



NEWSLETTER: AUGUST 2011

June meeting: Roz Jessop, Victorian Wader Study Group “Ruddy Turnstones Migration – Early Results of Geolocator Studies”

At our June meeting Roz Jessop from the Victorian Wader Study Group gave a fascinating talk on the migration patterns of Ruddy Turnstones as revealed by geolocator studies.

Geolocators are tiny devices, which record light level data from which latitude and longitude can be calculated, provided there is sunset and sunrise (i.e. they are not applicable in high latitudes). They are not as accurate as GPS loggers – accuracy to within about ± 150 km – but their great advantage is their small size enabling them to be attached to migratory birds; they are also much cheaper, and can record for several years. They do have to be recovered to download the information, however.

Roz spoke about Ruddy Turnstones tagged and fitted with geolocators at Flinders in April 2009. Six birds were fitted, of which four were recaptured the following year and the geolocators recovered.

On analysis of the information it was found that the four birds had travelled to Siberia via Taiwan (taking six days to fly non-stop to Taiwan, and spending between 8 and 17 days there). After spending the northern summer in Siberia they took various routes back to Australia.

Unfortunately the geolocators on three of the birds stopped recording data while they were still in Siberia or northern Asia. However two of the birds were seen back at Flinders in October



Photo: Lee Denis

The fourth bird – with leg flag '9Y' – was found to have returned to Australia via the central Pacific, stopping at the Aleutian and Gilbert Islands for a couple of months. Its return trip covered 27,000 kilometres, arriving back in Flinders in December. It was recaptured and its geolocator recovered in the following January.

It was also possible to calculate the average flying speed of the birds at 50-55 kmh.

The VWSG plans further geolocator studies in the future which will no doubt provide fascinating information on the epic migrations of these birds.

August meeting: Steve Yorke

Our August speaker was Steve Yorke, Head Ranger, The Briars, speaking on “Climate Change in High Places – From Russia with ... New Friends”

Steve was invited by an old friend to help with a workshop at an International Climate Change conference held during July 2010 at Altai, Russia (near Kazakhstan). Altai's average winter temperature range is -31 to -9o. In 2010 Russia experienced a very hot summer – temperatures of up to 40o, leading to forest fires which killed about 11,000 people by respiratory problems, an extraordinary death toll. At the conference the theme was that climate change is impacting most on the environment

at high altitudes. The temperature rise is greatest at high altitudes, leading to glaciers melting, rising snowlines, winters are shorter & fiercer and more droughts. High altitude animals have to retreat to higher altitudes, when possible. After the conference the participants went on a one week excursion to a range of Altai national parks, then Steve travelled on to Moscow & Irkutsk – capital of Eastern Siberia, and Lake Baikal – an enormous inland lake, with 20% of world’s freshwater, 636k long, 48k wide. Lake Baikal has Nerpa seals, the world’s only freshwater seals. A most interesting talk with fascinating photos of an area rarely visited by Australians.

June Excursion: Endeavour Fern Gully

Our June excursion was a visit to Endeavour Fern Gully in Red Hill. This is a section of remnant vegetation that is under the control of the National Trust, having been donated in 1973. All of the native trees are regrowth, the dominant messmate having been logged previously – in fact there was once a sawmill in this gully (the gully of Stoney Creek, which flows down to Western Port Bay at Shoreham)

We were taken on a guided tour by members of the Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association (SPIFFA, www.spiffa.org), who pointed out a number of rare and threatened native plants that are being cared for in the reserve including *Parsonsia brownii*, the Twining Silk Pod, and *Hedycarya angustifolia*, the Austral Mulberry

The area has been grazed in the past, but not cleared, and having been in private ownership for many years is now accessible to the public. Some boardwalks have been constructed, and some cleared land has recently been added, on which there is an active planting programme.



Photo: Lee Denis

August Excursion: Boggy Creek & Studio Park, Langwarrin

I wasn't expecting to see much in the way of flowers on this excursion, being the last month of winter, so I was very pleasantly surprised by the diversity we saw. Spring seems to have started early.

Our first stop was the junction of Little Boggy

Creek and Boggy Creek, at Lexton Drive Langwarrin. We heard bell miners, for the first time in quite a while, as they seem to have moved on from a lot of their old haunts. In flower were *Melaleuca squarrosa*, *Acacia oxycedrus*, *Acacia paradoxa*, *Goodenia ovata*, *Bossiaea cinerea*, *Dillwynia cinerascens*, *Epacris impressa*, *Billardiera scandens*, *Correa reflexa* - green and red, and *Ricinocarpos pinifolius* (wedding bush). There were a few remnant tree ferns.

One plant which had us intrigued for a while, looking like Vietnamese mint, but without the smell, turned out to be *Persicaria decipiens*, slender knotweed.

We then went on to Studio Park, behind McClelland Gallery. This beautiful remnant of heathland is a sad reminder of what has been bulldozed in Langwarrin in the last few decades. The star of the show for me was *Leucopogon ericoides*, a mass of pink and white flowers, reminiscent of *Micromyrtus* in the Wimmera. Also flowering were *Leucopogon virgatus*,

Bossiaea cinerea, *Epacris impressa*, *Hibbertia sericea*, *Ricinocarpos pinifolius*, *Trachymene anisocarpa* (wild parsnips), *Hypoxis vaginata* (yellow stars), *Acacia oxycedrus*, *Banksia marginata*, a variety of sundews (*Drosera*), and for orchids - *Pterostylis nutans* and *P. melogramma* (tall).

The birds were good too - the highlights being Yellow tailed black cockatoos, Golden Whistler, White-eared honeyeater, Eastern Spinebill, Brown Thornbill, Spotted Pardalote, Red browed Finch, Grey Shrike thrush, Welcome Swallow, and Grey Fantail.

Birdwatching Group

Rolfes 5 September 2011

Bird List			
Pacific Black Duck	Superb Fairy-wren	New Holland Honeyeater	Australian Raven
Straw-necked Ibis	Spotted Pardalote	Eastern Yellow Robin	Red-browed Finch
Swamp Harrier	Brown Thornbill	Varied Sittella	European Goldfinch
Purple Swamphen	Red Wattlebird	Grey Shrike-thrush	Mistletoebird
Spotted Turtle-Dove	Little Wattlebird	Grey Fantail	Welcome Swallow
Crested Pigeon	Noisy Miner	Willie Wagtail	Yellow tailed black cockatoo
Eastern Rosella	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike	
Fan-tailed Cuckoo (heard)	White-eared Honeyeater	Grey Butcherbird	
Laughing Kookaburra	White-naped Honeyeater	Australian Magpie	

In Flower

Bossiaea cinerea

Bossiaea prostrata

Ricinocarpos pinifolius (wedding bush)

Epacris impressa

Pterostylis nutans

Pterostylis pedunculata

Acianthus caudatus

UPCOMING EVENTS

Upcoming events can be found at the website. Notable programme items coming up are a talk and subsequent field trip on frogs, led by Robin Drury of FNCV (October) and a field trip to the Brisbane Ranges in November.

Peninsula Field Naturalists Club Inc

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month with a field trip the following Saturday. Further information and current Programme of Events can be found at our website.

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