



Birdwatch

Newsletter of Fleurieu Birdwatchers Inc



Thursday 7 April, Manning Reserve and Gemtree Wetland.
Whiting Rd entrance, McLaren Flat.

35°11'26" S 138°34'49" E

Saturday 16 April, Newland Head C.P. and Waitpinga Beach.

Dennis Hut Car Park.

35°37'39" S 138°29'59" E

Friday 13 May General Meeting. Willunga Resource Centre.

Sunday 15 May, Onkaparinga Estuary, Old Noarlunga.

Picnic area, near the Institute.

35°10'53" S 138°30'12" E

Wednesday 25 May, Cox's Scrub/Coles Crossing.

Cnr Heifer Lane, off Nangkita Rd.

35°21'4" S 138°42'16" E

Saturday 11 June, Aldinga Scrub and Washpool.

Cox Road. Aldinga.

35°17'50" S 138°27'30" E

Reminders

Members Night

Friday 13 May.

Willunga Resource Centre.

Presenters 15-20 mins.

Contact FBW or ring

85550634 to present.

Save the date!!

Sat. 25 June for a Winter

Xmas Lunch at the Victor

Hotel. 2 Course hot meal \$35

each. Details next Newsletter.

To book contact FBW.



Australasian Bittern taking off at Tolderol
12 February. Photo: Regina Durbridge.

Meetings: Anglican Church Hall, corner Crocker and Cadell Streets, Goolwa.

7.30 pm 2nd Friday of March, May, September and November unless otherwise stated.

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

Contacts: fleurieubirds@gmail.com or phone 8555 0634

Website: www.fleurieubirdwatchers.org

Newsletter: Contact email: fleurieubirds@gmail.com

The Australasian Bittern is an endangered waterbird which occurs mainly in Southern Australia and New Zealand. It inhabits tall, dense reedy vegetation growing in shallow freshwater wetlands, where foraging, roosting and breeding all take place. They are often difficult to see. When a person walks through a bittern's wetland, the bird's initial reaction is to freeze and assume an erect posture — with its neck outstretched and its bill pointing skyward. Sometimes a hiding Bittern even sways with the breeze to enhance its concealment. When this pose is combined with its cryptic plumage (mottling, streaks and striations), a bittern is easily overlooked. The eerie call of the Australasian Bittern is said to have been the origin of the Aboriginal and colonialist myth of the Bunyip - a mythical creature said to live in creeks, swamps, billabongs, riverbeds and waterholes.

There has been a rapid loss of suitable natural habitat for Australasian Bitterns over the past 20 years due to drainage and degradation of wetlands combined with prolonged drought. As a result, the population of Australasian Bitterns had declined significantly.

However, there has been great excitement with the discovery of Bitterns breeding in the NSW Riverina Rice Fields and one fledging named Robbie was fitted with a satellite tracking device. He was followed all the way to Pick Swamp in S.A. [557 km] away from the rice fields.

With the crowd funding that BirdLife obtained last year more tracking devices will be applied and further research conducted into this large, secretive bird.

For more information Google—Bitterns in Rice Project.

P.S. We will be visiting Pick Swamp next to Piccininny Ponds during the October Nelson Campout.



Campout Plans Friday 21st—Monday 24th October 2016 at Nelson, Victoria.

Accommodation: *Kywong Caravan Park* - Cabins \$70-\$95 per night [bring own linen]
Powered sites \$28, Unpowered \$23.

Phone 08 8738 4174 to book

OR

Casuarina Cabins \$90-\$135 [close to Kywong with more options for cabins]

Phone 08 8738 4105 to book

Nelson Visitor Information Centre 08 8738 4051 to book private holiday houses.

Sunday 24th Oct. 5pm we have chartered a boat to travel the Glenelg River 2-3hr. Cruise including Dinner cost approx. \$45. *We will be taking bookings for this event closer to the time.*

Enquiries to Wendy 85550634 or email FBW. [further details later]

Nature Foundation SA is developing Eco Tourism on their properties.

Carefully managed tourism brings people who value wildlife to observe and engage in Conservation. Members and the public are welcome to visit. Last year they launched two walking trails at Witchelina Nature Reserve in the far north of the State and are planning to build two more at Hiltaba [near the Gawler Ranges] this year.

Working Bee at Hiltaba —Thursday 28 April to Monday 2 May.

Phone Nature Foundation SA 8340 2880 to register if you can assist.

Coorong Wader Survey, February 2016—by *Keith Jones*

Over the first week of February, more than 16 volunteers, National Parks rangers, commercial fishers and researchers from Birdlife Australia participated in the annual summer wader count for the Coorong Lagoon. This survey is now in its 16th year, with valuable long term information on trends in bird numbers appearing. Although the survey was primarily aimed at estimating the abundance of migratory waders, we also collected data on all resident waterbirds. Those of us doing the Southern Lagoon, stayed at the Salt Creek Lodge, adjacent to the roadhouse. Tuesday turned out to be very wet, thanks to the remnants of Cyclone Sam, however, we managed to cover most of that part of the Lagoon. I was part of a team of three covering the eastern shore line from Woods Well to Parnka Point. While it rained, we ventured from our car every 300 or so metres, to do the counts. In our area, we counted more than a thousand Banded Stilts and a similar number of Red Necked Stilts. Despite the rain, the birds continued to feed avidly over the sand flats, which soon became pools of fresh water – we saw Chestnut Teal drinking from these pools. Later that afternoon, a few of us drove to Morella Basin Conservation Park, a wetland connected to the Coorong. Most of the area was mainly dry, however, in the wet area, we saw Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, and a juvenile White-bellied Sea-Eagle.

On Wednesday, with the weather improving, we moved up to the North Lagoon, where our team surveyed the western shore of Young Husband Peninsula from Long Point to the Needles. A commercial fisher greatly assisted us with that part of the survey, directing us within easy sighting distance of the shore with his shallow draft boat. Again, we saw large numbers Red-necked Stilts, as well as Common Greenshanks, Australian Shelducks, Chestnut Teal and several large flocks of Great Cormorants and Australian Pelicans. Crested and Caspian Terns were also seen, and we were pleased to observe good numbers of Fairy Terns, diving for small fish or resting on the small sandbars. Black Swans were very abundant. A number of pairs of Pied Oystercatchers were observed resting on the sand bars along that side of the Lagoon and a couple of Emus and Kangaroos came down to the water's edge to check us out. Overall, despite the weather I enjoyed participating and I recommend to keen birders to do next year's survey – it's a great way to get to know many of our shore and water birds, as well as meeting with researchers and other colleagues. My thanks to Dr Caroline Wilson from Birdlife Australia for making the survey possible and leading the group. The results of the survey will be available in the middle of this year.



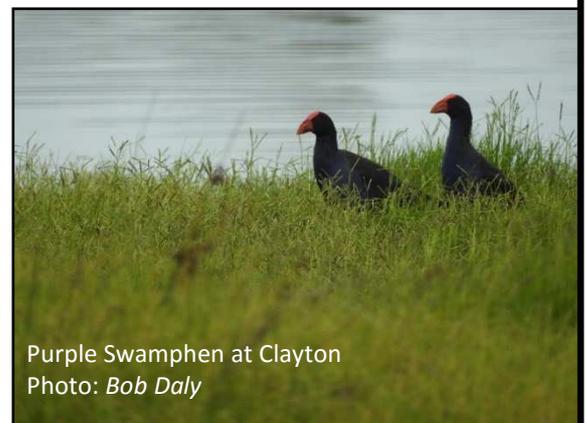
Red-necked Stilts

Good News: A young Sea-Eagle fledged at Waitpinga Cliffs this season. It was only the second successful breeding since 2008. *Elizabeth Steele-Collins.*

Outing: Clayton Bay—Saturday 13 February.

On account of Laratinga being mostly devoid of water and few birds, the FBW outing was changed to Clayton. We enjoyed a mild morning with lightly overcast skies and a moderate breeze. We met at 'Sails' Café then walked along the shoreline past the yacht club then via the boardwalk to the western end of the lagoon. Retracing our route we went to the cliffs overlooking Hindmarsh Island and the high ground west of Goose Island.

A good range of waterbirds were seen. A distant sighting of a lone brown duck tested our identification skills. With the aid of a super-zoom camera the distinctive bill shape of the bird revealed an immature or female Blue-billed Duck. Other ducks included Pacific Black, Australian Shoveler(3), Grey Teal and Pink-eared(2). Other water birds included Yellow-billed Spoonbill (1), Eurasian Coot(400) and four species of cormorant. Our total species count was 50. After the walk we held the bird count and enjoyed refreshments at 'Sails' Café.



Purple Swamphen at Clayton
Photo: *Bob Daly*

Red-whiskered Bulbul Alert. Escaped birds found in Adelaide must be eradicated. Notify authorities: Free call 1800 084 881 if you see any. Some have already become established in eastern States.

Southern Emu-wren News: from John Gitsham [GWLAP]

The Mt Lofty Southern Emu-wren population appears to be stable and slightly expanding down at Watchalunga [the new Nature Foundation property] in the Finniss area.

A few birds have been sighted in the revegetation areas of the CLLM project, which has been managed by the Goolwa to Wellington Local Action Program [GWLAP].

A few more have also been sighted at the new Fleurieu Swamp site at Nangkita near Mt. Compass, which is very exciting.

To my knowledge the Deep Creek population is declining at this stage, the CCSA Bird Ecologist isn't sure why they are declining in the heath areas.

Hisperella CP at Mt Compass has about 3-4 pairs living within the park and 4 birds have been seen regularly at the Mt Compass School Swamp Boardwalk. These few have been photographed often by various local bird photographers.

Unfortunately one of the photographers watched helplessly as one of the four birds was snatched from the top of a bush by a Black Shouldered Kite!

Sad, but it is a natural predation.

I hope the Kite appreciated his exotic and rare meal!



Watchalunga Nature Reserve— Report by Bob Sharrad, Ecologist and NFSA Councillor.

This 92 ha property at Finniss contains a substantial proportion of the remaining area of good-quality Fleurieu Peninsula Swamps which are listed as a Critically Endangered Ecological Community.

Nature Foundation SA (NFSA) is working to reduce harm from identified threats and restore the habitat to create a sanctuary for at-risk wildlife.

Watchalunga is also a good place for birdwatching!

Despite the dull, drizzly conditions I was pleased to see over 30 species including two Mount Lofty Ranges Southern Emu-wrens (MLRSEW) in only a couple of hours. There were other unidentified species present, but the tall reeds often prevented me from seeing them. Viewing Emu-wrens requires some patience, a naturalist's eye for habitat and luck! There are also many Fairy-wrens that might confuse some visitors. One of NFSA's rationales for buying Watchalunga was that it preserves a population of the endangered MLRSEW. The experts tell us that there are very few of these birds on the property, perhaps 11-25 individuals only (6-10 breeding pairs), probably confined to dense reed beds and nearby samphire (a small portion of the reserve). Our little population is likely one of many very tiny populations and was, in the past, mostly threatened by cattle trampling. At the moment we have little idea about the impacts of various types of disturbance on these birds except that they are likely to be detrimental during the spring/summer breeding season. What this means, I think, is that visitation should be restricted to certain areas and activities until various ecological and management goals are reached.

Looking to the future, NFSA hopes to construct hides on Watchalunga to help birdwatchers and photographers, but some work needs to be done to sort out the nature and sighting of these. A hide to enable viewing of wrens, reed warblers, etc., might need to be quite different from one designed to see the larger wetland birds (ducks, herons, egrets, etc.) In the latter case, elevated hides would be needed to see over reeds and to gain a panoramic view of the area.

FBW: We hope to visit Watchalunga in the future and support NFSA further.

Annual Subscription \$25 a single \$30 for couple if you have not already paid.

See previous Newsletter for payment options.

Enquiries to treasurer, Keith Jones phone 0439295990.

Birding Holiday Norfolk Island Nov. 2016.

Recommended by the Mountfords who went last year.

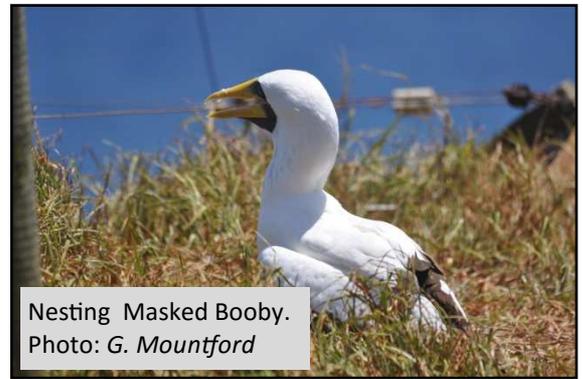
Dear Birdwatchers,

In November 2016 we will be partnering with Wild Mob to bring bird watchers (and their friends!) to [Norfolk Island Bird Week](#). This week offers the opportunity to see our endemic and endangered Green Parakeet, endemic Norfolk Island Golden Whistler, Scarlet Robin and seabirds such as Masked Booby, Grey Ternlet, White Tern, Sooty Tern and Wedge-tailed Shearwater just to name a few. Optional extra tours include travelling out to magic Phillip Island, offering access to one of the largest breeding populations of Red-tailed Tropic birds in Australia.

With maximum birdwatching sessions of no more than 15 people the week is sensitively organised to ensure maximum opportunities for bird-sightings. Escorted by local Norfolk Island expert Margaret Christian along with Derek Ball, CEO of Wild Mob and Chairperson of Island Arks Australia, an incredible wealth of bird knowledge will be on-tap for everyone joining this event.

Based on the recent success of the 2015 Norfolk Island Bird Week we know that this will be a popular week. Our best tip is to reserve your place now and you can do so by freecall **1800 1400 66** or visit our website at www.norfolkislandtravelcentre.com

Holiday packages begin at **\$1849pp ex Brisbane, \$1899 ex Sydney** – and we are very excited that a new direct flight is available **ex Melbourne from \$2249**. Norfolk Island Travel Centre PO Box 172, Norfolk Island 2899, South Pacific. Phone: 0011 6723 22502 Email: joyce@travelcentre.nf



Nesting Masked Booby.
Photo: G. Mountford

Bird Rescue Centre at Goolwa:

Rena Robinson says that plans for the new centre are progressing well. The site has been prepared on Kessell Rd, electricity and water installed and building is expected to start in early April. Further fund raising will be required to equip the centre and to train staff to care for sick and injured birds. The Committee has decided FBW will continue to sponsor the centre on a yearly basis with a regular donation and Rena suggests we have our organisation name attached to one of the bird cages in the intensive care room. It is important that we show we care for our sick and injured birds and support the wonderful work done by Rena and her volunteers. *Please support the Xmas Winter Lunch to raise funds to equip the new facility. [see front page]*

Pelican photo: Bob Daly



Leucistic Swan. Photo: Sally Grundy

Welcome new FBW members:

Kathy Scott and Austin Penney.
Pat Glazier.
Krystina and Robert Rowland.
Wendy White.

We hope you have some great birding adventures in the Fleurieu district.

Outing Sunday 13 March– Hindmarsh Island.

A group of 11 met at the Murray Mouth Lookout Carpark. There were hundreds of birds and as the tide was low we were able to walk along the beach for closer sightings. The bird calls were loud due to the numbers. A juvenile Wedge-tailed Eagle sat on the sand and remained there for some time before eventually flying away. Among the hundreds of birds were good numbers of Great Cormorants, Pelicans and a few Pied Oystercatchers. A group of Caspian Terns, approximately 80, was a real highlight. Common Greenshanks were sighted at each site as were Black-winged Stilts.



Rock Parrot.
Photo: Peter Owen

We moved to Mundoo Channel where there were Pacific Black Ducks, Grey Teal, Straw-necked Ibis and Little Pied Cormorants. Shelducks and Cape Barren Geese flew over us into the Channel. We walked towards the fishway and had good sightings of White-fronted Chats, Superb Fairy-wrens and Striated Thornbills. We then drove to Chapel Road where we found Banded Stilts, Red-necked Avocets, Great Egrets and Red-capped Plovers. The Red-necked Stints were coloured and fat and ready for their long flight north.

Our last stop was the Marina where we sighted a Nankeen Kestrel and more shore birds. While we were having lunch we saw a group of Purple Swampheens and Little Wattlebirds. We had a good morning birding with 59 species recorded by the group. *Thanks to Keith for leading the outing.*

Margaret Dreyer

Duck Shooting Season 2016 – BirdLife Australia Comment:

With much of south-eastern Australia in drought, duck populations across Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania have flocked to the few remaining wetlands still holding water to seek refuge from the dry conditions. Regular scientific surveys have revealed that the number of wetlands holding water and waterbird breeding activity, among other things, are at a near-record low.

BirdLife Australia has condemned the decisions of the three state governments: *It is reckless to declare a duck-shooting season, a declaration that ignores all of the expert scientific evidence.*

“A duck-shooting season should never have been declared this year,” said Dr Jenny Lau, Conservation Manager at BirdLife Australia. “In Victoria, the duck-shooting seasons were called off in both 2007 and 2008 due to environmental concerns during similar droughts, and the wetland conditions are worse this year than they were back then.”

Duck Shooting Season in S.A. is set for Saturday 19 March to Sunday 26 June 2016.

The Department of Natural Resources has reduced the length of the season and the number of ducks to 5 per hunter per day. This is due to the low counts recorded in their surveys earlier in the year, but who checks? NRM are so short staffed they cannot do it. It relies on the hunters to be honest!

Species Allowed are: Grey Teal, Chestnut Teal, Australian Wood Duck, Pink-eared Duck, Pacific Black Duck and Australian Shelduck. NOT allowed this year are Hardhead and Shovelers.

The Stubble Quail Season is from Saturday 13 February to Sunday 31 July, with 20 birds per day per hunter allowed.

BirdLife Australia encourages you to contact your Premier’s Office to voice your disapproval.

Be Aware....if visiting Tolderol for birdwatching, hunters may be present during these dates or camping at the site near Lake Alexandrina. They are NOT allowed to hunt in the basins we have been surveying [close to the pump shed]

Contact DEWNR for further information, or google Duck Hunting in S.A.



Annual General Meeting Friday 11 March at Goolwa.

32 people attended to hear Karleah Berris from Kangaroo Island talk about the **Glossy Black-Cockatoo Recovery Program**. Some visitors came after reading the advertisement in the local paper.

Karleah explained there has been an enormous amount of work done over the last 10 years to improve the birds chances of survival after it was noticed there were only about 150 GBC left. The NRM staff have placed artificial nesting

boxes made out of PVC pipe high in suitable trees and have installed metal rings on trunks of known trees with nesting hollows to prevent possum predation. While the birds only eat seeds from one she-oak species [*Allocasuarina Verticillata*] they require large eucalypts with hollows to nest in. The competition for the nest hollows comes from Corellas, Galahs, and Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos. The GBC only raise one chick a year so progress has been slow. They surveyed 356 birds last count. This project has relied on a strong support from volunteers. Massive plantings have taken place across the Island, Cape Jervis and Deep Creek. It is likely the birds will find their way across the Strait to the mainland. **All bird watchers need to report any they see on the mainland to KI's NRM**, phone 8553 4444 or email Karleah. karleah.berris@sa.gov.au

Other Business :

Treasurer's Report presented by Keith Jones. Our balance has increased to \$2,500 due to rise in subs last year and a small increase in membership numbers.

Chairperson's Report by Wendy Phillips reviewed the last 12 month's highlights.

Request for 2 or 3 new Committee Members failed. Any offers of help would be appreciated.

Presentation certificate given to Denzel and Jenny for twenty year service to the club.

Life membership offered to Judith, Ann, Denzel and Verle for their significant contribution to the club.

Speakers for September, Bob Green on Water for Wetlands and November, Peter Maxwell on restoration work in Antarctica. A Member's night is planned for May meeting at Willunga with 2-3 short presentations.

John Gitsham Vice President of Birds SA :

Requested 4 volunteers for a bird survey on Tokuremoar Reserve, Goolwa. WEA bird education courses in the city have re-commenced with good numbers attending. Bird education also at Gluepot again this year. Laratinga Ponds have been refilled after complaints from the public. Crakes and Rails sighted there.

Win Syson reported 17 Hooded Plover chicks fledged this season up from 9 last year due to the success of the Beach-Nesting Birds Project with volunteers engaging the public to put their **dogs on leads**.

Richard Owen from Hindmarsh Island Landcare spoke about the Wyndgate Working Group's input into the Draft Management Plan that should be released for public comment in about 6 weeks time. This large parcel of land will become a Conservation Reserve with walking trails, bird hides, farming and revegetation areas.

Wendy spoke about the plans for the Bird Rescue Centre and requested FBW members support a fund-raising event to be held in June this year for a dinner and Quiz night.

Outing Laratinga—Wednesday 23 March.

Eight members gathered on a gloomy overcast day. The conditions made it difficult to see movement in the treetops, but it was on the water where all the action was. The ponds had recently been filled and were in great condition. Our first view was the pond at the Bald Hill Road end which teemed with Straw-necked Ibis, White Ibis, Australasian Grebes, Little Pied Cormorants, a surprising number of Black-fronted Dotterels (20+) and the usual assortment of ducks including one Mallard. What was missing were the Crakes and Rails. Also quiet were the number of bush birds although some in the group were lucky to see four Purple-crowned Lorikeets.

No visit to Laratinga is complete without a look at the sewage ponds. What a sight! It was packed with some 250 Pink-eared Ducks, 80 odd Australian Shovelers, 4 Hardheads and various Coots, Black Ducks and Grey Teals. To top it off we had a noisy flyover of some 1300 Little Corellas. The final count of 47 species

together with the large numbers of birds made for a very enjoyable morning. **Our thanks to Neil Cheshire for leading the outing.**

Peter Owen



Ducks on Sewage Pond.
Photo: Neil Cheshire

A Nesting Box Story

By Elizabeth Steele-Collins



Photos above taken by *Lance Gray*.

When first sighted, it looked like a small possum had taken up residence in one of our Rosella nesting boxes. Unfortunately because of lack of natural tree hollows there is a lot of competition for the nesting boxes we have installed. Already this season nesting boxes have been used by a number of different species and in September a Ring-tailed Possum had driven out a Rosella who was nesting in one of our boxes by climbing in and either squashing or eating the eggs. Early one morning I noticed a Rosella pair were most upset so we took a look and sure enough there was the possum curled up asleep in the bottom of the box. Another time some pesky Starlings had taken over the box after throwing the Rosella eggs out and building their own nest. We cleaned out the box, disposing of the Starling eggs etc., and the Rosella pair had another nesting attempt with their young successfully fledging late November, 2015.

With the nesting box no longer being used by the Rosella pair I noticed something was in it and wondered if a possum had come back again. However, a friend and I had a delightful surprise last week... instead of a possum being inside, there was a little Australian Owlet-nightjar peeping out of the entrance. It certainly looked more mammalian than a bird at first glance.

The Australian Owlet-nightjar hides to roost in a tree and stump hollow (or nesting box) or sometimes uses a hole in a cliff face... so it is possible that they've been roosting/ nesting in cliff crevices here and I've never seen one due to it being a nocturnal bird. During the day from time to time, the Owlet is seen peering curiously from the entrance... or sometimes it's seen perching in the entrance hole sunning itself. This is how it was first discovered here.

I think the Rosellas have now accepted they have lost their nesting box so looks like we'll have to make another one for them. *[Elizabeth]*



Owlet-nightjar
20-24 cm

The Australian Owlet-nightjar hunts at night, mainly in the first hours after dusk and the last hours before dawn, feeding mostly on insects, particularly beetles, grasshoppers and ants. It feeds at night by diving from perches and snatching insects from the air, ground or off trunks and branches, but it may also feed on the wing. It is a sedentary bird, keeping to the same patch of woodland year in, year out and it mates permanently, even though male and female roost apart and alone by day.

During the day it roost in hollows in trees, partly for protection from predators and partly to avoid being mobbed by other birds that mistake them for owls. They are very reliant on habitat, so populations can be badly affected by fires or the removal of older trees. *Elizabeth Steele-Collins*