



**NEWSLETTER: DECEMBER 2013**

**FIELD TRIP TO CRIB POINT  
28 October**

Unlike last time we went to Crib Point, conditions were not ideal. It was overcast and drizzling, and the sun orchids stayed closed up. However we had interesting company – Karen Lester of DEPI, and Russell Mawson of the Australian Native Orchid Society. Russell showed us two Copper Beard Orchids, there was a tongue orchid in flower, and plenty of onion orchids.

**Orchids – Lorimer St**

- Thelymitra ixioides* Spotted Sun Orchid
  - Calochilus campestris* Copper Beard Orchid
  - Microtis unifolia* Onion Orchid
  - Cryptostylis subulate* Large Tongue Orchid
- (Names per Rudie Kuitert)



*Boletellus emodensis* Photo: Lee Denis



*Calochilus campestris* (Copper Beard Orchid)  
Photo: Yvonne Incigneri

After Lorimer St we stopped at Crib Point Primary School, but couldn't find any orchids, then after lunch we went to the railway line near Stony Point Station. There we saw Tall Leek Orchids and Donkey Orchids both of which had finished flowering, and a few Green Leek Orchids, which are good to see, being rare. Also a rather spectacular fungi – *Boletellus emodensis*. - **Judy Smart**

**Orchids – Railway Line Stony Point**

- Prasophyllum lindleyanum* Green leek orchid
- P. elatum* Tall leek orchid

**In Flower**

- |                                 |                        |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Arthropodium strictum</i>    | Chocolate lily         |
| <i>Billardiera scandens</i>     | Common Apple berry     |
| <i>Bossiaea prostrata</i>       | Prostrate Bossiaea     |
| <i>Burchardia umbellata</i>     | Milkmaids              |
| <i>Chamaescilla corymbosa</i>   | Blue Stars             |
| <i>Comesperma volubile</i>      | Love Creeper           |
| <i>Dianella revolute</i>        | Black-anther Flax-lily |
| <i>Dillwynia glaberrima</i>     | Smooth Parrot-pea      |
| <i>Goodenia geniculata</i>      | Bent Goodenia          |
| <i>Hibbertia stricta</i>        | Guinea flower          |
| <i>Helichrysum scorpioides</i>  | Button Everlasting     |
| <i>Kennedia prostrata</i>       | Running postman        |
| <i>Lagenifera stipitata</i>     | Bottle daisy           |
| <i>Leptospermum myrsinoides</i> | Silky Tea tree         |
| <i>Lobelia simplicaulis</i>     | Blue Lobelia           |
| <i>Lomandra filiformis</i>      | Wattle Mat-rush        |
| <i>Lomandra nana</i>            | Pale Mat-rush          |
| <i>Patersonia fragilis</i>      | Short Purple-flag      |
| <i>Patersonia occidentalis</i>  | Long Purple-flag       |
| <i>Pimelea humilis</i>          | Common Rice flower     |
| <i>Pimelia octophylla</i>       | Nodding rice flower    |
| <i>Platylobium obtusangulum</i> | Flat pea               |
| <i>Sphaerolobium vimineum</i>   | Leafless globe pea     |
| <i>Stylidium gramineum</i>      | Trigger plant          |
| <i>Stylidium perpusillum</i>    | Dwarf trigger plant    |
| <i>Thysanotus patersonii</i>    | Twining fringe lily    |
| <i>Xanthorrhoea minor</i>       | Small grass tree       |
| <i>Xanthosia pilosa</i>         | Woolly xanthosia       |

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**Adam Magennis, Mornington Peninsula Shire Cultural Heritage Officer  
Cultural Landscapes and Applied Indigenous Archaeological Management  
9 October**

Adam started by thanking the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, for the great resource they provide for indigenous history in the form of the Victorian Naturalist magazine, and notes from field trips since the Club formed in 1884. Adam came to archaeology after a career as a stonemason and bricklayer, brought to an end by arthritis, then as a Park Ranger on the Mornington Peninsula, then to Mornington Shire, during which time he has qualified as an archaeologist. He is currently working on his Masters thesis, on bricklaying skills at Port Philip, particularly The Briars homestead. He is the only indigenous officer in local government in Victoria.

Adam explained the concept of cultural landscape, which for each person or group has elements of social, cultural, environmental and historical and family connection. For indigenous people there are four eras of human settlement in Victoria.

- The first is late Pleistocene – up to 10,000 years ago (2000 generations). During this era Tasmania, Papua New Guinea and the near Pacific Islands were part of Australian mainland.
- The second is the Holocene – from 10,000 years ago until 1840 (500 generations). Port Philip Bay was a Yarra River flood plain and hunting ground until 8000 years ago, when climate change and glacial melt raised the sea level and created the Bay.
- The third is Post-contact (4 generations) – from 1840 when Victoria was settled by whites
- The fourth is Recognition period (2 generations) – from 1967 when Aboriginals were given human status, legal and voting rights, and recognition as prior residents, rather than Terra Nullius.

Archaeological sites – Pleistocene – there are 6 major Australian ones including Lake Mungo in NSW and Warrein Cave in Tasmania, and in Victoria Kow Swamp, Keilor and Cloggs Cave at Buchan. At Keysborough, Pleistocene artefacts were found recently during work on

East Link, artefacts excavated and removed, but site is now built over.

Mornington Peninsula archaeological sites and cultural landscapes of the Holocene are:

- Shell middens- for example No 16 beach at Rye, which has a 1000 year history, from 5000 years ago.
- Bush food mounds – women would cultivate the patches where orchids, lilies and yams grew, harvesting most of the tubers and planting tubers for next year’s food.
- Tools and blades – made from silcrete, found from Wonga Mar (Arthurs Seat) to Cape Schanck. Adam showed us how to make a stone tool by splitting rocks and creating an edge.
- Scar trees – banksias and River red gums, for example at Carrum Downs and Cranbourne Rd.
- Dreaming tracks- tracks used for seasonal movements around the Peninsula – the Point Nepean Road and Nepean Highway follow traditional tracks.
- Firestick farming – such as clearings in forest

During the Post-contact era there were massacres at Collins Settlement, Sorrento and Safety Beach, followed by missions at Mordialloc (next to the bridge), Dromana, (current site of Hickenbotham Winery) and Cape Schanck. Some pastoral leases were safe places for Aboriginals – The Briars, Coolart, Harewood and McCrae homesteads. One of Adam’s duties at the Shire is to check new development sites for artefacts by soil sampling – the top 300mm is Holocene sands, the darker soil below is Pleistocene, and as you go deeper you go further back in time. He also researches likely archaeological sites from a combination of historical records and favourable for human settlement factors such as fresh water.

Adam had more to tell us but time ran out and so did Adam’s voice – he had a cold. - **Judy Smart**

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**BIRDWATCHING AT WOODS RESERVE  
7 October**

Our group of eight birdwatchers met at the Balnarring Road entrance to the Reserve, noting a Magpie-lark in its mud nest on the opposite side of the road before walking down the track to find the Bell Miners still in possession of the weedy gully (Pittosporum and Boneseed) not far inside the gate. Although the birds spend most of their time in the eucalypts they do not venture far out of the gully even though the eucalypts continue up the hill.

Notable sightings included Crested Shrike-tit, in low vegetation quite close up; Varied Sittellas scurrying along

the tree trunks, and a Shining Bronze-cuckoo calling in full view. The total for the day of 40 birds includes a good contingent of honeyeaters, both Pardalotes, and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike. Olive-backed Orioles were calling, although not seen. A pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles was spotted circling high overhead.

We were also pleased to notice one of the native buttercups, *Ranunculus glabrifolius*, or Shining Buttercup, together with another small yellow *Hypoxis*, identified as *H. vaginata* (Yellow Star). - **Lee Denis**



Bell Miner. Photo: Yvonne Incigneri



*Ranunculus glabrifolius*. Photo: Lee Denis

<b>Bird List For Woods Reserve 7 October 2013</b>				
Australian Wood Duck	Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	Bell Miner	Eastern Yellow Robin	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike
Australian Pelican	Laughing Kookaburra	Noisy Miner	Varied Sittella	Olive-backed Oriole
Straw-necked Ibis	Superb Fairy-wren	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Crested Shrike-tit	Grey Butcherbird
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Spotted Pardalote	White-eared Honeyeater	Golden Whistler	Australian Magpie
Galah	Striated Pardalote	White-plumed Honeyeater	Rufous Whistler	Grey Currawong
Crimson Rosella	White-browed Scrubwren	Brown-headed Honeyeater	Grey Shrike-thrush	Little Raven
Eastern Rosella	Brown Thornbill	White-naped Honeyeater	Magpie-Lark	Common Blackbird
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Red Wattlebird	Eastern Spinebill	Grey Fantail	Common Myna

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**SEANA Camp Numurkah  
Hosted by Broken Creek FNC  
11-14 October**

Four members of the Club attended the SEANA Camp held at Numurkah, hosted by the Broken Creek FNC. Doris Weigert and Pat Gomm have each written about the field trips they went on.

**Doris Weigert**

Pat Gomm, Heather Ducat and myself traveled the 300 kms approx. to attend the Camp and stayed in the Numurkah Caravan Park. Ruth Marriott also attended the Camp from our Club.

Friday 11<sup>th</sup> evening after greetings, we were given soup and a bread roll for dinner at the Numurkah Town Hall with a light supper to follow. Our guest Speaker for the evening was Rolf Weber (DSE) and Graham Stockfed from the Australian Freshwater Turtle Conservation and Research Association. Some live turtles were on display in a large tub.

Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> saw Heather and myself on a bus trip to the Cadell Fault (seismic activity which altered the course of the Murray River). The old course of the Murray River is known today as Green Gully. We saw the Barmah Sandhills (NSW) which are wind blown lunettes from when the area, from Shepparton in a circle to Echuca, was a large lake around 10,000 years ago.

Saturday evening was a 3 course meal and our Speaker was Prof. Ian Lunt of Charles Sturt University, Albury who spoke about the Governments irrigation buy back scheme and of the land being returned to nature (SEANA general meeting was held before tea).

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup>. Heather and I took the Kingfisher Cruise on the Murray River at the edge of the Barmah (Forest) National Park. (The area is at present flooded but the Barmah Lake was dry only a few years ago). We journeyed across the Barmah Lake and had a wonderful aerial display by a sea eagle, a few other water birds were sighted but not many. We went through the wetland which was very quiet, peaceful and beautiful. Lots of River Red Gums. This area was home to the Yorta Yorta Aboriginal people.

For lunch we went to the home of Ann Timm (BCFNC Treasurer). The weather changed drastically so we were glad to shelter in her cosy shed for lunch. We then went for a walk in a sparser area of the Barmah Forest looking for birds and plants. A chough was sighted on a nest and yellow

parrots were heard and glimpsed. Dinner was a 2 course meal and we had a video presentation of the 2012 floods prepared by the Moira Shire. Very impressive!

Monday 14<sup>th</sup>. A walk after breakfast by all to see the bat colony on the bend of the Broken Creek at Numurkah. Then there was a walk in the Wunghuu Common, lunch and farewells. It was great camp, very enjoyable.

### Pat Gomm

Many thanks to President Paul Hockett, Secretary Catherine Rourke, and their club members who made the camp an enjoyable, well organized weekend for all attending people.

On Friday night, guest speaker, Mr Rolf Weber, a member of the Australian Turtle Conservation and Research Association, brought along a display of live turtles, including the Eastern Snake-necked Turtle, Broad-shelled Turtle and Murray River Turtle. Rolf gave an interesting talk about the habitats, nesting and hatching times, growth size and food supply of water plants, algae, molluscs, yabbies, tadpoles, small fish and carrion.

On Saturday night, the guest speaker, Professor Ian Lunt of Charles Sturt University, Albury, gave a lengthy talk about regeneration and revegetation over large areas of land. On Sunday evening, Catherine Rourke showed a DVD of the 2012 floods that devastated Numurkah and widespread surrounding towns and country.

On Saturday morning, together with twenty people, we drove in convoy to the Kinnairds Wetland, five minutes drive from Numurkah. The Wetland is part of a larger natural wetland (a prior stream depression). Covering an area of nearly 100 hectares of natural and constructed wetland, Kinnairds Wetland is part of a scheme designed to provide major regional drainage benefits for land in the Muckatah Catchment. The Wetland is fed by flows from the Muckatah Surface Water Management Scheme, which has a 600 square kilometre catchment, beginning in Yarrawonga.

The natural and constructed areas of the wetland act as a retarding basin. This aids in filtering sediments and nutrients, and minimises the rate of flows entering the Broken Creek to the south, which eventually flows into the Murray River in the Barmah Forest.

Although part of Kinnairds Wetland is constructed, designed and managed as a filtration system, it is still an important part of a biologically diverse area. This diverse area includes wetland and woodland which provide habitat for a variety of wildlife including birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and fish. As well as wetland, Kinnairds other main habitat feature is River Red Gum woodland. The woodland varies from mature old trees to dense stands of River Red Gum regeneration.

We sighted a variety of birdlife including Wood Duck, Grey

The next SEANA CAMP will be 2-5<sup>th</sup> May 2014 and will be hosted by Upper Goulburn FNC and based in Marysville. They have booked "Camp Marysville" which has 2 bedroom cabins with beds (no bunks) and will provide all meals. (No caravan or tent sites are at the camp). "Come and enjoy discovering the wonder of regeneration following the devastation." (2009 Bushfires).

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Teal, Black Duck, Pelican, Swamp Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, Red-rumped Parrot, Kookaburra, Spotted Pardalote and Striated Pardalote, White-plumed Honeyeater, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Grey Shrike-thrush, Dusky Woodswallow, Pied Currawong, nesting Willie Wagtail, Little Raven, Restless Flycatcher, White-winged Chough, Reed-Warbler. Frog calls were heard, the Blue Devil Plant and Mallee Wattle were in abundance.

We drove in convoy to Naring Hall for lunch (about 20 minutes drive from Numurkah) where we met Dr Doug Robinson, from Trust For Nature. TFN buy properties for nature conservation with money received from bequests and government grants. We walked with Doug to a TFN property, (Naring Grasslands) which was a control burn in May 2013. The property was originally farmland. We walked through a field of Chocolate and White Lily (a strong chocolate smell) found Yellow Bulbine-Lily, Goodenia, Broughton Pea flower, Drumsticks, Lemon Beauty-heads, Scaly Buttons and Wild Oats Grass.

On Sunday I chose to do the all day birding outing to Wyuna area in the Lower Goulburn National Park. We drove in convoy of about five cars led by noted birder Don Roberts. On the way we detoured to see two Bush Stone-curlew, sighted by a group of people the previous day. The morning started with fine weather and we walked through sparse woodland and sighted a Jackie Winter, Yellow Rosella, Weebill, Red-capped Robin, Brown Treecreeper, White-winged Chough sitting on a nest made of mud the size of a pudding basin, Mistletoe Bird, Rufous Whistler, Spotted Pardalote, and Grey Shrike-thrush. A mob of about fifty Eastern Grey Kangaroos bounded by in the bush.

We decided to have lunch sitting on the bank of the Goulburn River and heavy rain started just as we finished, and as the track became slippery we moved the cars to the paved highway and continued on to Nathalia and visited the Barmah Heritage and Education Centre. On the way back to Numurkah, we stopped a few times along the Broken Creek and sighted a Black Cormorant, White-plumed Honeyeater, Willy Wagtail, Sacred Kingfisher, Striated Pardalote, Little Friarbird, Noisy Miners and Welcome Swallow.

On Monday morning, the final excursion of the camp for me was a walk to view Numurkah's resident bat colony between the Broken Creek and the bowling club. The colony of Flying Foxes numbered about 2000 or more depending on the time of year and fruit growing industry in the area.

**Leon Costermans**

**Photography as a Stimulus to Observation & Understanding of Nature**

**13 November**

Pat introduced Leon by talking about his Little Brown, now Green, Tree book, and how lucky we are to have Leon as a friend of our Club. Leon’s parents were artists and photographers, from the early days of photography with glass plates, and Leon grew up with photography. Film and developing were very expensive, and Leon could only afford 2 rolls of 8 photos per year, so every photo had to count. This contrasts with today’s digital photography, where people take multitudes of photos.

Leon used a thought-provoking and audience-participatory format of pairs of photos, with discussion on the differences between the pair, and what we could observe and learn. He started with 2 photos of Jan Juc Beach – one from 1861, by William Daintree, the first Australian geological photographer, and one current, by Leon. The differences in vegetation and landform were surprisingly few. The next pair was of Mt Greenock, the first an 1836 sketch by Major Mitchell, the second a current photo by Leon, and once again the differences were surprisingly few, as contrary to popular opinion, the volcanic plains were always sparsely vegetated, and the bare hills were not the result of clearing.

The next were two similar Grevilleas – *G. alpina* vs *G. lanigera*- the difference being *alpina* flowers are minutely hairy, *lanigera* glabrous. Bitter-bush – *Adriana quadripartita* – the two photos were of male and female flowers, which we had to identify.

There were a series of photos of Lake Brambruk at Wyperfeld- the first in 1971, with water in the lake for the only time in 60 years, the second a year later with a line of red gum seedlings at the high water mark, the last in 2005 with mature river red gums, all taken from the same spot.

Two photos of bushfire - burnt trees – the first group had some epicormic growth, the second group were totally dead. They were different species of gums – most will shoot epicormic growth, but the second group were Mountain Grey Gums and Mountain Ash, which do not sprout but die and regenerate from seed. The Apostles and Natural Arch, nine months apart, before and after erosion caused one Apostle and the centre of the Arch to collapse.

Different colour tree vegetation on a bush track – showing a change in soil type – boxes growing on sandstone, gums on granitic soil. Another photo was of an unmade country road – the road surface changed from grey shale to sandstone, with a creek at the border, showing us that creeks erode their course at the weaker point.

Another was an aerial photo of Tidal River, showing lines of sand dunes parallel with the beach, then further inland lines of sand dunes perpendicular to the coast. The sand dunes close to the coast were created in the last 6000 years, the ones perpendicular to the coast were blown in when the sea level was lower more than 6000 years ago. The two groups of dunes had different vegetation too – the coastal ones had titree, the older ones heath.

After that Leon showed us some geology photos – hillside creep – soil eroding down a hill, which is only visible at roadside cuttings; terracettes, which people assume are created by cattle, but are the result of soil movement; rock bands down a hill at Licola; Diprotodon tracks in Western Victoria: concretions – cannon balls – at the Otways, and many other fascinating photos and explanations of natural phenomena. We look forward keenly to Leon’s Geology of Victoria book, nearing completion. - **Judy Smart**

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**Birdwatching at Coolart**

**4 November**

On a fine mild day we had a very productive day at Coolart wetlands, especially with ducks. Nine species of duck were sighted, including Blue-billed, Pink-eared and Freckled – only Musk Duck and Shelduck were missing from the species that might be present. Most of the other common waterbirds were seen, although this time no Crakes were sighted. Notable bush birds included Shining Bronze-cuckoo, Sacred Kingfisher, Golden Whistler and Olive-backed Oriole. The nesting Tawny Frogmouths were in their usual location. We were pleased to see Red-browed Finch, while Reed-warblers and Little Grassbirds were abundant in the reeds.

On the beach we spotted a pair of Red-capped Plovers, possibly sitting on a nest. A total of 69 birds was considered a very satisfactory result – aided by the fact that two of our

number are regular participants in the Birdlife bird count at Coolart and were able to tell us what we might see and to direct us to the best areas. - **Lee Denis**



Duck line-up:  
Chestnut Teal,  
Hardheads, Freckled  
Duck  
Photo – Lee Denis

Bird List For Coolart 4 November 2013				
Blue-billed Duck	Great Cormorant	Galah	Brown Thornbill	Olive-backed Oriole
Freckled Duck	White-faced Heron	Long-billed Corella	Striated Thornbill	Grey Butcherbird
Black Swan	Great Egret	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Yellow Thornbill	Australian Magpie
Australian Wood Duck	Australian White Ibis	Rainbow Lorikeet	Red Wattlebird	Little Raven
Pacific Black Duck	Straw-necked Ibis	Crimson Rosella	Little Wattlebird	Red-browed Finch
Australasian Shoveler	Black-shouldered Kite	Eastern Rosella	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	European Goldfinch
Grey Teal	Purple Swamphen	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	White-plumed Honeyeater	Welcome Swallow
Chestnut Teal	Eurasian Coot	Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	New Holland Honeyeater	Clamorous Reed-Warbler
Pink-eared Duck	Red-capped Plover	Tawny Frogmouth	Eastern Yellow Robin	Little Grassbird
Hardhead	Masked Lapwing	Laughing Kookaburra	Golden Whistler	Silveryeye
Hoary-headed Grebe	Pacific Gull	Sacred Kingfisher	Grey Shrike-thrush	Common Blackbird
Little Pied Cormorant	Silver Gull	Superb Fairy-wren	Magpie-Lark	Common Starling
Pied Cormorant	Spotted Turtle-Dove	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Fantail	Common Myna
Little Black Cormorant	Common Bronzewing	White-browed Scrubwren	Willie Wagtail	

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### Excursion to Mud Islands 17 November

We had planned a boat trip to Mud Islands as part of our SEANA camp in March this year, but it had to be called off at the last moment due to windy weather. We were still keen to go, so with some trepidation booked the boat months in advance. We were very lucky, as October had been too windy too, but all went well and 33 of us set off from Blairgowrie.

the inlets had blocked up while we were there.

The vegetation is dominated by Coast Saltbush (*Atriplex cinerea*) and Australian Hollyhock (*Malva* sp. aff. *australiana*). This is the main stronghold of Australian Hollyhock, which is rarely seen elsewhere.

The main attraction, apart from the spectacular scenery, is the birdlife. Tens of thousands of silver gulls breed there, and their raucous defence of their nests reminded visitors of an Alfred Hitchcock film..



Landing on the Islands. Photo: Lee Denis

We had plenty of guests to make up the numbers, including four of our speakers from this year (thanks to John Roth, John Eichler, Sally Bewsher and Jeff Yugovic), plus Birdlife members and SEANA camp attendees.

The Mud Islands are roughly equidistant from the Heads, Portsea and Queenscliff, and are three low-lying sand islands separated by narrow channels and a central shallow tidal lagoon. They are part of the Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park, and a Ramsar site. The shapes and configuration of the islands change constantly with the movement of sand by tidal currents and storms, and one of



Photo: Lee Denis

We also saw, nesting or with young, terns, both Crested and Caspian, Australian White and Straw-Necked Ibis, and Pelicans. We expected to see many migratory waders, but only saw Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Red-necked Stints and Red-capped Plovers. Sadly, we saw 7 dead Pelicans and many washed up Short-tailed Shearwaters, part of this year's Shearwater death toll.

In the afternoon we visited South Channel Fort, which is tiny compared to Mud Islands' 86 hectares, where we toured the tunnels and looked for White-faced Storm-Petrels in their burrows (none to be seen). We did find a pair of penguins nesting under the Disappearing Gun though. On the way back we stopped at a channel marker to see one seal and many Australasian Gannets.

Many thanks to our boat operators David and Jan of Fish'n'Ships who organized us a great day out. - **Judy Smart**

For more information I highly recommend the Friends of Mud Islands website -<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~fomi>

Bird List for Mud Islands 17 November 2013	
Black Swan	Royal Spoonbill
Short-tailed Shearwater - dead, washed up on beach	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
Little Pied Cormorant	Red-capped Plover
Pied Cormorant	Red neck Stint
Australian Pelican with young	Silver Gull
White-faced Heron	Caspian Tern nesting
Little Egret	Crested Tern nesting
Australian White Ibis breeding	Little Grassbird
Straw-necked Ibis breeding	
South Channel Fort	
Silver Gull	Welcome swallow
Pacific Gull	Little penguin - 2 in nest under gun
Channel Marker	
Australian Gannet	Black-faced Cormorant
Also: 1 seal	



Gannets on Channel Marker. Photo: Lee Denis

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### Birdwatching at Langwarrin Flora & Fauna Reserve 9 December

We were supposed to go birding at Langwarrin on the first Monday of December, the 2nd, but it was going to be too hot, so we postponed for a week. The forecast for the 9th was rain, but we weren't going to call it off again so away we went. The orchids were plentiful – masses of horned, large tongue and onion orchids. (*Orthoceras strictum*, *Cryptostylis subulatum*, *Microtis* sp).

The rain started early and wasn't too heavy for most of the time, so we didn't see many birds but we did see some interesting ones – a good view of a pair of Orioles, a Bassian thrush near the reservoir, a Brush Bronzewing, a

Tawny Frogmouth parent with baby bouncing up and down next to it, Pallid cuckoo and Satin Flycatcher. Our final total was 23 birds.

We considered walking further to check out the Flying Duck orchids and Elbow orchids, but the rain got heavier and instead we ran for the cars, thoroughly soaked, and didn't even stick around for lunch. We had a great morning though. - **Judy Smart**

Bird List For Langwarrin FFR 9 December 2013	
Pacific Black Duck	Eastern Yellow Robin
Brush Bronzewing	Golden Whistler
Pallid Cuckoo	Rufous Whistler
Tawny Frogmouth	Grey Shrike-thrush
Spotted Pardalote	Grey Fantail
Brown Thornbill	Satin Flycatcher

Red Wattlebird	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike
Little Wattlebird	Olive-backed Oriole
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Grey Butcherbird
White-eared Honeyeater	Australian Magpie
White-naped Honeyeater	Bassian Thrush
New Holland Honeyeater	

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### Tootgarook Wetlands 15 December

Ten members travelled to Tootgarook on a fine mild Saturday morning. We started at St Elmos Close, where we were met by Friends of Tootgarook Swamp members Cameron Brown and Jess Durrant, who led us on a tour of the Sanctuary Park Bushland Reserve and the 'island' in the middle which was slated for an extension of the Village Glen Retirement Village. This development was to require extensive infill before the building of 36 units in the middle of the Reserve.

On the way in to the Reserve we were able to spot a Swamp Skink (*Lissolepis coventryi*) right beside the path. Unfortunately our photographers were unable to get a usable shot but it was a delightful start to the day.



“St Elmo's Island”, Tootgarook Swamp. Photo: Lee Denis

Tootgarook Swamp is an area of about 380 hectares and is the largest example of a shallow freshwater marsh in the Port Phillip Bay region. It is a groundwater dependent ecosystem on peat soils and could be described as a fen – complete with the 'islands' that rise above the surrounding marsh and remain dry. A large part of the wetland is unprotected from development, being in private hands, and its protection is an ongoing battle for the Friends and other conservation groups.

Cameron and Jess led us around the Reserve, pointing out interesting plants including the native Forget-me-not *Myosotis australis*, the native bindweed *Calystegia sepium*

(right), and the Native Elderberry *Sambucus gaudichaudiana*, amongst others. Also present were weeds including St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) and Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) invading from the developed areas surrounding the Reserve.



Our bird list numbered 36, including a number of waterbirds, a couple of raptors, and a Southern Boobook which flushed from the tea-tree as we approached.

Cameron and Jess were able to fill us in on the issues confronting the wetland, displaying an impressive level of knowledge about the the flora, fauna and landform. The wetland is an important habitat area of the afore-mentioned Swamp Skink, which is listed as rare in Victoria.

After leaving Jess and Cameron we travelled to the Truemans Road Recreational Reserve for lunch, after which we took a short walk through the wetland where we were able to add to our bird list with New Holland and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, among others, plus a close-up view of Golden-headed Cisticolas (which we had also seen at St Elmos Close).

Tootgarook Swamp is an important area for the Peninsula and we thank Cameron and Jess for giving us a good insight into both the ecology and issues. Further information on their campaign can be found at [www.savetootgarookswamp.org](http://www.savetootgarookswamp.org) Another good source of information is [www.spiffa.org/tootgarook-swamp](http://www.spiffa.org/tootgarook-swamp).

Much of the information for this article came from these sources.

We wish them success in their cause. - **Lee Denis**

Note. Shortly after our visit came the news that the Mornington Peninsula Shire has rejected the development application in the Sanctuary Park Bushland Reserve. Again, further information can be found at the SPIFFA site.

Bird List For Tootgarook Wetland 15 December 2013				
Pacific Black Duck	Purple Swamphen	Brown Thornbill	Magpie-Lark	Golden-headed Cisticola
Australian Pelican	Masked Lapwing	Red Wattlebird	Grey Fantail	Silvereye
White-faced Heron	Silver Gull	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Dusky Woodswallow	Common Blackbird
White-necked Heron	Spotted Turtle-Dove	Noisy Miner	Australian Magpie	Common Starling
Australian White Ibis	Crested Pigeon	Crescent Honeyeater	Little Raven	Common Myna
Straw-necked Ibis	Galah	New Holland Honeyeater	European Goldfinch	
Royal Spoonbill	Eastern Rosella	Eastern Spinebill	Welcome Swallow	
Swamp Harrier	Southern Boobook	Eastern Yellow Robin	Clamorous Reed-Warbler	
Nankeen Kestrel	Superb Fairy-wren	Grey Shrike-thrush	Little Grassbird	

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### Devilbend IBA

Another significant feature on the Peninsula is Devilbend Reserve, which like Tootgarook Swamp is subject to competing usage pressures. Built as a water storage for the southern Peninsula, but decommissioned in around 2000, the reserve was designated the Devilbend Natural Features Reserve in 2007. Opening of the Reserve for recreational use, and the release of exotic fish species, have raised significant conservation issues.

The total area in the Reserve is 1057 hectares, of which the former reservoir comprises 243 hectares of open water. The Reserve supports some 200 species of indigenous plants; the Growling Grass Frog and Dwarf Galaxias have been recorded there. However it is most notable as bird habitat, with around 160 species being recorded there.

The entire area of open water has been listed by Birdlife International as an Important Bird Area (IBA).

The IBA program is an international non-governmental conservation scheme led by Birdlife International and national organisations including Birdlife Australia, to identify and protect sites of global bird conservation importance. Each IBA meets one of four criteria:

1. Globally threatened species
2. Restricted-range species
3. Biome-restricted species
4. Congregations - the site supports > 1% of the world population of a waterbird (similar to Ramsar Convention criteria) or seabird.

Devilbend is classified on the first and fourth of these criteria, on the basis of seasonally supporting more than 1% of the world population of the near-threatened Blue-billed Duck *Oxyura australis*, whose numbers have been recorded at over 3000 on the Reserve.

The Reserve is the only nesting site of White-bellied Sea

Eagle on the Peninsula, and provides habitat for waterbirds including Musk Duck, Great Crested Grebe, egrets, herons, cormorants and Coots, as well as bush birds including Whistlers, Honeyeaters and Bronze-cuckoos. Peregrine Falcon, Brown Falcon, Whistling Kite, and Wedge-tailed Eagle have also been observed there.

The IBA process comprises

- Identification - any site which meets the global IBA criteria will be identified as an IBA. Published data will be analysed and local experts, land-owners and other local stakeholders will be consulted.
- Monitoring - basic data on the key birds and habitats will be collected annually where practicable.
- Conservation - the project will help any local group or land-owner with advice, contacts and possibly fund-raising and lobbying, to conserve their IBA.

To date 314 IBAs have been identified across Australia. The Australian IBA program will help protect a network of sites critical for the conservation of Australia's birds by:

- promoting IBAs as a tool for biodiversity conservation planning
- encouraging government to prioritise conservation at IBAs (e.g. in grant-giving schemes)
- encouraging and facilitating local community-based groups and land-owners to manage land sustainably and conserve key bird species

The IBA process has proved very successful across the world with 7,678 global IBAs identified in 198 countries and territories by mid-2008.

For more information on IBAs see <http://birdlife.org.au/projects/important-bird-areas> from which most of the information in this article has been sourced. - **Lee Denis**



Devilbend Reservoir. Photo: Lee Denis

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**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 Activities can be found at our website.

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