



April 2013

# Birdwatch

Newsletter of Fleurieu Birdwatchers Inc



**Newsletter Contributions:**  
Please send all items for inclusion in future newsletters to :  
fleurieubirds@gmail.com

**Subs are now due**

See page 3  
for payment details

**URGENTLY NEEDED!!**

**SECRETARY**

FOR FBW COMMITTEE

Please Contact

Neil Cheshire on 8552 7904

or email to

fleurieubirds@gmail.com

**if you can help**

**Thursday 11 April Mt Magnificent CP**

Corner Nangkita Rd / Enterprise Rd 35°19'18" S 138°40'4" E

**Saturday 20 April Nixon-Skinner & Springmount CP**

Main Sth Road, Myponga Reservoir, Causeway Rd

35°24'40" S 138°26'16" E

**Friday 10 May General meeting**

**Sunday 12 May Laratinga Wetlands Mt Barker**

Dirt Car park, Bald Rd, Mt Barker

**Wednesday 29 May Mt Billy CP**

Hindmarsh Valley Hall, Hindmarsh Valley Rd 35°29'49" S 138°37'35" E

**Saturday 15 June Manning Reserve, McLaren Flat**

Kay's Rd McLaren Flat, NW corner of Manning Reserve

35°11'26" S 138°34'49" E



**Malleefowl**  
Photo: Teresa Jack  
(see Article page 6)

**Meetings:** Anglican Church Hall, corner Crocker and Cadell Streets, Goolwa  
7.30 pm 2nd Friday of odd months.

**Outings:** Meet 8.30 am. Bring lunch and a chair. See **Events** above

**Contacts:** Neil Cheshire on 8552 7904 or fleurieubirds@gmail.com

**Website:** [www.fleurieubirdwatchers.org](http://www.fleurieubirdwatchers.org)

**Newsletter:** Contact fleurieubirds@gmail.com

# OUTING

## Hindmarsh Island Saturday 16 February

22 people attended the outing with a few Hindmarsh Island Land-Care members and two new FBW members joining in. The temp was expected to be HOT and reached 36 degrees by lunchtime.

The first point of call was Richard Owen's magnificent property Tarni Warra, where he met us at the gate and showed us the little Spotted Crakes in a muddy pond on the way in. We were surprised to find Mangroves growing there.

These are the only ones on the Island and the most Southern in S.A.

Three Elegant Parrots flew around us and a few Tree Martins too. We wandered down to the Goolwa Channel opposite Sir Richard Peninsula and viewed a large number of water birds. These included Red-kneed Dotterels, Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and a couple of Black-fronted Dotterels. There were lots of ducks and cormorants, Black-tailed Native Hens, terns and seagulls with one Royal Spoonbill and one Pelican. We wandered further around the waterway and found around 100 Shelduck with a lone Musk Duck behind them and more than a 100 Cape Barren Geese standing in the low lying water with approx. 100 Swans nearby.

With several spotting scopes between us everyone got to see birds they were not familiar with and Richard showed us the old wharf remains where they used barges to transport goods to the Island before the barrages were built. Someone saw a Golden-headed Cisticola amongst the reeds. The vegetation around the swamp land is very lush and fresh since the end of the draught and the return of the water. Some special swamp plants are found in this area and are treasured by the plant specialist of the Land-care group who propagate them for the Island.

After an hour and a half with Richard on his amazing property we drove to Wyndgate farm area and scanned the Hunters Creek where we found more water birds and one little Australasian Grebe.

Due to the intense heat we cut short our usual visits around the Island and headed to Paula's place on the opposite side of the Island which overlooks Clayton. Here we spotted two Richard's Pipits on the electricity wires while driving in. We made straight for the shade of her front veranda and decided on a bird count there and then with the option for the less heat-affected

members to walk around the scrub area at the back of her house while the others settled in for lunch. Despite the heat we found Grey Fantails, Fairy Wrens, a male Golden Whistler and a White-plumed Honeyeater to add to the list.

Total species was 60 for the morning. Considering the heat and having to cut the outing short it was a most enjoyable and interesting morning.

A big thank you goes to Richard and Paula for allowing us to visit their properties.



Goolwa Channel

Cape Barren Geese

Wendy Phillips

Photos: Nic Nicol





## PAIWALLA Wetlands Sunday 10 March

The threat of hot weather did not stop eight keen members from turning up at Sunnyside Lookout on a lovely Sunday morning. Indeed a clear blue sky and 22 degrees started well for the day as it climbed to 36 by lunch time.

The group was led by Judith Dyer and with Peter Koch, a volunteer for the Paiwalla Habitats Trust. They provided an excellent commentary on the birds and the environment during our tour.

The birds of prey were in abundance and the sight of a Swamp Harrier was a first for me.

The tour began in earnest at the car park on the Northern side of Paiwalla where the wetlands could be seen to be in pristine condition. Our walk along the cliff side triggered many sightings including half a dozen Darters and Black Kites in a dead gum tree. So engrossed were we that no one noticed the bed of black ants – this led to one member performing a vigorous version of the Ant Dance whilst another member showed us that when the mites go up the tights go down! (Memories of schooldays geography). By this stage the Black Kites were in large numbers rising to the sky as we passed by. A couple of Whistling Kites joined in to provide us with clear ID differences between the two species. The next sighting was a Little Eagle which also proved a first for a couple of members. It turned out to be a rapturous day for the raptors with seven sightings from the fifteen recorded at Paiwalla.

As we turned towards the River our interest focussed on the waterbirds that filled the ponds. The experience of some members shone out as they identified several interesting species from the hundreds of birds on the water. These included Blue-billed, Freckled and Pink-eared Ducks with Shelduck and Australasian Shoveler also present. It was impressive spotting given there were an estimated one thousand Grey Teals, three hundred Hardheads and some five hundred Eurasian Coots competing for our attention. We also saw large numbers of Darters, Cormorants, Pelicans and Egrets.

We lunched in the welcome shade of the majestic River Red Gums and completed the bird call. An impressive total of sixty seven species was recorded. It was a day in which the bush birds took second stage.

Our thanks to Judith Dyer for organising and leading the tour.

Peter Owen

*(Other bird photos from Paiwalla on Page 8)*



Photo: Peter Owen

## World Wetlands Day—'Taking care of Water' Friday 1 February 2013

### Sharing Science, Monitoring and Discovery from the Lakes and Coorong

A number of FBW members attended the information day presented by the Lakes Hub (Milang and District Community Association) at Signal Point in Goolwa.

We found it full of amazing scientific research being done on a range of topics in and around the Lower Lakes and extending through to the Coorong.

The topics included water birds in the Lakes and Coorong by Dr Daniel Rogers and monitoring the Fairy Terns and other water birds by Prof David Paton. Mudflat monitoring of invertebrates, zooplankton studies, water quality testing of nutrients and microalgae, acid sulphate soil research monitoring in a range of sites around the Lakes and waterways. The afternoon session included fish monitoring of fresh and sea water species. Also the re-introduction of young fresh water fish from two dams back into the Lakes post drought.

We learnt about the Bell frog monitoring and involvement of community groups doing a range of activities to assist the scientists with their work.

The outcome of the day was that although the water is back, the scientific evidence suggests not all ecosystems are recovering to full capacity since the drought. We can not mend environmental degradation in the short term but with all the monitoring being done at least the scientists can advise the government on the current research with the hope that better decisions can be made in the future.

The plan is to present further workshops to keep the general public informed on scientific research so volunteers can be involved in better management of our areas of environmental importance. *Wendy Phillips*



Photo: *Peter Gower*

## Annual Subscriptions for 2013 are now Due

Membership year is from 1 April to 31 March of following year.

☐ **Single \$20**      ☐ **Family \$25** (2 or more people at the same address)      ☐ **Junior \$12**

*Please forward this **slip**, together with your **payment**,  
to the Treasurer, Keith Jones, 25 Coppin St. Glengowrie SA 5044*

Name ..... Amount enclosed \$.....

NB To save postage, receipts will be forwarded with snailmail newsletters, or by hand at meetings and outings where possible. Please enclose a SSAE if you need a receipt mailed to you.

If paying by EFT please follow the instructions below.

### To pay subscriptions by EFT

The following information is needed to make an EFT payment.

- Ø Bank SA's BSB number is 105-160 (or 105160 if the hyphen cannot be entered)
- Ø Our account number is 015551140.
- Ø The organisation's name is Fleurieu Birdwatchers Incorporated (abbreviate or truncate if necessary).

**Important: In the Reference Box on the Transfer Screen, please enter your name (abbreviate if necessary).**

If there is a box on the screen to send an email notification to the payee, please check this box and enter **fleurieubirds@gmail.com** or send an email direct to this address notifying us of your payment (or do both)

*\*\*\* Failure to do this will mean we do not know, when checking the bank statement, who has made the payment \*\*\**



## UK Birdos visit the Coorong.

Back in October I volunteered to escort four wildlife journalists from the UK on a Coorong cruise.

This was arranged by the SA Tourist Commission as part of a promotion with Tourism Tasmania to attract UK bird-watchers to the two states.

Along with their driver and two crew on a Spirit of the Coorong boat we spent most of a day on a cruise observing birds. The two crew were pretty knowledgeable regarding birds and happy to be concentrating on just one aspect of the Coorong.

Very quickly I realised that I was going to learn more from Rob Joliffe, Michael Unwin, Timothy Appleton, and Dominic Couzins, than they would from me. A quick look on the internet at British Birdwatching sites, will most likely find you one, if not more of their names. Their writings cover articles, blogs, books and tours.

We got to see five father Emus with chicks coming down to the water's edge for a drink at several places. With the high river flows at the time, the surface water was fresh. In the Mundoo Channel and along the Tauwitchere Barrage we saw two immature White-breasted Sea Eagles and at Godfrey's Landing all of us got good views of a Rufous Bristle-bird. It was then that Dominic Couzins, who has visited Australia several times, announced that he had now seen the Western, Eastern and Rufous Bristlebirds.

With pleasant weather, we were all impressed by the number and variety of birds over the water and along the shores. All four British visitors were kept busy looking in all directions and at the end of the day our bird list totalled 86.

We had time for a quick look at the Goolwa Sewage Ponds on the way to the Strathalbyn Motel.

The following morning we visited Tolderol Game Reserve. Although there were not a lot of birds here, everyone was entertained by a close encounter with a Golden-headed Cisticola. Onto Monarto Conservation Park and sightings of Shy Heathwrens and a Fan-tailed Cuckoo were the highlights.

I said goodbye here and the visitors went Wombat hunting in the Mannum area for the afternoon and evening. The next day Peter Waanders took them to Gluepot Reserve, before they returned to Adelaide and a look at Kangaroo Island with Chris Baxter.

*Peter Gower*



## AGM. Friday 8th March 2013.

**12 members and 4 visitors attended.**

Judith Dyer announced her retirement from the Committee after devoting the last 18 years since the inception of the FBWs. She was thanked for her dedication to the club and being the driving force in getting it up and running with her husband Bruce.

Denzel Murfet is not able to continue either as president or as a member of the Committee due to work commitments this year and Pat Uppill wished to step down from the Secretary position after four years. This left all offices vacant.

**Neil Cheshire was elected President.**

**Keith Jones elected Treasurer.**

**No Secretary was elected.**

**Committee members are: as above plus Pat Uppill, Pat Bachelor and Bob Daly and Wendy Phillips**

Neil Cheshire gave an interesting talk on the Pelagic Trips out from Port MacDonnell.

**If members do not come forward to assist with running the Club then the FBWs will NOT be able to continue.**

**Pat Uppill is willing to assist getting a new person trained for the Secretary position. The main job is to record the minutes of the meeting and email them to the committee members.**

**Show your support and come forward. Contact Neil Cheshire 8552 7904**

## Fairy Tern Survey—February 2013

As part of the Fairy Tern Survey, a small group of us arrived at Jack's Point (Coorong) to survey some rocky outcrops in the Coorong. Transport was by private boat or kayaks to an unmarked reef not more than 400mm above current water levels. Here we found nesting Fairy Terns!

To be so late in the nesting season, it was thought that a first nesting had failed (possibly due to inundation) and that this was a second attempt.

From a distant water point and later at a non-nesting part of the reef, the nesting birds were observed and a general layout mapped. As a final action, a single sweep was done through the nesting colony and scrapes, nests with or without eggs, and with or without young, were counted. We then retreated to our previous observation points. Within ten minutes, all had returned to normal at the nesting site. We congratulated ourselves and quietly departed.

Tally. Approximately 60 adult birds (which is approximately 20% of the Coorong population) were counted plus eggs and young.

The survey is now complete for this year and full results are being collated.

*Nick Tebneff*

Photos by: *Nick Tebneff*



## Malleefowl Extravaganza—127 in total !

I have just returned from Ouyen Victoria where I went to check on the large numbers of Malleefowl reported as seen on the side of some back roads. They were frequently feeding on grain lost from passing trucks that were heading to the silos.

I was lucky to see a total of 127 in two days and 50 on my best evening.

I even saw 5 one day at lunchtime and usually they are out on the road from dusk to dark. Fortunately the roads are well signed for their safety.

*Teresa Jack*

*Malleefowl Crossing*  
*Photo: Teresa jack*





## Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers with colour bands and flags.

For almost two years, as part of my regular beach walks between the Murray Mouth and Middleton, I've been counting Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers. However, it was only during this last summer, that I began noticing that some of the "Pieds" had variously coloured plastic bands (black, green or white) on the lower part of their legs. On doing a bit of "googling", I see that there's been a banding program on Oystercatchers and Waders by the Victorian Wader Studies Group for more than 30 years. On reporting my observations to this group, I discovered the banded "Pieds" that I had seen on the Ocean Beach immediately outside the Murray Mouth, as well as immediately within the Estuary, had travelled from as far afield as Corner Inlet on the eastern side of Wilson's Promontory, Victoria, and that they had been at liberty, carrying their bands, for at least 8 years.

The results from these banding studies show that "Pieds" banded in Victoria have travelled as far as the mid coast of NSW, to King Island in Bass Strait and to eastern South Australia. Also, Emma Stephens, Coast, Estuary and Marine officer with the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board (who coordinates the Hooded Plover monitoring program on the Fleurieu Peninsula), has mentioned to me that a "Pied" that was banded in the south-east of SA had recently been observed at Thompson's Beach on the eastern shore of Gulf St. Vincent. This bird had been banded by the SE SA Wader Studies Group, headed by Maureen Christie. Another interesting result from the Victorian long-term banding program has been the discovery that this species is quite long-lived, with one banded bird at liberty for 26 years!

Because fewer numbers of Sooty Oystercatchers have been banded, less is known about their movements; however, the limited results so far indicate more localised movements than 'Pieds'. More recently, the group has begun to attach lightweight plastic flags to the upper parts of the Oystercatchers' legs, instead of the plastic bands. Anyone seeing banded or flagged Oystercatchers should contact their reporting officer, David Trudgen ([trudgen@iinet.net.au](mailto:trudgen@iinet.net.au)) or fill in the on-line reporting form (<http://www.environment.gov.au/biosecurity/science/abbbs/reportform.html>).

Keith Jones

Photo: Keith Jones



Photo: Peter Gower



# The Annual Wader Count in the Goolwa Channel

Early in February each year for the past decade the Australasian Wader Studies Group (of Birdlife Australia) has carried out a bird count, predominantly in the Coorong.

Local commercial fishermen have provided their boats to take bird observers and recorders through the length and breadth of the Coorong to see how bird populations are faring in this part of the country. During all of that time migratory waders have been on a very serious decline, as have many other species too, due in large part to the over-extraction of water and the Millennium drought starving the Coorong of fresh water.

However since October 2010 there has been freshwater through most of the Lakes system, and particularly the northern end of the Coorong.

The results are in for the section that I have been involved with for most of this last decade, from the Goolwa Barrage to the Murray Mouth, and there is reason for serious optimism.

We met our commercial fisherman, Rod Ayers, at the Beacon 19 boat-ramp and travelled across to where Monument Road meets the river, then back to the barrage, across and down the inside of Sir Richard Peninsula to the mouth where we cross back at Sugars Beach and travel up to Monument Road again. The survey took almost 5 hours.

*This year the overall numbers were the largest we have ever counted, some 12 998 birds of 43 different species. 8 766 were waders and 4 232 were waterbirds.*

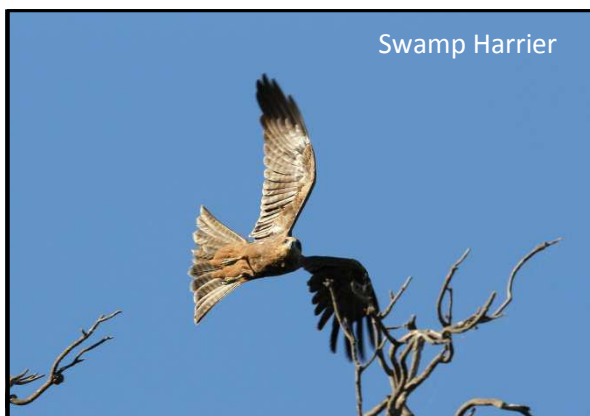
As a comparison, last year there were 5 565 birds of 35 species, 1 845 were waders and 3 720 were waterbirds. In 2003 the numbers were 3863 birds of 39 species of which 719 were waders and 3144 were waterbirds.

This year there were 2 733 red-necked stint (1 286 in 2012), 954 sharp-tailed sandpipers (449 in 2012), 181 red-necked avocet (nil in 2012), 3 284 Eurasian coot (nil in 2012), 2 807 grey teal (463 in 2012), 482 hardhead (nil in 2012), 487 black swan (24 in 2012) and 258 Cape Barren geese (108 in 2012). There were many more species of course but these are some of the larger numbers this year with the previous year showing just how counts can vary.

**The main migratory waders found here, Red-necked Stint and sharp-tailed sandpipers, had doubled in numbers, red-kneed dotterels appeared to be spread much more widely and openly than usual and two Fairy terns were seen near the barrages.**

The Goolwa channel, downstream of the barrage, is such a rich and special area for birds. We ought to be sharing this much more with interstate and overseas bird watchers.

**Richard Owen**



Swamp Harrier



Little Eagle



Darter

Paiwalla Birds  
Photos: *Peter Owen*



Black Kite