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## Barwon Heads in Spring!

### The Best made Plans of mice or men... or the day it all went pear-shape.

The plan was to meet at Jerringot by the Barwon River, we would see Latham Snipe, the snipe had other ideas and had not yet returned...

Around to look over Connewarre Lake where the Barwon River almost loses the plot, it is a huge area, and home to many water birds., but again not today...

Around to the Sheep Wash where the Barwon River re-appears. It's Spring, the sun would shine and all the bush birds would be out, well, the sun did not get the message, neither did the bush birds. Finally to the mouth of the Barwon River where it flows into the Southern Ocean. Time for a leisurely coffee before walking up the Bluff... not so, the wind started to blow a hurricane, there was very little shelter. After a brief lunch the group got back on the bus and went home following the coast around to Black Rock. Strangely we do have a reasonable bird list and we did add a new bird to the Wagtails list... the Grey Butcherbird. I was dismayed that all my great plans went so quickly down the gurgler!

Bird watching Hints: Practise with you binoculars, look at a leaf on a tree, while still looking at the leaf take you binoculars to your eyes and there is the leaf..

Keep practicing.

Black Swan  
 Australian Wood Duck  
 Grey Teal  
 Chestnut Teal  
 Pacific Black Duck  
 Australian Grebe  
 Rock dove(feral pigeon)  
 Spotted Dove  
 Crested pigeon  
 Little Pied Cormorant  
 Great Cormorant  
 Little Black Cormorant

Pied Cormorant  
 Australian Pelican  
 Little Egret  
 Australian white Ibis  
 Royal spoonbill  
 Straw-necked Ibis  
 Whistling kite  
 Black Kite  
 Swamp Harrier  
 Brown Falcon  
 Purple Swamphen  
 Dusky Moorhen  
 Eurasian Coot

Caspian Tern  
 Crested Tern  
 Pacific Gull  
 Silver Gull  
 Galah  
 Sulphur-crested cockatoo  
 Rainbow lorikeet  
 Crimson Rosella  
 Eastern rosella  
 Superb Fairywren  
 White-browed Scrubwren  
 Striated Fieldwren

Yellow-rumped thornbill  
 Brown thornbill  
 Red Wattle bird  
**Grey Butcherbird**  
 Australian Magpie  
 Grey fantail  
 Willie Wagtail  
 Little Raven  
 Magpie-lark  
 Welcome Swallow  
 Common Starling  
 Common Myna  
 House Sparrow



## [An Over view of the Grampians Camp from Iian our Camp Organiser](#)

Lunch at the Lake Fyans Holiday Park then we met up with our guides Neil Macumber and Neil Marriott (son of Nance), and we were very quickly on the road. However, we didn't travel far, just around the lake overlooking a wetland area. This kicked our list off at a gallop with most people struggling to keep up with the birds as they were called, including Whistling Kite, White Necked Heron, and Eastern Great Egret.

The convoy moved on to a few roadside verges, some where remnant vegetation was in abundance. At one point on the track Neil pointed out a small plant that was rare and endangered across Australia, it was then trod on by one of our number who wasn't listening to the monologue. Birds become scarce during the afternoon, so many contented themselves with looking down at the beautiful and abundant wildflowers. Some of the birds seen were White Browed Babblers, Yellow Tufted Honeyeater and a good number of Black Chinned Honeyeaters.

The final stop of the Day was Neil & Wendy Marriott's delightful home and the edge of the Black Range. With lots of native vegetation bird and animal life was plentiful.

The day was rounded out with a BBQ back at the Holiday Village.

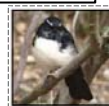
**Day 2 started at 8:30** with the sun's rays welcome and warm. Our first stop was at the home of David and Linda Handscombe (Linda's the daughter of Doug Blood). Their home is in the shadow of the Grampians and affords postcard views. Their garden is a wonderful display of Australian natives, and the local birds were attracted in number. We were told of various birds that have visited over the years, but we were contented with ticking off Purple Crowned Lorikeet, White Browed Babbler and Rufous Whistler.

Then Neil Marriott took us into the Grampians along the Redman Track, a track which challenged some drivers, but gave us wonderful vistas of rock formations and lush creek lines. The birds weren't numerous but slowly the numbers rose including White Browed Scrub Wren, Spotted Pardalote and Gang Gang Cockatoo. Along the track we visited a historic site for the collection of water for Stawell, at the top of which we viewed Wedge Tailed Eagle and a new bird for many the Tawny Crowned Honeyeater.

During the afternoon we drove through the spectacular Victoria Valley. Unfortunately bird numbers were extremely low and we were thwarted at multiple points with road closures due to recent heavy rain.

We spent an enjoyable evening at the Town Hall Hotel Stawell with our guides and their partners. On day three we met our guides Neil and Wendy Marriott in Stawell, they took us out of town to the Deep Lead Conservation Reserve, an area of diverse and distinct vegetation. The wildflowers through here were a delight, however it was disappointing that the birds were not as numerous as the mosquitoes. We did however enjoy sightings of Grey Butcherbird, Buff Rumped Thornbill and a Bearded Dragon. Lunchtime marked the conclusion of the tour. We thanked our hosts and guides and departed for home all pondering a location for a camp next year.

[Iian Denham Camp Organiser.](#)







## [Dinner at Stawell Town Hall Hotel](#)

I started walking to Stawell but was diverted by the birds on the water. Swans sitting on nests. Kingfishers. Ibis. And those bloody swooping magpies. I don't know if they were still celebrating the Grand Final win, or were just out to get me. I had to carry a large eucalyptus branch over my head as protection. The first car passed me, braked and reversed, and offered me a lift. A second car passed, gave me odd stares, and then I am sure they all turned to each other and said "that looked like Liz Hurley with a branch of eucalypt on top of her head". And kept driving. The third car with Flo and Ginny and Anita -by prior arrangement - stopped and gave me a lift.

At the hotel Denis O'Connor returned from the bar with information regarding a complicated deal which involved a free drink and Pokies vouchers - but only if you bought the *Armageddon* Parmigiana. Strangely quite a few were convinced to have the Parmigiana. We went into the Pokies and of course came out with nothing.

Talk at the table covered an array of subjects.

Quite a few made no sense at all. Denis O'Connor's great grandfather thought he was on a boat to Canada. But somehow arrived in Australia. It was difficult to hear but Ceri seemed to have 5 Irish Grandparents. Geoff Forrest ancestors have passed on a handy gene whereby they can be recognized anywhere in the world by a Jesuit priest. Something to do with the size and shape of the nose. Don Jennings worked at Dennys Lascelles Wool stores with my mother in the 1940's. And Pat Forrest generously handed out her potato wedges as the rest of us hungrily waited for our meals. Brian amazingly had already been to Wendy and Neill Marriott's garden. 50 years ago shooting rabbits. Had we known we would have celebrated Jim's 70th birthday. Happy Happy birthday Jim. Jim had made a comment that day about male cuckoos laying eggs. I think we all knew what he meant.

After we left the hotel I decided to find the hospital and check it out as a potential employment destination. In our quest we circled the same roundabout 3 times and ended up at the Lookout which was great as we saw the majestic outline of the Grampians in the fading last light of the day.

I apologize for a short story but on Saturday my brother received a kidney / pancreas transplant at Monash. Progress so far has been excellent. And now I can keep my kidney and start drinking again!.

Thank you to all who helped organize the trip. *Liz Hurley*

## [Around Stawell](#)

Our last day Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> October, was warm and threatening rain. Werrabee Wagtails packed up and departed en masse from the Lake Fyans Holiday Park, with varying reports of the warmth and hospitality of our Hosts and again met our generous guide Neil Marriot in Stawell this time. At a stop on a dusty road we heard alarm calls and saw a swift (raptor) disappear beyond the eucalypts with a small bird its prey. Other highlights, well for Jim it was his birthday. We saw beautiful deep pink scented sun orchids at Bonnie ....dam and swainsonia procumbens or Broughton's pea at Deep Lead and a wonderful carpet of brachyscome, little purplish daisies, a lovely sight in a depression along another dusty road. We left Neil then and all of us went our separate ways after a wonderful stay in the Grampians. *Virginia Moylan*

*Sincere thanks to Ginny for most of the photos, to Liz, Ginny Denis and Iian for their reports...*



The Bird list was very difficult to do... M = Monday T = Tuesday , W = Wednesday. For those who would like Iian's list just ask and I will forward it to you .

Emu M.T.W.  
Black Swan M T  
Australian Shelduck M T  
Australian Wood Duck T  
Musk Duck M  
Chestnut Teal M  
Grey Teal W  
Pacific Black Duck M W  
Australasian Grebe M W  
Brush Bronzewing T  
Crested pigeon W  
Great Cormorant W  
Little Black Cormorant M W  
Little Pied Cormorant T  
Australian Pelican M  
White Necked Heron M T W  
Eastern Great Egret M T W  
White Faced Heron M T W  
Straw-necked Ibis M T W  
Black -shouldered kite M  
Whistling kite M  
Wedge-tailed Eagle M T  
Little Eagle M T  
Brown Goshawk M W  
Little Eagle M  
Purple Swamphen M  
Masked Lapwing M T W  
Silver Gull M T W  
Gang-gang Cockatoo T

Galah M T W  
Long-billed Corella M T W  
Sulphur-crested cockatoo M T  
Rainbow lorikeet W  
Musk Lorikeet W  
Little Lorikeet T  
Purple-crowned Lorikeet M T W  
Crimson Rosella M T W  
Eastern rosella M  
Red-rumped parrot M T W  
Horsefield's Cuckoo M  
Sacred Kingfisher T  
Kookaburra M T W  
White-throated Treecreeper T  
Brown Treecreeper M  
Superb Fairywren M T  
White-browed Scrubwren T  
Weebill M T  
Striated thornbill T W  
Yellow-rumped thornbill T  
Buff-rumped Thornbill W  
Brown thornbill T  
Striated Pardalote T W  
Yellow-faced Honeyeater T  
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater M  
Tawny-crowned Honeyeater T  
White plumed honeyeater M T  
Brown-headed honeyeater T W  
White-naped honeyeater T

Noisy miner M W  
Little Wattle bird M W  
Red Wattle bird M T W  
White-fronted Chat T  
New Holland Honeyeater M T W  
Black-chinned honeyeater M T  
White-browed Babbler M T  
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike T W  
Rufous whistler T W  
Grey Butcherbird W  
Dusky Woodswallow M  
Grey Shrike Thrush T W  
Australian Magpie M T W  
Pied Currawong T  
Grey currawong T W  
Grey fantail M T  
Willie Wagtail M T W  
Little Raven T W  
Australian Raven M T W  
Restless Flycatcher M  
Magpie-lark M T  
White-winged Chough M T  
Eastern yellow robin T  
Little Grassbird T  
Welcome Swallow M T W  
Common Starling W  
Tree martin M W  
Mistletoebird M  
Australasian Pipit T

I now know what a fair dinkum birdwatching expedition is meant to be like. Those two guides blew me away. They obviously live and breathe the Grampians, and so they should - it's a wonderful place. But they knew the countryside, including not just the birds, but all of the wildlife, the plants, the rocks, the whole jolly lot. And if you'd like to say "I told you so", you can make reference to the business of bird calls. There were a couple of spots that had me wondering why are we stopping here?, but they knew what should be around, and set upon calling them out. I'm sure Neil Marriot and that Fantail Cuckoo knew each other from way back - they seemed to me to be enjoying a serious discussion as they chatted away happily to each other.

A very professional few days. I don't know what the final count was, but it certainly included many that were new to my inexperienced eye, and I put that down to a genuine skill on the part of those guys. Keep up your insistence on the need to learn the calls, and even to practise imitating them. It makes an enormous difference.

Congrats to the organisers for an excellent trip. Denis O'Connor

During the week Peter Gibbons and Dave Torr have been at the Werribee Library at the Hoppers Crossing Plaza promoting 'Bird watching' ...It has been a most interesting exercise.

There will probably be a Sweep for the Melbourne Cup at our outing on Tuesday, we need a Book-Maker...

I have really battled with the Newsletter and would be so grateful for articles from members. Photos too...

Peter G, Dave and Christine recently went to Kangaroo Island in search of interesting birds.

