outing	Newport Lakes and other sites. For details contact Sonja, 9846 5380 or sonja.ross@yahoo.com.au
Saturday, 22 Feb 2014	Beginners' Outing	Banyule Flats, Viewbank. Meet at 10.00am in the car park at the end of Somerset Drive. Melway 32 F2. Contact Hazel, 9876 3712 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Sunday, 23 Feb 2014	ETP Survey	Eastern Treatment Plant, Bangholme. Meet at 9:00am 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
Tuesday, 25 Feb 2014	Balwyn Monthly Meeting	8:00pm at Balwyn Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn. Melway 46 E8. Good street parking nearby. Guest Speaker: Andrew Skeoch of Living Earth. Subject: Understanding the Natural Landscape. Andrew will explore the fascinating understanding emerging from the new field of soundscape ecology. Member's Topic: Janet Flinn - Bush Stone-curlews of Port Douglas. Stay for supper and a chat after the meeting. Contact Bill, 9803 1493 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Saturday, 1 Mar 2014	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 Mar 2014	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

Carlton Monthly Meeting

Please note that as of February 2014 the Carlton monthly meetings will be 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.

The Member's Choice segment is a 5-15 minute slot before the guest speaker at **the Balwyn Meeting** for BirdLife Melbourne members to share a topic of their topic with the meeting. If you think you have an idea that would make for

Balwyn Monthly 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. Out-of-town members and visitors are always welcome.

a suitable Member's Choice segment, or require any other information about the Balwyn meetings, please get in touch with **Bill Ramsay** on melbourne@birdlife.org.au.

Tuesday, 4 Mar 2014	Weekdays Outing	Bellarine Peninsula 10:00am to 3:00pm. Leader Glen White. Balyang Sanctuary. Melway 451 F9. From the Geelong Ring Road take either Hamilton/Newtown or Belmont/Ceres exit. From Shannon Ave turn into Marnock Rd at Meway 451 F7. Park near toilets. Convoy driving to different locations. Scopes useful. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Thursday, 13 Mar 2014	Carlton Monthly Meeting (Note: the second Thursday of the month)	8:00pm at BirdLife Australia National Office, 60 Leicester St, Carlton. Plenty of free street parking nearby. Guest Speaker & Subject: To be advised. Tea and coffee served after the meeting with time to chat with other attendees. Contact Claire, melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Wednesday, 19 Mar 2014	Weekdays Outing	Royal Park (Trin-Warren-Tam-Boore) 10:00am to 3:00pm. Leader Elsmaree Baxter. Melway 29 C11. From Flemington Rd/Mt Alexander Rd enter Church St then follow Manningham St to Oak St or enter Oak St from north via Park St. Meet near toilets in Oak St car park. Contact Diane, 9836 8692 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Saturday, 15 Mar 2014	Photography Group Outing	Mud Islands. For details contact Sonja, 9846 5380 or sonja.ross@yahoo.com.au
Saturday, 22 Mar 2014	Beginners' Outing	Longridge Farm, Warrandyte. Meet at 10.00am on Alexander Rd, opposite entrance to farm. Melway 22 J11. Contact Hazel, 9876 3712 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au
Sunday, 23 Mar 2014	ETP Survey	Eastern Treatment Plant, Bangholme. Meet at 9:00am 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
Tuesday, 25 Mar 2014	Balwyn Monthly Meeting	8:00 pm. BirdLife Melbourne AGM will be held before the monthly meeting at Balwyn Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn. Melway 46 E8. Good street parking nearby. Guest Speaker & Subject: To be advised. Stay for supper and a chat after the meeting. Contact Bill, 9803 1493 or melbourne@birdlife.org.au

(Continued from page 1)

reserves (i.e. Wilson Reserve and Shepherds Bush) compared to sites within continuous forest (i.e. within Dandenong Ranges)? I have caught and colour-banded several Eastern Yellow Robins at each of these sites and myself and a number of wonderful volunteers are monitoring these individuals. Every time we see a banded Eastern Yellow Robin, we make note of its band combination and record a GPS location. Eventually we will have enough data to map the individual birds' home range. I find this part of the study particularly rewarding – it is nice to see the same bird time after time and know they are doing well! I am always after new volunteers to help with band re-sightings, so if you're interested, please get in touch.

3) Are there morphological differences across the urban-forest gradient? I want to know if there are observable differences in the robins that live in the more urbanised areas compared to those living in the continuous forest. Is there any difference in their size or body condition, or the inten-

sity of their plumage colouration? I am catching, measuring and photographing robins all across the study area to collect data for this part of the study.

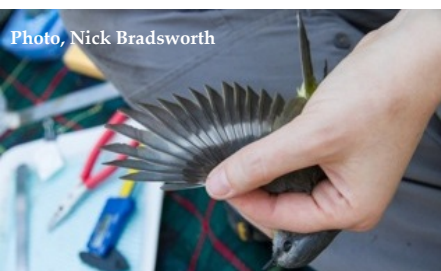
There is still a lot more work to do, but I am thoroughly enjoying my research. Eastern Yellow Robins are lovely creatures, full of spunk and personality. And a great deal of courage – I have seen one breeding pair chase a curious kookaburra and another scold and harry a tiger snake, both presumably away from a nest location.

I am very grateful for the PAKRA Award I received from BirdLife Australia in 2011. It has helped cover the project equipment costs, in particular to purchase a critical piece of equipment – a good set of binoculars!

Christine Connelly

Christine is a PhD candidate at Deakin University in Burwood and presented a talk on her research at the Carlton Monthly meeting in October.

Photo, Nick Bradsworth



Eastern Yellow Robin Research Project:

Do you live in eastern Melbourne and love seeing woodland birds in your local parks and reserves? If so, you might like to volunteer some of your time to help understand the threats that our increasing urban areas have on woodland birds. Christine is currently looking for keen-eyed volunteers to help her explore the effects of urbanisation on Eastern Yellow Robins. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Christine for further information at caconnel@deakin.edu.au or on **0403 195 663**.

Habitats Close to Home

At the September Balwyn meeting Annette Rypalski, spoke on her work as manager of Mt. Rothwell, while Dave Torr spoke briefly about the birds found at the Mt Rothwell property.

Mt Rothwell is a 453 hectare property on the northern foothills of the You Yangs. It is contained by an eleven kilometre fence that is fox proof, cat proof and rabbit proof (although there are existing rabbits on the property). It contains three types of vegetation: granite rocky outcrops, basalt grasslands and red box woodland. The latter has sprung back to life with the end of the drought. Mt. Rothwell's mission is to restore populations of mammal species which are in decline.

One such mammal is the Eastern Quoll, which is extinct on the mainland but still lives in Tasmania. Competition with cats is deadly for the Eastern Quoll due to toxoplasmosis from cat faeces. Testing of genetic diversity is done at Melbourne University and there are forty-nine young of this species this year.

Southern Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby are kept in one hectare pens. Mates for the Rock Wallabies are selected by genotyping. There has been some cross-breeding across subspecies which will eventually be bred out as the numbers increase. There was a wild release of the wallabies in the Grampians but this has not gone well due to predation by foxes.

Other species on the Mt Rothwell property are Eastern-barred Bandicoot, Long-nosed Potoroo, the Southern Brown Bandicoot and the Rufous Bettong. This creature is one foot

high but has a three foot jump. It has a prehensile tail and is now extinct in Victoria due to fox predation. All species are kept together and have to survive attacks from both Eastern Quolls and birds of prey, making them more likely to survive in the wild. As well as these mammals, Shingle-backs, lizards and snakes are also doing well.

Since the end of the drought in 2010, all populations have increased. Mt Rothwell is encouraging new sites for these mammals so as to not overstress the populations. They have just bought a new property out west towards Hamilton. This new property is 800 hectares in size, contains three wetlands and has a number of breeding pairs of Brolga.

Education is an important part of Mt Rothwell's brief. Education programs take place with Primary, Secondary and VCE students, who even help with the daily tasks at the site. They have a number of volunteers who also assist on the site. Visitors groups of about twelve are welcome at a cost of \$240. Walks around the site can include both day wildflower walks and evening walks to see the mammals.

Dave Torr from the Werribee Wagtails described the site as a fantastic habitat for birds with 119 species seen on the property. Of these species only three are introduced species. Most of the Victorian bird of prey species have been seen at Mt Rothwell. Key species include Southern Whiteface, the Brown Treecreeper, Diamond Firetails and Jacky Winter. This is a testament to the work of those involved at Mt. Rothwell and underlies its status not only as a sanctuary for native mammals but also for native birds as well.

Scot Sharman

Birdline Vic Highlights

Reports from August to October Melbourne and Geelong

A Channel-billed Cuckoo was first reported at Berwick in late November 2009. This year it was first seen on 8 October at the Wilson Botanic Gardens, Berwick. According to HANZAB this species is a vagrant to Victoria. It has been a regular visitor to Gippsland since 2005 and to Berwick for the last five years.

After an absence of just over 12 months the Scarlet Honeyeater has returned to the Melbourne area with recent reports from Ringwood North, Northcote and the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne.

There were several days in September and October when flocks of White-browed Woodswallows and the occasional Masked Woodswallow were seen. There was also a very southerly report of a White-breasted Woodswallow at the Western Treatment Plant at Werribee.

In early September there was an unusual sighting, by Hooded Plover monitors, of a White-fronted Honeyeater at St Andrews Beach, Rye. This is a long way from this species usual habitat of mallee scrubs and emu bush.

Another bird found in an unexpected place was a Leaden Flycatcher at the Moorabbin Railway Station in October.

Black Falcons were spotted at Woodlands Historic Park, Viewbank, Karkarook Park, the Western Treatment Plant at Werribee and Point Lonsdale.

Interesting waders at the Western Treatment Plant at Werribee included an immature Ruff, Terek Sandpiper, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone and Grey Plover. Ruddy Turnstones were also reported at Indented Head, Gunnamatta Beach, and Ricketts Point, Beaumaris.

Swift Parrots were seen passing through mainly to the west of Melbourne at Anakie, the You Yangs and Ocean Grove in August and early September.

Two Red-whiskered Bulbuls, a rare exotic, were photographed at Clifton Springs in October.

Sea-watching from the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse has proved productive with reports of a Blue Petrel, Sooty, Shy and Black-browed Albatrosses and Ospreys.

Further along the coast around the Barwon River Estuary we had reports of 21 Pacific Golden-Plover, several Caspian Terns and Double-banded Plovers.

In October, an immature Australian Painted Snipe was found at the Yarra Valley Water Aurora Sewage Treatment Plant and Recycled Water Treatment Plant at Epping North.

Margaret Alcorn

Dandenong Catchment Survey Summary

July to September 2013

During the April to June period, wet conditions upset many surveys; unfortunately similar conditions continued through to September, with the South Golf Links Rd site not surveyed this period as two scheduled days were not suitable. Strong winds made observing difficult at some sites with bird species numbers below average.

Of the eleven sites surveyed, only one new species was added to the combined list. A Wood Sandpiper at **Rigby's** on a non-survey day in September, taking the total to 179 bird species. The following individual sites had bird species added this period:

Kilberry Boulevard – Eastern Rosella in July and Song Thrush in April (missed in the last report). **Hallam Valley Rd** – Yellow-rumped Thornbill (previously seen only on non-survey day), July. **Mordialloc Ck** – Spotted Harrier, August. **Rigby's** – Australasian Bittern, August, Spotted Harrier, August, Black-tailed Native-hen, September, Eastern Rosella, August, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, August, Golden Whistler, August, Silvereye, August (previously seen only on non-survey day), and Tree Martin, August.

Other species: **Rigby's** - Verreaux's Tree Frog and Brown Hare, both in September. **Heatherton Rd Sth** – Spotted Marsh Frog, September.

Latham's Snipe was only recorded at two sites this period: **Waterford Wetlands**, August (5) and September (28), and **Troups Ck**, September (1). Australian Reedwarblers returned to **South Golf Links Rd** in July and were also present in August, no survey in September. All other sites recorded this species in September with the exception of **Waterford Wetlands** and **Hallam Valley Rd**. Australasian Bittern, an elusive species, was twice recorded at **Troups**



New Zealand's critically endangered Black Stilt (Kaki), the subject of Bill Ramsay's Members Topic at the Balwyn July Meeting.

Ck in August.

The Eastern Common Froglet was plentiful at all sites in September with high numbers at **Mordialloc Ck** (199) and **Rigby's** (270).

Total number of bird species recorded at each site on Survey and Non-survey days to 30 Sep 2013:

Frog Hollow – 97, Kilberry Boulevard – 107, River Gum – 119, South Golf Links Rd – 114, Hallam Valley Rd – 121, Waterford Wetland – 70, Troups Creek – 115, Mordialloc Creek – 118, Heatherton Rd Sth – 124, Heatherton Rd Nth – 106 and Rigby's – 119.

A full tally of the three month sightings may be found on the BirdLife Website <http://www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-melbourne/projects-initiatives-mel> and download the pdf. The results are also displayed at the BirdLife Melbourne Branch monthly Balwyn meetings.

*Graeme Hosken
Birdlife Melbourne DCS Recorder.*



BirdLife observers undertaking their monthly survey of Melbourne Water's Hallam Valley Road wetland

Weekend Outings

Woodland Historic Park

4 August 2013, species count: 48

My first led outing for BirdLife Melbourne was to Woodlands Historic Park in Greenvale. Twelve people attended on a somewhat shabby day, weather-wise. The early birders got great views of a Whistling Kite and a Brown Goshawk flying overhead, and the Australian Wood Ducks searching for nest hollows in the old river red gums.

As the walk commenced a male Scarlet Robin sat for all to see just on the path and as the day went on four male robin species were observed (Scarlet, Red-capped, Flame and Eastern Yellow).

The Birdlist continued to kick over with Grey Currawong and Grey Butcherbird calling loudly in the early morning, Golden Whistlers and Grey Fantails were everywhere, and the beautiful calls of the Weebill filled the air, and as we made our way through the Sugar Gum plantation Yellow-faced and White-naped Honeyeaters put on a great display in low shrubs to everyone's delight.

A quick detour gave us a glimpse at a wild population of Greenhood Orchids, then out into the open fields to see Brown Flacon and a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles circling above, and the beautiful colours of Eastern Rosella taking flight.

An early arrival of a large flock of Tree Martins was a talking point between the group as we made our way back to the car park. The last bird seen by most was the vocal family group of White-winged Choughs that call this park home.

An intrepid few then continued on into the back paddock. The weather deteriorated quickly and everyone decided to call it quits, however the last bird I got to see on a great morning was a Black Falcon.

Jawbone Reserve/Newport Lakes/Laverton Creek

6 October 2013, species count: 82

My second expedition as leader of a BirdLife Melbourne outing was to Jawbone Reserve/Newport Lakes/Laverton Creek. Seven people attended the 9.30 am start on an overcast

spring day. Once everyone had turned up we started, walking east towards the boat club and on the way flushing a single Brown Quail. All the cormorants were present, except Black-faced, as we made our way down the thin path leading to the boardwalk. Along the path we were lucky to flush two Buff-banded Rails, then as we hit the boardwalk we disturbed an Australian Spotted Crake. It was a good start, and we continued on to the bird hide where we picked up three Freckled Duck. We continued along the wetlands, collecting species as we went. Of note were 12 Black-tailed Native-hens feeding on the grass, and 2 male Blue-billed Ducks in full colour. Whiskered Terns were hawking over the wetlands and as we continued towards Kororoit Creek Road, we spotted our only raptor – a Black-shouldered Kite.

As we arrived at the western end of Jawbone Reserve we noticed that there were small waders feeding on the exposed mudflats. On closer inspection, and to our delight, we saw Common Greenshank, many Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and a Common Sandpiper.

After everyone's excitement we walked back to our vehicles and made our way to Newport Lakes. It was somewhat disappointing with not much to report. The common species were abundant, but nothing of note. The water in the ponds was stagnant, and the paths closed to pedestrians so after a quick loop we decided to try somewhere else.

After some discussion I decided that Laverton Creek may be worth a visit. Along the way we stopped at the ford on Racecourse Road for a quick look, as a member had stopped there early this morning and seen some roosting waders. Alas, they were no longer there.

We continued on to Truganina Park, from which we would walk to the mouth of the Laverton Creek. The main objective was to see if we could find any roosting birds on the spit, and as it was low tide we had easy access. The wind however had picked up and there was not much to observe. We did however get two Bar-tailed Godwits as well as a lone Little Egret. Crested Terns were struggling to fly into the headwind, which gave people some great views, but as the time was nearing the end we decided to head back, picking up Singing Honeyeaters and Red-browed Finches on the return as well as a low flying Swamp Harrier

Overall a great day had, with a great group of like minded birder to spend a Sunday with.

*Philip Peel,
Outing Leader*

Weekdays Outings

Troups Creek & River Gum Creek, Hampton Park

12 August 2013, species count: 47

Forecast: Winds from the west, gale force at times with possible showers and hail.

An unpleasant day, but 12 brave souls started at Troups Creek Wetland. The wind was very strong but only one shower when a small bushy area provided shelter. Water birds were few and far between as the surface water was white-topped. Acute hearing was required for Brown Thornbills and Superb Fairy-wrens, especially near the High Ten-

sion Power Lines sounding like a squadron of bombers overhead. A Swamp Harrier flushed from a reed bed then continued to forage unsuccessfully. A second raptor, a Brown Falcon, was driven off by two Little Ravens, and a lone Black-shouldered Kite was present before lunch. Perhaps a single Australasian Darter foraging in a sheltered waterway was the highlight for the morning.

River Gum Wetland, about a kilometre away, provided a sheltered spot for lunch. Only seven species were added after lunch to the 40 seen in the morning. Heavy rain approaching decided us on an early departure.

Both sites are two of the eleven wetlands being surveyed by BirdLife on a monthly basis for the Melbourne Water Dandenong Catchment project. Thanks to John Bosworth who led

(Continued over page.)

(Continued from page 10.)

the outing under trying weather conditions.

Graeme Hosken for Diane Tweeddale who was unable to attend.

Newport Lakes and Kororoit Creek

4 September 2013. Species count: 65

A strong wind didn't deter 19 people from attending. The car park list included Crested Pigeon, Red Wattlebird and Superb Fairy-wren. Both New Holland and White-plumed Honey-eater were in the bush and the South Lake added Eurasian Coot, Black Swan, Australasian Darter, Hoary-headed Grebe and Welcome Swallow. The highlight of the day came as those who were admiring a male Golden Whistler were redirected to a male Rose Robin, the first recorded for this area.

At the Kororoit Creek mouth the falling tide was exposing sandbanks and mud. Chestnut and Grey Teal roosted separately and Black-winged Stilt flew in to be joined by a lone Common Greenshank. A walk along the creek gave an elusive Common Sandpiper, a flight of eight Royal Spoonbill, plus three Long-billed Corella on the sports ground, White-fronted Chat uncharacteristically on the open grass and clear, brief views of Singing Honeyeater. The lakes bird list was 43 species and the creek 50. Our thanks to Jane Moseley for leading.

Wonga Park

16 September 2013. Species count: 59

Seventeen enthusiasts were undeterred by grey skies or a road closed for bridgework. We detoured around the closure and headed off under the leadership of Rob Grosvenor. The Yarra banks yielded female Australasian Darter and a speedy Azure Kingfisher while Red-browed Finch flocked near the path. Frogs called from the reed beds and a Long-necked Tortoise on the path was a bonus. Rufous and Golden Whistler called and later were clearly seen. Spotted and Striated Pardalote were heard and then seen, clear and close, the highlight of the day as few had observed a Striated Par-

dalote in such detail. Waterbirds included Grey and Chestnut Teal, Australian Wood Duck, Great and Cattle Egret, White-faced Heron and Australian White Ibis. Raptors were a pair of Whistling Kite and a passing Nankeen Kestrel. Pallid Cuckoo and Olive-backed Oriole were heard unseen while honeyeaters included Red Wattlebird, Eastern Spinebill and Yellow-faced and New Holland Honeyeater. The morning was productive but a walk downriver after lunch yielded nothing. We departed before the rain arrived, very grateful to Rob.

Port Philip Island

14-15 October 2013. Species count: 101

Afternoon car park highlights were Pink-eared Duck, Swamp Harrier and Brown Falcon. At Surfies Point a Nankeen Kestrel hovered in the strong wind and Sooty Oystercatcher and Crested Tern sheltered on the rocks. Next to Shearwater Wetlands in a new housing estate. Ducks, coots, swallows and both martins were numerous. Australian Reed-Warbler and Little Grassbird were both well viewed. At windy Seal Rocks Silver Gull were starting nesting. Shy Albatross and Short-tailed Shearwater came in and a Southern Giant-Petrel was a lifer for most. At Swan Lake numerous Black Swan had young. Bushbirds, Black Wallaby and an echidna were recorded before supper.

Next morning Oswin Roberts Reserve had pardalotes and bronze-cuckoos. Raptors included Whistling Kite and an acrobatic Swamp Harrier. Highlights were a male Satin Flycatcher and a Fan-tailed Cuckoo. Musk and Rainbow Lorikeet, Honeyeaters including White-plumed, New Holland, Yellow-faced and White-naped plus a lone Koala were spotted. Rhyll Inlet included White-faced Heron, Caspian Tern, Bar-tailed Godwit and Australian Pied Oystercatcher. Fishers Wetland included Cape Barren Geese, ducks, Black-winged Stilt, Black-fronted Dotterel and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. We thanked our leaders Sally and Derek Whitehead.

*Diane Tweeddale
Coordinator, BirdLife Melbourne Weekdays Outings*

Beginners' Outings

Braeside Park

27 July 2013, Species count: 62

A group of 27 enthusiasts left the visitor centre along the main track south towards the wetlands, where it was hoped that a recently reported Australasian Bittern and a Spotted Harrier would show themselves. The usual Tawny Frogmouths and Red-rumped Parrots proved elusive. Leaving the main track just after the park office, an anticlockwise circuit of the entire wetlands was undertaken. On the paddock side, Flame Robins, Golden-headed Cisticolas and soaring Eurasian Skylarks were spotted. Notable sightings on the ponds were Australasian Shovelers as well as Blue-billed and Pink-eared Ducks. Several raptors were seen; the best views being of a Nankeen Kestrel and a Brown Falcon. After lunch, a short walk around the self-guided trail produced a few more bush birds, including Golden Whistler and Eastern Yellow Robin, which added to a good list for the day.

Pound Bend, Warrandyte

28 September 2013. Species count: 44

Thirty-two attendees assembled and were shown a tree in which pairs of Galahs, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and Rainbow Lorikeets could be seen tending their nesting hollows. The first hot-spot occurred at the end of a walk up the river track, where a Sacred Kingfisher, a Pallid Cuckoo and a male Rufus Whistler stayed perched near to each other for a long time, allowing all to study them in detail. Taking the track up to higher ground, a search through fruiting mistletoe eventually produced two much admired male Mistletoebirds, along with Spotted and Striated Pardalotes. A female Australian Wood Duck with a family of about 17 chicks pressing themselves into the grass in a tightly-packed motionless group, held us in awe as we passed.

After lunch, during which an experienced Laughing Kookaburra left one of our group agape by snatching a whole sandwich just centimetres from her mouth, the remaining members visited the tunnel and then the high ridge where the only raptor, a Whistling Kite, was spotted. Yellow-faced and White-naped Honeyeaters were seen, but not the White-winged Triller which had been present three days earlier.

*Hazel and Alan Veevers
Outings Leaders,*

New Members

A big welcome to the following new members who joined BirdLife Melbourne between 1 June 13 to 18 October 2013 and we look forward to seeing you at the BirdLife Melbourne activities and meetings.

James	Mustafa	ASHWOOD
Jannette	Manins	BLACK ROCK
Alexandra	Harrison	FOOTSCRAY
Rainer	Woxvold	FOOTSCRAY
Terence	Condon	MOONEE PONDS
Adriana	Smith	BUNDOORA

Mary-Lou	Hylands	YARRAVILLE
Anna	Lanigan	STRATHMORE
Benjamin	Daw	ELWOOD
Mick	Connolly	HUGHESDALE
Celia	Bagshaw	NORTHCOTE
Michelle	Crawford	PRESTON
Kay	Schroer	TEMPLESTOWE
Anthea	Stephenson	NIDDRIE
Ros	Metzke	GREENSBOROUGH
Jeff	Jackson	BOX HILL NORTH
York	Day	PORT MELBOURNE
Millie	Ross	SEDDON
Meg	Orton	BRUNSWICK
Jenny	Richmond	BALWYN
Rebecca	Tilley	SEAFORD

Graham	Gill	SUNBURY
Sarah	Marr	BROOKLYN
Harry	Burgess	MOUNT WAVERLEY
Clifford	Miller	CHELSEA
Vassi	Bouzalas	PANTON HILL
Andrew	Robertson	ROSANNA
Harold	Richards	BLACKBURN
Abhishek	Sengupta	POINT COOK
Tony	Jelley	ELTHAM
Matthew	Crawford	SOUTH YARRA
Samantha	Imberger	FERNTREE GULLY
Bill	King	BENTLEIGH EAST
Ken	Ehrenberg	GISBORNE
Kerry	Clarke	EDEN PARK

The You Yangs: Birding and Boneseeding

Saturday 7 Sept 2013

The day dawned unexpectedly fine and the morning remained very pleasant for birding around the Park Office and dam. With 19 people in attendance we recorded 35 bird species in this area, which was 10 more than at the same time last year. We missed the Tawny Frogmouths that are

usually near the Office and concluded they must be breeding elsewhere. A highlight here was seeing Black-chinned Honeyeaters and a lone Swift Parrot. It was disappointing to find a dead Royal Spoonbill beside the dam, but interesting to know it had been using the area. We saw and heard the first of several groups of White-winged Choughs for the day.

At our lunch stop further around the road, the weather began to change with a few raindrops falling. Frogs called at the nearby dam and frogspawn was evident. It's been a good season for them. We found 18 bird species including an overflying White-faced Heron.

We arrived at our official boneseeding site in the middle of the afternoon and stayed for over an hour to pull out the weeds. We do have to walk a considerable distance into our site to find any now, so what we are doing certainly works. We found Painted Button-quail foraging scrapes and kangaroo resting places in the litter under the eucalypts and wattles. We recorded nine bird species.

Some of us finished the day with a walk to the nearby Eastern Flat area where we found 19 bird species. Jacky Winters were particularly active. Unfortunately boneseed is beginning to take over here. This is very obvious during early spring. Some of the plants were huge and totally covered in bright yellow flowers. It would be difficult to tackle these mature plants, but well worth our while to try.

We finished the day with a total of 60 bird species recorded and left the park with a reduced mass of boneseed plants in the ground.

Our You Yangs boneseeding days are generally the first Saturday of March, June, September and December. If anyone would like to be added to my YY email list, please let me know at Merrilyn@wirejunkie.com.

Merrilyn Serong



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