



Werribee Wag-Tales

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Our May outing was to the Altona area, led by Andre and Peter O'C. Most people chose to go straight to the sports centre, with only a few driving from Werribee. After gathering at the Sports Centre we drove the short distance to the 100 Steps car park and then set off for our walk down Laverton Creek. We were very pleased that Nancy was back with us - now in charge of a walker - and Doug has one also - who would win a walker race?

The tide was low and the weather was great. The walk started well, Iian spotting a very dull Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo, followed soon by a Hobby flying past. Lots of Little Pied and Little Black Cormorants were actively fishing in the creek, along with Pelicans. On the edges Royal Spoonbills and White-faced Herons fed, with a few Ibis. Singing Honeyeaters were fairly common in the bushes, and we had a single female Flame Robin. Near the mouth we added several Little Egrets and a Kestrel, as well as a woman letting her dogs chase the birds. Back to the carpark for morning tea and a final look round the little wetland, where some of us were lucky and saw a Little Grassbird.

On to Truganina Swamp where we saw our first Black Swans for the day and some Black-winged Stilts with young - there was some debate as Andre thought he had seen Marsh Sandpiper on the recce and we wondered whether they were actually very young stilts? A flowering gum gave us good views of Musk Lorikeets.

Lunch at the Apex Park, a lack of tables forcing us to find places to eat on the children's playground. Much excitement as a young Pacific Gull flew past as we had briefly hoped it was a Jaeger. At Newport Lakes, a mysterious dove was seen by some participants. Analysis of the photos showed that it was probably a Barbary Dove - a bird often released from aviaries and has occasionally built up in numbers on nearby Kororoit Creek - the authorities usually try and remove them before numbers get too big as we have quite enough feral pests.

The bird count was 56, won by Christine Shelley. Thanks to Peter and Andre for organising a good walk with lots of birds and really great autumn weather.



Black Swan
Grey Teal
Chestnut Teal
Pacific Black Duck
Australasian Grebe
Hoary-headed Grebe
Rock dove
Spotted Dove
Crested pigeon
Little Pied Cormorant
Little Black Cormorant
Australian Pelican
White Faced Heron
Little Egret

Australian white Ibis
Royal spoonbill
Straw-necked Ibis
Whistling kite
Swamp Harrier
Little Eagle
Nankeen Kestrel
Brown Falcon
Australian Hobby
Purple Swamphehen
Dusky Moorhen
Australian Pied Oystercatcher
Black-winged stilt
Masked Lapwing

Crested Tern
Pacific Gull
Silver Gull
Galah
Rainbow lorikeet
Musk Lorikeet
Horsfield's Cuckoo
Superb Fairywren
Spotted Pardalote
Singing Honeyeater
White plumed honeyeater
Little Wattle bird
Red Wattle bird
White-fronted Chat

New Holland Honeyeater
Dusky Woodswallow
Australian Magpie
Willie Wagtail
Little Raven
Magpie-lark
Flame Robin
Little Grassbird
Welcome Swallow
Common Blackbird
Common Starling
Common Myna
House Sparrow
European Goldfinch



WERRIBEE RIVER PARK (not yet open)

On a bleak June morning the intrepid Wagtails went for the annual Werribee River walk. How surprising, 22 members braved the cold and impending rain, we welcomed Jenny and Michael Pratt, who have recently come to live in Werribee via Capetown, and then set off to walk behind the Chirnside Park Football Ground to Bunge's Hole. Fascinating to see the changes wrought by the February floods. We made our way down to the Werribee Mansion, through Gate 5 by the Golf Course, around to the Blacksmith's forge, down the hill to the beginning of the Werribee River Trail. We were all amazed by the grandeur of the old trees and the unspoilt bushland. We crossed the Foot Bridge over the Werribee River again marvelling at the damage done by the flood. Unfortunately the weather then took a change, soon drizzle, then rain was falling, but we did see the entrance for the Melbourne Water side of the Park and the ramped walk-way from the car park down to the River Valley. The birds of course were not about but we all know we will return on a fine day in Spring and take in all the beauty of this new Park...

Well Done Parks Victoria!

In all we saw 29 birds species and the prized chocolates were shared by Joyce and Gwen. Morning tea was on the steps of the Polo Pavilion. Next year in June we may make a return visit?

Cape Barron Goose
Australian Shelduck
Australian Wood duck
Chestnut Teal
Pacific black duck
Crested Pigeon
Little pied cormorant

Little Black Cormorant
Pied Cormorant
Straw necked ibis
Whistling Kite
Brown Hawk
Dusky Moorhen
Silver Gull

Rainbow lorikeet
Little lorikeet
Purple-crowned lorikeet
Superb fairy-wren
White-plumed Honeyeater
Red wattlebird
New Holland Honeyeater

Crested shrike-tit
Australian magpie
Willie Wagtail
Little Raven
Eastern Yellow Robin
Welcome Swallow
Common blackbird
Common starling

Christina Dennis' Magic Carpet Ride

In April fifteen intrepid explorers set off on a Botswana adventure. Mike, the tour leader, and I were the only "birdos" in the group although another two had an interest, soon we managed to convert a couple of others (they didn't take much converting!).

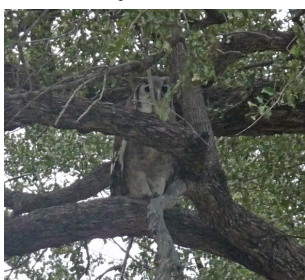
Our first stop was Meno A Kwena (Tooth of the Crocodile) camp on a cliff edge overlooking the Boteti River. For the first time in many, many years the river had flowing water - not just pools of water - and we were promised lots of wildlife. We weren't disappointed! We arrived about 3.30pm and after a refreshing drink we were shown to our respective tents overlooking the river. As Linda, my co-traveller, and I reached our tent, we glanced across the river and what should we see but an elephant drinking at the water's edge - the first of many "eles" we were to meet - and some really close ups.

The magic started for me during "sundowners". We gathered in the viewing tent around 5.30 for pre-dinner drinks and nibbles while watching the animals arrive at the river for their evening drink. Someone saw something in the large tree on the opposite bank so up went the binoculars. It was a large bird. Even field guides don't work all the time and it wasn't until one of the guides came that it was positively identified as a Giant (Verreaux's) Eagle Owl.

It's the biggest owl in Southern Africa (58-66cm). Grey-brown in colour with distinctive pink eyelids and black eyes it makes a pig-like grunt. It favours broad-leaved woodland along watercourses.

This was just one of the different and unusual birds I saw. The magic was to continue - more next time.

📷 Photo: [Christina Dennis](#)



Meet Susan Myers

Age 62 years

What first you to bird watching?

I was interested in the diversity of birds that came to the Williamstown Wetlands after they were constructed in the early 1990's. I enjoy combining my interest in being in the bush with watching birds and learning about their habitat.

Favourite Birding Spot *Recently I spent some time below the Lake Bellfield Reservoir wall where the Fyans Creek flows towards Halls Gap. I was rewarded with plenty of bird activity.*

Favourite Bird *Sacred Kingfisher*

Number of years looking at birds *It's less than a year since I joined the Werribee Wagtails and seriously started learning to recognise birds.*

Number of Species you can recognise *I haven't done a count but around 80 species*

Favourite bird seen *Superb Lyrebird*

Bird on top of the "to be seen wish list" *Orange-bellied Parrot*

What would you like to see changed?

I'd like to see local government require property developers to have a percentage of open space/gardens, State Governments develop green wedges and Federal Governments stop the clearing of native forests. I believe duck shooting should be totally banned



Western Woodlands Survey May 15th

The quarterly survey was very lightly attended in May, although the weather was reasonable. I would certainly encourage more of you to come along, as we see quite a lot of good birds. Our day started as always at Pinkerton Forest where the highlights included our first Diamond Firetails for a year, and some Brown Treecreepers. Zebra Finches, Flame Robins and Red-rump Parrots were also abundant - winter is always good for Flame Robins and the males were as stunning as always. We picked up 8 species of raptor flying over the forest, including our very first Collared Sparrowhawk for the area and one of the White-bellied Sea-eagles which have bred in the forest in the last two years.

On then to Bush's Paddock where we rarely seem to see as many birds, and our path was hampered today by some recently installed electric fencing. But we found even more Flame Robins and Diamond Firetails here, as well as at least 8 Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes in one tree. The walk back to the cars was interrupted by many good looks at spiders! A fairly windswept lunch was followed by the drive to Eynesbury, stopping briefly for a Great Egret at the Surbiton Park Sewage Works. Eynesbury again was alive with birds - more Flame Robins and Diamond Firetails, the first Jacky Winters of the day and a final highlight as we made our way back to the cars - 3 Speckled Warblers, a bird that used to be common in the You Yangs but is now rarely seen there or anywhere else locally.

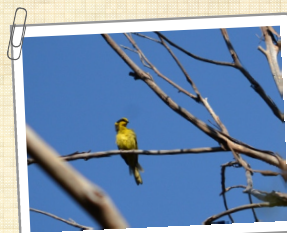
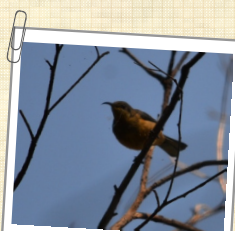


Our 64 species for the day included 8 raptors and 7 parrot species.

Welcome Susan.

All you need is a bird book, a camera and the Wagtails...

Susan often sends me photos to identify, The bill of the Eastern Spinebill is a dead give-away, and the Yellow Tufted Honeyeater were two seen at Bullengarook





1. BOCA and BA Merger

Most of you no doubt have heard the news - at the respective AGMs on May 21st 95% of the 3000 or so BA members who voted and 93% of the 1500 or so BOCA members who voted were in favour of the amalgamation of the two organisations. This is an overwhelming vote with by far the highest participation rate of any vote either organisation has ever had.

So what does this mean for you as an individual and for the Wagtails as a group?

The short answer is I don't know! The new organisation (BirdLife Australia, which will almost certainly be called BLA I guess) will take over the assets, liabilities and membership of the two organisations as from Jan 1st next year. It will have its own Board of Directors, and I have the honour to be one of the original Board. They will take all major decisions for the future organisation, and until they have met and decided some things nothing is guaranteed.

Some things however are reasonably clear:

The new organisation will at least initially be based at the current BA office in Carlton - much better for Western Suburbs people than the BOCA one in Nunawading.

2. There will be a single magazine produced, starting next year. Personally I think the BA magazine (Wingspan) is better than the BOCA one, and hopefully the new one will be better still. (But not of course as good as the Wag-tales!)
3. You should continue paying your membership of BOCA (or BA) when it comes due in the normal way. All memberships will get transferred automatically at the end of the year, and in 2012 you will get a renewal notice from BLA.
4. Our program of activities - and indeed those of all other branches and affiliates - will continue as they currently do. At some stage - I hope sooner rather than later - BOCA members will be able to go on BA outings and vice-versa, which is mainly of significance out of Victoria as BA run relatively few outings in Victoria.

Some things are unclear - whether the new organisation will continue to run a shop, how they will handle affiliated members (the current \$10 fee that BOCA charges non-members to help with insurance costs), what the logo will be....

What is clear - and I think most of the BOCA members appreciated that - is that had the merger not gone ahead there would have been fairly major changes at BOCA, and these were bound to have an adverse effect on our members and our efforts to help conserve birds. We will never know how it would have worked out if the vote had gone the other way - but now myself, my fellow BLA directors and the combined staffs of the two organisations are dedicated to making the new organisation a major success so that we can be a powerful force for conservation and education in Australia, and help to ensure that future generations have some birds to watch!

We thank Dave for keeping us so well informed of the merger and congratulate him on being on the inaugural Committee.

In-depth interview with A W W member Who is this?

Age 66

What first attracted you to bird watching? A childhood spent in the country.

Favourite Birding Spot WTP

Favourite Bird Great-crested Grebe

Number of years seriously looking at birds 4

Number of Species seen About 200

Rarest (Favourite) bird seen Stilt Sandpiper

Bird on top of the "to be seen wish list" Orange-bellied Parrot

What would you like to see changed? More TV programs dedicate to birding in specific areas.

