

# CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST



MAY 1991

#167

## BIRD WATCHING THE EASY WAY

While some travel to distant parts and generally go to some trouble to seek birds out, others do it the easy way and merely watch from the comfort of their home. And often with considerable success. The following is a list of birds seen drinking from a bird bath at Sandon by Susanna Starr. The list was made during March.

Thornbills: striated, buff-rumped, yellow-rumped, brown?  
Pardalotes: Spotted, striated.  
Grey shrike thrush: both juvenile and adult males  
Honeyeaters: brown-headed, fuscous? (also juvenile with a yellow beak), white-plumed, New Holland, yellow-faced  
Robins: Yellow (with family), scarlet (pair)  
Willie wagtail (pair)  
Grey fantail (2 pairs)  
Silvereyes.  
White-throated treecreeper

Other birds seen nearby, and visible from the house include

Whistlers: golden (male and female), rufous  
Grey currawongs (pair)  
Magpies  
Eastern rosellas (pair)  
Crested shrike-tit  
Speckled warbler  
Red wattle bird  
Firetail: red-browed (pair), diamond (pair)  
Honeyeaters: yellow tufted (flock, seen with white-plumed honeyeaters)

It is to be hoped that we will be able to publish a monthly list.

## TULLAROOP CREEK EXCURSION

The Club's excursion on April 13th was to a gorge of the Tullaroop Creek. The gorge is reached by turning left from the Pyrenees Highway along the Moolort-Clunes road. About 11 km along this road, turn westwards to the creek. There is a small picnic area near the crossing.



The creek has cut a bed well below the level of the basalt flows, and the rock faces are exposed in several places.

Highlight of the bird observations was of a hawk, thought to be a peregrine falcon. Downstream from the crossing, the creek flows through some beautiful basalt-lined banks - here were swans, coot, moorhens and grebe.

The total bird list for the outing is given below.

Grebe, Australian	Galah
Heron, white-faced	Swallow, welcome
Swan	Pipit
Shelduck, Australian	Cuckoo-shrike, black-faced
Kite, black-shouldered	Winter, Jacky
Falcon, brown	Wagtail, Willy
Falcon, peregrine	Wren, superb blue
Kestrel, Aust (Nankeen)	Miner, noisy
Moorhen, dusky	Honeyeater, white plumed
Coot	Firetail, red-browed
Lapwing, masked	Magpie

Cairn Curran was particularly low - near the road bridge it was reduced to a small stream with wide muddy verges. Despite the dryness however, Tullaroop Creek was still flowing.

#### A FOUNTAIN, KALIMNA, AND THE CASTLEMAINE BIRD CLUB

I've been having a big clean-up, and came across a letter from Mr Albert Heather, written in 1978, which gives a few interesting insights into the Bird Club and Kalimna Point.

Here are some extracts, plus some other bits of information I learnt in a conversation over the phone this week.

".....

"The Bird Club of Castlemaine was operating about the years 1925 - 1930, maybe a bit later. The late Mr Leech was the instigator - himself a keen bird lover, with plenty of intimate photographs of birds about the area, and in particular in his own garden.

"He lived in Hall Street ..... We were early marrieds at that time, and until 1928 lived directly behind Mr Leech in Wimble Street." (An interesting story Mr Heather told me over the phone was that when Mr Leech wanted Mr Heather to go around to his place he would sit the garden rake upright with a white rag tied to it, and Mr Heather would trot dutifully around to Hall St. from Wimble St. to see what was wanted. Mr Leech was still teaching school at the time.)

".....He was the main one of the Bird Club, and was President." Lovell Langslow, a local Solicitor, and later Miss Brotherton, was Secretary and Mr Heather was Treasurer. He handed the Treasurer's books over to the F.N.C. several years ago, but unfortunately the Minute book was lost. "..... we had a bird fountain built, but water to it was a problem"



(Over the phone he told me it was originally supplied with water from a dam higher up, but the pipes kept blocking at first, but) "eventually we got a constant flow, but it was ill treated by vandals and had to be re-built a couple of times." Jason Blakeley, who also built the surrounds for the Unknown Miner's grave, was the builder. "The outer rim of the basin was formed in cement over a bike wheel rim" supplied by Aif Pensom - cycle repairer, gun repairer, and sewing machine mechanic!

"After Mr Leech left the district the club slowed down, .....and could not continue .....because the dynamo of the club...had gone. Mr Leech wrote a couple of bird books about that time."

It was decided to wind the club up. The books were to go to Lovell Langslow for safe keeping, and he agreed to accept them. The money belong<sup>ing</sup> to the club was given to the Art Gallery or the Museum.

"As regards to Kalimna in general. I knew Mr Whitchell, a retired banker. He was dedicated about Kalimna and was responsible for many of the trees that were planted, paths and walks arranged, and fencing, etc. He was the urger, and many times we would find him doing the rounds early mornings and evenings, tending to the many young plants about the place.

"Of course, the trees have grown beyond our anticipation, so the larger trees have smothered a lot of the smaller shrubs and flowering plants" (the sugar gums are the main culprits) "that were about in between the trees."

"....."

"Unfortunately, vandals have spoilt the original setting at Kalimna, fences, gates torn down, shrubs battered and torn up, etc., etc. - you know the pattern. When Mr Whitchell passed away no one came forward to take the loving care and do the necessary attention to the area and its shrubs, resulting in general decline of this once lovely area - this can be seen today" (1978) "and those who knew it in the early stages can reflect on former glory.

"....."

"Yours sincerely,

Albert A. Heather      B.E.M.

There is now a Kalimna Park Preservation Committee who have for some years been trying to improve the area, and were working towards having a much larger area gazetted. This was achieved some years ago, and the Committee now has seen the completion of a walking track in the area behind the High School, as well as the one at the Point which was completed some years ago, and has a Nature trail guide to go with it. Restoring the rotunda was a special project, as it, too, had been vandalised. The fountain is a project for the future, when the committee is in a financial position to do something about it. It was thought by many to have



been dedicated to a Mr Sam Leech, who was associated with Sir Harry Lawson, who was in some way connected with the club, but Mr Heather always understood it was Mr Leech, the author of the bird books, and President and founder of the bird club to whom it was dedicated, which, to me, makes a lot more sense.

Rita Mills

## CHINKAPOOK via BALRANALD

One of the problems when travelling to unknown districts is to find which areas are good for bird watching, or for plants, or have interesting geological features. Tourist publicity is seldom of much use - any patch in which the trees have not yet all been cut down is described as a wildflower wonderland, crowded with rare and colourful birds, and bountifully supplied with furry animals. Stinging, biting ones are seldom mentioned.

Some of the interesting spots visited on a trip at the end of April are described below.

TERRICK TERRICK FOREST. The forest is a few kilometres north of Mitiamo. Turn right into the forest just past the golf club. The reserve has large granite outcrops, and has a beautiful cypress-pine forest.

Red-capped robins were abundant - both male and less colourful examples were seen in many areas. A number of whiteface were seen feeding near the picnic ground. As usual, brown treecreepers were abundant. Other notable sightings included hooded robins, golden whistlers, diamond firetails, chestnut-rumped thornbills and dusky woodswallows.

KERANG SWAMP. Kerang Ibis rookery, with its hide, is always worth visiting. It is next to the Murray Valley Highway, a few kilometres north-west of Kerang.

Unfortunately our trip coincided with a rainy period. Apart from the hundreds of ibis seen, notable sightings were of a number of fork-tailed kite and swamp harriers. At the Apex park (between the rookery and Kerang) a flock of white-faced chats was feeding on the grass.

WOOD WOOD RESERVE. The reserve is behind the Wood Wood caravan park. It can be reached from the side road. There are numerous tracks through the reserve, from which the mallee vegetation can be observed. Lots of wildflowers can be seen in Spring.

Birds seen here included rufous whistlers, red-capped robins, weebills, and chestnut-rumped thornbills.

BALRANALD WEIR. The road to the Balranald Weir leads south from the Sturt Highway, a few kilometres west of Balranald. Although the weir itself was a little



disappointing, there was much to be seen on the way.

Perhaps a early starting time contributed to the number of birds seen. A large flock of large black cormorants was observed on one of the billabongs - they made a majestic sight flying among the red gums.

Other birds seen on this stretch were yellow rosellas, mallee ringnecks, spiny-cheeked honeyeaters, yellow-throated miners, apostle birds and tree martins.

LAKE BENANEE is alongside the Sturt Highway, a few kilometres east of Euston. There is a picnic area, to me a good spot for morning tea.

Like many of the lakes seen, there were very few water birds to be seen. However, some white-breasted woodswallows were on the red gums at the edge of the water - we were able to get close to them as they were perched, and also when they were flying.

ROBINVALE. It is hard to find mallee scrub near Robinvale. However, the patch 13 km south of Robinvale, near the corner of the Robinvale-Sea Lake road and the Murray Valley Highway made up for much of this lack.

Birds seen during a short walk included crested bell birds, white-backed woodswallows, yellow-throated miners, red-capped robins, blue-bonnet parrots and yellow-plumed honeyeaters. The crested bellbirds were particularly noteworthy. We were able to see them feeding on the ground. A little later, their domestic affairs took precedence, and some perched on trees too close to be seen with binoculars.

LAKE POWELL is 17 km south-east of Robinvale, beside the Murray Valley Highway. The entrance to the park is on the east side of the lake. The lake is surrounded by trees and sand dunes are a notable feature of the park.

We arrived rather late in the afternoon, so that the light made bird identification difficult. The first birds seen were red-capped robins. A couple of Bird Observer Club members had walked most of the way around the lake and had an impressive list of birds seen. It is certainly a place worth spending some time at.

BOX FLAT is next to the Robinvale - Manangatang road, about a kilometre north of Manangatang. It too proved to be an interesting place.

A flock of the beautiful white-browed woodswallow were flitting about. It is interesting that a grey and brown bird can be so beautiful. Other birds seen here were mulga parrots, mallee ring-necks, a singing honeyeater, and a glimpse of a female wren - thought to be a splendid wren.

E.P.



## BIRDING AT VAUGHAN

While some go to distant parts looking for birds, others travel to our district for the same purpose. The list below gives the bird list compiled by Lyn and Ern Rudwick, while staying at Vaughan Springs. We are lucky to live in an area with so many birds!

Grebe, Hoary Headed	Shrike-thrush, Grey
Grebe, Australian	Flycatcher, Restless
Darter	Fantail, Grey
Cormorant, Little Pied	Wagtail, Willy
Heron, White-faced	Wren, Superb Blue
Duck, Pacific Black	Scrub-wren, White-browed
Eagle, Whistling	Weebill
Eagle, Wedge-tailed	Thornbill, Brown
Eagle, Little	Thornbill, Yellow-tailed
Falcon, Brown	Thornbill, Striated
Moorhen, Dusky	Treecreeper White-throated
Coot	Treecreeper, Brown
Lapwing, Masked	Wattlebird, Red
Plover, Black-fronted	Honeyeater, Yellow-faced
Pigeon, Common Bronzwing	Honeyeater, White-eared
Galah	Honeyeater, Yellow-tufted
Cockatoo, Sulphur-crested	Honeyeater, Fuscous
Rosella, Crimson	Honeyeater, White plumed
Rosella, Eastern	Honeyeater, White-naped
Parrot, Red-rumped	Honeyeater, New Holland
Kookaburra	Spinebill, Eastern
Swift, Fork-tailed	Mistletoe Bird
Swallow, Welcome	Pardalote, Spotted
Martin, Tree.	Pardalote, Striated
Pipit	Silver Eye
Cuckoo-shrike, Black f'd	Goldfinch
Blackbird	Firetail, Red-browed
Robin, Scarlet	Starling
Robin, Hooded	Chough, White-winged
Robin, Yellow	Mudlark
Winter, Jacky	Woodswallow, Dusky
Shrike-tit, Eastern	Magpie
Whistler, Rufous	Currawong, Grey
Whistler, Golden	Raven, Australian
	Raven, Little

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc  
P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine 3450

Committee: Ern Perkins (Pres), Chris Norwood (V. Pres),  
Maggie Oliver (V. Pres), Barbara Maund (Sec), Clodagh  
Norwood (Treas), Kaye Turner, George Broadway, Rita  
Mills (Newsletter), Enid Hall and Brenda Envall.

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Student/Pensioner	\$7	Single	\$10
Supporting	\$20	Family	\$15
Newsletter posted: Subscription plus \$6			

SUPPER May 10: I & E Pellas Jun 14: R Mills & M Oliver



## APRIL MEETING—NOTES

**IN FLOWER:** Plants in flower include spreading wattle, magenta storksbill, white box, stinkwort. At Barkers Creek, where trees have been removed, stinkwort and thistles are growing in profusion.

**RAINBOW LORIKEET** was reported as now being fairly common at Geelong. It was formerly very uncommon in that locality. In the Mornington Peninsula, the thought is that it has been encouraged by the planting of Western Australian natives, and that the rainbow lorikeets are now displacing other birds.

**KATOOMBA BIRDS** seen by G. Broadway included red-browed treecreepers, yellow-chested scrub-wrens, Lewin honey-eaters, pilot birds and rock warblers.

**SACRED KINGFISHER** was reported from Chewton (RH).

**MAGPIES NEST** was exhibited by F. Duffin. It included seven wire coat-hangers in its construction!

**FOX SCAT.** A scat from the area north of the botanic gardens was thought to be that of a fox.

### WHITE-FACED HERON IN GARDEN

A white-faced heron has been observed stalking around a Campbell Street garden on the mornings of 29th and 30th April. Does anyone else have records of this bird in a township garden?

An owl was also seen in the same garden, once in a pepper-corn tree, in mid April, and towards the end of April on the clothes line.

### LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The Midland Good Neighbourhood Network will be conducting a leadership program, organised by John Harvey (City of Castlemaine Youth Worker) and Phil Butcher (Regional Youth Affairs Consultant). It is an evening program, starting 27th May at the town hall. Cost: free. A leaflet is available from the B. Maund.

Walking along the railway reserve to Barkers Creek the last week in April I was delighted to see a flock of a dozen or more Eastern Rosellas, apparently feeding on the galls on Silver Wattle. It was getting late in the afternoon, and the light on on the gorgeous plumage of the males in particular was a wonderful sight.

Later in the walk I came across a small eucalypt sapling almost stripped of leaves, and looking very scruffy. Close inspection showed numerous leaf case moths. Next to it was a Golden Wattle with at least another dozen, but their cases, instead of dull grey, were a rich red-brown.



# CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

- Fri 10 May. NATURAL HISTORY OF THE GOLDFIELDS. Speaker is Garry Cheers. 8 p.m. at the High School.
- Sat 11 May. Mt ALEXANDER WALKING TRACKS. Explore some of Mt Alexander with Rita Mills. 1.30 pm sharp at SEC.
- Fri 24 May. BIRD BOXES. Talk by Barry Goulding to "Towards Self Sufficiency" group. Elderly Citizens Club, Campbells Creek at 7.45 p.m. CFNC members invited.
- Fri 14 June. FROGS with Tom Burton. 8 pm at High School
- Sat 15 June. DAM CRAWL. A tour of some of the watering places of Smiths Reef and Muckleford. Leader is George Broadway. 1.30 p.m. sharp outside S.E.C., Mostyn St.
- Sun 16 Jun. FRYERSTOWN TOUR. Bendigo F.N.C. excursion to Fryerstown. Leave market car park (Forest St) at 10.00 a.m. Castlemaine F.N.C. members invited.
- Fri 12 July. THE HIMALAYAS with Berri Perry.
- Sun 28 Jul. BLACK HILL. Bird Observer trip to Black Hill, Kyneton
- Fri 30 Aug - Sun 1 Sept. HATTAH. WVFNCA campout organised by Sunraysia Club
- Fri 13 Sept. BRITISH ISLES REVISITED. Nicolette Hooper
- Sun 6 Oct. MUCKLEFORD FOREST with Ballarat F.N.C.
- Fri 11 Oct. NOCTURNAL with Rob Watkins.
- Sat 12 Oct. LAURISTON WILDFLOWERS. 1.30 p.m.
- Fri 8 Nov. Pat Bingham
- Sun 20 Oct. MALDON STEAM TRAIN WILDFLOWER TRIP. Date of Bendigo Native Plant Group outing. 1 p.m. at Maldon RS. Later trains at 2,3 and 4 p.m. so choice of several for return. Cost \$4 adults, \$2 children
- Sat 9 Nov. TIPPERARY SPRINGS. Walk from the springs to Twin Bridges. Leader R. Mills. 1.30 pm at SEC, Mostyn Street. Leader R. Mills.

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Meetings on the second Friday of each month (Jan excepted) at Castlemaine High School at 8.00 p.m. Business meetings on the fourth Thursday at 38 Campbell St at 7.30 p.m. All members are invited to attend.

Visitors are invited to attend the Club's sessions.

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