



fleurieu birdwatch

Newsletter of Fleurieu Birdwatchers Inc

December 2005

- Meetings:** Anglican Church Hall, cnr Crocker and Cadell Streets, Goolwa
7.30 pm 2nd Friday of odd months
- Outings:** Meet 8.30 am. Bring lunch and a chair — see Diary Dates
- Contacts:** Val Laird 8555 5995 Judith Dyer 8555 2736
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- Website:** users.bigpond.net.au/FleurieuBirdwatchers
- Newsletter:** Verle Wood, 13 Marlin Terrace, Victor Harbor 5211; verlew@bigpond.net.au

DIARY DATES



- * **Saturday 3 December**
Christmas Breakup
Meet at the Goolwa Barrages at 4.00 pm for a bird walk followed by a BYO barbecue. Please bring your own portable barbecue if you have one and share. And remember the insect repellent!
- * **Friday 13 January**
Twilight walk, Hindmarsh River
Meet at 7.00 pm on the corner of Hindmarsh Road and Wattle Avenue, Victor Harbor.
- * **Saturday 11 February**
Tolderol Game Reserve
Meet near the railway carriage, Milang.
- * **Friday 10 March**
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Identification of Orange-bellied Parrot—Bob Green
- * **Sunday 12 March**
Mt Magnificent and Blackfellows Creek
Meet at the junction of Nangkita and Enterprise Roads, Nangkita.

A great big thank you to those who have written reports on outings this year. It has been good to have your personal best sightings and your enthusiasm has shone through. Without your reports this newsletter would be very dull indeed! Special thanks to Val for photos, Judith for proofreading and to Ann for help with mailing. Verle

Season's Greetings

*and may
2006 bring
some special
sightings!*



STOP PRESS

**Alexandrina Council has approved \$500
donation towards the reprinting
of our brochure.**

MEETING

Friday 11 November

We were a fairly small band of 20 present on this Members Night. Ray Laird welcomed all, and later, one visitor.

Matters brought forward were correspondence about the Orange-bellied Parrot Recovery Plan—an identification workshop may be arranged for the March 2006 meeting; information about Avian Flu; Fleurieu Tourism has donated \$750 towards the reprinting of our brochure and City of Victor Harbor Council has approved a donation of \$200.

Judith Dyer reported that the campout had been a great success and other participants agreed, several having their first sightings of species including Crimson Chat and Chestnut Quail-thrush at Brookfield. Val Laird tabled several pages of photos taken at campout—see web pages.

Rosalie Sharpe presented slides and spoke about Finches. Rosalie has kept finches in an aviary for 40 years, has studied their habits and idiosyncracies. She generously shared her wealth of facts and anecdotes of these cute, and often colourful little seedeaters.

Geoff Evans tabled a number of useful bird reference books and discussed their relative merits, with some helpful comments from his listeners. He then spoke about larks—of the avian variety! Skylarks were introduced to southeastern Australia by European settlers in the mid nineteenth century but Australia has its own Singing Bushlark, and Rufous and Brown Songlarks.

Bird call included observations of Spotted Pardalote nesting among tree roots in Cox Scrub, Hardhead on a dam at Currency Creek, Little Bittern calling at Paiwalla, White-naped Honeyeater near the lower Inman (not seen for some time), an active Wedge-tailed Eagle nest with young at Waitpinga within the 5-kilometre range of another nesting pair, and the annual influx of Caper White Butterflies along the south coast.



Photo: Verle Wood

Phyll Whellams *Spot the chick!*

displayed two black birds to show us the differences between the Little Raven and Grey Currawong.

We enjoyed a cuppa and biccie while catching up with each other's bird news.

Restoring OBP habitat

Extract from Lower Lakes and Coorong Natural Resource Management Community Newsletter, Autumn 2005

The Orange-bellied parrot (*Neophema chrysogaster*) is a nationally endangered species of bird which breeds in coastal south-west Tasmania and migrates to spend the winter in coastal Victoria and South Australia.

To assist in restoring its once plentiful winter habitat around the Coorong and Lower Lakes, the Coorong District LAP (Local Action Planning group), Goolwa to Wellington LAP and PIRSA (Department of Primary Industries and Resources, SA) have developed guidelines to assist landholders create Orange-bellied Parrot habitat.

Around the Coorong and Lower Lakes potential Orange-bellied Parrot habitat includes coastal salt marshes, samphire shrublands, beaches, coastal dunes, lakeshore and adjoining samphire areas.

The habitat restoration guidelines focus on the management of existing habitat, the identification of potential habitat areas requiring revegetation and the provision of both feeding habitat and roosting habitat. Full lists of feeding and roosting plant species for both saline areas and dunes are provided as well as detailed information on their establishment.

For a copy of the guidelines or to discuss restoring habitat on your property and funding available, contact Jem Tesoriero 0427 364 551.

Avian Influenza

The Animal Health Branch of PIRSA has just set up a single reporting point for suspected AI cases. This is Dr Kim Critchley 8207 7908, 0417 895 062, AH 8272 4251, critchley.kim@saugov.sa.gov.au

Incidents worth reporting are those where there is a cluster of dead birds rather than single deaths. Waders or waterfowl are the prime suspects at present. If a single bird is found dead in unexpected or unusual circumstances, or a rare species is found, this should be reported. Avoid contact with the carcasses and report as soon as possible.

If the find is in a relatively inaccessible or remote place, or there might be a chance that the carcasses could be rapidly scavenged or washed into the sea, a number of carcasses should be collected.



Choose the most freshly dead ones, place them inside at least two thick plastic bags, wear gloves, a dust face mask (a P2 is OK), eye protection, ie glasses or goggles, and ensure you wash all exposed skin surfaces with warm water and soap before eating or smoking. Carcasses can be frozen but it would not be a good idea to store them with food used for human consumption.

Further information: <http://www.who.int/en/>

I can't be bothered to go abroad this year, dear –let's just stay here!

According to an item in *The Weekend Australian*, 19–20 November, growing numbers of birds including warblers, blackcaps and chiffchaffs, are ditching the migration policy.

They are too lazy to fly all the way to Africa for the winter and are staying in Britain. Experts predict most of the shirkers are likely to die because the climate, despite global warming, is still too cold for them.

WELCOME

Alana and Greg Dare, Glenunga and Victor Harbor

Trust you'll enjoy your birdwatching activities with us.



OUTINGS

Bullock Hill

8 October

Thirteen intrepid birdwatchers eventually had to abandon their outing as the overcast skies turned to rain, then deluge, and the dirt roads became rivers of mud!

Not a bush bird to be seen or heard—although no-one actually ventured into the scrub—in fact some of us did not even brave getting out of our cars!

However, those that took the time on the way home to stop at Double Bridges, saw a variety of birds on the flooded pasture adjoining the reedbeds, and scored a tick. There were Straw-necked and Australian White Ibis, White-faced Heron, Reed-warbler calling, Noisy Miner and an excellent view of a Hobby in a nearby tree.

But what was fascinating was a Darter, not perched or swimming, but walking—or rather waddling like a drunken sailor on his short wide-set legs across the paddock. None of us had seen a darter walking before—a tick of sorts, for sure!

Phyll Whellams

CAMPOUT

Eremophila Park, near

Friday 28 October

Our long awaited campout was here at last! Judith gathered us together under the watchful eyes of a Mallee Fowl and Common Bronzewing.

It was an enjoyable stroll with wonderful viewing of Rainbow Bee-eater, White-winged Chough and nest.

Chestnut-rumped Thornbill and activity of nest building was also recorded. Some of us caught up with a Red-capped Robin and Jacky Winter.

Altogether our total was 26 for our first walk of the weekend. Thanks to all who put our campout together. Our location was ideal and convenient.

Eremophila Park, extended

Saturday 29 October



Photo: Val Laird

We set off in convoy, 23 people in 7 cars, on a very overcast day with rain threatening. Our first stop, not long after leaving the campsite, was to see a Varied Sittella nest. It was not easy to see the nest, it blended so well with the tree bark. We spent

some time watching the parent birds, still near the nest site, attending to dependent young.

A couple more stops showed us birds common to the park, including Brown-headed Honeyeater, Chestnut-rumped Thornbill, Striated Pardalote, and Jacky Winter with dependent young.

Then the rain started to fall heavily and we returned to camp. After trying to wait out the rain, we had lunch and people began to go in different directions. Some stayed at



Mallee Fowl

Photo: Val Laird

Eremophila, others went to Waikerie Effluent Ponds and Hart Lagoon bird hide. Edith and I decided to go to Maize Island Lagoon CP, just outside Waikerie.

By then the rain had tapered off and we had a good couple of hours, seeing 29 species, including Rufous Songlark and Zebra Finch. On the way back to Eremophila Park, just outside Holder, we saw a family of Chestnut-crowned Babbler.

A good day, despite the weather. Total count for the weekend at Eremophila Park was 40 species.

Again, many thanks to the organisers of the weekend for all their work on our behalf.

Jean Boomer

Banrock Station

Sunday 30 October

After splitting our group into two, and appointing Judith and Bruce as leaders, we began our walk in opposite directions. Overcast cold conditions did not deter us. Immediately we observed a variety of birds flying in and around black box and the many dead gums that provided good nesting holes: Mulga, Red-rumped, and Mallee Ringneck parrots, Yellow Rosella, Brown-headed and White-plumed Honeyeaters. Superb and Variegated Fairy-wrens were in full breeding splendour.

At our first bird hide a Golden-headed Cisticola excited us all as he sang, swinging on a slender reed. Clamorous Reed-warbler was heard constantly. Water birds included Pacific Black and Pink-eared Ducks, Pelican, Cormorant, Black-fronted Dotterel, Caspian Tern and Black-winged Stilt.

When we met our other group a hasty exchange of sighting tips alerted us and sure enough we found about 30 White-fronted Chats moving from dead gums to the ground. A Sacred Kingfisher was heard, then seen, as well as a vibrant Nankeen Kestrel. A pair of Whistling Kite exchanged food on the wing, and later a nest with a young was easily seen.

We returned rather warm and quite ready for a very companionable lunch. The bird count totalled 73, and we were well pleased having enjoyed our day together.

Warwick Hamilton

Brookfield

Monday 31 October

Almost a full complement of campers—22 out of 24—gathered here for our last survey. We headed first for the saltbush area in search of the two most wanted, Crimson Chat and White-winged Fairy-wren. We were at all points of the compass when at last a small flock of chats were found. The signal was given and everyone converged on the area, carefully stalking the little 'flames' as they flitted among the low bushes. Excitement ruled! Unfortunately, the quest for the White-winged Fairy-wren proved fruitless. Oh, well ...



Refreshments in the rain

Photos: Val Laird



Photo: Val Laird

Photo:Val Laird



Crimson Chat

We moved further along the track towards the mallee bush with one stop on the outskirts where a White-winged Triller seemed to be defending his territory, calling constantly.

Among the mallee another special sighting was the

Chestnut Quail-thrush, skittering from shrub to shrub. Geoff Evans must be the first person in history to have a quail-thrush running over his foot!

Other special sightings were Variegated Wren, Southern Whiteface, White-eared and White-fronted Honeyeaters, Red-capped and Hooded Robins, Varied Sittella, White-winged Chough with young in nest and Rufous Songlark.

Gilbert's Whistler was heard but we were disappointed not to see it or the Crested Bellbird we had found on our previous campout visit.

However, over lunch and bird call—45 species—we all agreed this was an exceptional site to visit.

Verle, Judith and Phyll



Photos:VerleWood

Brookfield: Bird call, and removing roadside obstructions



MORE OUTINGS

Black Swamp, Currency Creek

13 November

Eleven members met in the winery car park on a sunny but cool morning. Walking along the edge of the swamp we soon warmed up much to the delight of some who feel the cold.

We had good sightings of Red-browed Firetail, Superb Fairy-wren, Nankeen Kestrel, a pair of Black-shouldered Kite and a Little Eagle. Clamorous Reed-warbler, Little Grassbird and Golden-headed Cisticola were very vocal with only the Little Grassbird its usual elusive self.

Nearing the viaduct we heard an unusual loud harsh call. A Peregrine Falcon was found sitting near the top of a pine tree and, looking further along the trees, another Peregrine was also sitting on a cut-off branch. As we walked closer for a better view one member commenced walking across the viaduct. This



Photo:A.Tousson



brought both of the birds from their perch and loudly harassed him by calling and flying quite close to him. An immature was spotted higher up in the pine tree so they were obviously defending it. On the viaduct were the remains of a Galah which it appeared they had been

feeding on. It was an interesting and unusual sighting into the behaviour of these birds and I doubt if any of us there will forget the call.

As we neared the end of the walk we finally found the Fantail Cuckoo which had been calling all morning.

Over 40 species were seen during this excellent outing.

Ann Turner



State of the Art bird hide, Paiwalla



Photos:VerleWood

Paiwalla Wetlands

Thursday 24 November

Twelve people met at the Sunnyside Lookout on the cliffs above the Paiwalla Wetlands, about 15 km north of Murray Bridge, on a cool morning which quickly warmed up, bringing rather more flies than we would have liked. From the lookout we had a good view of a Peregrine Falcon perched in a dead tree, and could hear White-browed Babblers in the scrub beneath the cliffs.

We drove down to the river's edge, making a stop on the levee to check out the waterfowl in the middle of the wetlands. Those in the vanguard heard a Little Bittern but despite the best birdcalling efforts it did not reply.

Leaving the cars at the landing we walked around the part of the wetlands that used to be the dairy farm. On the small levee were lots of Pelican, Little Black and Little Pied cormorants, a Black-winged Stilt and a Red-kneed Dotterel. From the bird hide we saw Grey Teal and Hoary-headed Grebe, and as we walked back, our first Sacred Kingfisher. We had heard them at the landing and saw several more (or the same one several times) on the side of the wetlands nearest the river. Further away on the water was a group of hard to identify ducks which might have been Blue-billed—but in the end it was decided they were Hardhead. Also near the bird hide we heard and then spotted a Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo.

Along the banks were many holes and broken shells where turtles' eggs had been dug out by foxes and other predators. We saw two quite large turtles.

Phyll was declared Spotter of the Month for noticing a Nankeen Night Heron, perched in the willows, obligingly giving us an excellent view through the branches. On this part of the walk we also had some very good views of both Black and Whistling Kite. In the reeds many Clamorous Reed-warblers, were both heard and sighted, and also the elusive Little Grassbird, of which one sighting was claimed. There were dozens of Superb Fairy-wren.

On the bank furthest from the river, under the cliffs, we saw the White-browed Babbler that we had heard before, and perhaps the highlight of the outing, a Barn Owl sitting in a high cavity in the rock, peering back at us, as we peered at it, as if through a keyhole.

At the bird count we discovered we had seen 60 species. It was a wonderful outing in a fascinating and beautiful spot.

Gillian Rubinstein