



fleurieu birdwatch

Newsletter of Fleurieu Birdwatchers Inc

June 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
42 Daniel Street, Goolwa 5214 30 Woodrow Way, Goolwa 5214
rlaird@exemail.com.au jdyer@iinet.net.au
- Website:** users.bigpond.net.au/FleurieuBirdwatchers
- Newsletter:** Verle Wood, 13 Marlin Terrace, Victor Harbor 5211; verlew@bigpond.net.au

For your
Diary



Saturday 10 June

Coles Crossing Road, Nangkita, and Mt Compass boardwalk

Meet at junction of Nangkita Road and Coles Crossing Road, Nangkita.

Thursday 29 June

Hardy Scrub

Meet at Gate 14, Chapel Hill Rd, McLaren Flat.

Friday 14 July

MEETING

Ray and Val Laird: Bird Week in Fraser Island

Sunday 16 July

Cox Scrub CP North-east

Meet in the northern car park off Ashbourne Rd.

Wednesday 26 July

Hindmarsh Falls

Meet in the lower car park at the falls.

Saturday 12 August

Onkaparinga Wetlands

Meet near the Institute, Old Noarlunga.

Friday 18 August

ANNUAL DINNER, Hotel Victor

Thursday 24 August

Winery Road, Currency Creek

Meet at the canoe tree, Goolwa-Strathalbyn Road, Currency Creek

ONCE-A-YEAR
NIGHT

ANNUAL DINNER

Hotel Victor

7.00 pm Friday 18 August

Not forgetting

ELAINE'S QUIZZICAL QUIZ

3 courses \$18

Please bring correct money

Great choices of main course
and dessert

RSVP Geoff Evans 8552 1064
evansone@bigbutton.com.au

MEETING

Friday 12 May

IN THE ABSENCE OF the President and the Secretary, Brian Ginno chaired the meeting and Judith Dyer stepped in as secretary. Thank you to both. This was the best attended meeting ever, filling the hall with 32 members and 23 visitors, attracted by the notable guest speaker, Mike Tyler. Advertising pays!

The business of the meeting was soon despatched.

- ◆ Finances are healthier than usual pending payment for the brochure which is now at the printers. There are very few outstanding subs and a reminder will be sent to those members. Subscriptions can now be paid by EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer)—details will be advised when next year's subscriptions are due.
- ◆ The exhibition of Wildlife Art 2006 is still on at the Porter Street Gallery.
- ◆ *Chewings*, newsletter about the Glossy Black-Cockatoo, and Birds Australia's *State of Australian Birds*, were tabled. Contact the Secretary if you would like to read these.
- ◆ Information about the Orange-bellied Parrot survey was tabled and is elsewhere in this birdwatch.

Chris Wastell gave a warm welcome to our Guest Speaker, Mike Tyler, Australia's famous frog man, and professor in the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, at the University of Adelaide. Mrs Tyler assisted Mike as projectionist.

Mike spoke at length about the complex pharmacy of the frog's skin and how substances extracted from it have been put to use in medicine. For instance, a non-toxic glue has been used to connect cartilage and effects healing in knee joint surgery in six weeks. Frogs have also been used for centuries by the Chinese in their medicines.

Among several fascinating insights Mike talked about a gastric-brooding frog assumed extinct since 1981. It swallowed its eggs, fertilised them and turned its stomach into a uterus. It lived on its fat reserves for the six weeks' gestation, and when the 12–14 young emerged the frog was close to death. Little wonder!

Question time was lively and informative. Re the age of frogs—a Painted Frog named Bertha, found at Cowell, lived for 28–29 years. The record life-span is 42 years but smaller frogs live only 2–3 years. In response to another question Mike said that the cane toad is gradually extending its territory across

the north of the continent, and to the headwaters of the Murray-Darling River system.

The biggest threat to frogs in Mike's opinion is the use of herbicides—he feels that the \$25,000 per year that each council spends on weed poisons could be better used in other environmental protection measures.

Kate Bruce thanked our speaker for his instructive and entertaining talk, and was supported by prolonged applause.

Bird call

- The roof of the Tolderol hide has been repaired, and a new record book has been installed in the hide.
- Flame Robin and Black Falcon at Middleton
- Kingfisher on the rocks near Whaler's Inn at Encounter Bay
- Little Stint at Tolderol
- White-bellied Sea-Eagle on Pullen Island, Pt Elliot
- 9 Bar-tailed Godwit and 4 Rock Parrot on Hindmarsh Island
- Red-browed Firetail adjacent to Scott CP.
- Terry Dennis encouraged members to check flocks of neophemas for Orange-bellied Parrot, and would like to hear about aggregations of neophemas of all species (osprey84@bigpond.net.au). The first OBP sighting of the season has been photographed on Lake Alexandrina.
- The Friends of Newland Head have organised an evening at the Whale Centre, Victor Harbor, at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 14 June. Tim Vale will talk about the Black-chinned Honeyeater.

Thanks to our hostesses, Gaynor and Helen for the warm cuppa and biccies.



No, not a microscopic mobile phone! Mike Tyler ponders a thought-provoking question.

Photo: Verle Wood

E & OE

OMITTED TO MENTION IN the last *birdwatch* that at their first meeting in March your new Working Party allocated specific duties as follows:

Chairperson serving second year of 2-year term:
Ray Laird 8555 5995, rlaird@exemail.com.au

Vice Chairperson: Brian Ginno, 8555 3735,
bginno@dodo.com.au

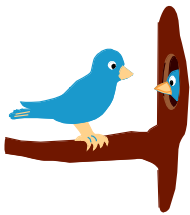
Secretary: Val Laird 8555 5995, rlaird@exemail.com.au

Treasurer: Brian Ginno

Publicity: Entre Nous and Lions newsletter, Judith Dyer 8555 2736, jdyer@iinet.net.au; The Times (Victor Harbor) and Southern Argus (Strathalbyn), Val Laird

Program: outings, Judith Dyer with Ann Turner coopted; meetings, Geoff Evans 8552 1064, evansone@bigbutton.com.au and Ray Laird

Bird records: Judith Dyer with Ann Turner coopted.



WELCOME

Neil Cheshire, Goolwa
Pleased to have your considerable experience among our resources.

People move around the planet a lot these days and we always appreciate knowing your new mailing address.

When you move around in cyber space we would really like to know your new email address also. Many thanks. V



Crimson Rosella

Photo: G Mountford

OUTINGS

Garnet Kelly Park

Saturday 8 April

NINE MEMBERS ENJOYED A leisurely walk through the Yankalilla Gorge in fine and mild weather with just one brief spell of misty rain. Thirty-four species of birds were seen and/or heard with an accompaniment of numerous Wanderer butterflies and one fox who escaped as fast as he could.

Highlights were a Brush Bronzewing on the path ahead that seemed as interested in us as we were in him, and numbers of Red-browed Firetails with some immatures among them. Two Wedge-tailed Eagles glided so high the top of one kept disappearing in the clouds. I wonder what he was trying to catch up there!

A flock of Brown-headed Honeyeaters were identified by their continuous sweet chirruping as they flew over and then were seen fossicking among the gum leaves.

One White-faced Heron standing in the reeds was the only water bird this time, but rosellas, lorikeets, Red Wattlebird, Superb Fairy-wren and Silvereye were plentiful which made for a very enjoyable walk.

Rosalie Sharpe

Hindmarsh Island

Thursday 20 April

SEVEN MEMBERS BRAVED THE very squally conditions and fortunately there wasn't any rain.

We began the day at Mundoo where we walked through ankle deep water at times through the samphire, and came across a family of Superb Fairy-wren living in the "bush". From our vantage point near the water, we saw many and varied waders. Of special mention were 10 Red-capped Plover running around, generally braving the elements and literally fighting the wind.

The view of the Murray mouth was nothing short of spectacular with giant surf pounding—a 4–6 metre swell according to the weather bureau.

An item of interest: we watched a Magpie-lark defend his territory against a Swamp Harrier—the ML won the battle.

The sighting of the day was spotted by Colleen: two young Nankeen Kestrel sheltering under the eaves of a house near the Murray mouth lookout. These two young'uns had us baffled for a while as they were either side of a Magpie-lark's deserted nest. We were

jumping to the wrong conclusions early, trying to decide if they were giant Welcome Swallow!

We ate our lunch under the shelter of a wattle tree near the river on Captain Sturt Parade, and recorded our 45 sightings.

A very pleasant day.
Elaine O'Shaughnessy

PS Also this comment from Edith St George, "...The highlight was probably the hobby. As it tried to hold itself steady in the wind it was easy to see the underwing and tail markings. We also saw one of the biggest flocks of chats I've ever seen in one place ..."

Newland Head Conservation Park

Sunday 14 May

TO ALL MEMBERS WHO had breakfast in bed or lunch with families on this Mothers Day, WOW! did you miss a trip! And the sighting of not one but three special species of birds!

On a cool, still, cloudy morning 10 members met at Dennis Hut. We walked up and up the hill seeing plenty of birds along the way, then along the inland side of the park. Altogether we saw 43 species and most of them were not singles but at least two and sometimes more.

The highlight for us all was the display put on by Chestnut-rumped Heathwren (*Hylacola*) along a revegetation fence line. He moved in and out of the cover for quite a long time giving us a splendid view. Then after some debate about tracks we saw an Emu—a rarity in the park and no-one could recall seeing them west of the Coorong. There is some debate about how it arrived but as it was in good condition and again paraded for all to see we



Photo: Verle Wood

were content to leave it to its new-found home. The other highlight was not one but several small groups of Beautiful Firetail. Again these are an endangered/threatened group, so the number was as pleasing as the actual sightings. And they too gave us all a splendid view as they flitted in the tree foliage.

We had an early lunch outside Dennis Hut with Superb Fairy-wren, thornbills, and pardalotes. The thornbills as well as a Scarlet Robin promenaded on the grass. The beach was something of a letdown as the rough weather had altered the sand dunes access, but we saw a flock of 100–200 Crested Tern on the beach as well as Silver Gull and Pacific Gull.

So a wonderfully rewarding days' birdwatching!
Yrena Mountford

PS The Tawny-crowned Honeyeater was also a significant sighting on this outing.

Torrens Vale (private property)

Wednesday 24 May

ON A COOL AND overcast morning 13 keen birdos met at Pinjanbilly Lodge anticipating a great day's birding.

Early on our walk, we had good sightings of Eastern Spinebill, Brown-headed, and White-naped Honeyeaters. In all, 36 species were recorded for the day, with Golden Whistler and the Scarlet Robin delighting us all. The highlight for the outing was the two Crested Shrike-tit. A Wedge-tailed Eagle hovered above keeping an eye on us.

It was pleasing to see a new member and two visitors in our group.

Lunchtime was spent under the beautiful gums at Pinjanbilly.

Alma Kroon



A diversion at Pinjanbilly was the fly-agaric, the storybook toadstool—but no wee elves sleeping beneath! One member suggested that this

fungus was introduced to Australia to improve the health of exotic pine trees.

I found a comprehensive treatise on fly-agaric at peyote.com/jonstef/flyagaric.htm



Photos: Verle Wood

CAMPOUT 2006

ONE THING IS certain—those who were at last year's campout will be there again this year! If you need reminding of the good time had by all visit our website and follow the Gallery link from the Activities page.

This year's campout will be held at Burra from **Friday 27–Monday 30 October**.

Those with their own camping facilities will be based at Redbanks Conservation Park, about 16 km east of Burra. We thought this would be quieter than Burra Gorge which has become an extremely popular camping area—and the park ranger agrees.

Those needing accommodation should book ASAP. A caravan park, the historic Paxton Square cottages, hotels etc are available. Explore the options at www.visitburra.com or ring the Burra Visitor Centre on 8892 2154. Bookings can be made by phone to the visitor centre or by email to burravisitorcentre@bigpond.com

We will be visiting the Burra Gorge and the property of Ian Berry, and the Department of Environment and Heritage have asked that we do a survey for them of the new Hopkins Creek CP.

A mud map and detailed timetable will be published in the October newsletter. We will have activities from mid Friday afternoon throughout the weekend, culminating in a visit to some place of interest on the way home on Monday for those who can stay that long.

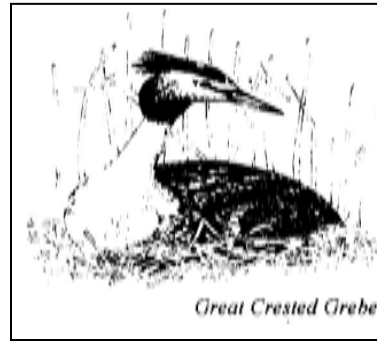
Judith and Ann

Five years ago we received permission of the publishers to reproduce a few cartoons by Peter Rigby. Think it's time to recycle them.



FASHION VICTIMS

WHEN WE THINK of threats to birdlife, foxes, cats, land-clearing and the use of toxic chemicals spring to mind. But other human activities can also put serious pressure on native avians.



In Britain birdlovers are rejoicing in the return from the brink of disaster of the Great-crested Grebe whose plumes were much sought after fashion accessories in the 18th–19th centuries. A change

in fashion happened just in time, and legislation and the development of more wetlands have ensured that the numbers of this splendid water bird are steadily increasing. It is estimated there are now 1,000 breeding adults and more than 10,000 birds that now winter in Britain.

The Little Egret's beautiful white plumes were likewise much sought after by milliners for the elaborate hats of the Victorian and Edwardian eras. The catalyst for this elegant bird's preservation was in fact the demand by British ladies for its plumes. The import of plumage to Britain was banned in the early 20th century. Contrary-like, this resulted in the demise of the trade in plumes and so the egret survived there.

From the late 1980s numbers of Little Egret have increased, the latest figures being 1,600 birds wintering over, and more than 50 breeding pairs. They can be seen on the coastlines from Cornwall to Norfolk.

Information from the English Woman's Weekly, March 2006. Thanks to Alwyn Dolling.



Photo: Peter Koch

A black Laughing Kookaburra discovered on a private property near Mannum.

ORANGE-BELLIED PARROT



LOST! ... temporarily!

After their summer breeding season in south-west Tasmania, the endangered Orange-bellied Parrot (OBP) population (about 200

birds!) migrate across Bass Strait to winter on the mainland where they promptly disperse and largely disappear somewhere in coastal south-eastern Australia

THE CHALLENGE ...

is to locate the OBPs during winter and determine what habitats and food plants are important to their survival. Help is required in the Murray Lakes and northern Coorong region (north of Salt Creek) and Kangaroo Island, on the following dates to search for these 'missing' birds:

- Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 July and on
- Sunday 17 September

To add to the challenge, OBPs can be very difficult to distinguish from their more numerous cousins eg. Elegant, Rock and Blue-winged Parrots ... but some are wearing plastic leg-bling (**bands**) and identity kits are available (see *Wingspan* July 1998). A visit to www.birdsaustralia.com.au/birds/obp.html is highly recommended before charging off into the sunset to check out those elusive little green parrots for leg bands.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED ...

If you are able to assist on these survey days, or at any other time from May to October, please contact (email preferred, or phone) the survey coordinator to

- discuss which piece of coastal or lake fringe habitat you might want to search and even adopt for the season; and
- get a supply of survey forms sent out to you to record and report all little green parrot (*Neophema* sp.) sightings.

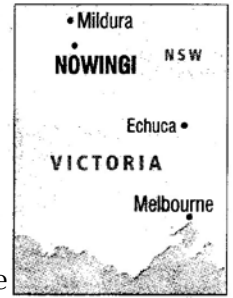
All assistance to help solve the mystery of the annual OBP disappearing-trick will be greatly appreciated and will contribute to their ongoing management and conservation.

Terry Dennis
OBP survey coordinator
Northern Coorong/Murray Lakes
Ph 8552 7659, 0409 527 654
osprey84@bigpond.net.au

LATE NEWS!
A total of 34 Orange-bellied Parrots were recorded on the mainland over the survey weekend in May. Two of these were in SA and both were with Elegant Parrot flocks: one near Wellington recorded by Terry Dennis and the other on the Coorong near Magrath Flat, recorded by Paul Wainwright.

Bird snag for dump

Site vital to rare wren



THESE WERE THE HEADLINES for an article in Melbourne's *Sunday Herald*, 14 May 2006 reporting that the Mallee Emu-wren could force the State Government to scrap plans for a toxic waste dump in Victoria's Riverland.

The tiny bird was recently add to a 'red list' of endangered species. It's habitat at Nowingi, 50 km south of Mildura is the site for the proposed dump. The World Conservation Union's vulnerable assessment says the wren faces a 'high risk' of extinction, with one of its last strongholds in this location. The Federal Government has the responsibility for the final decision on the dump.

One MP opposing the dump, Senator Campbell, was recently successful in halting a \$200 mill wind farm project in Gippsland because of the perceived threat to the endangered orange-bellied parrots.

"La Trobe University ecologist Michael Clarke said the wind farm decision raised expectations about protecting the wren.

While government studies found a 'negligible' chance of worsening the bird's extinction risk, the professor said helping the bird survive was a different matter."

Senator Campbell indicated his intention to fight the current proposal for the dump.
Thanks to Val Laird for this snippet.

