



# Werribee Wag-Tales • Volume 18 No 1, 2012



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16 Wagtails gathered in Bacchus Marsh on fine winter morning to be led around Bacchus Marsh by Bev - a place that quite a few of us were unfamiliar with. Our first port of call was Peppertree Park by the swimming pool. The walk went along one bank of the Werribee River and was popular with dog walkers! There were indeed many peppercorn tress along the river, as well as some mysterious large green fruits as well! Our walk started with lots of Long-billed Corellas and as we walked along we soon found a number of interesting birds - a magnificent male Darter, great views of Spotted Pardalotes and the first of many Dusky Woodswallows - an unusual bird for this time of year as they usually migrate. After morning tea we headed off towards the freeway along the Avenue of Honour and stopped at the Rupert Vance Moon reserve for a 2.8 km (or was it 2.9 - the signs disagreed) loop walk along the Lerderderg River and back through some of the local market gardens. The birds here were fairly similar, although we had our first raptor (other than Brown Falcon and Black-shouldered Kites on the drive from Werribee). There was some discussion about the identity of the bird but eventually we got good views of the short tail and distinctive underwing pattern that confirmed it as a Little Eagle. We had lunch at this spot and entertainment was provided by one of our group trying to change wiper blades on their car - I have no idea why as it was not raining! We headed off for toilets - with our leader going one way and the rest of us finding some at the Information Centre (along with a first aid course). Once we were reunited we headed to our final spot - another part of Peppertree Park. More Darters were found here and a small Accipiter was flushed along the river and perched in a tree with its back to us. Much debate as to whether it was a Sparrowhawk or Goshawk - eventually it flew and we were able to see the rounded tail that identified it as a Goshawk - but from the size it must have been a male (with most raptors the males are a fair bit smaller than the females, which enables them to hunt different prey and thus not compete with their partner). The final bird call gave a respectable tally of 43 species, with the chocolates being won by Brian Kelly. Thanks to Bev for organising visits to places that were new to most of us. Next month we head to Eynesbury for our birding.

- Pacific Black Duck
- Rock dove(feral pigeon)
- Spotted Dove
- Crested pigeon
- Australasian Darter
- Little Pied Cormorant
- Australian white Ibis
- Straw-necked Ibis
- Black -shouldered kite
- Brown Goshawk
- Little Eagle
- Dusky Moorhen
- Galah
- Long-billed Corella
- Sulphur-crested cockatoo
- Rainbow lorikeet
- Crimson Rosella
- Eastern rosella
- Red-rumped parrot
- Superb Fairywren
- Striated thornbill
- Yellow-rumped thornbill
- Spotted Pardalote
- White plumed honeyeater
- Bell Miner
- Red Wattle bird
- New Holland Honeyeater
- Grey Shrike Thrush
- Dusky Woodswallow
- Australian Magpie
- Grey fantail
- Willie Wagtail
- Little Raven
- Magpie-lark
- Silvereye
- Welcome Swallow
- Common Blackbird
- Common Starling
- Common Myna
- Red-browed Finch
- House Sparrow



## Late Bird Count? Written by Carole

Chris had just pulled into Watton Street to let Pat out to get her car. When I passed a remark to Jenny who was waiting for Mike to collect her, I happened to glance up. There on an open branch was a sight for sore eyes. Mum had "parked" her youngster while she went off. There it sat giving us a fabulous view and a chance to study a youngster of the species. You know what they say- everyone should have a hobby and that is what we had... A young Australian Hobby also known as the Little Falcon. It is distinguishable from the larger Brown Falcons because the dark eye patch is much fuller around the teardrop area. Check it out in your Field Guide and keep an eye out in future as they are sometimes hunting over the CBD area

Something not many people know'.

You probably walked past and didn't notice a very interesting plant by the side of the path on our first walk along the river. It was a fine example of **Fuller's Teasel** *Dipsacus fullonum sativus*. This plant was once widely used in wool processing, as a natural comb for cleaning, aligning and raising the nap on fabrics hence their introduction to the Geelong area from where they have spread widely. Its stouter, somewhat recurved spines on the seed heads are an improvement on the wild parent.. The dried flower heads were attached to spindles, wheels, or cylinders, sometimes called teasel frames, to tease the fibres. By the 20th century, teasels were largely replaced by metal cards which were more uniform and didn't need constant replacement, as the teasel heads wear fairly quickly. However, some wool weavers still prefer teasels claiming that the result is better; in particular, if a teasel meets serious resistance in the fabric, it breaks, whereas a metal tool rips the cloth.

Florists use Teasel heads in dried floral arrangements.

But why should Werribee Wagtails be interested in them? .... They are an important winter food source for many birds.

It is with much sadness that we note the passing of both Doug Blood and Gilbert Pickersgill, (far right) They both has a passion for the Western Treatment Plant.

Gilbert left Werribee about 8 years ago but I am sure some will remember him.

Doug was out birding on the WTP on Tuesday 4th. June, he died peacefully on June 6th.

