



# Werribee Wag-Tales

## You Yangs Regional Park

*Out and about in the You Yangs with 26 Werribee Wagtails.*

*Thanks to Jim for a great day.*

What started out as quite overcast and a light drizzle soon turned out to be a sunny morning by the time we arrived at Toynes Road Gate.

Jim had a tight schedule and lots of stops planned and we headed down the fence line track only to be halted first by a pair of Scarlet Robins, and next a pair of very cooperative Restless Flycatchers who lived up to their "Scissor Grinder" nickname in fine form. On to the dam area, and some Flame Robins, then a single male Red-capped Robin were spotted.

We then moved along the track seeing a large feeding party of Flame Robins.

We then crossed the "Seed Beds" area and went back to the cars, and convoyed to The Big Rock for morning tea.

A pair of Scarlet Robins were in attendance after morning tea, and we then took the drive around the Great Circle Road, looking for, but not finding, a Mistletoe Bird that Jim was hoping would put on a show. Next time!

Then down to Fawcetts Gully, and a female Golden Whistler among the highlights.

From there to Lunch, and a walk to see the resident Tawny Frogmouths and a nice collection of honeyeaters at work.

Thank you Jim for a well organised day.

Count for the Day: 45 Birds.

Winner: Mark Buckby



Photo: Surong Gunn



Photo: Mike Pratt

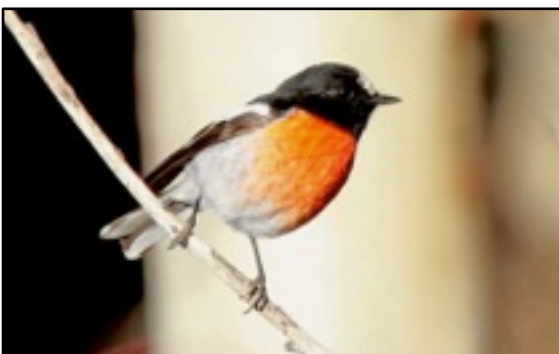


Photo: Surong Gunn



Photo: Dieter B.

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SWAMP HARRIER VERSES SPOTTED HARRIER WING SPANS

There was considerable debate on our Point Cook outing about the relative sizes of the Swamp and Spotted Harriers, with most of the field guides we had on us not showing wingspans and the one that did showing a Swamp Harrier was larger (at 145 cm) than a Spotted (at 120) - most of us felt that Spotted were bigger than Swamps.

From a quick search of the web and various books it would appear that both can be in the range of 120-145 cm, and (as with most raptors) the females are larger than males.

HANZAB has Swamp as 120-145cm and Spotted as 120-150cm

Debus 2nd Ed. has Swamp at 120-145 and Spotted at 121-147cm

Debus also shows some wing comparisons and on page 66 has a Spotted immature and a Swamp, male, with the Spotted being noticeably deeper.

From observations I have often thought that the Spotted Harrier has a much deeper wing depth from the Bend of the wing.

Might just be the birds I've observed, but it does seem to confirm the thought that the wing appears larger.



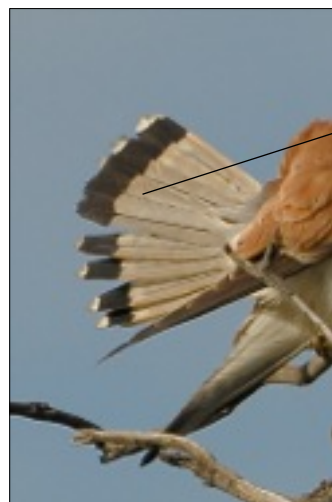
WHAT MAKES A... WINGS AND TAILS AND ID'ING A RAPTOR

**What is the difference between Female and Male Australian Kestrels?**

Some interesting discussion the past couple of outings on id for raptors.

Female Kestrel: tail has a large dark bar at the tip and fine multi bars.

Female has a brown, striped head, and a striated rufous chest.



Male Kestrel: tail is plain with a single dark bar at the tip.

Male head is a distinctive grey, and usually not as much 'rufous' on the chest.

Juveniles are similar to the female, and most of the ones I've seen have been more rufous on chest.

NEXT TRIP: MACEDON RANGES BUS TOUR



With Spring well and truly on the way, and many birds already hard at work on the new season's crop, a trip to the Macedon Ranges is sure to provide opportunities to find lots of bush birds. Mark and Anita have a fine trip arranged.

Limited seats on the bus, so book with Dave Torr. Those travelling up meet at Gisborne.

YOU YANGS REGIONAL PARK BIRD LIST

5 AUGUST 2014

Maned Duck	Spotted Pardalote
White-faced Heron	Striated Pardalote
Little Eagle	Weebill
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Brown Thornbil
Brown Goshawk	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Collared Sparrowhawk	Yellow Thornbill
Whistling Kite	Australian Magpie
Common Bronzewing	Australian Golden Whistler
Tawny Frogmouth	Grey Shrikethrush
Laughing Kookaburra	Willie Wagtail
Galah	Grey Fantail
Long-billed Corella	Magpie-lark
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Restless Flycatcher
Musk Lorikeet	Little Raven
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	White-winged Chough
Crimson Rosella	Jacky Winter
Eastern Rosella	Flame Robin
Red-rumped Parrot	Scarlet Robin
Superb Fairywren	Red-capped Robin
New Holland Honeyeater	Welcome Swallow
Brown-headed Honeyeater	Common Starling
White-naped Honeyeater	Red-browed Finch
White-plumed Honeyeater	

Newsletter photos Online

Interested in seeing some of the newsletter photos at a larger size?

I've uploaded some to a Flickr photosharing site.

You will also be able to add some of your photos there. Contact me for how to details.

Check here.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/126759107@No8/>

SURONG GUNN, YELLOW SEA TRIP

By the way, a few people asked me about the Yellow Sea Survey trip and wish to read them on my website. My website is

[www.paintedbuttonquail.weebly.com](http://www.paintedbuttonquail.weebly.com)

The newsletter is also available on our "Unofficial website"

<http://www.wmcn.org.au/birds>

*When birding trumps bird count*



*Photo: Mark Buckley*



INTERESTED IN LATHAM SNIPE?

What: Come along and learn about our Japanese visitor the Japanese or Latham Snipe.

Expert David Wilson talks about where to see and how to recognise this endangered bird.

When: 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM, 10 September 2014

Where: Melton Library and Learning Hub 31 McKenzie Street Melton Vic 3337

Ian Denham's UK Visit Report.

My wife Anna and I recently returned from a two month vacation to the UK. Whilst not specifically a birding trip, I found lots of time to do birding as there are many wonderful outdoor and countryside locations in the UK.



**Eurasian Robin**



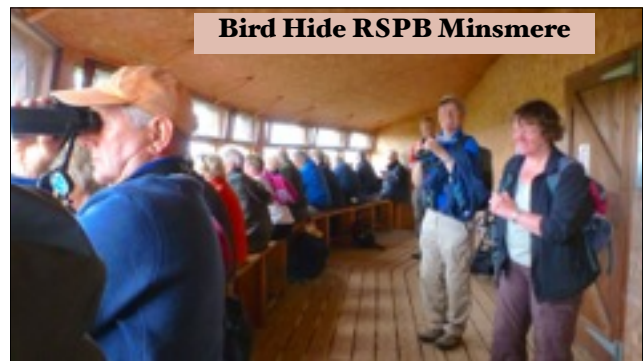
**Great Tit**



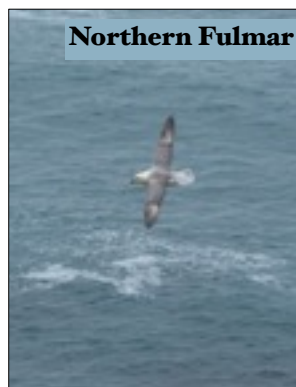
**Black Guillemot**

The trip started at Penzance and Lands End where I found my first Northern Fulmar and Common Murre [Guillemot]. We zig-zagged our way up the country visiting various manor houses and estates where wildlife was plentiful. In west Scotland I was lucky enough to see six Common Cuckoo on the same day, a bird up until that time I had only ever heard, and many UK residents never see it.

We crossed over to the Outer Hebrides by ferry and found the boat trip a great pelagic experience with birds following the ferry for



**Bird Hide RSPB Minsmere**



**Northern Fulmar**



**Shag**

most of the trip, including Black Guillemot, Puffin and Manx Shearwater. On the unique isles of Harris and Lewis I got my first Red-throated Loon, Dunlin and Corn Crake.

The cliffs on the Orkneys provided similar birds, but in vastly larger numbers and at closer quarters. The end of our trip we spent in Norfolk and Suffolk where birdwatching is on an industrial level.

Many of the bird hides at RSPB sites are very comfortable, they often have a member in the hide to answer questions, and in some cases you have to queue for a seat. At some of the larger RSPB sites they have cafeteria and gift shops. I concluded our UK trip with a list of 151 birds, of which 55 were new for me. The weather was good to us with only 3 or 4 really bad days.

Would I do it all again? Definitely.



**RSPB Cley Cafeteria overlooking Wetland**

## WARRNAMBOOL CAMP

Our campout this year will be held at Warrnambool.

Warrnambool being a regional city has a large infrastructure, from which to base our camp and provides ample choices for supermarkets, restaurants, refuelling, etc.

The dates for the camp this year will be:

Sunday 12 October and conclude on Wednesday 15 October [3 nights].

It is proposed to base the camp at the Surfside Holiday Park, Pertobe Road, Warrnambool.

<http://www.surfsidepark.com.au/>

Telephone 03 5559 4700.

However, you are free to seek your own accommodation.

There are numerous birding spots within easy distance of Warrnambool, and there will be lots of different birds than we normally see around Werribee.

If you would like to attend the camp, please arrange your own accommodation, then let me know via email: [iidenham@yahoo.com](mailto:iidenham@yahoo.com) that you will be attending, and how many in your party, so I can keep track of numbers.

I leave it to individual members to contact each other regarding sharing of accommodation or car-pooling.

Anyone participating in the camp is welcome to attend as many or as few days as they feel comfortable eg. after a couple of days you may wish to have a look at the local attractions instead of going birding, or you may wish to sit on the beach, or just go home.

Participation in birding activities is optional.

Iian Denham



## A DRY PELAGIC: WHEN BOATS DON'T RUN



*Photo: Mark Buckby*

Iian, Mark and I were booked on a pelagic for the weekend of 2nd Aug but 10m seas midweek meant we needed an alternative. Bustard has been seen recently north of Nhill - a bird we all needed for our Vic list so this seemed a suitable plan!

It was a great but cold day on the Saturday. 5 hours after leaving Mark's house we were at the spot they had been.

Sightings covered a roughly 10km square block with drivable roads only on 3 sides. The odds were not good, especially as a few days before Mark had failed to see an Ostrich which his wife had to point out. We initially found a few good birds such as Variegated Fairywren, White-browed Babbler and Redthroat but it then took around 3 hours of driving around the edge of the block before we finally found a solitary bird.

Sunday morning was freezing - literally - so a leisurely start - we even had time for the motel breakfast! Target today was the Slender-billed Thornbill - which would be a new bird for Mark and new for Victoria for Iian and

myself. Our first stop was at the northern boundary of Little Desert - we had good views of Shy Heathwren (normally a bird that lives up to its name) but not much else.

On then to the Stringybark walk which in the past has been rather boring. We found 9 species of honey-eater on the walk (and would add 2 more later in the day) but no thornbill - until we heard a call just as we were getting in the car and quickly called in 3.

Our remaining time was spent exploring a couple of other tracks, seeing a number of emus on one of them, but it was soon time for the long drive home.

Dave Torr

MEMBERS AMBLINGS AND ANECDOTES

**Help wanted**

If you would like to help provide details of birds that can be a bit confusing, our section of “**What makes a...**” needs your input. Send me a few points of how to distinguish birds that can sometimes be confused.

From the You Yangs trip the differences between Willie Wagtails and Restless Flycatchers would be a good start as a number of us were a bit unsure of calling these little black and white birds.

**Mt Rothwell lunchtime.**



**Thank you, Shirley**

As I take over the newsletter, I am very aware of the great work, dedication and love that Shirley Cameron has put in as editor since the inception of the group.



**From the editor**

It's your newsletter, so please, any anecdotes, short stories, trip details, or what birds are in your 'special' place will be published here. I can work from just notes, so feel free to give it a go.



**Where Song began**

Author: Tim Low

Tim Low has a rare gift for illuminating complex ideas in highly readable prose, and making of the whole a dynamic story. Here he brilliantly explains how our birds came to be so extraordinary, including the large role played by the foods they consume (birds, too, are what they eat), and by our climate, soil, fire, and Australia's legacy as a part of Gondwana.

Dave Torr has the book on order at the Werribee Library, and has first place on the list for reading. Hopefully we'll get a book review.

**Mt Rothwell Bird Survey.**

14 birders gathered at Mt Rothwell for our quarterly survey on June 20th - 3 of whom had never been before. The early drizzle soon turned into a fine winter day. Birding was initially fairly quiet - certainly much quieter than the nearby gun club! The highlights of our first walk were a single Shrike-tit (tracked down after much confusion about the call) and 4 Southern Whitefaces - a new bird for one of our visitors but a fairly reliable one at this site.

Our walk through the woodlands after morning tea revealed a large flock of Silvereyes, probably a mix of Tasmanian and local birds as well as more Whitefaces. After lunch the walk to the Rocky Rises added very few birds (but a good chance to practice our raptor id skills) but good views of a number of Rock Wallabies. The final count was 43 species, although some of us added Common Bronzewing on the drive out.