



# Werribee Wag-Tales



## Meandering in Melton

*An Amazing Day In Melton: Thanks to Geraldine and Brian Kelly for showing us around their patch.*

A wonderful day was had by all at the Birdlife Werribee outing in Melton led by locals Geraldine and Brian Kelly.

Our first stop was **Toolern Creek Park** where we walked along the paved and gravel paths following the edge of the Toolern Creek escarpment overlooking the growing suburbs of Melton. Here we saw 3 Cuckoo species:- Horsfield's, Shining and Fantail as well as other local species. As we walked back we spotted a pair of Jacky Winters and several Dusky Woodswallows and were fortunate to see one on nest.

We next moved on to **Melton Botanic Gardens** for morning tea in the covered BBQ areas before walking along Ryans Creek to the Nursery and Depot.

During our walk we were able

to flush out two Latham's Snipes which was a treat for us. Along with a flock of Musk Lorikeets and off in the distance the call of at least one persistent Rufous Songlark. We then returned to the BBQ areas for lunch.

After lunch we drove to **Harkness Woodland** for our final walk. The day was turning out to be quite warm and the birds seemed to be resting. The resident mob of kangaroos took flight at our presence and a herd of cows, which shouldn't have been present, became restless at the commotion of the kangaroos. Mark Buckby located a Brown Goshawk at its nest with two large chicks.

We also saw Diamond Firetails Jacky Winter and a number of White-winged Choughs.

Bird of the day. Brown Goshawk and young.

**Count for the Trip: 61 Birds.**

**Winner: Len Towerzey**



Pacific Black Duck and ducklings *Photo: Dorothy Jenkins*



Musk Lorikeet

*Photo: Dorothy Jenkins*



Dusky Woodswallow

*Photo: David Jenkins*



Brown Goshawk and nestlings. *Photo: Dorothy Jenkins*

## BIRDLIST MELTON DAY DECEMBER 2 2014

Maned Duck  
Pacific Black Duck  
Chestnut Teal  
Straw-necked Ibis  
White-faced Heron  
Australian Pelican  
Little Black Cormorant  
Great Cormorant  
Little Eagle  
Wedge-tailed Eagle  
Brown Goshawk  
Purple Swamphen  
Eurasian Coot  
Masked Lapwing  
Black-fronted Dotterel  
Latham's Snipe  
Spotted Dove  
Crested Pigeon  
Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo  
Shining Bronze Cuckoo  
Fan-tailed Cuckoo  
Brown Falcon  
Galah  
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo

Rainbow Lorikeet  
Musk Lorikeet  
Little Lorikeet  
Purple-crowned Lorikeet  
Eastern Rosella  
Red-rumped Parrot  
Superb Fairywren  
New Holland Honeyeater  
Brown-headed Honeyeater  
White-naped Honeyeater  
Red Wattlebird  
Noisy Miner  
White-plumed Honeyeater  
Spotted Pardalote  
Striated Pardalote  
Yellow-rumped Thornbill  
Australian Magpie  
Dusky Woodswallow  
Black-faced Cuckooshrike  
Varied Sittella  
Willie Wagtail  
Grey Fantail  
Magpie-lark  
Little Raven



White-winged Chough  
Jacky Winter  
Eurasian Skylark  
Welcome Swallow  
Australian Reed Warbler  
Rufous Songlark  
Common Myna  
Common Starling  
Common Blackbird  
House Sparrow  
Diamond Firetail  
Red-browed Finch  
European Greenfinch

## WERRIBEE RIVER PARK: IT'S ALL A DAY'S WORK AT "THE OFFICE".

As recent arrivals in the Werribee area please excuse the "Oh, look what we found."

For various reasons Dorothy and I are not great travellers preferring to find a good birding area and spend some time getting to know the forest as a whole, not just a collection of trees and undergrowth.

To our delight there is an area close to home that suits our more pedestrian requirements.

**Werribee River Park.** The area that is down behind the Werribee Mansion precinct and has several tracks through the wonderful old River Red Gums and is close to the Werribee River.

The park extends along the sandy cliffs opposite K Road Cliffs and the plan, so they tell me, is to extend the area all the way down to the mouth of the River at Werribee South.



*Photo: Dorothy Jenkins*

We access the area from the New Farm Road, past the Melbourne Water Discovery Centre, then over the freeway, and along a gravel track to a car-park right on the river cliffs. From there a very sturdy, easy-grade, walkway leads down to the river flat and over a foot bridge and into the forest.

Apart from the usual gathering of raptors, at the moment the area is alive with nesting Wagtails, Red-rumped Parrots and visiting Purple-crowned Lorikeets. As well as an many Rainbow Lorikeets. And a very sneaky Brown Goshawk, that no doubt has a mate.

Highlight however is several pairs of Sacred Kingfishers, whose active "Kee, Kee, Kee,-Swqareck", can be heard along the track next to the golf links. No doubt as time goes on there will be the pitter patter of little Kingfishers in there.

## LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER, AN AUSTRALIAN FIRST : REPORT FROM JOHN BARKLA

We were not long back from Viet Nam when an American Dowitcher was found at Lake Tutchewop, in northern Victoria around 7 November 2014.

At the time, there was discussion as to whether it was a Long-billed or Short-billed Dowitcher. I had seen a previous Short-billed Dowitcher in Australia, but there had never been a confirmed sighting of Long-billed.

As days passed and many people got to see the bird, the reports were that most regarded it as a Long-billed Dowitcher. With BirdLife and other

commitments, we could not get up there to look for it.

18th November 2014 that all changed and we made a rather hastily arranged trip. I called my best friend, David Kelly to postpone our pre-arranged lunch and I called Jim Wright to postpone our morning coffee.

Jim's reaction was to drop everything and ask if he could come with us. When I explained that if we did not find the bird we would stay the night and mount another search the next day, Jim decided to take his own vehicle.

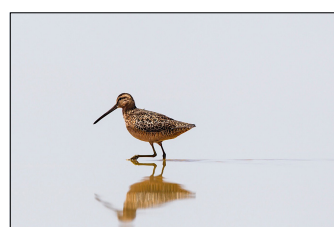
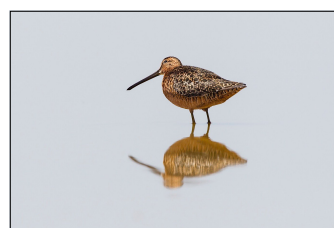
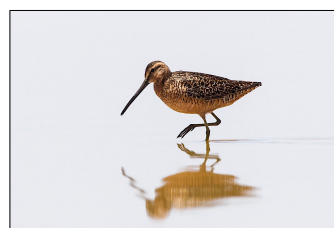
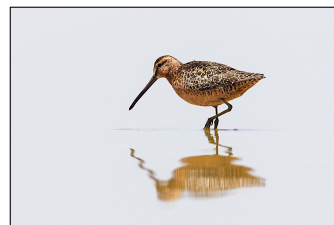
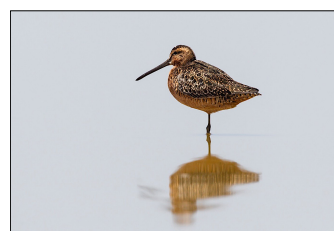
Needless to say, he got there long before

we did. By the time we arrived, he had joined Bill and Jack Moorhead who were already looking at the bird.

Jim walked out to the road and flagged us down and within a few minutes we all had great views. Better still, Bill got some video during which the bird had called, confirming it was a Long-billed.

I set up my camera and had the extraordinary good fortune of having the bird walk closer to me as I was photographing.

These are a selection of my best shots. I hope you enjoy them



*Report and photos kindly provided by courtesy of John Barkla*

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### A NEW SPECIES FOR AUSTRALIA!

New species are often added to the list of birds seen in Australia, but these usually are found on islands off the north coast. Recently a new species turned up in Victoria!

Dowitchers are medium sized waders somewhat like a small Godwit. There are 3 species - Asian (which is seen quite regularly in northern Australia), Short-billed (an American species that has been seen around 3 times in Australia) and Long-billed (also American and never before seen in Australia)

Birders were therefore very excited when an "American" Dowitcher (the Short and Long-billed are very hard to tell apart) was seen at Lake Tutchewop (north of Kerang) around the 7th of Nov. It was seen regularly over the next few days - but by the 12th (when Iain, Mark and I made a day trip to see it) - it had gone.

However, it came back soon after. So on the 18th we once again drove up and found the bird very easily as there were other birders present who had it lined up in their scopes.

*David Torr*

## PINKERTON/BUSH'S PADDOCK/EYNESBURY BIRD COUNT NOVEMBER 16

The last count for the year was conducted at the 3 sites to the northwest of Werribee. It has been over 10 years of data collection on these sites and as the seasons change so to do some of the bird species.

The all night rain cleared as we met at **Pinkerton**, with a group of 15 Wagtails eager to see what was in the area.

Into the forest we found at the dam site, a large number of Red-kneed and Black-fronted Dotterel.

We then moved to the much smaller **Bush's Paddock**, only

500m or so away, and now between the two areas the signs of Frances Overmars and her team's regular planting activities are beginning to show some success.

Eventually the corridor between the two areas will be a fine stand of trees offering the birds and mammals a safer passage between the two main sites. A first time bird in the area a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was feeding at Surbiton Park. We had lunch and the rain seemed like holding off, so on to **Eynesbury**.

The usual suspects were found on the lake and we were pleased to see Freckled Duck and several young Little

Pied Cormorants. We went to the forest to look for among other birds, Diamond Firetail and Speckled Warbler. The Firetails were found along with a number of recent fledged young; unfortunately no Warblers.

Count for the day 77 Species. With some increase in some numbers and a bit of a reduction in others.



Diamond Firetail

*Photo: Dieter Boz*



Dusky Woodswallows

*Photo: Dieter Boz*

### Shirley Says:

When you were all at Melton I went down to the Zoo for a wander, how interesting it was!

There is now an Australian section, A dim lit area so you can see the Nocturnal animals.

There are Koalas from Kangaroo Island and soon to take up residence some Orange Bellied Parrots. They are breeding them in captivity at Healesville, they will train them to fly long distances and evade raptors! Before releasing them at Melaleuca in the hope they will eventually return to wild.

I am fascinated as to how you train a bird for the long flight? A very long piece of string???

Thought it may be worth a visit by the Wagtails sometime.

### Six species to see.

Sue Myers sent in a link to an article in "The Conversation", a scientific sharing site. It's titled

**Six extraordinary Australian birds you need to see.**

Here's the full link

<http://theconversation.com/six-extraordinary-australian-birds-you-need-to-see-34481>

Before you go there to look, have a guess at what they might be. Let me know if you got any of them.

## WESTERN TREATMENT PLANT BIRD LIFE OPEN DAY

On 11th November an open day at WTP Discovery Centre was hosted by Birdlife Australia, Threatened Bird Network (TBN) and Holcim the day consisted of morning talks and a bus ride round the plant in the afternoon.

Janelle Thomas began that day by explained the work of the Threatened Bird Network

Chris Purnell talked about the work of numerous community science projects and the results that are available for access online.

Dieter, Dorothy and I, attended, and quite a number of other Birdlife Australia members. Along with locals who wanted to learn a little more about the birds, the WTP and the efforts that Melbourne Water are making to keep and improve the habitat. Also a number of Holcim employees were on hand to talk about their work in conservation.

Chris set about the task of introducing us the GISS of a bird and with some excellent examples from life showed how

the skill of recognising shapes can be acquired.

As it was Remembrance Day we paused for a Minute's Silence and Chris then showed us some example of the birds we would likely see in the afternoon.

Following lunch, we boarded the bus and Chris Lunardi began his usual patter of how the Treatment plant used to function, and how it has changed its operation.

The bus took us down to near The Borrow Pits and the chance to see into the conservation ponds. I must admit I felt very happy about being able to look into the ponds from a greater height than out of the i20, and so could see much more.

We got out of the bus at The Borrow Pits and 'scopes were set up and quite a few waders were on hand to give everyone a chance to test their new skills.

Then on to Lake Borrie where we again had some time with the scopes. Many Whiskered Terns entertained us as they hunted close to the roadway.



The Chrises did a great job of explaining how to pick the various waders and what to look for in id as well as make sure everyone got a good look through the scopes.

All in all a good day at the WTP, certainly for the newer folk a chance not only to see the breadth of the area but also to gain an overview of the amazing birds that use the area.

*David Jenkins*

## WHAT MAKES A... HORSFIELDS BRONZE AND SHINING BRONZE CUCKOO

**Often the Call of these birds is the first sign of their presence.**

Has a descending call, like, wyiooo, wyiooo wyiooo. Fairly rapid about 4-5 seconds.

The chest bars generally don't meet in the middle nor go under the chin.

White face with a distinctive dark eye bar



Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo



Shining Bronze Cuckoo

Has an ascending call, like 'Fee—ee Fee—ee Fee—ee. Like a person calling a dog.

But also can have a descending call

Bars at the front meet all the way up to under the chin.

Whitish face no eye bar.

Usually a mottled or speckled face.

## FROM OUR BROKEN HILL CORRESPONDENT

We are visited each morning by a pair of Australian Ringnecks. They are a large green Parrot with some blue and yellow, and a red band across the nose.

Although brightly coloured they blend into the foliage of next-door's almond tree.

I watch for the empty almond fruit to drop. Then I look up and wait for them to move and then I see them. They make a hole in the fruit and extract the soft almond kernel, then drop the empty green fruit. At first I felt a bit angry. I thought they might eat all the almonds. They come each morning and eat a few. So now I don't mind sharing. Anyway it is next door's tree. I enjoy their high flute calls each morning.

A few days ago we had a pair of Pied Butcherbirds sitting on the power lines into our yard. They can really pipe a tune.

They are a welcome relief to next door's three dogs barking, rooster crowing all night, chooks cackling all day and cockatoo squawking when he feels like it. And the sparrows!!!

We love walking in the desert along a dry creek or river. Some places you cannot see above the scrub, other places it is salt bush or low Heath or dry grass. Some plants are thorny but usually the going is easy.

The big trees in the dry river provide shade for us. Often we branch off and go up a small two metre wide creek for a several kilometres. It is easy walking on the flat sandy bottom of the creeks and rivers.

When it rains the water scours the vegetation out making easy walking. The birds and animals don't see us coming until we climb up the bank.

So far we have seen 80 species of birds within 25 kilometres of Broken Hill.

*James Gunn*



Crimson Chat

*Photo: Surong Gunn*

FROM SURONG'S FILES.



White-winged Fairy-wren

*Photo: Surong Gunn*

## MEMBERS AMBLINGS AND ANECDOTES



## The President's Christmas greetings!



It's been I think a good year for the group - the major change of course being our fairly smooth transition into becoming **BirdLife Werribee** - still a few issues to sort out but it is good to be backed by a major group, and we have acquired quite a few new members as a result.

The other major change of course was the transition from Shirley to David as newsletter editor - I think we all appreciate the great effort that Shirley put in over 20+ years into running the group and editing the newsletter, but David has already made a significant contribution in this area.

I know I am the figurehead, but the group could not run without all the people who volunteer to lead outings - and especially Iain for organising our annual camp.

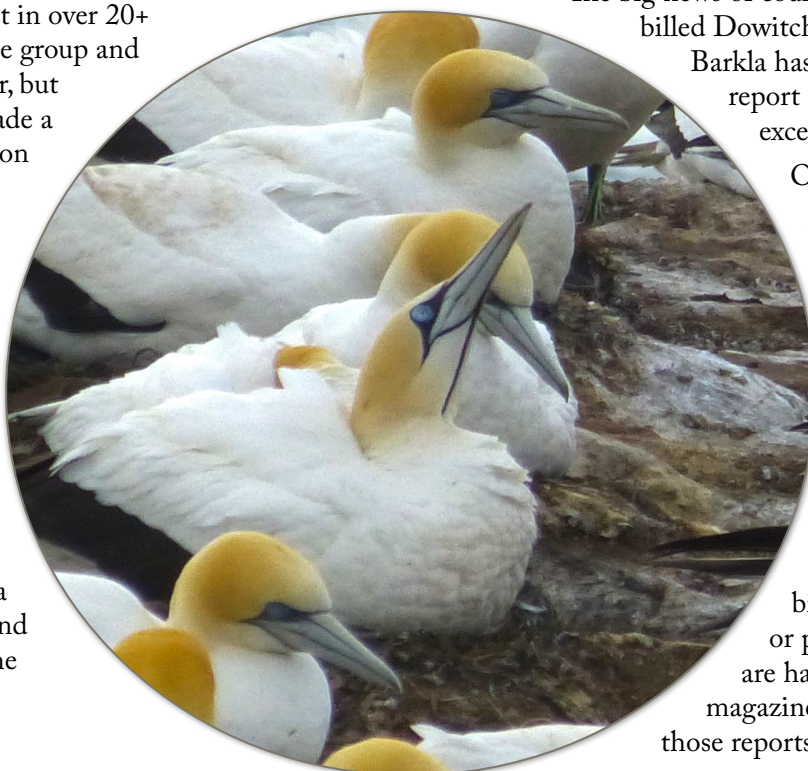
Hope you all have a great festive season and that we can have some great birding in 2015



## 2015 Activities Calendar is now available

Those of us on the mailing list should have revived a copy from Dave Torr of the 2015 Activities programme.

If you haven't got a copy or didn't get one, please drop a note to Dave and he'll make sure you are up-to-date for 2015 events.



## The Cape Gannet

The distinctive bill stripe on the Cape Gannet shows well in this featured shot from Iain Denham.

Looks like the long drive was worth it. Trip details on page 8

## From the editor

It has been a very busy and eventful November for our group.

The big news of course is the Long-billed Dowitcher and John

Barkla has kindly provided a report and some excellent photos.

Our own traveling group also made the journey. Not too hard to find the way, I'm told, by following the convoy of Subarus up the Murray-Valley Highway.

Any reports of birds in your area, or places you've been are happily added to our magazine. So please keep those reports coming in.

## Six species to see

### What's on your list?

Sue Myers sent in a link, see page 8.

What would be on your list?

How about sending me your pick of the species you'd most like to see. Australian of course!

I'll put up a list in the newsletter as I receive your best six. So email away.

## First outing in January; but not as we know it.

The first outing for Birdlife Werribee (formerly Werribee Wagtails) for January 2015 is a bus trip to Ballarat. The date is NOT our usual first Tuesday of the month, but rather the 27th of January, because that is when the bus and driver are available for us. NOTE: there is no February trip planned.

Please contact Dave Torr if you would like to take the bus to Ballarat, or if you are going to carpool.

## CONTACTS, WEB ADDRESS AND PLACES TO VISIT ON LINE

### Birdlife Werribee Contacts

**Email** [werribee@birdlife.org.au](mailto:werribee@birdlife.org.au)

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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/>

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-werribee>

### LOOKING FOR SEMIPALMATED PLOVER AND CAPE GANNET.

Inspired by our success with the Dowitcher, Iian, Mark and I decided to have a crack at another rare American vagrant - a Semipalmated Plover that had been seen recently at Pelican Rocks near Mt Gambier. "Semipalmated" refers to the partially-webbed feet of the bird - a rare feature for a wader.

We set out on Monday 24th November for the long drive to the site - with heavy rain for much of the way. Arriving around 1pm we had no rain but strong winds and most of the birds huddled in rocks

and weed a fair way out. After a while Mark saw the bird close in and we got good views. Fellow Melbourne birders John Barkla and Chris Lester were on their way and would arrive in around 30 minutes according to a phone call. Would the bird stay for them?

When they arrived John got a quick view in the scope but before he could take a photo - or Chris could see it - the bird flew off. We headed off back to Mt Gambier and had a text a couple of hours later that they had seen the bird!

A drive first thing on Tuesday to Point Danger (familiar to those who went on the recent camp) to be met by Rob Farnes who had the Cape Gannet lined up in his scope for us. Not brilliant views as it was very windy and the birds were all lying down, but enough to satisfy ourselves that we had seen it. Rob then very kindly waded through a local swamp in the hope of flushing a Bittern for Mark - but alas it was not to be.

A final call at Killarney Beach on the way home and we managed to see a Wood Sandpiper that has been there for a while.

Quite an exciting 2 weeks - what next I wonder??



Semipalmated and Red-capped Plovers *Photo: Iian Denham*

*Dave Torr*