



# Werribee Wag-Tales • Volume 19 No 3, 2013

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## Avalon Beach, Lara Lake & Dog Rock Batesford In May 2013

I liked this joke. There were 2 friends sitting in the pub. One friend pointed to 2 old drunks across the bar and said to his friend "that'll be us in 10 years time". His friend looked up and replied "that's a mirror you idiot".

The 2013 highlight for me so far has been the Arctic Jaeger April sighting at the mouth of the Kororoit Creek. The Jaeger is a pirate seabird in the skua family Stercorariidae. This bird shows great midair agility as it relentlessly harasses other birds to rob them of their food. This is known as Kleptoparasitism. Now every time I pass the Kororoit Creek turnoff on the Princes Highway I recall the sight of the single Jaeger rocketing over the sandbar.

At the time I wondered if there was an association between the British clothing brand Jaeger and the Ornithological Jaeger. The clothing brand Jaeger was inspired by the teachings of Gustav Jaeger (1832-1917) who was a German naturalist and hygienist. He advocated the benefits of wearing clothing made of rough animal fibres such as wool "close to the skin", objecting especially to the use of any kind of plant fibre. Originally Jaeger clothing was named "Dr. Jaeger's sanitary woollen system". However - in short, there is no connection between the Jaeger bird and the Jaeger clothing brand. I was disappointed.

The second highlight of 2103 was the two Spotted Pardalotes at Newport Lakes. They foraged for insects within a few metres of the group and seemed oblivious to our presence. The photo by Peter O'Connell captures completely the detail and colour of the plumage.

On Tuesday May 7<sup>th</sup> the Werribee Wagtails had an outing to the Geelong area. Six cars and 17 people departed Watton Street for the coastal area of Avalon Beach. Avalon beach reminds me of a deserted movie set of shacks down one side of a dirt track with consecutive house numbers up to 28. Conversation amongst residents would not stray far from fishing. A black shouldered kite was on guard perched on the 10 metre antennae. A V shaped flock of little black cormorants swept across the bay. The water in the ponds was so still that the Avocets, Black winged and Banded Stilts were reflected as if looking into a mirror.

At suburban Lara Wetlands we had to side step over large collections of poo in the car park. Probably the Cape Barren Geese. Swarms of house sparrows flew in and out of the grasses. Dave explained that the grey teal and the chest nut teal are remarkable for their near zero DNA diversity which suggests the 2 species to be closely related. How could two species share the same DNA? Two reasons given are hybridization, or a relatively recent divergence between the 2 gene pools. The group wanted to know "Could this genetic information be used in a paternity or murder trial?" Currently there is great interest in the genetics of waterfowl because they are the principle natural reservoir of highly pathogenic avian influenza viruses.

The third stop was a woodland area at the Dog Rocks Flora and Fauna Sanctuary at Batesford owned by Lit and George Belcher who generously made available their amenities and veranda. Sir Charles Frederick Belcher (1876-1970) a Great Uncle of George was a foundation member of The Bird Observers Club in 1905, and wrote *Birds of the District of Geelong Australia* in 1914. His status as a serious ornithologist is reflected in the names of two birds with which he is associated: Slender Billed Prion *Pachyptila belcheri*, and Belcher's Barbet *Buccanodon belcheri*.

I think what most will remember about the Dog Rocks were the Purple - crowned Lorikeets inspecting the real estate in the Tree hollows. Two disappeared down a hole - and the wait for them to reappear incited a rather risqué banter about what the two might be doing. I was reminded of Bev Ashford's remarks years ago down at the Drysdale Lake. Observing two ducks in the act of procreation she accurately predicted "he'll be asleep in a few minutes". Down by the Moorabool River with the warmth of the afternoon, dappled light and noise from the waterfalls the mood of the group was subdued. New Holland honey-eaters and Dusky Woodswallows were observed.

The day was characterized by only a few Raptors, and a missing and much missed Brian Thompson. The strangest sighting of the day was seen as we left Werribee. A man walking down Watton Street dressed in Mexican national costume, leading a horse - also dressed in Mexican National costume. Some left the Dog Rocks to pursue the Aussie Bittern at the WTP. I don't know if it was sighted. Ginny Flo and I visited Nancy Marriott who remains in Williamstown Hospital. The group send their warm regards and best wishes to Nancy for a full recovery.

Thank you to Mr Andre Dreyfus who provided the Tim Tams. Thank you to Mr. Mike Pratt who was the official photographer for the day. And I would like to thank and acknowledge Mr. David Torr for all his help, support and voice on the day. The number of species seen was 72 and the bird count was easily won by Carol Popham. The next outing will be Tuesday June 4<sup>th</sup> to Bacchus Marsh led by Bev Ashford.

Elizabeth Hurley Friday, 10 May, 2013







Musk Duck  
 Freckled Duck  
 Cape Barren Goose  
 Black Swan  
 Australian Wood Duck  
 Grey Teal  
 Chestnut Teal  
 Pacific Black Duck  
 Hardhead  
 Australasian Grebe  
 Hoary-headed Grebe  
 Rock dove (feral pigeon)  
 Spotted Dove  
 Crested pigeon  
 Australasian Gannet  
 Little Pied Cormorant  
 Little Black Cormorant  
 Pied Cormorant  
 Australian Pelican  
 Eastern Great Egret  
 White Faced Heron  
 Australian white Ibis  
 Royal spoonbill  
 Straw-necked Ibis  
 Black -shouldered kite  
 Whistling kite  
 Swamp Harrier  
 Wedge-tailed Eagle  
 Purple Swampphen  
 Dusky Moorhen  
 Eurasian Coot  
 Black-winged stilt  
 Red-necked avocet  
 Banded stilt  
 Red-capped Plover  
 Masked Lapwing  
 Red-necked Stint  
 Crested Tern  
 Pacific Gull  
 Silver Gull  
 Galah  
 Sulphur-crested cockatoo  
 Musk Lorikeet  
 Purple-crowned Lorikeet  
 Crimson Rosella  
 Eastern rosella  
 Red-rumped parrot  
 White-throated Treecreeper  
 Superb Fairywren  
 Spotted Pardalote  
 Striated Pardalote  
 Yellow-faced Honeyeater  
 Red Wattle bird  
 White-fronted Chat  
 New Holland Honeyeater  
 White-naped honeyeater  
 Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike  
 Golden whistler  
 Grey Shrike Thrush  
 Dusky Woodswallow  
 Willie Wagtail  
 Little Raven  
 Magpie-lark  
 Eastern yellow robin  
 Silvereye  
 Welcome Swallow  
 Common Blackbird  
 Common Myna  
 Red-browed Finch  
 Diamond Firetail  
 House Sparrow