

# Castlemaine Naturalist

Dec. '99

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## ***Adopt-a-Highway***

*There will be a cleanup of the roadside litter on Saturday Dec. 11 from  
8am to 9am*

*Meet at Tait Carriages Australia car park, opposite the Golf Links,  
Pyrenees Highway*

*Bring gloves, hat, a drink etc. and wear sturdy footwear.*

*Also - bring some paper bags and a pen for seed collecting and labelling*

## **Birding for Pleasure**

Admittedly the trip out to Redesdale was proposed to survey some of the area that is not being covered by Bird Atlassers at the moment, so it was really not supposed to be a pleasure trip, but, sorry, we couldn't help enjoying the day. It started out cold and windy, and at our first stop at the top of Specimen Gully Road it looked like it might be a poor day for birding as there was quite a cold wind, the clouds were coming over and we were very glad we'd brought something warm to put on at the next stop which was along the road to Redesdale from Sutton Grange.

The third stop was on the Coliban crossing, and the clouds were becoming much lighter and brighter and we were seeing more sunshine, and the bird calls were also more encouraging. Striated Pardelotes were heard at every stop, and the trees were certainly in need of them because everywhere we went lerp attack was leaving the Red Gums in particular looking very sick. It was at this spot we took a while to work out a call, which was very quickly recognised finally when Margaret saw a Sacred Kingfisher fly away from the tree I had been scanning with my binoculars.

Our main target area for the day was Mount Lofty near Redesdale, and we stayed there from ¼ to 12 until ¼ to 3. While we had lunch on the bottom road a family of Restless Flycatchers arrived with the fledgling piping insistently and continuously for food. We also spotted our second Noisy Friarbird for the day there, though it seemed to have an all white breast. The wattlebirds wouldn't let it alone, and while they were squabbling amongst themselves I thought I saw it fly off, but in following it up I found instead a juvenile White-eared Honeyeater, though we didn't see or hear an adult all the time we were there.

Fingerflowers were in bloom but the plants are quite small. There was lots of Sticky (Golden) Everlastings, Bluebells, Daphne Heath and Silky Parrot-pea in flower

too, and Chocolate Lilies were just finishing - though I didn't have a good look at them they were possibly *Dicopogon fimbriatus*. The whole atmosphere of the spring bush, the breeze and light and shadow, the flowers and the birds made a perfect day.

Birds seen in the Mount Lofty bush and its environs were -

Olive-backed Oriole inc. juvenile	Magpie White-winged	nearby paddocks- Pacific Black Duck
Galah	Choughs	Little Australasian
Weebill	Red Wattlebird	Grebe (b)
Yellow Thornbill	Noisy Friarbird	Shoveller
Striated Thornbill	Juv. White-eared	Grey Teal
Buff-rumped Thornbill	Honeyeater	Masked Lapwings
White-browed Tree-creeper	White-plumed Honeyeater	Magpie-lark Welcome Swallow
Eastern Rosella	B-f Cuckoo-shrike	Fairy Martin
Rufous Whistler	Restless Flycatcher (b)	Sulphur-crested
Striated Pardalote	Willie Wagtail	Cockatoo
Spotted Pardalote	Scarlet Robin	Yellow-billed Spoonbill

On the dam with the Spoonbill was a bird that was resting with its head tucked amongst its feathers and Margaret and I speculated what it might be. It obviously had grey wings and white head and neck, and I got a brief glimpse of red or bright orange beak. Finally, just as we'd given up and got in the car ready to leave, it stood up, and we hopped out of the car and aimed binoculars - and began to laugh. It was a domestic goose!

Rita Mills

### Bus Trip to Clarksdale Bird Sanctuary

By now most of you would know our trip to Werribee had to be cancelled. Instead we were able to arrange for a friend of ours, Bob Hughes from Lismore, to lead us through Clarksdale Bird Sanctuary at Linton. It turned out to be a fantastic day, the weather couldn't have been better, the bus trip itself was great fun and our driver for the day, Mal. Toy, was very helpful and considerate. He was a bit disappointed, though, when we all turned up in clothes - the "Naturalist" bit had him confused (so he said!).

When we arrived at Clarksdale we met Bob and while we had morning tea the bird chorus, including a Satin flycatcher, and Golden and Rufous Whistlers, had us all enthralled.

Then back into the bus for a short drive to view a Peregrine Falcons' nest with chicks through Bob's telescope. The surrounding rock formation was well worth a look as well.

We went back to the Sanctuary for lunch, stopping for half an hour on Woody Yallock Creek where there were some ancient Bull-oaks and a wattle endemic to the area, on the way. We stopped at the dam near the cottage and ate our lunch there. It would be a great place for a campout next year! After lunch we had a short walk

around the cottage area, and then on for a lovely walk through the famous "Bird Paddock".

Considering how dry it is we came up with a very good bird count

We stopped for afternoon tea at lake Wendouree (the swamp Ern had recommended was all but dry) at Ballarat to pick up a few extra waterbirds - and Clamorous Reed Warblers - and an ice-cream for some.

Maureen and Ken Dredge

Bird List for the day - a total of 88 species, (C denotes Clarksdale area):

Little Aust Grebe C	Crimson Rosella C	Wh.-t Treecreeper C
Great Crested Grebe	Red-rumped Parrot C	Red Wattlebird C
Lt. Pied Cormorant C	Blue-winged Parrot C	Noisy Miner
Pied Cormorant C	Fantailed Cuckoo C	White-naped,
White-faced Heron C	Horsfields Br-cuckoo C	Brown-headed,
Pacific Heron C	Pallid Cuckoo C	Yellow-tufted,
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Kookaburra C	Yellow-faced,
Sacred (White) Ibis	Sacred Kingfisher C	White-eared,
Straw-necked Ibis C	Welcome Swallow C	White-plumed and
Black Swan	Tree Martin C	New Holland
Wood Duck	Richards Pipit	Honeyeaters. all C
Pacific Black Duck C	B-f Cuckoo-shrike C	Eastern Spinebill C
Pink-eared Duck	Wh-winged Triller C	Mistletoebird C
Musk Duck	East. Yellow Robin C	Spotted Pardalote C
Brown Goshawk C	Jacky Winter (b) C	Striated Pardalote C
Wedgetailed Eagle C	Crested Shrike-tit C	Red-br.Firetail C
Brown Falcon	Golden Whistler C	Goldfinch C
Peregrine Falcon (b) C	Rufous Whistler C	Sparrow C
Eurasian Coot	Grey Shr.-thrush C	Starling
Dusky Moorhen (b)	Restless Flycatcher C	Dusky Woodswallow C
Purple Swamphen (b) C	Satin Flycatcher C	Grey Currawong C
Masked Lapwing C	Grey Fantail C	Magpie C
Bl.-fronted Dotterel C	Silvereye C	Little Raven C
Silver Gull	Willie Wagtail C	Aust. Raven C
Crested Pigeon	Little Grass-bird	Magpie-lark C
Brush Bronzewing C	Superb Blue-wren C	Blackbird
S.C. Cockatoo C	W-br. Scrub-wren C	Wh.-winged Chough
Galah C	Brown Thornbill C	Spotted Turtledove
L.B. Corella C	Y-rumped Thornbill C	Rock Dove
Eastern Rosella C		Clam. Reed-warbler

### Did You Read.....?

Not all newspaper stories are of gloom and doom. In the Weekly Times, 10/11/99, there is a story of a brother and sister, Jack and Jean Wishart from Korong Vale, who have sold their property, which has been in the family for about 130 years, to Trust for Nature. The 80 hectare property, Kinypanial Grassland, will now help towards the preservation of native grassland.

Species on the property include the Sun Moth, the Plains Wanderer and Hairy Tails, a rare *Ptilopus* species. Mr Wishart commented that if "this area was lost, these rare species would disappear forever."

The paper also reported that Trust for Nature was able to buy 50 ha. of Bullock and Red Gum grassy woodland and wetland at Edenhope to add to the system. It is the home of Brolgas and Red-tailed Black Cockatoos.

The purchase was made possible due to the generosity of 92 year old conservationist and bird lover, Flora McDonald.

### Observations

- On Nov. 6, a Pacific (White-necked) Heron in Adelaide St. Chewton. It was standing in a pond just south of the railway line. Frank Carpenter.
- The three following reports are from Margaret Badminton. "Atlassers near Metcalfe notified me that a Pallid Cuckoo nestling ejected one egg and three nestlings from a Welcome Swallow nest under the eaves of their home.
- "At dusk when I was opening my gate a Tawny Frogmouth adult sat on the gate post, a young one on the fence nearby. As I watched, with the car headlights still on, the young one was fed several times.
- "At Vaughan Cemetery I was dive-bombed by 4 Dusky Woodswallows; the reason being a fledgling hopping along the ground obviously unable to fly. The Woodswallows then dive-bombed a White-winged Chough, both species chattering angrily."
- More Cockatiels are being seen in the district. Ern Perkins saw twelve at Baringhup West. He also reported half a dozen stilts on Frogmore swamp. He also found *Microtis arenaria* (syn. *M. biloba*), the Notched Onion orchid, on Fryers Ridge.
- Ken Cross reported an Echidna in their garden at Macedon. It apparently has been around the area for a while, and was quite unconcerned by them as it moved around.
- Barbara Maund saw three Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos at Badgers Keep in Chewton.
- Brenda Envall had to move a Bluetongued Lizard which was in her garden to ensure that the dog wouldn't get it. She had also seen Black Kites in Harcourt.
- A Wedgetail Eagle was seen on the U3A walk to the Sugarloaf near Denver in the Wombat Forest. There were also hundreds of Ivy-leaf Violets *Viola hederacea* in flower, but only one Showy Violet *V. betonicaefolia* was seen. There were many Common Bird Orchids *Chiloglottis valida* (were included with *C. gunnii*) and some very large (compared with the local variety) specimens of Musky Caledonia *C. gracilis*. They were up to about 35cms high. Stan Bruton, Rita Mills.
- John and Jacqui Turnbull have been adopted by a family of Choughs, and John was watching them recently dive-bombing a fox, seeing it off their property.

- At the Bird Paddock at Clarkdale Sanctuary, Linton, Dusky Woodswallows were seen attacking a Pallid Cuckoo which apparently had an interest in their nest. Rita Mills
- Maggie Oliver saw a large raptor which she was fairly sure was a Wedgetail, chasing a flock of Galahs when she was driving out of Harcourt towards Bendigo. Because she was driving she wasn't really able to get a good look, and is interested to learn if this behaviour is generally seen in Wedgetails.
- Another question was posed by George Broadway. Recent visitors had asked him if he could give an explanation for vast flocks of ibis seemingly aimlessly soaring over Port Phillip Bay? Does anyone have any explanation?
- John Turnbull commented that many of the birds on their property are nesting for a second time, and the Choughs for a third time this season.
- Barbara Maund has had a bad infestation of caterpillars and while her son-in-law was visiting a bird was seen eating them. The binoculars were brought out and a study of the bird books made them conclude that it was an immature Horsfields Bronze-cuckoo.
- Lorraine and Mark Rye reported Buff-banded Rails at their front gate and in the paddock in Fryers Road in Chewton.
- On a warm, humid evening recently ZOe Thomas found herself in the middle of a huge swarm of winged termites at her property at Fryerstown Road, Campbells Creek.
- Maureen Dredge spotted a White Goshawk being pestered by other birds at Ballarat while she and Ken were on the way home from Colac.
- Several interesting sightings were had by the Bird Atlassing group, led by Margaret Badminton, who went to Lancefield/Pyalong area on 25/11, including some flocks of Cockatiel and numbers of Striated Pardalotes.

### FROM THE BUSINESS MEETING

**Are you interested in taking part in the annual bird count on Sunday 5th of December? We have entered the competition and would like to field several teams of at least 3 members. It will be a fun day.**

**If you are interested please contact Maureen Dredge Ph 5470 6474**

\*Please use the nomination form included in this magazine for the election of office bearers at the Annual Meeting. Please note that it needs to reach the Secretary by Friday January 28, 2000.

\*We have received the results of the Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater surveys carried out this year.

It included a letter expressing appreciation to the club for its part in the survey and an apology for taking so long in getting the results out.

Some of the other information in the letter was -

- A total of 170 survey sheets covering 102 10 minute grid blocks from southern Queensland to western Victoria were received from at least 87 people who participated.

- The total number of Swift Parrots and Regent Honeyeaters was down on the May surveys, but this is likely to be due to the dispersed nature of the populations of these birds by August.

- The number of overall sheets was down from the May survey, which had been the best coverage to date. The plea for better coverage in certain areas was well received. The main reason for the decline in overall returns has come from a reduced return from Victoria, especially from central Victoria (us!).

- The last few surveys have verified that the Regent Honeyeater is at best extremely scarce and possibly extinct across much of Central Victoria, however, Swift Parrots can still be found as often as every second year in some of the box/ironbark forests. Simon will be looking to improve the coverage in this area next year. (We can contact Simon for details of some possible sites later. He apologises for any inconvenience as a result of his studying the Swift Parrot in Tasmania for the rest of this year).

- "As we always remind our volunteers, please take time to return the forms [even] if no species were found. Eventually we will have a handle on what flowers where and how the target birds respond. Information from the nil returns can tell us if a site is dry with no flowering and few birds, or flowering well and full of birds, in which case perhaps the target species may turn up soon!"

The letter is signed by -

David Geering, Regent Honeyeater Recovery Coordinator,  
03 9412 4297, or freecall 1900 621 056

and Simon Kennedy, Swift Parrot Project Officer  
(03) 6233 3117 (in 1999), and 03 5430 4444 (in 2000)

#### **The Regent Honeyeater Story, - August 1999**

Central NSW was the place to be if looking for Regent Honeyeaters although they took some finding. Small numbers were located across the region. The Goulburn River National Park site was the only location at which Regents were reported in both the May and August surveys. It is clear that Regents have dispersed widely in central NSW and, undoubtedly, many more birds must be out there somewhere. Since the survey other reports have come in of additional scattered pairs. Many of these have been confirmed as breeding.

Single birds were reported from near Bundarra in northern NSW, hopefully the first of the returning birds that breed in this district, and at Tuross Head on the south coast. The Tuross record is yet another from this area suggesting that a small population may regularly use the district.

Summary: In north-eastern Victoria Regents were known to be at Bobinawarra while another group were across the border in the suburbs of Albury. Two of the

Bobinawarra birds were a pair colour-banded at Killawarra, some 50 kms away, in June.

In Victoria and just over the border, 4 birds were seen in Red Box at Bobinawarra, and 6 in planted Mugga Ironbark in Albury. In Turross Head 1 was seen in Pittosporum, at Burrendong Dam, 3 in native arboretum, Goonoo S.F. 2 in unnamed species, near Gulgong and near Ulan, 6 and 2 in Mugga Ironbark, Golbourn River N.P. 10 in Mugga Ironbark and White Box, and near Bundarra 1 in Mugga Ironbark.

#### **The Swift Parrot Story, August 1999**

The second mainland Swift Parrot survey of 1999 revealed the return of a large percentage of the population to many of their traditional haunts in central Victoria. The Maryborough and Rushworth regions were again supporting a considerable number of the birds after the scarce returns of the May 1999 survey. The North-east and St Arnaud regions appeared to have less birds than in May, but still supported a significant percentage of the population.

Despite a good coverage in NSW, only two records were received, a group of 10 at Warraderry State Forest on the western slopes, and three in the Capertree Valley by an observer from Virginia in the USA! A single Swift Parrot was seen on the south coast a fortnight after the survey.

The Yellow Gum (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*) was used widely by birds recorded in the Bendigo, Maryborough and St Arnaud regions. The Red Ironbark (*E. tricarpa*) was generally the attractant in the Rushworth region, Mugga Ironbark (*E. sideroxylon*) and White Box (*E. albens*) flowering was still supporting a large number of parrots in the North-east.

The overall number of Swift Parrots was down on recent surveys, but the lack of any large flocks within a confined area probably contributed. A flock of 95 Swift Parrots was seen in western Victoria later in August, and it is suspected that many have been present in Yellow Gum Habitats from St. Arnaud west into the south-east of S.A., where few birds were seen this year. Successful coverage of the Swift Parrot population in Yellow Gum "boom years" such as this one will need a presence in western Victoria/south-east South Australia. The Recovery Team hopes to foster links with people in this area to make coverage as good as it is in Swamp Mahogany or Mugga Ironbark habitats.

The Swift Parrot newsletter, Swifts across the Strait, will be distributed by the end of the year, and will have data for all the surveys since the first one August 1995.

Sightings from Victoria were as follows -

Bendigo 23 (Whipstick S.P. 20, Wellsford S.F. 3); Maryborough/Dunolly 110 (Kingower S.F. 45, Tunstalls S.F. 31, Dalynong S.F./Flora Reserve 18, Diamond Dam 15, Wehla S.F.1); Rushworth S.F. 61; St Arnaud 61 (St Arnaud S.F. 23, Mt Bolangum Flora and Fauna Reserve 20, Big Tottington S.F.15, Morrl Morrl S.F. 3); North-East 32 (Boweys Flora and Fauna Reserve 20, Glenrowan 6, Goorambat 6).

from N.S.W. -

Western Slopes 13 (Warraderry S.F. 10, Capertree Valley 3)

**CFNC PROGRAMME**

**EXCURSIONS General Meetings** Are held in the Uniting church (UCA) hall, at 8.00pm on the second Friday of each month, except January. Entrances to the car parks are beside the Art Gallery and beside the Church building in Lyttleton Street.

**Excursions** leave promptly at times stated, usually on the Saturday after the general meeting. There are NO excursions on TOTAL FIRE BAN days.

**Business Meetings** are held at 38 Campbell Street on the 4th Thursday of each month, except December, at 7.30pm. All members are invited to attend.

VISITORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME TO CLUB MEETINGS AND EXCURSIONS

**Fri. Dec. 10 Members and Visitors night** This is our own "show and tell night", if you have something to share, please bring it along - a few slides, an anecdote, a short talk..... Bring a plate of supper.

**Sat. Dec. 11. Tea at Tullaroop.** Depending on the weather, a BYO picnic tea is planned for our final outing for the year. Either meet at 13 Mostyn St. at 3.30pm or travel out independantly to the bush picnic area over towards the old Church .

**Sat Jan 15, 2000 BYO Dawn Breakfast at Glenluce.** Meet at Gaulton St at 5.45am or travel out to Glenluce Springs independantly at a time to suit you. BYO breakfast things and binocs. Leader M. Oliver.

**Fri. Feb. 11 Annual Meeting. Alpine Flora and Fauna,** speaker, Gary Cheers, Maryborough FNC. 8pm, UCA hall.

**Sat Feb. 12 Sailors Falls, near Daylesford.** Leave 13 Mostyn St. at 1.30pm Leader, M. Badminton.

**Fri. Mar 11 The Loddon Water Catchment** Speaker is Greg Peters of the Water Catchment Authority. Greg gave us a very interesting talk in August on his work on stream management.

**Sat Mar. 12 Upper Loddon Forest, Glenluce South.** Leave 13 Mostyn St. at 1.30pm

**Mar. 11 - 14VFNCA CAMPOUT** at Geelong.

**Fri. Apr. 8 The Diggings Project.** Speaker confirmed later.. UCA hall 8pm

**Sat. April 9 A visit to the Diggings Project.** Leave 13 Mostyn St. at 1.30 pm.

**Midwinter Meeting** It is planned to have a meeting during winter where members can pass on information about their favourite places of interest in Victoria.

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**Committee** M. Dredge (President) Ph 5470 6474, E. Perkins (V.P. and Grievance Officer), B. Maund (Sec.) ph. 5472 4354, M. Badminton (treas.) R. Mills (N/L Ed. and P.O.), G. Broadway, J. Turnbull, M. Oliver, C. Morris, K. Turner, Z. Thomas.

**Subscriptions** - Ordinary Membership: Single \$22, Family, \$30

Pensioner or student: Single \$18, Family \$24

Supporting: \$31

The subscription now covers postage of the 'Castlemaine Naturalist'.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.

P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine. 3450.

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