



Werribee Wag-Tales



Bussing Wagtails to Ballarat

From the new meeting spot in Watton St beyond the roundabout, 18 Wagtails set out to travel to Ballarat in a lovely new Wyndham Council bus. Only one member, Shirley Cameron, had to withdraw at the last moment – we hope she is feeling much better. We were ably led as always, by Dave Torr.

Our very nice and efficient driver took us on the scenic route via Wyndhamvale and Bacchus Marsh to reach the Western Highway. Then it seemed like no time at all before we were pulling up at our first stop, beautiful Lake Wendouree, the Fairyland area. Here we met the 8 other people, who had already come here by car. Firstly though, we needed to have morning tea, which does not mean we did not begin our bird observation and counting. Some of the birds we saw by merely sitting there, were a group of foraging Crested Pigeons and a flock of Long-billed Corellas, both in fairly close-up view.

Ballarat, true to form, was colder than Melbourne, and as we set off on our first walk the wind felt quite chilly. Undaunted we headed to a small native wetland area on the opposite side of the road to the main lake. We saw many of the usual wetland suspects, like a White-faced Heron, Purple Swamphens, Eurasian Coots and Australian Black Ducks, but no crakes or rails, despite the fact that there were some very nice muddy bits. Here we did sight some smaller birds, like White-browed Scrubwrens, Superb Fairy Wrens, Grey Fantails and Brown Thornbills. And a pair of Musk Lorikeets brightened up the sky momentarily.

Now we crossed back to the lake-edge to walk its paths where small, but sometimes connected, islands with large trees, shrubs and reed beds provided shelter for many birds. We added to our waterbirds with new ducks, grebes, swans and pelicans. There were cormorants, gulls, Whiskered Terns, a Swamp Harrier and more. Highlights here were the excellent views of a goodly number of Blue-billed Ducks, the Great Crested Grebes and one Reed Warbler, which stayed in the open long enough for

some of us to see it quite closely. One exceptional sighting for a lucky few was a clear and lengthy view of a native water rat, a Rakali. We were mesmerised watching this sizeable creature swimming from one of the small islands to the lake bank. It swam, dived, surfaced – all the time giving us wonderful views of its several-coloured coat and its very long, partially white tail. It finally disappeared into a well-disguised hole in the bank of the lake just next to the path.

We had our lunch in the same place as morning tea, and soon we headed for the second stop on our trip, the Gong Gong Reservoir. We did not bother with the reservoir, but headed along the bushland paths, following a small creek, which at this time was fairly dry. We were eager to add to our list of birds here, and the bushland did provide some good opportunities to see some honeyeaters, Red-browed Finches and more. Obviously the pleasant waterholes remaining along the creek, and overhanging branches, played a definite part in attracting birds here. Some highlights were the White-naped and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, and a Brush Bronzewing, which flew past in a flash of sunlit copper-brown.

For a place which initially looked dry and unyielding it added a decent number of birds to our day's sightings. So after Dave had noted what we had seen (adding in a last minute fly-by of a Sacred Kingfisher), with due attention paid to the strict rules of the legitimacy of a sighting, and tallied up, we had a respectable 53 species for the two places visited. The prize for predicting the correct number of birds we would sight for the day went jointly to Dave, Marion and Brian, and the rest of us enjoyed the chocolates resulting from this.

Home again in good time to avoid any peak hour, and a very enjoyable day was had by all. Our thanks go to Wyndham City Council, our driver, Dave Torr and other organisers, and all who came and added to the fun and learning we experienced.

Christine Shelley

Count for the Trip: 53 Birds.
Winners: Dave, Marion and Brian

BIRDLIST BALLARAT JANUARY 27 2015

- | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Black Swan | Masked Lapwing | Brown Thornbill |
| Maned Duck | Silver Gull | Striated Thornbill |
| Pacific Black Duck | Whiskered Tern | Australian Magpie |
| Grey Teal | Brush Bronzewing | Pied Currawong |
| Blue-billed Duck | Crested Pigeon | Australian Golden Whistler |
| Musk Duck | Sacred Kingfisher | Willie Wagtail |
| Australasian Grebe | Galah | Grey Fantail |
| Hoary-headed Grebe | Long-billed Corella | Magpie-lark |
| Great Crested Grebe | Sulphur-crested Cockatoo | Little Raven |
| Australian White Ibis | Musk Lorikeet | Eastern Yellow Robin |
| White-faced Heron | Crimson Rosella | Welcome Swallow |
| Australian Pelican | White-throated Treecreeper | Australian Reed Warbler |
| Little Pied Cormorant | Superb Fairywren | Little Grassbird |
| Little Black Cormorant | White-naped Honeyeater | Common Myna |
| Swamp Harrier | Red Wattlebird | Common Starling |
| Purple Swamphen | Yellow-faced Honeyeater | Common Blackbird |
| Dusky Moorhen | Spotted Pardalote | Red-browed Finch |
| Eurasian Coot | White-browed Scrubwren | |



Purple Swamphen



Little Pied Cormorant



Eastern Yellow Robin



Maned Duck

Photos: Dorothy and David Jenkins

EDITORIAL POLICY FOR DIGITAL PHOTOS

Here are a few thoughts on where we are proceeding with publication of digital photos for our newsletter.

Not so many years ago a newsletter was cut on a stencil, and with the help of some ammonia solution and some sensitive paper a 'print' would produce a one page newsletter with a type face from the typewriter used.

Looked just like this.

The advent of the photocopier changed the production methods and not so long after, 'Desktop Publishing' revolutionised the way 'Newsletters' were produced.

At the same time digital cameras improved and the quality obtainable meant that film would go the way of wooden wagon-wheels.

Take another leap forward and documents were being distributed using "Portable Document Format" - pdf. The output we are still using for Werribee Wagtails.

Adding to that the advancement in viewing devices from small handheld phones to large multi-media computer screens and wide-screen tv's and the challenges of providing a newsletter with sufficient resolution for those hi-res photos becomes apparent.

In the old days there was only one resolution and one viewing option. The printed page. Usually A4. But now, the range is so much wider.

And.

The resolution that works well on a small hand phone is woefully inadequate for a hi-res 30 inch computer monitor. The file size for the phone is small and quickly downloaded. The much higher computer file is larger and takes a large download bandwidth.

So to make the file small enough for the phone user, or tablet, the computer reader will have a lot of blurry looking photos. If it is made sufficiently large enough size for the computer user, it will take up a lot of time and space for the phone user.

There is no best of both worlds.

To that end, the editorial policy for our newsletter is to send out to everybody via email a lower resolution file. It will be suitable for the phone and tablet users, and give the computer user a guide as to what is in the newsletter.

Should either want a much larger file size to enjoy the photos, then a hi-res copy will be on the website for anyone to download.

A note with the online address will be sent out with the first edition of the newsletter.

Which, then leads to the requirements for photo publication.

Up until now, I've been able to use the lower resolution files.

But for the hi-res newsletter these files may be insufficient. So if you intend to send files for use in the newsletter, and please, I encourage you to do so, as they form a great visual feast of our sightings. Preferably they should be high resolution, and if not, then I'll place a note with the photo that it is Lo Res and it is going to look a little unsharp on large screens.

Times change, technology changes, and we have to adapt and adopt to get the best for everybody.

Please let me know if you have any ideas on the best way to work with images. I really strive to make the newsletter a showcase of our group, our activities and the birds we enjoy so much.

dw_jenkins@icloud.com.

BIRDLIFE AUSTRALIA EVENTS IN OUR AREA.

On 1st March John Young - the re-discoverer of the Night Parrot - is presenting a talk about his efforts. Tickets from <http://www.chriswatson.com.au/shop/night-parrot-presentation-ticket>

Finally John Barkla - superb photographer and wader expert - is running a Wader Study session. There is a talk at the BirdLife office in Carlton on March 12 and an outing to the WTP on March 14th. Contact melbourne@birdlife.org.au if interested. Even if you can't attend the session on the 12th, they may need some drivers with permits for the 14th.

Hope to see you at one or more of these events

DaveTorr

FROM OUR BROKEN HILL CORRESPONDENT

Happy CHINESE New Year to you and your family. Wish you a happy and healthy 2015!

We are settling in in Broken Hill after 4 months. The weather starts to be kind to us now. It is rather cool in the morning around 15 degrees and heats up around high twenties or low thirties.

The 4 days rain here made everything so green. The birds start breeding again. Some non desert birds like Quails are starting to be seen in the area. We are going out for birding most weekends. The water holes are everywhere. All the dams on the farm are filled with rain water. The Cattle have begun looking healthy.

Not many dances here to our disappointment, we have to increase our outdoor activities as much as we can. The living desert sanctuary became our backyard which is 15km away from us. We make sure Jim and I go hiking there at least once a week.

It is off-tourist season. This vast sanctuary is left all to us. Sometimes we don't see anyone at all except kangaroos and other wildlife. White-winged Fairy-wrens, Zebra Finches are resident here. Currently Brown Quails are visiting the region after the good dose of rain. After I spotted two Quails a couple of weeks ago, Jim saw around 20 of them last Saturday at the same spot. There is a little pond the ranger has kept for wildlife. We can see it is essential for birds. They are visiting the pond every day to our delight.

I am waiting for my new camera gear from Canon after cancelling my order from Teds camera. I am looking forward to capturing sharp images of lovely feathery creatures in the new year.

Hope you will have a wonderful new year as we will.

Surong and Jim

PINKERTON/BUSH'S Paddock/EYNESBURY BIRD COUNT NOVEMBER 16

10 intrepid birders turned out for the quarterly bird survey on a hot Sunday 15th Feb. Pinkerton was very quiet with no signs of the "signature" birds we used to see - Diamond Firetail, Brown Treecreeper and Jacky Winter. Not even any woodswallows, although we had good numbers of Red-rumped Parrots, Tree Martins and Zebra Finches. Unusual sightings were 4 Australian Darters flying over, and two Brown-headed Honeyeaters appeared at lunchtime. Bush's Paddock was similarly disappointing.

Eynesbury got off to a good start with a pair of Little Corellas in the carpark and around 14 Freckled Duck on the lake. Not far into the forest we found a very young cuckoo which was the subject of much debate and many photos - either a Horsfield's Bronze (which are common locally) or a Black-eared (which would be a new bird for us in the area). At the time of writing we await photos from the people with big lenses! With all the time spent looking at this bird and the hot weather we curtailed our walk a little - finding several Jacky Winters but alas no Speckled Warblers or Diamond Firetails

It was a Horsfield's Bronze. There was rufous in the tail but it seems only Simpson (which we did

not have with us) mentions that Black-eared Cuckoo does NOT have this feature

Principal queries were, there is no barring on the breast, and what a lot of rufous in the tail. We knew it was juvenile, but few guides described the juvenile plumage. Simpson & Day eventually saved the day.

David Torr



Photos: Iian Denbam Lo Res

Recruiting new Wagtails

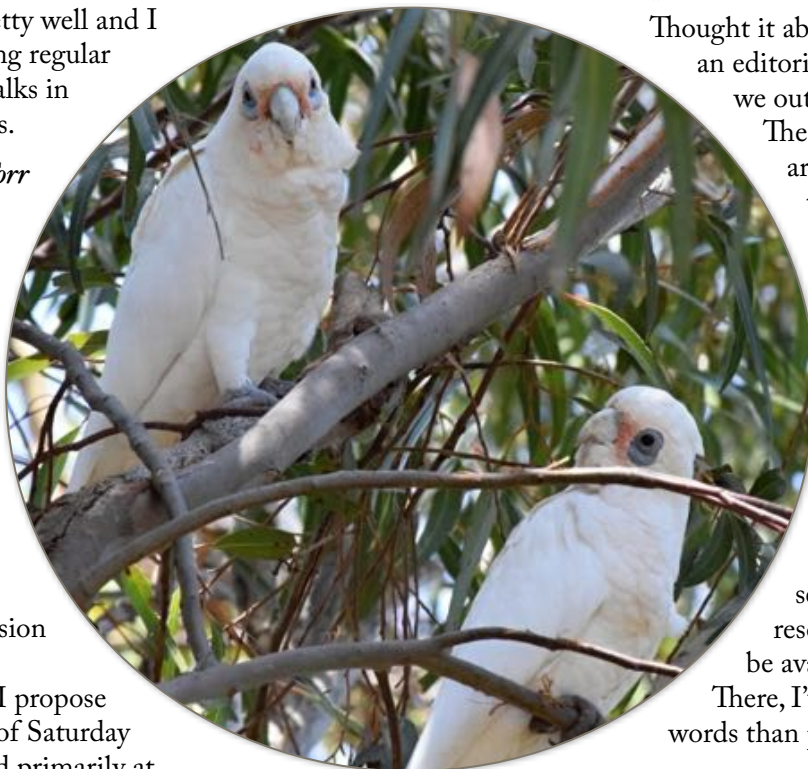
In conjunction with Wyndham Council, and assisted by Iian, Peter G, Peter O'C, Geraldine, Ceri and Susie, I ran a "Beginning Birding" session at Werribee South on Valentines Day.

30+ people booked and around 20 turned up - there had been a lot of rain overnight and before the event started. We started with a brief talk on using binoculars, bird books and starting birding, and then had a walk around the area - the highlight probably being an Australian Hobby in a tree in the car park.

It seemed to go pretty well and I intend to start running regular Saturday morning walks in the area for beginners.

Dave Torr

Little Corellas
Photo: Dave Torr
Lo Res



Regular Beginners Day Scheduled

Following on the session we ran recently for Wyndham Council, I propose to run a short series of Saturday morning walks aimed primarily at beginners - but all are welcome and I will probably need some help if a lot of people turn up! Initially 3 outings - if they are a success then we can consider more. Feel free to publicise these events.

Dave Torr

Beginners Outing Dates

Sat March 7 0900-1100. Meet near the end of Maddox St (<https://goo.gl/maps/uymop> - by the curve in the road just before a line of "fishing shacks"). We will explore the banks of Kororoit Creek looking for sea birds and shore birds. No toilets.

Sat Apr 4 0900-1100. Meet at the end of Watton St (<https://goo.gl/maps/vZdDT>) for a walk along Werribee River.

Sat May 2 0900-1100. Meet at the car park for Werribee River Park (<http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/explore/parks/werribee-regional-park> - New Farm Rd is shown on <https://goo.gl/maps/p1800> but the actual park entrance is not shown) for a walk down to the woodland by the river. No toilets.

March outing.

Our March outing on 3rd of March 2015 is a trip to Geelong.

Elizabeth Hurley is organising the day and has planned some great areas for us to visit. Convoy from usual meeting place at Watton Street. Dave will email details.

From the editor

Little late running to press with this combined newsletter. Blame it on the holidays. Just got caught up in the relaxed laid-back lifestyle.

Thought it about time to produce an editorial policy on the way we output the newsletter.

These days so many of us are linked to life though the mobile medium, that its become not just a way of life but part of our culture.

The newsletter will be produced in two versions. One low res directly emailed, the second, higher resolution version will be available for download.

There, I've said it in less words than page 3.

Wagtails Camp for 2015

The Wagtails camp for 2015 will be held from 4 October to 7 October, so block out your diaries now. Location yet to be confirmed, but will be in the Castlemaine area.

CONTACTS, WEB ADDRESS AND PLACES TO VISIT ON LINE

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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/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/126759107@N08/)

As well the newsletter is available on our website at a higher resolution so you can view the images on a large computer/media screen at their best.

Go to our website at here.

[http://birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-
werribee/publications-wer](http://birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-werribee/publications-wer)

WAGTAILS VISIT NOWRA

It's a very long drive from Melbourne to Nowra, New South Wales, and even further to Culburra Beach on the coast, but an American wader (White-rumped Sandpiper) chose that particular beach as its new home around Jan 5th and many birders flocked to the area.

As it was still there a month later Iain, Mark, Christine and I decided that we should make the trek, so we set off early on Feb 4th. When we arrived at the beach in the late afternoon all the birds were sheltering from a very strong wind so it took quite a while to locate the bird which is a bit

bigger than a stint. Soon after we found the bird it decided to go to the lake edge to feed, and we had much better views of it, along with a Lesser Sandplover - a bird that is reasonably common in northern Australia but which rarely makes it to Melbourne.

Next morning we set off for home, stopping in Nowra to do the Grotto walk. Just about the first bird we saw was a Superb Lyrebird, and we also added Wonga Pigeon and Brown Cuckoo-dove to our year list.

Dave Torr



White-rumped Sandpiper Lo Res



Photos: Mark Buckby and Iain Denham