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Werribee Wagtails Outing to Geelong January 25th 2011

Meeting at the usual spot in Werribee the group then set off in the wonderful City of Wyndham bus, for St Helens in Geelong, with a seriously difficult 'Bird' crossword to solve along the way, which Dave solved before we got to Lara. His prize, a delicious box of jellies generously donated by Elizabeth, the composer of said crossword, was shared by all. Yum.

St Helens, at the western end of Eastern Beach, visited by Ginny a long, long time ago, was a new area to some. Back then, on that cold winter's day it was busy with gannets diving, black swans, cormorants and lots of other birds. Today, warm and still, there were not so many. We had morning tea, sang Happy Birthday (6th January) to Brian T., and saw the 'Young Endeavour' sailing on Corio Bay with many sailors, looking like cormorants, sitting high on the beams ready to trim the sails.

Next stop, Queens Park Bridge, flooded last week, most set off to walk 2.5km to Balyang Park. Here were Splendid Blue Wrens, ducks, Masked Lapwings and wattle birds along the river. Then Premi spotted a Tawny frogmouth, we had a very good view, sadly not the folk who went to Balyang Park. There were Darters, Sparrows in abundance, and we heard Reed Warblers. Several of the group saw a small family of brownish, yellowish, thinnish, not sleek rather fluffy birds which took a good long time to identify as the elusive Reed Warblers. We had several copies of the same guide book which didn't help. Later, after lunch and Andre's Tim Tams, we went to the Hide at Belmont Common, an adult Reed Warbler was sighted up close and the former sighting was confirmed. Belmont Common had been flooded the week before and smelly stagnant water was all around and low scrub was muddy. Wild silver beet found here last year and picked by hunter gatherers of the group had already gone to seed.

Gwen won this month's chocolates with a close estimation of the days 39 birds.

Nancy, who's almost ready to return home from Williamstown Hospital, was sorely missed. Thanks go to Elizabeth for excellent work organizing the day.

Reporter: [Ginny](#)

Photographer: [Liz](#)



Birthday Boy!



Catching and Banding Red-neck Stints

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.

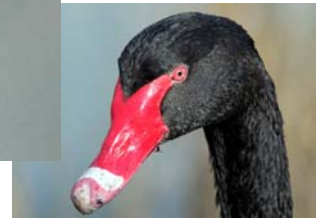
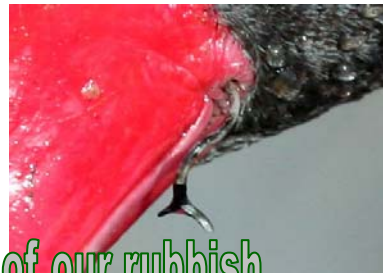
Over the years I have counted 13,000 Red-necked Stints, 8,000 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, and 5,000 Curlew Sandpipers feeding in front of me in one square mile. This year, over 3 days I probably saw about 2000 Red-necked Stints, no Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and six Curlew Sandpipers each day.

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.

Reporter: [James Gunn](#)

Fishmen beware!

We need to be mindful of the disposal of our rubbish



Ruddy Turnstone , CMY (who was named 9Y last year) with Geolocators Report

He took off from Flinders on 26 April (27th last year) and flew non stop to Hainan (or thereabouts) in 7 days Stayed here for 12 days.

On 13 May he took off over Taiwan towards the Yellow Sea - he stayed in the northern Yellow Sea until 26 May. Then NE, Sakalin Island, Sea of Okhotsk to around Magadan early June. Here we lose useful signals due to 24 hour daylight.

On the return journey I pick him up on the Alaskan Peninsula on 4 July, then he moves to the outer reaches of the Aleutians until 15 Sept.

On 15 Sept flies South to reach the Marshall Islands in the Pacific and stays until approx 25 Oct.

On 26 October heads southwest to the Samoan Islands (or around this region) where he stays until 28 November.

On 28 November heads for east coast of Australia crossing the coast around Fraser Island.

Arrives back at Flinders 2 December 2010 (last year 8 December).

So there you have the story of this amazing bird. Please take some of my dates and locations with care as a lot of filtering and analysis still needs to be done. Hopefully I can get a better picture to you in a couple of weeks.

Thanks again to everyone for their help - this is the sort of result that makes it all worthwhile.

Best wishes and a happy new year to you all,

Reporter: [Ken Gosbell](#)



2008 - 2011 Baringhup

It's Wednesday, 12 January as I type this. All of us are watching and listening to the terrible news of the Queensland floods. I thought some of you might be interested to learn of the November/December floods in Victoria, when urgent warnings were broadcast for the Murray, Goulburn, Avoca and -

The Loddon River Downstream of Cairn Curran:

That's Baringhup, where the Wagtails had their first away trip in April 2008.

When we were there nearly three years ago, the lake at the dam was standing at about 5% capacity. As the drought prevailed, it continued to drop further to a bit over 2%.

Then, during spring last year, the rains came. By mid-November, the dam was full and the decision was made to release some of the water as the in-flow continued. A necessary decision, but bad news for Baringhup and our caravan park, and for further areas downstream towards Laanecoorie.

Number 1 son Denis was there mid-December and reported that several of the vans closer to the river had gone - some towed away, but others literally torn from their stands and washed away, and that some forty metres of the main road outside the park had lifted and floated away into the paddocks.

I went up there during the week after Christmas and stayed in the van he owns jointly with number 2 son Terry. That's the one we called O'Connor2, where we spent that mad Saturday evening that some of you might remember (and some might wish to forget!).

The park was buzzing when I was there as the water had receded and everyone was busy assessing damage and re-establishing as well as they could. It's not just water, of course, it's liquid mud and it's full of debris, some quite heavy. Much of this debris is hanging over fences (those that are still there) and from quite high among the branches of trees along the river (I estimate about 14 metres above the present river level). The river broke its banks, Baringhup was entirely isolated, and I'm now seeing large areas of wetland where I've never seen water before.

O'Connor2 is safe and sound as it's well back from the river and a couple of feet above ground level. But at the little van that I used to own, where some of you dropped in for a coffee,

the high water mark stands about a metre above ground. That would spell the end of floor coverings and bedding, and the saturation of floor structure that was never meant to sustain that sort of damage. I remember Anita and Premi setting up their camp on the site next to me. Sorry girls, you would have been washed away in November.

None of this compares with the disaster in Queensland of course, but it does serve, for me at least, to appreciate the impact of these floods.

And as I write, the Loddon River is again on flood alert.



Dave's Twitching Progress

My Aus list is 707 and my world list is 2800. Hoping to go and see the recently discovered NSW Ostriches in the next week or two so I can make it 708! India and Argentina this year should get me well over 3000 for the world.

Image: Michelle Wan



Calendar for February 2011		
Contact Werribee Wagtails Dave Torr. davidtorr@gmail.com. 0397495141		
1	Tue VIC	Bus Trip. Bannockburn. 8:30am. Booking essential.
20	Sun VIC	Survey. Western Woodlands. 9:15am. Pinkerton Forest is on Mt. Cottrell Rd (Melways Page 7)
20	Sun VIC	Bird Count. Greenwich Bay. 10:00am. Gatehouse, Newport Power Stn, Strand, Newport (Mel 56C4).
March 2011		
1	Tue VIC	Activity. Western Treatment Plant. 8:30am. Bookings essential.
April 2011		
3	Sun VIC	Bird Count. Greenwich Bay and Jawbone. 9:30am. Gatehouse, Newport Power Stn, Strand, Newport (Mel 56C4).
5	Tue VIC	Activity. Bullengarook. 8:30am.



A message from The President (!)



For those of you who love photos, <http://bit.ly/hWNb5A> is worth a regular look, as are the rest of the photos on the BOCA site. I particularly liked Jen Spry's photo of an Aussie Grebe attacking a Coot (<http://bit.ly/i5k1FF>). (bit.ly is a great way to make long URLs shorter!)

Duck numbers remain low at Werribee as they are still away breeding - let us hope they stay out of range of the shooters! Wader numbers are also low, but we have had a good set of rare birds - Stilt Sandpiper (4th Australian record) turned up a week before Christmas and has attracted many birders from around Australia. Other rare birds have included Ruff, Long-toed Stint, Grey-tailed Tattler, Terek Sandpiper and Grey Plover. The 2 broilga chicks seemed to have survived the foxes and can now fly.

Dave

