



Werribee Wag-Tales



Wandering Werribee Wagtails in Warrnambool. Bumper Edition.

The 2014 Werribee Wagtails campout was at Warrnambool, 12-15 October. Masterly organised by Iian Denham, 18 of our number had great opportunity to enjoy a wide range of birds and it culminated with a trip to the Australian Gannet colony at Portland. Enjoy the reports.

Day One

This year's camp started when we met for lunch at Lake Bullen Merri near Camperdown. As this is a volcanic crater lake there were few water birds, but the adjacent bushland quickly revealed Long-billed Corella, Shining Bronze-cuckoo, and Yellow-faced Honeyeater.

Count for the Trip: 114 Birds.

Winner: Anna Denham

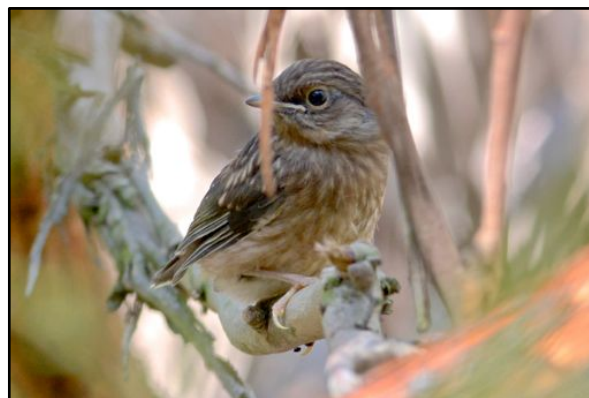
Our next stop was Lake Elingamite, just south of Cobden. This is a quiet gem of a location with extensive reed-beds. Highlight was the close pass of a White-bellied Sea-eagle.

The final stop of the day was at the Ralph Illige Sanctuary. This small forest area has been almost untouched by farming or fires and is quite a beautiful spot. David and Dieter, met us at this site and had been there for some hours before we arrived. Highlight here was a Powerful Owl with two fledged young.

Most of us stayed at the SurfSide Caravan Park in clean, comfortable, but slightly overpriced cabins.



Powerful Owl 2 Fledglings *Photo: Dorothy Jenkins*



Eastern Yellow Robin, fledgling *Photo: Dorothy Jenkins*



Yellow-faced Honeyeater *Photo: David Jenkins*



Eastern Shrike-tit *Photo: Dorothy Jenkins*

Day 2 Tyranny at Tower Hill.

It was a dark and stormy night... but we survived. We arrived at the upper Tower Hill car-park to be buffeted by a gale force wind, which was breath taking.....err no, actually that was the view into the caldera; so expansive with large lakes glinting below, dotted with bird life. Conditions inside the Reserve were milder.

We wandered along the tracks and discovered Rufus and Golden Whistlers, Swamp Harriers, a Whistling Kite, Brown Goshawk, Black Swans with 4 fluffy signets, a White-necked Heron and 3 Emus. After a boardwalk through a reedy area, we were grateful to take shelter from the intermittent rain in a bird hide. We enjoyed a hot cuppa and shared Mark and Cathy's iced cake at the Visitors Centre and spotted White-browed Scrubwrens and Superb Fairy Wrens 'ducking' in and out of a huge pile of dead trees. A very wet, fluffy Fantailed Cuckoo oversaw them.



Ruddy Turnstone

Photo: David Jenkins

At the Coastal Reserve via Gormans Rd, the dark and stormy clouds threatened again as we walked to the beach where the wind made it difficult to hold the binos still. At the estuary, we were excited to spy 3 Hooded Plovers, 2 Ruddy Turnstones, many Redcapped Plovers, 2 Pied Oystercatchers and a Sanderling. The roadside ponds at Killarney Beach, revealed a Black Swan with signets, Black-winged Stints and many Purple Swamphens sheltering in the lee of a hill. Whiskered Terns were feeding over the farmland instead of the water courses!



Red-necked Stints

Photo: David Jenkins

Sue and Darcy led us to a lovely sheltered Rotunda at Port Fairy for lunch. A nearby causeway linked us to the Short-tailed Shearwater colony on Griffiths Island- 31 ha of low lying ground, harbouring around 100,000 bird burrows. The sea was green, surging and foaming; the sky blue, with Shearwaters streaming.



Red-capped Plover

Sanderling

Photo: Dieter Boz.

We saw a Great Cormorant and a single Australasian Gannet, a Pied Oyster Catcher, a White Faced Heron and Little Raven. Red-necked Stints and a Sea Eagle's nest with a chick calling from its depths.

On Powling Street Wetland, Port Fairy, the low lying area of land is around 4 hectares. We looked sceptically over the paddock, took a few steps into the long Kikuyu grass and immediately flushed 3 Latham Snipes! Several more flushes revealed around 30 Snipe. A representative from an



Latham's Snipe

Photo: Dieter Boz

ecological group approached us and informed us that she had, for many years, been lobbying the local council not to sell The Wetlands to a housing developer. A local survey of Snipes present in The Wetlands numbered 130!

Our last stop for the day was back at Warrnambool at Logan's Beach Whale Nursery, where a Southern Right Whale and calf had been reported wallowing in the shallows, 200 metres off shore. Sadly not today. Bird Count for the day 70.

Sue Boekel

Day 3 Tuesday:

We set off early in more moderate weather conditions to meet Rob Farnes at Point Danger, Australia's only mainland Australasian Gannet colony. There are about 200 pairs on this headland and another 6,000 pairs two kms away on Lawrence Rocks.



Australasian Gannet

Photo: David Jenkins

Rob said the birds were already sitting on eggs in a nest of earth, guano and seaweed. The southerly was pretty strong with frequent rain squalls but it didn't deter us from watching these graceful birds at close proximity. A couple of enthusiasts and Rob searched earnestly for a Cape Gannet but were unsuccessful as the birds were facing into the wind which made the longer throat line hard to see. Whew, Dave Torr!

Our next stop was the Cape Nelson State Park to see the Rufous Bristlebird. We had good views from the coffee shop at the lighthouse. The bird was grey and continually fanned its long tail

tending to run to cover rather than fly. Coastal vegetation provides some protection as this bird is a weak flyer, feeding and nesting close to the ground. However housing development along the coastal corridor is a major threat.

In Portland we enjoyed a short dry walk along Fawthrop Lagoon observing a Caspian Tern, Yellow Robin, Teals and a Swamp Harrier.

After lunch we drove out to Mt Eccles a dormant volcano. This National Park is managed by Gunditjmara Traditional Owners and is quite an oasis on the grass plains of the western district. I was privileged to be travelling with a Gunditjmara woman Anita, and to hear the history of the region.

On the walking tracks we heard or saw White-throated Treecreeper, Grey Shrike Thrush, Golden Whistler, Striated Pardalote and White-Browed Scrubwren. A variety of water birds were using the crater lake. It was a full program for the day and thoroughly enjoyable

Sue Myers

Australasian Gannet: Pair

*Photo: Dieter Boz***Day Four and trip home**

The final day started by saying farewell to Brian and Christine who were staying on in Warrnambool to catch up with respective relatives.



Hopkins Falls

Photo: Sue Myers.

Our first stop was the Hopkins Falls Scenic Reserve, which is quite small, but with the help of tree plantings is developing into quite a Mecca for birds. This site offers both woodland and waterbirds the highlight being the flypast of a Latham's Snipe. The final stop for the campers was at Lake Colac Bird Reserve. The highlight here was an Intermediate Egret and Yellow-billed Spoonbills.

The total count for the trip was 114 birds.

Many thanks to all who provided information on things to do and see [whether used or not], and to all the participants for making it a great camp.

Iian Denham

BIRDLIST WARRNAMBOOL CAMP OCTOBER 12- 14

Australasian Gannet	Great Cormorant	Rock Dove
Australasian Shoveler	Great Crested Grebe	Royal Spoonbill
Australian Golden Whistler	Great Egret	Ruddy Turnstone
Australian Magpie	Greater Crested Tern	Rufous Bristlebird
Australian Pelican	Grey Currawong	Rufous Whistler
Australian Pipit	Grey Fantail	Sanderling
Australian Reed Warbler	Grey Shrike-thrush	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
Australian Shelduck	Grey Teal	Shining Bronze Cuckoo
Australian White Ibis	Hardhead	Short-tailed Shearwater
Black Swan	Hoary-headed Grebe	Silver Gull
Black-faced Cormorant	Hooded Dotterel	Silvereye
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo	Singing Honeyeater
Black-fronted Dotterel	House Sparrow	Sooty Oystercatcher
Black-shouldered Kite	Intermediate Egret	Spotted Pardalote
Brown Falcon	Jacky Winter	Straw-necked Ibis
Brown Goshawk	Kelp Gull	Striated Pardalote
Brown Thornbill	Latham's Snipe	Striated Thornbill
Caspian Tern	Little Black Cormorant	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Chestnut Teal	Little Grassbird	Superb Fairywren
Common Blackbird	Little Pied Cormorant	Swamp Harrier
Common Greenshank	Little Raven	Tree Martin
Common Starling	Long-billed Corella	Wedge-tailed Eagle
Crimson Rosella	Magpie-lark	Welcome Swallow
Dusky Moorhen	Masked Lapwing	Whiskered Tern
Eastern Cattle Egret	Musk Duck	Whistling Kite
Eastern Rosella	Nankeen Kestrel	White-bellied Sea Eagle
Eastern Yellow Robin	New Holland Honeyeater	White-browed Scrubwren
Emu	Noisy Miner	White-faced Heron
Eurasian Coot	Pacific Black Duck	White-headed Stilt
Eurasian Skylark	Pied Currawong	White-naped Honeyeater
European Goldfinch	Pied Oystercatcher	White-necked Heron
European Greenfinch	Powerful Owl	White-plumed Honeyeater
Fairy Martin	Purple Swamphen	White-throated Treecreeper
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Rainbow Lorikeet	Willie Wagtail
Forest Raven	Red Wattlebird	Yellow-billed Spoonbill
Galah	Red-browed Finch	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Gang-gang Cockatoo	Red-capped Plover	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Golden-headed Cisticola	Red-necked Stint	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo



On the first day of the Campout we visited this beautiful sanctuary. It was the brain child of Ralph Illige a Warrnambool identity and local photographer. He purchased the 40 Ha area and donated it to the Victorian Trust for Nature, now Trust for Nature. It is managed by a friends group.

The range of forest includes stands of Manna, Messmate and Swamp Gum. The area was badly burnt out in 1982, and now over 30 years later the regrowth is amazing. A wonderful place to take a break and do some birding in the area.

FROM OUR BROKEN HILL CORRESPONDENT

Sunday 12/10/14

It is 18 days since we arrived in Broken Hill. Surong is happy at work.

I am flat out like a lizard drinking, house hunting.

The weather is very pleasant. At weekends Surong and I go bird watching within 10 to 25 km of Broken Hill. The desert birds are plentiful and nice.

We find a creek and walk up or down the creek for a few hours. We did this today and then about 2pm we drove down to Menindee Lakes and Kinchega National Park about 130 km each way.

We plan to go to the Ball at Mildura. Then Surong will come back to Broken Hill and I will come home to mow the lawn and put her paintings in the art show.

I have not done any touristy things yet.

Common birds here include:

White-winged Fairy-wren

Crimson Chat

Red-capped Robin

Variegated Fairy-wren

Chirruping Wedgebill

White-backed Swallow

Redthroat

Australian Magpie

Welcome Swallow

Southern Whiteface

Willie Wagtail

Singing Honeyeater

Little Crow

James Gunn



Crimson Chat

Photo: Surong Gunn

FROM SURONG'S FILES.



White-winged Fairy-wren

Photo: Surong Gunn

TRIP REPORT KING ISLAND SEPT 2014

King Island – famous for dairy products and strong winds and rain (which I thought helped to make the dairy products, although all the cattle we saw were for beef).

Also home to endemic subspecies of Black Currawong, Dusky Robin, Green Rosella, New Holland Honeyeater, Scrubtit, Silvereye, Superb Fairy-wren, Tasmanian Scrubwren, Tasmanian Thornbill and Yellow Wattlebird, as well as Turkey, Peafowl, Pheasant and California Quail – and a remote chance of Morepork (the Tasmanian form of Boobook which is now a new species).

So on Tuesday 9th Sept I set off with Christine, Mark and Iain for a 4 night stay. The flight over was quick and bumpy, and we picked up our Hilux (not sure where the “lux” bit comes from!) and headed to town, seeing Turkeys and Peafowl on the way. After some shopping and checking into our cabins we headed off to the south of the island, looking for the rarest of the endemics — Scrubtit.

We had great difficulty actually finding the swamp they were supposed to live in, and failed to see the bird.

Driving was made hazardous by large numbers of wallabies on the road sides at all times of the day.

On Wednesday we headed north to the other known location, but the area had been burnt and access was difficult — and we failed to find the bird. Thursday and Friday were spent driving around looking for the remaining species we wanted. Two further visits to the swamp we visited on the first day — where Mark and Christine both



managed to find leeches.

And we still didn't have a place to look for the Morepork.

The weather had been pretty wild for the first two nights but was calm by now — ideal for owling.

The proprietor of our favourite café told us on Friday morning she had been woken up by owls at 4am that morning, so we got directions from her and headed



out after dinner on Friday evening — and after some searching eventually had good views of the Morepork — a “tick” for all of us.

And so the trip came to an end — we returned on the lunchtime flight on Saturday weighed down with King Island cheeses (and too many scones and cream) having seen all the birds we had hoped for apart from that elusive Scrubtit.

Dave Torr



MEMBERS AMBLINGS AND ANECDOTES

Help wanted

No, I haven't abandoned "What makes a..." just lots of trip reports. I am always happy to receive any ideas for this section, so 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.

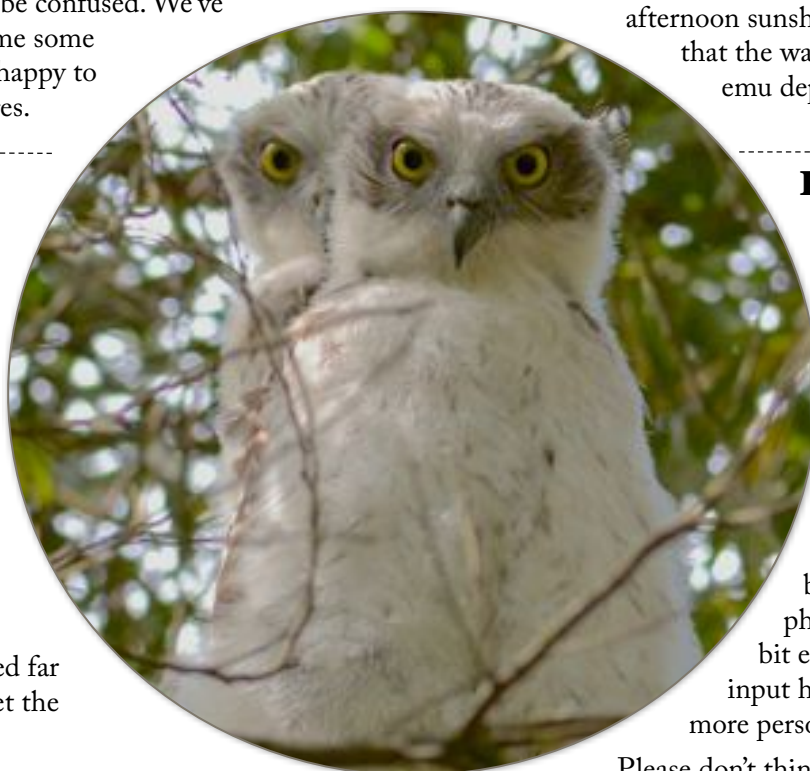
I've had a couple of suggestions, but really need a few lines of text and descriptions of birds that can sometimes be confused. We've all done it, so send me some pointers and I'll be happy to work it into our pages.

When two heads are better than one.

Powerful Owls, juveniles

It's not some clever Photoshop Trick. These two young owls were on separate branches at the Ralph Illige Reserve. I just moved far enough around to get the "Three eye" effect.

Photo: David Jenkins

**Thanks Iian for a great weekend of birding.**

Sue Boekel wrote,

"Iian, thank you sooooo much for a well organised, interesting day. We all appreciate your time and effort in organising this enjoyable and relaxed camp! I have attended 4 Werribee Wagtails outings now, and wish to thank everyone for their generous spirit, sense of humour and patience."

All of us who attended the camp would agree.

**Emus, knee deep in Tower Hill**

Dieter Boznjakovic found these Emus taking a stroll across the Tower Hill Lake in the late afternoon sunshine. How did they know that the water was just the right emu depth?

From the editor

I've been very pleased to receive some nice, "thank you's" from a happy band of readers. Glad that the newsletter is working for you.

I am looking forward to receiving your trip reports, birding days, best places to visit, and photos. It makes the job a bit easier. Your reports and input help make our newsletter more personal.

Please don't think that it's all too hard, just provide me with the details and I'll find a place in the newsletter and edit into shape for you.

Surong Gunn has a new Website Address.

Surong has opened up a new Website Address. Still the same great pictures, so if you'd like to see what she's been up to, here is the address link.

www.paintedbuttonquail.com

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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@N08/>

FLINDERS RANGES REPORT

A mate and I recently undertook a road trip to the Flinders Ranges. My mate, Will, is not a birder, nor does he want to be, but it is hard to repress my birding urges, so the following is an account of my limited birding opportunities. Will did all of the driving which allowed me to constantly look for birds.



We travelled up to Mildura for the first night, then on to Lake Mungo National Park the next day [site of the oldest Australian human remains].

The lake is dry most years allowing numerous flocks of emu to wander. At the Walls of

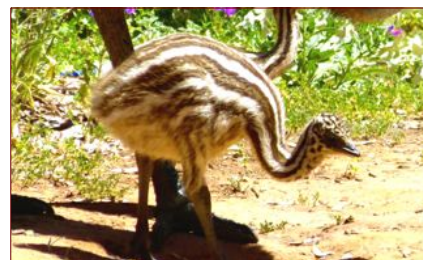
China there were White-backed Swallow flying everywhere, probably the most numerous I have ever seen them. Some kilometres further north at Pooncarie a Black-breasted Buzzard flew over the car.

We stayed a night in Broken Hill [not knowing Jim and Surong were already there], then headed across to South Australia. From here Black Kites were a regular feature, plus we flushed Fairy Martin from almost all the culverts we crossed.

We stayed in a tent at the Wilpena campground for three nights. Regular bird visitors were Australian Ringneck, Yellow-throated Miner, Striated Pardalote and Apostlebird.

A walk to the Wangarra Lookout nearby added Inland Thornbill, Rufous Whistler and Grey Butcherbird.

On the last night in camp I was awoken by the nearby call of a Southern Boobook. Unfortunately I didn't have my



good torch with me and had to settle for recording it as a heard only.

While packing up on the last day we got the only Fairy-wrens of the trip Variegated, with very good views, from one of the most cryptic of all fairy-wrens. Also an Emu came foraging around with two very young chicks, and wasn't at all protective of them.

All too soon we were back home after 7 days on the road.

Report and Photos: Ilian Denham