



fleurieu birdwatch

Newsletter of Fleurieu Birdwatchers Inc

December 2007

- 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, phone 8555 5995 Judith Dyer, phone 8555 2736
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- Newsletter:** Verle Wood, 13 Marlin Terrace, Victor Harbor 5211

For your Diary



Saturday 1 December

Christmas Break-up

Lions Park, Currency Creek

Meet at 4.00 pm for a bird walk followed by a BYO everything barbecue tea. No barbecue facilities on site—BYO gas cooker.

Friday 11 January

Twilight Walk, Hindmarsh Falls

Meet at 7 pm in the lower car park at the falls. Bring chair, torch, insect repellent, and nibbles for supper at bird call.

Saturday 9 February

Waders and Water Birds

Meet in the car park at the Goolwa barrages.

Friday 14 March

Annual General Meeting

Sunday 16 March

Paiwalla Wetlands

Meet at Sunnyside Lookout opposite the Bowhill turnoff on the Murray Bridge/Mannum road.

A very large THANK YOU to all who wrote reports of the outings for this year's editions of *birdwatch*. We appreciate very much your willingness to record our outings with your own unique perspectives. They make lively and entertaining reading, especially for those who are unable to participate actively. They are also an important historical account of club activities.

We have about 20 birdwatching outings each year, including our annual Campout and this year, FBE. If each participant writes up ONE outing per year the chore is shared. I am acutely conscious that some members have assumed more than their fair share this year and sincerely thank them for that.

Please make a New Year's resolution to be a writer—publication assured! *Verle*

PS. Have you seen the new Our Birds page on our website? If you have photos of FBE and 2007 Campout I would really like them soon too, to update those web pages.



Happy holidays and
great birding in 2008

MEETING

Friday 9 November

Ray Laird in the chair was assisted by Judith Dyer, filling in for Secretary, Val Laird. Ray welcomed 21 members and our guest speaker, Eleanor Sobey, of the Department of Environment and Heritage on Kangaroo Island, who works three days a week on the Glossy Black-Cockatoo Recovery Program there.

Minutes were read and confirmed, and reports from Fleurieu Bird Encounter and Campout were received. Total species for FBE was 129, and for Campout, 83. Members were enthusiastic in their comments about both events and everyone appreciated the huge effort put in by the organisers.

Ellie then gave us an overview of her work with glossies, the smallest of the Black-Cockatoos. Numbers declined dramatically last century, and they disappeared entirely from mainland South Australia. It was encouraging to hear that 2006 census results continued the trend of increasing numbers of birds on the island since the 80s, with an estimated population now of about 340 birds. Urban sprawl on KI, and the attendant destruction of old trees with potential to create hollow nesting sites, is an ongoing threat to their survival there. The drought conditions are also affecting the glossies' main source of food, the seed cones of *Allocasuarina verticillata* (Drooping Sheoak), both in the loss of trees and in the reduced production of cones.

Ellie concluded her talk with an education segment: we learnt how to identify the male, female and immature of the species, mainly by their tail feather colours and patterns. The adult male has bright distinct red panels in the black tail. The barring on the tail of the adult female is red to reddish-yellow. The female may also have yellow markings around the head area. The juvenile/immature birds have a mixture of patterns.

We look forward to the day when there are so many glossies on KI that they will migrate across Backstairs Passage, or get blown across, to feed on the sheoaks being planted in anticipation of their return to the southern Fleurieu.

Members wholeheartedly supported the vote of thanks to Ellie.

Bird call

- Nankeen Kestrel in a Victor Harbor backyard
- Shy Albatross and Pacific Gull out at sea 10 km from The Bluff

- Spotted Pardalote (deceased) tabled—sub-species Yellow-rumped
- Hooded Plover: nests containing eggs at Watson's Gap and at Basham's Beach were washed away by the huge tide in late October. The pair on Franklin Parade hatched two young, but they have not been sighted since a day or two old. The nesting site and its enclosure were completely inundated and left in disarray by the monster tide of 28/10.
- Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike nesting at Nangawooka again after an absence of a few years.

We finished off the evening with a cuppa and biscuits prepared by Jenny, and indulged in more bird chatter.

OUTINGS

Black Swamp Walk, Currency Creek

Saturday 13 October

On this cool overcast day 10 of us met at the old canoe tree before going on to the winery.

Here our first sighting was an Australian Hobby studying us from his perch in a dead gum. Two Swamp Harrier gave us an exhibition of aerobatics and synchronised flying which was a joy to watch, before they zoomed off into the heavens again.

Thornbills kept turning out to be Striated, but eventually we spotted a Yellow toward the end of the walk. Elusive Clamorous Reed-Warbler could be heard everywhere and were eventually seen just as we left the swamp area.

The wetlands seemed to be completely lacking in water birds despite ponded areas. In fact, we saw only one pair of adult Black Swan, with three teenage cygnets still in tow.

In all 38 species were spotted. I enjoyed seeing a healthy number of Red-browed Finch and Nick, I believe, got two ticks from this outing.

Phyll Whellams

Welcome

Chris Hoad, McLaren Vale
Susan Innes, Encounter Bay
Hugo and Pat Klynsmith, Pt Elliot
Dennis and Gloria Wright, Victor Harbor
Scott and Pauline Dundas, Beaumont



Kyeema Conservation Park

Sunday 11 November

Perfect weather, perfect birding group of eight members and a good count of 33 species made for an excellent outing.

We had an extended three-hour walk through the park where we had not been for quite a while. Luckily, the slight breeze kept us from over-heating. Even though the numbers were the usual low for the predominantly stringybark forest we had two highlights: firstly, Scarlet Robin with nest (?eggs).



Scarlet Robin on nest at Kyeema. Photo: Teresa Jack

Then toward the end of our hike was a Bassian Thrush which everyone managed to see. This being my seventh bird trip to Kyeema it was interesting to find I recorded five firsts for the park: Brown Goshawk, Nankeen Kestrel (thanks to Ann for calling it into the park), Elegant Parrot, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo and of course, the Bassian Thrush. Very unusual that this was the first visit when I did not record a New Holland Honeyeater.

Denzel Murfet

... and also a 'just in case' report from Teresa Jack.

We walked through short dense canopy forest, down the hill, past the dam and then through the gully with its tall stringybark forest. Lots of birds were enjoying this cool area near water. The highlight, lots of Scarlet Robin, juvenile being fed and then a nesting bird was found. Nine Wood Duck out by the dam and seven varieties of Honeyeater.

Then the best, a Bassian Thrush found and all had a good look at him. Denzel tried hard to find the Cuckoo he could hear in the scrub. We lingered over lunch with a warm breeze under the good shade near the car park, hoping another bird or two would fly into the park.

Ashbourne

Thursday 22 November

Nine members and Brenda, a visitor, met at Ashbourne on this beautiful sunny morning. Light was perfect for birding. We walked along the gravel road adjoining the golf course and beyond. We were not in a hurry so paid great attention to all feathery movements. We came up to a farm and enjoyed the company of the cattle who showed considerable interest in us. May be they thought we were bearers of hay.

Then the find for the day! Just by a bridge over a small creek was a Willie Wagtail sitting on its nest. The nest, of course, was the usual beautiful work of art and quite cleverly camouflaged in the suspended dry wood of an overhanging branch.

We met up with the owner of the property, one of our members, who kindly extended an invitation for our group to have an outing on their property some time.

We enjoyed our lunch and bird count at the little park by the Finniss River. Forty species in all, including Sacred Kingfisher, Rufous Whistler, Mistletoebird, Kookaburra, Brown Treecreeper, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, and 15 Striated Pardalote. We also found a nest of wild bees and heard many chirping cicadas.

Elaine O'Shaughnessy

Yakka Invaders

Denzel and I recently went to Cox Scrub and saw several groups of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo feeding on Blackboy (Yakka) flowers. They were throwing big chunks of seed material onto the ground so were not interested in the seeds as we first thought.

After watching them for some time Denzel investigated and showed me a small grub about half an inch long and only an eighth thick. These grubs were in the middle of the stalk, so much destruction took place to reach them. There was evidence all over the park of torn stalks showing how much their interest was in the grubs.

I personally would love to know how they knew they were in there as I would not have thought the grubs would make a lot of noise inside the flower head or give off any smell.

It was a very interesting spectacle to watch and both of us learnt something new from the morning walk.

Ann Turner



Grub infestation causing deformities in yakkas near Salt Creek. Photo: Verle Wood

FLEURIEU BIRD ENCOUNTER

Fleurieu Bird Encounter Report

Our inaugural Fleurieu Bird Encounter took place from Monday 22 to Thursday 25 October, 2007. The aim of the conference was threefold: to put our club 'on the map', to educate and to entertain. It was designed for all interested in birds: beginners to experienced birdwatchers, from South Australia and interstate.

A total of 46 people participated in some or all of the Encounter, with the majority either from Adelaide or the Fleurieu region.

The week began with a Welcome Dinner at which Judith Dyer gave us a very interesting talk on the history of our club. Our after-dinner presenter, Denzel Murfet, inspired and educated us in his talk about the variety of bird habitat on the Fleurieu Peninsula, illustrated with photographs of many of the Conservation Parks that we know and love.

Bird Encounter included outings each day to local sites for birdwatching activities. Bruce Riglin did a great job of conducting the bird call at each site. A total of 129 species of birds was seen during the week even though the weather was not totally appropriate for birdwatching. Maureen and Brian Ginno kept the guests well fed with freshly made lunches each day, boiling water on tap for tea and coffee, and even hot soup on a couple of cold days.

The Corio Hotel and Murphy's Restaurant both sponsored our event by providing meal discounts for our guests and we received enthusiastic reports from those who used this facility for dinner prior to the evening programmes.

These evening presentations consisted of slide shows of local birds including photos taken by members Val Laird, Teresa Jack and Peter Gower, bird identification quizzes conducted by Denzel, and talks by highly experienced ornithologists, Dr Andrew Black and Dr Jeremy Robertson. The only hitch to the week was a faulty Proximity Card which would not open the Council Chambers, the venue for our meetings. Thankfully, we were able to access the facilities in time when a local staff member came to our rescue.

Andrew's illustrated talk on the uncoloured wrens was most informative and very helpful for identification purposes. The descriptive tables that he presented are published in this *birdwatch*. Jeremy's illustrated presentation on the flight of birds was likewise, most enlightening. He raised a number of issues which provoked many questions

which he expertly answered from his deep store of ornithological and biological knowledge.

Dr David Robertson was our after-dinner speaker at the Farewell Dinner on Thursday night. He left us with more questions than answers in his talk *Why is it so?*, but what stimulating questions they were! Those who had attended the photography workshop were presented with a mounted print of their favourite photograph. It was obvious from these beautiful photos that the participants had benefited greatly from their day with Lindy Downing, the workshop leader.

Our thanks go to the other members of the Encounter Sub-committee, Brian Ginno and Geoff Evans, who spent many hours assisting in the planning and running of the event. To those who assisted with transport, our special thanks. Thank you to all our members who supported the event, who helped when they saw the need and who constantly encouraged us in our efforts.

We were very pleased with how the week went and believe we have fulfilled our aim of putting our club on the map. We have educated our guests about the wonderful birdlife of the Fleurieu. The many compliments we have received about the event indicate that people have been happily entertained.

Ray and Val Laird



Above. Bruce Riglin, Gaynor Jones, Elizabeth Wilson, Teresa Jack, Alma Kroon, Dolf Kroon, Andrew Black enjoyed some lively conversation at the final dinner. Photo: Val Laird
Below. Brian and Maureen Ginno efficiently prepared our smorgasbord lunch each day. Mary Crawford tucks in at Kent Reserve. Photo: Verle Wood



FBE OUTINGS

Scott Conservation Park

Tuesday am 25 October

The birds were calling after recent rains and 24 of us were off on our first Fleurieu Bird Encounter walk, enjoying both the wildflowers and the birds. Tree Martin, Galah, Crimson Rosella, Red-rumped Parrot, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo and Striated Pardalote were the most common. It was good to come across the Golden and Rufous Whistlers, Fantailed Cuckoo, Elegant Parrot, Brown Treecreeper (breeding), Brown Goshawk and Sacred Kingfisher. Altogether 49 different species were sighted in a pleasant excursion.

Bruce Riglin



Young Clamorous Reed-warbler was also spotted in Scott CP.
Photo: Teresa Jack

Goolwa Effluent Ponds, Barrages, Sugars Beach

Tuesday pm 25 October

After a delightful lunch catered for by Maureen and Brian we moved to the ponds. And what a sight it was to behold! Forty species: we enjoyed good sightings of Spotted Crake, Pink-eared Duck, Freckled Duck, Hardhead, Blue-billed Duck, and large numbers of Australasian Shoveller. The big highlight was the Royal Spoonbill with its buff-coloured chest and head plumes being magnificently disturbed in the wind.

Next for the day were the Goolwa barrages and the Murray Mouth, giving us 28 species. Again, an impressive sighting of a Royal Spoonbill with his headdress was admired. Seventeen Great Crested Grebe were congregated at the northern end of the barrages. Apart from Black Swan, Australian Pelican, Eurasian Coot, Common Greenshank and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper we also had Pied Oystercatcher and Black-winged Stilts to add to our list. Whiskered Tern and Silver Gull were forever present.

Bruce Riglin



Above. Vying for sheltered viewing spots at Goolwa Effluent Ponds. Foreground, Ann Gilbert chats with Henry and Margaret Dreyer.

Below. Bruce Riglin did an excellent job of recording sightings at all venues — this one at Strathalbyn Effluent Ponds, prompted by Ray Laird, Faye Lush, Scott Dundas, Andrew Black, Gaynor Jones and Alma Kroon. Photos: Verle Wood



Strathalbyn Effluent Ponds

Wednesday am 24 October

First stop on a cool, overcast morning was Strathalbyn Effluent Ponds. We eagerly made our way to the bird hide, which provided a climbing challenge, to find Hoary-headed Grebe, Australian Shelduck, Pacific Black Duck with young and Black Swan. A Whistling Kite sitting beside the pond kept us guessing until it took to the air. There was more activity above and adjacent to the ponds with Black Kite, Wedge-tailed Eagle and hundreds of Straw-necked Ibis circling, some coming in to land nearby. Also seen were Masked Lapwing, Galah and Goldfinch. Two Whistling Kite chicks in a nest in a nearby big tree were the highlight of the morning. The group of 20 counted 37 species for this part of the Fleurieu Bird Encounter.

Margaret Dreyer

**Travelling in convoy,
keep a check on the car
BEHIND you.**

Wednesday am 24 October (continued)

We then moved on to Milang. The Railway Museum there has an embankment overlooking the samphire wetland, winter holiday playground of Latham's Snipe from Japan. One flew up causing some excitement.

Then Bruce, our recorder, fell into the swamp and after recovering, trudged through it putting up four more birds for us to observe.

Then it was over to the tall old pines where four Nankeen Night Heron graced us with enquiring looks, eyes wide open. Our 24 people then wandered the lake-front of the town and notched up 48 species in all. Included were Golden-headed Cisticola in the lignum bushes, Great Crested Grebe, both Yellow-billed and Royal Spoonbills, Red-capped Plover, Australian Shelduck and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike.

After lunch, expertly served by Brian and Maureen, the local scavenger, Noisy Miner, arrived from the caravan park to clean up.

Geoff Evans

Muntiri

Wednesday pm 24 October

After lunch we moved off to Margaret and Andrew Black's property, *Muntiri*, near Milang. Here we split into two groups, one going clockwise and the other anti-clockwise around this heritage scrub.

Dusky and Masked Woodswallows were sighted; Jacky Winter with dependent young and Willie Wagtail on nest, were some pleasant sights. The White-winged Triller was a thriller for all. Mallee Ringneck, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, and Brown-headed Honeyeater were heard. Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Peaceful Dove, Peregrine Falcon and Brown Goshawk were among a wonderful variety of birds. A generous afternoon tea was provided by our hosts — thanks!

We recorded 44 species and 24 members and visitors took part.

Bruce Riglin



Willie Wagtail on nest at Muntiri. Photo: Verle Wood

Newland Head CP

Thursday am 25 October

On a fairly cool, overcast morning the group of 23 met at Dennis Hut. We walked up to the T-junction and quietly made our way down towards the sea.

Some of the party reached the clifftop where the track turns towards the Bluff, but returned with not many sightings apart from a fur seal on the beach, Grey Shrike-thrush and Grey Currawong.

Halfway back, we found a pair of Spotted Pardalote digging into the side of the track and watched them for quite a while. The rest of the party caught up to us and were also rewarded with the observation. There were two older burrows from previous years' nesting nearby.

Other species seen were Scarlet Robin, White-naped, Singing, New Holland and Crescent Honeyeaters, Red Wattlebird, Silvereye, Superb Fairy-wren, White-browed Scrubwren and Willie Wagtail, to name a few of the 35 species seen.

Despite the odd misty shower and cold breeze, it was a satisfying visit. We continued on to Kent Reserve for lunch and bird call.

Don Overall



Spotted Pardalote at Newland Head. Photo: Teresa Jack

Nangawooka Flora Reserve

Thursday pm 25 October

The weather remained overcast and cold for the 16 birdwatchers who visited Nangawooka on the last afternoon of Fleurieu Bird Encounter.

There were no unexpected sightings among the 28 species identified in this small garden patch of native flora. Of particular interest, however, were Red-browed Finch nest-building in an Araucaria and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike sitting on a minute nest on a horizontal branch of a eucalypt.

Gaynor Jones

CAMPOUT OUTINGS

Salt Creek

Friday 26 October

The first bird walk for our campout and we met at Salt Creek on Friday afternoon. Twenty-seven walkers had a good look at Salt Creek near the highway, then set off on the Ngrugie Ngoppun Trail (Looking Listening Trail), out to where the creek enters the Coorong.

Slow water-flow allowed us to cross over and walk through different vegetation back to the highway again. It was interesting looking for water birds and scrub birds at the same time. Someone cleverly spotted a White-winged Triller up in a mallee tree. Red-kneed Dotterell, Spotted Crake, Tern and Egret were in the creek by the highway. Then back to camp for tea and bird call under the pergola.

Teresa Jack

Lakes Nature Trail and Old Melbourne Road

Saturday 27 October

A group of 29 people were not fortunate in the weather: overcast, hot and windy. We drove in convoy, stopping frequently to explore. Lakes Nature Trail yielded very little. Scarlet Robin and Golden Whistler were spotted.

Loop Road Campground 2 was very quiet, but some of the group spent more time at the Malleefowl nest, and got good views and photos of the bird. Purple-gaped Honeyeater was also seen here. Loop Road Campground 3 had a solitary Musk Duck, and on the way to Tea Tree Crossing some of us spent about 20 minutes trying to get a GOOD look at Rufous Bristlebird. Red-capped Plover were at the water's edge near the same spot. Compared with our last visit in 2002, there were very few water birds in the area.

After lunch, we had the afternoon to ourselves. Edith and I went to Messent CP—totally uninteresting—and Martin's Washpool CP which was more lively, but Common Bronzewing was the only new sighting for the day. In Salt Creek on the way home, we had Mallee Ringneck and Red-rumped Parrot. 36 birds for our group walk.

Jean Boomer



Malleefowl at nest near Salt Creek.
Photo: Peter Gower

Binos found at Malleefowl mound site. Contact Graeme or Yrena 08 8388 3245

Morella Station

Sunday 29 October

Sunday of our campout saw us going to Morella station, owned by conservation group, Wetlands and Wildlife. A short walk led to Martin's Washpool, a lagoon there. It was a rather windy day and birds on the lagoon were scarce, apart from Black Swan. However, the surrounding area proved to be somewhat better birding—48 species in all.

The highlights were a Collared Sparrowhawk, Red-rumped Parrot, Mallee Ringneck and some very busy Varied Sittella. A pair of Grey Fantail kept us entertained as we enjoyed their nest-building activity. They are very talented little architects!

Our campout was just wonderful and Sunday was an enjoyable part of it.

Alma Kroon

Jack's Point and Parnka

Monday 30 October

Twelve people FINALLY congregated at Jack's Point, but apart from several cheery Singing Honeyeater and a few distant Pelican, sightings were poor. Two couples left us there but by the time we arrived at Parnka Point, another couple had joined us, so then we were 10.

Parnka was far more exciting with Whiskered Tern in their thousands, Black-winged Stilt in their hundreds and many, many Avocet which made our day. Several cheeky Red-capped Plover and Red-kneed Dotterel kept us amused, along with Sharp-tailed Sandpiper with a few Curlew Sandpiper thrown in. Chestnut Teal, Black Swan with a few Pelican then made up the number. Some 27 species observed at the two points.

Extremely windy conditions with a shower or two made our observations uncomfortable. However, we all agreed the quantity of bird life made up for the paucity of species.

Colleen Evans



Whiskered Tern frenzy feeding at Parnka. Photo: Peter Gower

Our sincere condolences to Judith Dyer on the sad loss of her daughter-in-law, Gail.
 Judith has also been unwell herself and had a spell in hospital.
 Our best wishes for a speedy return to good health.



IDENTIFYING BLUE WRENS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The Tuesday evening presentation at FBE by Andrew Black, *Identifying Blue Wrens in South Australia*, was very well received. In response to several requests Andrew generously gave permission for us to reproduce his notes in *birdwatch*.

MALURUS

Taxonomy

- Order Passeriformes
- Sub order. Corvida
- Meliphagoidea

- Family Maluridae
- Sub-family Malurinae
- Genus Malurus (3 other genera)
- 9 species in Australia, 5 species in SA



Distribution

	Habitat	Rainfall
Superb	Forest and woodland	over 400mm (+ Murray River)
Splendid	Mallee and Acacia and other semi-arid shrublands	150-300 mm
Variiegated	Mallee and shrublands extending into arid zone	under 450 mm
Blue-breasted	Mallee of Eyre Peninsula	over 250 mm
White-winged	Arid especially Chenopod shrublands	under 250 mm

Plumages

1. Fledge into juvenile plumage.
2. At 2-3 months moult into adult female or immature male plumage.
3. First spring (pre-breeding) moult into immature breeding male plumage.
4. Post breeding moult to adult non-breeding male plumage.

Brown Birds, Pale Bills (female)		
Eye-ring and lores	Tail	Identification
Diffuse pale orange-brown (much as bill)	Grey-brown and bluish cast	Superb
Diffuse pale orange-brown (paler than bill)	Bright blue (turquoise)	Splendid
Distinct dark brown (bill paler)	Dull grey-blue, long and pale-tipped	Variiegated
Indistinct red-brown (same as brown bill)	Dark grey-blue, long and pale-tipped	Blue-breasted
Unmarked (as crown and face)	Dull blue-grey	White-winged

Brown Birds, Dark Bills (adult male)				
Eye-ring	Lores	Wing	Tail	Identification
Unmarked	Dark (or pale)	As back (± blue tinge)	Dark blue	Superb
Unmarked	Dark	Blue	Violet blue	Splendid
Off white	Black	Paler edges	Dark grey-blue (long)	Variiegated
Pale Blue	Black	Rufous edges to tertials	Dark grey-blue (long)	Blue-breasted
Unmarked	Pale	As back	Dull bluish-grey	White-winged