



Werribee Wag-Tales

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WINTER AT EYNESBURY : LEADER....PETER GIBBONS.

A cold and blustery July day found around 10 of us silly enough to brave the weather and head off from Watton St to Eynesbury (via a quick stop at the Surbiton Park lagoon and Melton Reservoir), where two more members joined us. An early sighting was a small group of Diamond Firetails on the lawn across the road from the car park, and there were quite a lot of Brown Treecreepers in the same area. The lake was not very productive as the water levels were far too high. Relief when Peter specified it was coffee time and some of us hastened towards the cafe - only to be told we were too early!

After coffee a walk in the forest to the old Shearing Sheds. First sightings were a group of Eastern Rosellas, and Trevor picked up a Restless Flycatcher behind them, which we all got good views of. The walk along the path was brightened up by a number of Flame Robins, and some Brown Falcons harassing a Whistling Kite. After an inspection of the Shearing Sheds (the shearers' quarters still have old beds in them for those who want to camp out in the forest!) we headed back via the forest, where we added Jacky Winter and Fan-tailed Cuckoo before two of our group were lucky enough to get a Speckled Warbler. Time then for lunch - some of us had coffee in the cafe and were told off for eating our sandwiches there.

After lunch the weather deteriorated so it was decided to call it a day - we had seen 39 birds and the (non-existent) prize was won by Bev. Thanks to Peter G for organising it, and I think those who went deserve a medal or incarceration in an asylum! *Dave Torr*

An amazing list in very cold windy conditions.

Australian Wood Duck
Grey Teal
Chestnut Teal
Pacific Black Duck
Australasian Grebe
Rock dove(feral pigeon)
Crested pigeon
Little Pied Cormorant
White Faced Heron
Whistling kite
Wedge-tailed Eagle
Nankeen Kestrel
Purple Swamphen
Dusky Moorhen
Eurasian Coot
Masked Lapwing
Sulphur-crested cockatoo
Eastern rosella
Red-rumped parrot

Fan-tailed Cuckoo
Brown Treecreeper
Superb Fairywren
White-browed Scrubwren
Speckled Warbler
Yellow Thornbill
Brown thornbill
White plumed honeyeater
New Holland Honeyeater
Crested Shrike Tit
Australian Magpie
Grey fantail
Willie Wagtail
Little Raven
Restless Flycatcher
Magpie-lark
Jacky Winter
Flame Robin
Rose Robin
Welcome Swallow
Common Blackbird
Diamond Firetail
House Sparrow

Welcome to New Members..

We are delighted to welcome Jenny and Mike Pratt to the Wagtails. They are recent arrivals in Australia from South Africa. Jenny is the bird watcher and Mike is trying his hand at photography.



AUGUST OUTING TO BRISBANE RANGES NATIONAL PARK & WTP.

The August outing for The Werribee Wagtails was a trip to the Brisbane Ranges National Park. We were joined by some new faces whose company we enjoyed. The weather was sunny with only a light breeze. After heading out of Werribee we made a short stop before the Park to observe Australasian Grebe and Australian Wood Duck on a dam.

Our first stop in the north-west corner of the Park was for a walk along Spring Creek track. Rain over the last 12 months has transformed the vegetation still recovering from drought and fire. We stopped at an area in the forest where bird activity revealed a number of species: Scarlet Robin, Brown Tree-creeper, Buff Rumped Thornbill and a variety of honeyeater including Yellow-faced and White Plumed.

The track was dry after recent heavy rain and would be worth investigating further towards farmed land and along the Spring Creek. Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and Crimson Parrots were seen above the forest canopy. Cinnamon Fungus is present in the Brisbane Ranges affecting a number of plant species. This in time will have an effect on bird and insect presence in the forest.

Back in our convoy we drove to Boar Gully Camping Area for morning tea. We were met by Judy Locke the Ranger from Parks in Bacchus Marsh. She told us the history of the Park and promoted the Wildflower Show and orchid display. We were pleased to hear from Judy that a new list of bird species in the park is being compiled. A plant regeneration plot was revealing bird activity but unfortunately these were disturbed by a vehicle.

Travelling south through privately owned land we made our next stop at Beremboke. Some members had observed a number of bird species along this road the previous week. We were rewarded with a sighting of a Wedge-tailed Eagle and Whistling Kite.

We re-entered the park along Switch Rd and stopped at the Stony Creek Picnic Area. An attractive setting for lunch amongst wattles and a number of birds were sighted. After lunch we walked up to the reservoir wall which was constructed of concrete in the 1870's and is still in good condition. On the way a sighting of Varied Sittella was a first for me. Difficult to see with their undulating flight, I did hear their incessant sharp twittering. We walked up to the water level of the reservoir but there was little bird activity at that time of the day..... (cont Page 3)



Australian Shelduck
Australian Wood Duck
Pacific Black Duck
Australasian Grebe
Hoary-headed Grebe
Crested pigeon
White Faced Heron
Wedge-tailed Eagle
Australian Hobby
Purple Swamphen

Long-billed Corella
Sulphur-crested cockatoo
Musk Lorikeet
Crimson Rosella
Eastern rosella
Red-rumped parrot
Fan-tailed Cuckoo
Kookaburra
White-throated Treecreeper
Brown Treecreeper
Superb Fairywren
Striated thornbill

Buff-rumped Thornbill
Brown thornbill
Spotted Pardalote
Eastern Spinebill
Yellow-faced Honeyeater
White-eared Honeyeater
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
White plumed honeyeater
Noisy miner
Red Wattle bird

White-napped honeyeater
Varied Sittella
Australian Magpie
Grey fantail
Willie Wagtail
Little Raven
Magpie-lark
Scarlet Robin
Eastern yellow robin

Did you Know... Tim Doldy's record of seeing 345 Birds in Victoria in one years was broken by Ruth Woodruff and her partner by seeing 389 birds in a year... now there is a challenge for you!



The bird count for the day was 53 species. I learnt that you can't expect to see the birds on the day that were there the week before on the reconnaissance trip
After the bird count some of the group were eager to see a Northern Shoveler at the WTP. So a couple of cars set off past the granite boulders of Anakie and around the You Yangs towards Point Wilson. At Lake Borrie we saw the beautiful Red-necked Avocets. Observed from the bird hide we were able to see the Northern Shoveler amongst his hosts the Australasian Shoveler. As the sun was setting we had wonderful views of a pair of sea eagles. A beautiful evening sky completed an enjoyable day.

Sincere thanks to Susan for organising the day, writing the Report and providing the photos too. (last one came from Andre, thanks1)

WERRIBEE WAGTAILS BASS COAST BASH

This year we are going to the Bass Coast of Gippsland [Phillip Island to Inverloch]., Sunday 9th until lunchtime Wednesday 12th. October

This area has a rich diversity of fauna and flora and lots of birds. That is why we have extended the camp this year to three nights.

We will be staying at the Inverloch Holiday Park on Cuttriss St Inverloch.

If you would like to participate in the Camp you will need to arrange your own accommodation, whether at the Holiday Park or at a place of your own choosing. We have not made any prior arrangements with the park.

If you would like to know more about the Holiday Park, please visit the following website: <http://www.inverlochholidaypark.com.au/>

or

Contact them on: Tel: **03 5674 1447, 1800 468 375**

Because of the Camp there will be no Official Outing on October 4th but I thought I would go down and have another look at the new Park behind the Mansion in NICE.. Weather. (Shirley)

The great Ostrich Twitch

Ostriches have been on the "official" Australian bird list for a long time - the result of failed farming exercises. For many years they could be seen fairly easily on a station north of Port Augusta, but eventually the property owners closed it to birders. Not to be deterred some friends of mine chartered a light plane and flew over the property a couple of years ago, so they could add the Ostrich to their Aussie list. I vowed never to do this, but recently a population of Ostriches was discovered near Barham in NSW that seem to be wild and breeding, so on the last Sat in Jan I set off with 4 friends (who wish to remain anonymous as they are ashamed of going to see the birds, aren't they Iain!)

We did some "serious" birding in the Moama Wetland (Sacred Kingfisher being the highlight) and then drove towards Barham - and there they were at the specified spot - 3 males and 2 females. There are apparently 25 in the area. On then to look for more birds north of Barham, but not much to be seen.

Sunday was going to be hot so we decided on an early start and some birding at Kamarooka - a pleasant spot north of Bendigo. A stay of just over an hour let us find another Sacred Kingfisher, Fuscous, Yellow-plumed and Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters, Common Bronzewing, Restless Flycatcher, Peaceful Dove and we heard a Crested Bellbird. Then it got too hot and we were home by lunch-time - one more bird on our Aussie lists. (Who sent this)



On Wednesday 27th of July Iian, Peter G and I took an overseas visitor to the WTP. At Lake Borrie I found him an Australasian Shoveller in my scope - and whilst he was looking at it a Northern Shoveller swam into view. The Northern Shoveller's normal range is throughout the northern hemisphere - the stunningly marked males turn up in Aus every couple of years or so, usually at Werribee. (The females are almost indistinguishable from an Australasian, so are rarely identified). Later in the day on our way to the Brisbane Ranges we found the first Banded Lapwings that we have seen since May 2010.

The following Wed found Iian, Peter, Christine and I heading NE to Chiltern, following on reports of Regent Honeyeater being there. The Regent Honeyeater is critically endangered - some experts believe it will be extinct in the wild before the Orange-bellied Parrot disappears. Arriving at Chiltern around 11am, we had found two Honeyeaters by noon - one of them being unbanded, an indication that it was born in the wild as opposed to being a release from the captive breeding program. We spent the rest of the afternoon and the following morning looking in vain for Turquoise Parrot, but we did find 9 other species of Honeyeater, a Grey Goshawk and a pair of Black Falcons (over the caravan park in Chiltern).

Hearing of Scarlet-chested Parrots in Gluepot, and feeling that our luck was in, I set off to Gluepot on Tuesday the 9th with Iian, Christine and Joan. It takes an entire day to drive there (with the highlight being a Major Mitchell Cockatoo on the road), so the morning of the 10th - another Wednesday - found us driving the 60km or so from our hotel in Waikerie to Gluepot - mainly over gravel roads. Arriving around 8am we diligently searched the locations where the parrots had been seen in recent days - lots of nice birds, but alas not what we are after. So after coffee we set off in a different direction from the car park - and after 700 metres - just as the rain started - we were rewarded by a male in a tree close to the track. These parrots have a huge range, mainly in the Great Victoria Desert - but rarely come close to "civilisation" so this was a fantastic sight. The rest of the day in Gluepot was dull and miserable but we still managed some nice birds - White-browed and Chestnut-capped Babblers, Mulga Parrot, Chestnut Quail-thrush and both Splendid and Variegated Fairy-wrens.

I think I will do all my birding on Wednesdays in future! Dave Torr

Catching and Banding Red-neck Stints (*Although this happened last year it is interesting and if you wish to be a part OF THE Team chat to Jim*)

28th December 2010, Clive Minton and his group of scientists and volunteers who were trying to catch and band Wading birds that nest in Siberia and come back to Australia for the winter (our summer).

Nets were set on the new mudflats on the beach side of the road near the T-Section. After the nets are fired the birds were removed quickly and put into cages covered by shade cloth for processing.

A metal band and an orange plastic flag is put on. The individual numbers on the metal bands are recorded together with the bird's age (immature or adult), stage of moult, weight, and for some species the sex.

Poop samples were taken by the scientists from DPI (Department of Primary Industry) (and sometimes blood samples) to determine if they are carrying Bird Flu, so far these birds are not carrying the flu virus Preliminary opinion is that breeding success was good last year and better than some previous years which had been poor.

We finished the first day with only 65 birds banded for the day.

Next morning being the "local lad" I was sent to find some waders.

Most of the waders have not returned to Werribee this Australian spring.

Over the years I have counted 13,000 Red-necked Stints, 8,000 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, and 5,000 Curlew Sandpipers feeding in front of me in one square mile. This year, over 3 days I probably saw about 2000 Red-necked Stints, no Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and six Curlew Sandpipers each day.

Clive Minton and some of the more dedicated people went to Flinders that evening to catch 8 Ruddy Turnstones; four Turnstones were carrying geolocators fitted the previous year. One had been fitted two years previously.

James Gunn

