



# fleurieu birdwatch

Newsletter of Fleurieu Birdwatchers Inc

October 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 Avenue, Goolwa 5214                      30 Woodrow Way, Goolwa 5214  
rlaird@exemail.com.au                                  dyerjm@gmail.com
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- Newsletter:** Verle Wood, 13 Marlin Terrace, Victor Harbor 5211; verlew@bigpond.net.au

## For your Diary



### ☀ **Saturday 7 October**

*Mt Magnificent CP, Blackfellow's Creek*

Meet at the junction of Nangkita and Enterprise Roads, Nangkita.

### ☀ **Fri-Mon 27-30 October**

*Campout at Burra*

Details and maps page 6

### ☀ **Friday 10 November**

*Meeting*

Speaker: Neil Cheshire

### ☀ **Sunday 12 November**

*Aldinga Scrub*

Meet at the park entrance, Cox Road, Aldinga.

### ☀ **Wednesday 22 November**

*Inman Estuary, Franklin Parade esplanade, the Bluff, Victor Harbor*

Meet at Barker Reserve, Bay Road, Victor Harbor, opposite Council Chambers.

### ☀ **Saturday 2 December**

*Breakup, Goolwa Barrage*

Meet in the barrage car park for bird walk at 4.00 pm followed by a BYO everything barbecue.

### ☀ **Friday 12 January 2007**

*Twilight Walk, Jarnu*

Meet at the Lions Park, Currency Creek, 7.00 pm. Remember the thermos/esky and nibbles for supper after the walk.



*A special treat!*

*Australia's sub-Antarctic,  
Heard Island and  
Southern Ocean sea birds*

*Member Neil Cheshire will share  
some unique sightings with us.*

*And you won't have to worry about  
getting your sea-legs to see them!*

*7.30 pm Friday 10 November  
Anglican Church Hall,  
cnr Cadell and Crocker Streets, Goolwa*

## MEETING

Friday 8 September

'Twas a braw night indeed, and we certainly had second thoughts about leaving the cosy fireside. But 17 members were glad they did! President Ray Laird welcomed those present, especially our guest speaker, Jeremy Robertson.

Correspondence received included notification that our application for a grant for the purchase of a data projector was refused. However, one is available for public use from the Alexandrina Council, and Ray and Val have received training in its operation. It was on hand for tonight's presentation.

A two-year upgrading project has begun at the Goolwa effluent ponds. The redevelopment means that our birdwatching activities there are somewhat curtailed for the time being, and will change in the future.

Ray introduced Dr Jeremy Robertson, biologist, who was one of the presenters at the Fraser Island Bird Week in May. Jeremy gave us a fascinating insight into the biology of brains and compared the bird brain with the human brain. Recent research has changed the understanding of the proportions of the bird brain that control instinctive and learned behaviour. It is now thought that birds acquire more skills and adapt more to their environments than was previously recognised. He assured us that if anyone should call him a 'bird brain' he would take it as a compliment.

Jeremy cited a number of instances of learned and adaptive behaviour in birds, such as ravens who dropped walnuts from a height onto a busy highway where the cars cracked them open. The ravens found this practice fraught with danger and learned eventually to drop the walnuts onto a pedestrian crossing and to retrieve the nuts safely while the lights were green. This was a most stimulating and intriguing talk, and members told of other observations of acquired skills and behaviour in other birds.

Bird call included

- Red-browed Finch 'skin', victim of a glass window
- Large flock (200) of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo at Scott CP
- White-bellied Sea-Eagle, 2 females and 1 male at Waitpinga
- Eastern Reef Egret on breakwater in Horseshoe Bay, Pt Elliot, and on Basham's Beach
- 2 Wood Sandpiper on a swamp at Finnis

- Black Swan on the pond at the junction of Crozier Road and the Ring Road, Victor Harbor
- 2 Black Swan and 5 cygnets, Liverpool Road, Goolwa
- Flame Robin at Springmount
- Greenfinch at Encounter Bay
- Black-chinned Honeyeater at Pt Elliot and behind the Victor Harbor Effluent Ponds
- Brown Goshawk devouring a Crested Pigeon at Encounter Bay (This bird has since been identified from the photograph as a juvenile Collared Sparrowhawk.)
- Common Sandpiper near the boat ramp at Encounter Bay

Water is now flowing into Paiwalla Wetlands at Murray Bridge. It is being allowed to flow only slowly to encourage birds that prefer some mud flat. If you would like to visit please contact Judith Dyer 8555 2736, [dyer.jm@gmail.net.au](mailto:dyer.jm@gmail.net.au).

Plenty of bird talk ensued over a welcome warm cuppa and biccie — thank you, Helen.

### A bird by any other name, would also tweet



In August birdwatch I raised the case of finch v firetail. Terry Dennis has put me on the right track and I'll try not to lose it. Evidently, the Bible on the naming of birds, including their common names, is *The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia and its Territories* by L Christidis and WE Boles (1994).

So, (I wrote to Terry) the three firetails (Diamond, Beautiful and Red-eared) listed by Pizzey and Knight are the only ones and all the others, including the Red-browed, are finches. Have I got it right?

Terry replied: ... yes, you have it right ... but they are all finches! (Family PASSERIDAE) including the 'umble spoggy! and yet the goldfinch and greenfinch are in a different family (FRINGILLIDAE) again! Confused? Join the club!

In arriving at a common nomenclature its largely all about what we use as a common name to avoid the same bird being called different things across state borders. Remember the Masked Lapwing vs Spur-winged Plover chapter, and Hooded Plover vs Hooded Dotterel?

You know, despite all this formality that we birdos are supposed to revere, there is something nostalgic and quietly satisfying in using and conversing in colloquial speak using the bird names that we grew up using ... but don't call 'em firetails in print or I might think you saw *Stagonopleura bella*!

## OUTINGS

### Onkaparinga Wetland

*Saturday 12 August*

It was a beautiful morning, clear blue sky, and a slight breeze when 20 members and 2 visitors met to begin our morning walk.

The Nankeen Night Heron were spread among three trees, and included some juveniles in the eight spotted. There were also some very aggressive geese and Wood Duck flying up into the trees. Sulphur-crested Cockatoo were showing off their crests, and it was a great start to the morning. Sharing transport, we drove to the carpark at the wetland. Sadly, the lagoon was empty!

The large group was split into two, Judith and Edith leading one party, and Denzel and Ann leading the other. Our group set off southwards along the bike track towards the only lagoon which we knew had some water in it. There was lots of bird song, and quite a few sightings before we reached the lagoon by crossing over the railway bridge, and walking along tracks. This was the most productive area, and included four Australasian Shoveller on the water, two Grey Teal, and a duck which had everyone mystified. It was close to the reeds, had a long yellow bill, narrow black and white stripes down the breast, with stronger black and white stripes along the wings and back. Obviously a hybrid of some kind, but one we hadn't seen before!

Leaving the lagoon, we crossed the river again and wended our way north towards the bridge. Again, no water in sight and very few water birds to be seen. We did see a solitary Caspian Tern eating his breakfast, Great Egret and Pacific Black Duck, all in the river. We followed the track over the bridge and then along the boardwalk.

A Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo was finally spotted, after we had listened to its call for quite some distance. Dusky Woodswallow sat on a tree while we approached, so we had a good look at the pair. We didn't spot the other group of birdwatchers which we finally found had gone along the boardwalk on River Road, and into the area by the holding ponds. They had mixed success with a Common Sandpiper and a Crested Shrike-tit being their highlights.

I think in the overall count we fared slightly better than the other group, but they all enjoyed their excursion too.

We returned to Old Noarlunga and made our way along the river bank to the very nice picnic area.

Here, the Peregrine Falcon put on a great exhibition for us while we had lunch. He flew up and down the river soaring and turning, and it was such a delight to see him at close quarters. Sadly, the Tawny Frogmouth was elusive, but we had a lovely view of a Great Egret on the river bank.

All in all, an excellent morning, beautiful weather, and such a large count, 71 in total, plus our unidentified duck. We hope our visitors enjoyed their morning and will join the club for many more outings.

*Ann Gilbert*

### Winery Road, Currency Creek

*Thursday 24 August*

What an outing! For those unable to join nine of us you missed an excellent morning with three main highlights.

At the commencement of the walk we were welcomed by several handsome male Mistletoebird that were still around us even at the end. We then had a Striated Thornbill sit very still on a low branch and allow us to stand quite close and study its details — most unusual for this bird! It finally flew a short distance away but once we moved on, it came back to the same tree, perhaps to build a nest.

Further along the railway line a Crested Shrike-tit called loudly and also sat very still for us. The colours on this bird were very striking with the bold black and white stripes around the face a sharp contrast to the bright yellow body.

Continuing our walk we found another Crested Shrike-tit which did not appear to be so strongly coloured and on checking the book we found it was a female, the first one being male. The female has a paler throat which was a good lesson for us all.



*Crested Shrike-tit, female (left) and male (right)*

*Photos: Val Laird*

Lunch and bird call was enjoyed at locally known Wally's landing on the Finnis. A total of 43 species were seen for the morning.

*Ann Turner*

## Currency Creek Gorge

Sunday 10 September

A bright, sunny morning saw six of us make our way up the gorge, with White-plumed Honeyeater present in good numbers.

Beyond the waterfall we climbed the bank and made our way through the Plant Trees for Me area, an initiative of the Alexandrina Council and other organisations. Here we saw Golden Whistler and Brown-headed Honeyeater. We heard Black-chinned Honeyeater but were unable to sight them as they moved away across the gorge. We also saw two Little Raven harassing two very young Pacific Black Duck.

We skirted the Firing Range, walked through the cemetery and climbed back down into the gorge. At the viaduct there were two Red-rumped Parrot trying to enlarge a nest hole in one of the pylons, only to be chased out by a Starling.

During lunch we were visited by a flock of Red-browed Finch, and just as we were about to leave a Peregrine Falcon flew overhead.

Altogether, 46 species — a very good tally for the gorge.

Jean Boomer



Photo Verle Wood

A rare sighting at Currency Creek Gorge.

## Bullock Hill

Wednesday 20 September

We finally made it! We were washed out by a virtual cloud burst at this location last year but this time we had a beautiful day, cool and cloudy.

Six people twitched, four members and two visitors, and enjoyed 31 species.

Half the conservation park is a New Holland Honeyeater haven and their noise rises to a crescendo when a raptor flashes by.

Three species were heard only: Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and Grey Currawong. But our eyes delighted in the White-browed Babbler, Rufous Whistler, Eastern Spinebill, a Mistletoebird pair, Weebill and Red-browed Finch.

On the ground were yellow-studded black stumpy (Sleepy Lizard), grey kangaroo and Common Bronzewing. In the trees were 20 other bird species singing gloriously and, in the atmosphere, three soaring pelicans in formation.

Geoff Evans



Photo: Teresa Jack

A not-so-rare sighting at Bullock Hill.

## ELAINE'S ONCE-A-YEAR NIGHT QUIZ

1. What is the incubation period for emus' eggs?
2. Unscramble: ROBLAG, LIONBSLOP, DRILLBEB, TREEKILO, SHRUB KYTEUR
3. Which bird is the following: "Bird that may sink a \$650m pulp mill"? *Sunday Mail*, 14 May 2006
4. Name six birds which have a color in their title.
5. What bird name? (a) Part of the anatomy above the shoulders (b) As in sandpaper (c) A bit of fun (d) For strutting around (e) Maybe delivered all of us (f) Necessary for eating process

6. What type of nest does the New Holland Honeyeater have?
7. Who was the handsome dignified performer in the late 1920s who went on to become a star in the 1940s? He and Greer Garson were a leading box-office attraction at MGM through the 40s.
8. What color are the eggs of the grey fantail?
9. Which bird is named after the National Park to which it is confined?
10. What is the word for an assembly of each of the following? Owls, Penguins, Plovers, Swans



**CAMPOUT 2006**

This year's campout is to be held in the Burra locality from Friday–Monday 27–30 October. Refer to *fleurieu birdwatch* June 2006 for details of accommodation.

People who will be camping at Redbanks CP please contact Anne or Judith by Saturday 21 October as the Ranger-in-Charge, Ian Falkenburg, would like to know how many camping sites are needed.

There are toilets on site but bring enough water to be self-sufficient as water is scarce in the area this year.

A map of the Burra area showing the location of Redbanks CP and a map of the park are below.

The RAA Road map of the region is also a good guide.

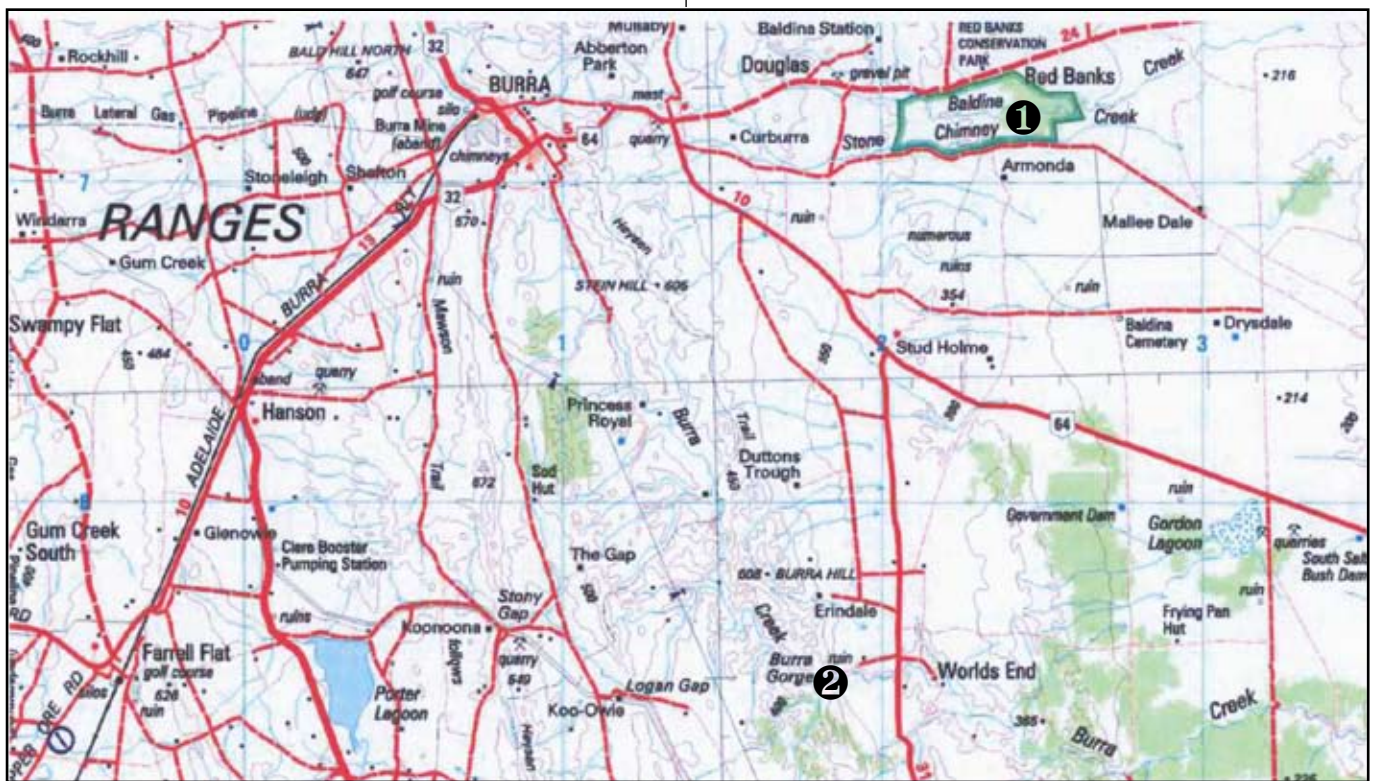
While in the area we will survey the Burra Gorge, Redbanks CP, Hopkins Creek CP and possibly Caroona Creek CP.

Those arriving on Friday will meet at the Burra Creek Gorge at 3.30 pm for a walk up the creek and onto the property of Ian Berry.

The program for the other days will be available then or displayed on the sandwich-board in the camping ground. Bring supplies for Happy Hour and a barbecue at the campground on Saturday evening.

For campsite bookings please contact Judith 8555 2736 or Ann 8554 2462.

See you there!



- ① Burra Gorge
- ② Red Banks Conservation Park
- ③ Mallee Campground

