



fleurieu birdwatch

Newsletter of Fleurieu Birdwatchers Inc

February 2006

- 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; verlew@bigpond.net.au

For your
Diary



☛ **Saturday 11 February**

Tolderol Games Reserve
Meet near the railway carriage at Milang.

☛ **Friday 10 March**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

☛ **Sunday 12 March**

Mt Magnificent and Blackfellows Creek
Meet at the junction of Nangkita and Enterprise Road, Nangkita.

☛ **Wednesday 22 March**

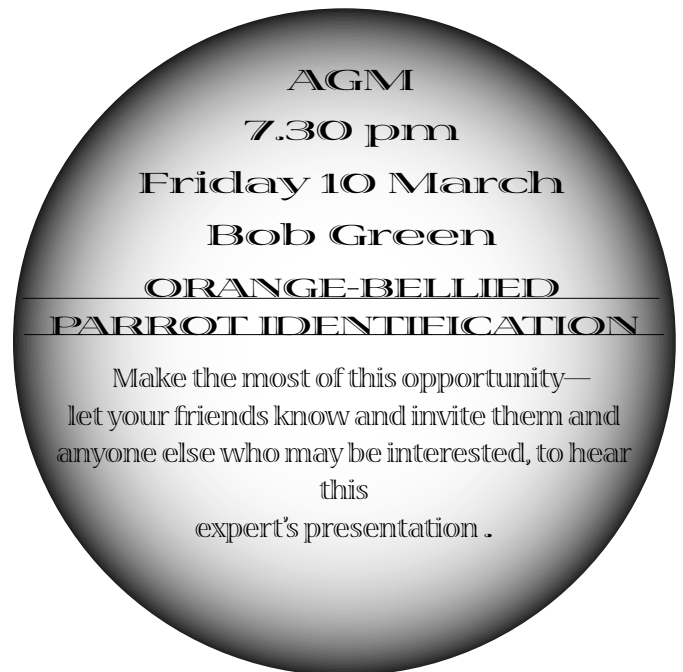
Coles Crossing (Cox Scrub)
Meet at the junction of Nangkita Road and Heifer Lane, Nangkita.

☛ **Saturday 8 April**

Yankalilla Creek
Meet at Garnet Kelly Park, 4 km south of Normanville.

☛ **Thursday 20 April**

Hindmarsh Island
Meet at Ferryman's Reserve, about 500 m past the bridge on the right.



OUTINGS

Goolwa Barrages—Christmas Breakup

Saturday 3 December

An enthusiastic group of 31 assembled at the Goolwa Barrages for our annual break-up and bird walk. The day was sunny with a cool breeze. We commenced our walk at the barrages with a close-up view of a Great Egret in full breeding plumage. From our vantage point we observed Common Greenshank, White-faced Heron, Pelican, Black Swan, Little Pied, Pied, Little Black and Great Cormorants, as well as Pacific Black Duck and Grey Teal. Caspian, Crested and Whiskered Terns were also part of the scene.

As we walked away from the barrage towards the road, an Australian Hobby nest with young was an item of much interest. Below the barrages the tide was out, revealing the flats.

Along the shore we could see a good number of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Curlew Sandpiper. Among them were Bar-tailed Godwit, a Red-necked Avocet and a Masked Lapwing. We particularly enjoyed observing some of the migrant waders through two scopes that were available.

On our return journey we saw a Nankeen Night Heron sitting quietly in the pine trees. This peaceful scene quickly changed when three Red Wattlebirds made the Nankeen Night Heron move on. Other sightings included Nankeen Kestrel, Singing Honeyeater, Hoary-headed Grebe, Little Raven and Australian Magpie.

We returned to the shade of the pines and enjoyed more bird talk and our Christmas barbecue/picnic. Bird count totalled 48 species.

Special thanks to the Committee for organising another great year's birding.



Great Egret at the Goolwa Barrages

Photo: Verle Wood

Hindmarsh River—Twilight Walk

Friday 13 January

Not too hot, nor too cold, no wind and no mozzies!

Twenty-three birdwatchers met on a pleasant summer evening to walk along the lower section of the Hindmarsh River before it empties into Encounter Bay.

Bird sightings were dominated by the 'usual' with nothing notable to report. The peace of the bush was broken by the constant squawk and erratic flight of many galahs. We noted the absence of a Night Heron which caused interest on a previous twilight walk.

To the surprise of some, 30 species were recorded. Such is the diversity of the 'ordinary' birds of our local bushland.

A warm welcome to those for whom this was their first birdwatch with us and may they see many more finches, Fairy-wren and other birds to delight them.
Gaynor Jones



WELCOME

Lieke van Bommel, Victor Harbor
Trust you will enjoy your birdwatching activities with us.

BROCHURES

We are now able to go ahead with the reprinting of our *Birdwatching on the Fleurieu* brochures which are placed in the tourist information centres and outlets.

We now have funds to print 7,500 copies thanks to the generosity of our sponsors.

- * Fleurieu Peninsula Tourism
- * Alexandrina Council
- * Hotel Victor
- * City of Victor Harbor



Unofficially and off the cuff

Although we have only two official outing reports in this issue there have been a number of unofficial outings for some members.

A fledgling Wedge-tailed Eagle which some had been observing for a few weeks, mentioned in the last newsletter, finally departed the nest in the second week of December.

In mid December Neville Hudson reported that he had seen an Oriental Pratincole at Aldinga. So the scopes were loaded up and we hied to a swampy paddock on a back road between Aldinga and Aldinga Beach, near the Aldinga Scrub. There this rare visitor moved among the indentations left by the grazing cattle, feasting on insects that swarmed above the mud. The news had obviously spread widely as a number of watchers, some members of Birds SA, also gathered to record their tick.



Photo: Neville Hudson

Photo: Verle Wood

Between Christmas and New Year huge numbers of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper gathered at Tolderol. John Eckert, a long-time watcher there, had not seen this phenomenon for many years. While Sharpies are not rare this was certainly a sight to behold—several thousands of these waders flocked on the verges of the marsh looking like so many weather-smoothed brown rocks, except that every now and then a few would change places, or a small group fly up and relocate.



Photo: Judith Dyer

At Victor Harbor, on the pond behind the caravan park, and next to the Inman mouth, a pair of Hooded Plover defied the tourists and successfully raised three chicks.

I was sorry on Saturday 28 January to find only two chicks there but shrugged off my disappointment. However, have just received this good news from Terry Dennis who has also been watching them.

Hello Verle - just to let you know that if you notice one of the Inman HP runners looking decidedly grubby it is because it spent Sunday morning (and possibly Sat. night!) lost/trapped in the dense vegetation on the swamp verge on the caravan park side.

Sunday morning Helen and I noticed that there were just two runners. From the agitated behaviour of one of the adults and then by hearing faint distress calls coming from the 'jungle', we eventually found and released the missing 'child'. Of course, it instinctively went quiet whenever I got really close.

Initially post rescue, one of the adults (the 'mum?') brooded the prodigal allowing it to at least dry out, but one adult (the male?) was inexplicably aggressive toward it. By evening it was actively feeding (away from the others) and looking strong. See ●● below.

And a non member at Middleton has been delighted by a pair of Crested Pigeon which raised young just outside her window where she could watch their antics daily.



Photo: Rosemary West

If you have seen something special please do report it at the first opportunity—the phone/email grapevine works well—and we will try to find a space in this newsletter for your stories and photos.

●●LATE NEWS

Last night (30/01) we went down late and all five (Hooded Plover) were active, AND it appeared that the errant chick had been accepted back into the fold again!

Helen Dennis

EAGLES

at home ...

Eagle Survey—Fleurieu Peninsula 2005

Members may recall the eagle project survey mentioned in the June 05 issue of *fleurieu birdwatch*. The project set out to determine the number and distribution of large eagles (White-bellied Sea-Eagle and Wedge-tailed Eagle) on the Fleurieu Peninsula during the 2005 breeding season. The main findings of the project were:

- only one occupied White-bellied Sea-Eagle territory was found over approximately 150 km of coastline and the lower River Murray estuary areas, and despite an early breeding attempt no young were produced;
- in contrast, Wedge-tailed Eagle territories were found distributed throughout, with a total of 29 occupied territories confirmed, plus a few more possibles;
- active nest sites averaged about 7 km apart and the average home territory was about 34 km²;
- most pairs had commenced egg-laying/incubation by mid July and most young had left the nest (fledged) by late November;
- productivity was determined for 23 territories, with 0.86 young being fledged per nest and only two of these managed to fledge two young.

It is well known that large eagles world-wide are sensitive to disturbance during the breeding season, and because of the proximity and frequency of various human activities the survey assessed the sole White-bellied Sea-Eagle territory and several of the Wedge-tailed Eagle territories, to be “in highly disturbed habitat settings”. However, it would appear that the Wedge-tailed Eagle has largely adapted to environment and landscape change coincident with agricultural development on the Fleurieu, while the future of the sole White-bellied Sea-Eagle territory remains precarious.

So it's a big THANK YOU to Fleurieu Birdwatchers members and all those rural folk who shared their local knowledge, valued observations, property access or became involved in some way or simply came out and opened gates!

At this stage, this survey by Birds SA is a one-off project. However, if further funding or corporate sponsorship becomes available, an ongoing monitoring program could be established.



Photos: Terry Dennis

Young Wedge-tailed Eagle aged 75-80 days, about one week off flying, in nest in remnant blue-gum woodland, typically situated on a steeply sloping hillside in a quiet gully near Delamere.

... and abroad

With its massive ‘barn door’-sized wings the White-tailed Sea Eagle is a breath-taking sight. But Britain's biggest bird of prey became a victim of human activity in the early 20th century. Gamekeepers saw it as a threat to their livelihood and farmers resented it preying on lambs.

In the mid 20th century steps were taken to reintroduce the eagle to the skies over Scotland and its outer isles, and there are now about 33 breeding pairs in that area. It now has legal protection and heavy penalties apply for egg stealing.

White-tailed Eagle, sometimes known as Grey Sea Eagle or Erne, can live to more than 20 years of age, and are found also on the more remote coastlands in Europe, including Scandinavia, Iceland and Greenland.

More info: www.rspb.org.uk and www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/White-tailedeagle

Thanks to Alwyn Dolling for passing on an article in the *English Woman's Weekly* 5 January 2006, about these birds.

FOR SALE

Tasco 60 mm Spotting Scope: Rubber armoured with straight view Gerber 15-45X zoom lens.

Optex tripod with quick release panning head.

Sell as package. Negotiate with Judith 8555 2736.