



NEWSLETTER: DECEMBER 2018

The Grange Heathland Reserve 15th September

This reserve in Clayton South is a remnant of the Cheltenham Heath flora which was saved from development as a housing estate by community effort. Its small area of 6.6 hectares contains the vegetation communities Heathy Woodland, Swamp Scrub and Swampy Woodland. Overstorey is mainly Silver-leaved Stringybark, with some Manna Gum. The Heathland Reserve comprises about half of The Grange Reserve, which also includes playing fields, childrens' playground and picnic areas, with open areas of pine trees.



The Heathland Reserve is a fenced area on the south side of The Grange, adjacent to the much larger Spring Valley Golf Club, which effectively extends the habitat by a factor of about six. To the east is the Clayton landfill which, while not a natural area (devoid of vegetation higher than grass) also separates the Reserve from housing.

Walking tracks have been formed through the Heathland, and despite the threatening weather we were able to see lots of spring flowers on the short walk. Prominent flowers were Wedding Bush, seven species of wattle, several species of pea including Aotus and Bossiaea, and Beard-heath. We were interested to also find Prickly Geebung - past flowering, with fruit. This plant is not listed for The Grange in Flora of Melbourne, although it is listed as having once been found in the Clayton area.

A number of orchids were also noted: Mosquitos, Waxlips, and Nodding Greenhoods.

Not great weather for birdwatching, but we did manage to see a couple of honeyeaters (White-plumed and New Holland), Superb Fairy-wren, Spotted Pardalote, Crested Pigeon, and a flock of Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos. —
Lee Denis

Plants at The Grange 15th September 2018	
<i>Acacia mearnsii</i>	Black Wattle
<i>Acacia melanoxylon</i>	Blackwood
<i>Acacia oxycedrus</i>	Spike Wattle
<i>Acacia paradoxa</i>	Kangaroo Thorn
<i>Acacia stricta</i>	Hop Wattle
<i>Acacia suaveolens</i>	Sweet Wattle
<i>Acacia verticillata</i>	Prickly Moses
<i>Acianthus pusillus</i>	Mosquito Orchid
<i>Amperea xiphochlada</i>	Broom Spurge
<i>Aotus ericoides</i>	Common Aotus
<i>Billardiera scandens</i>	Common Apple-berry
<i>Bossiaea cinerea</i>	Showy Bossiaea
<i>Cassinia arcuata</i>	Drooping Cassinia
<i>Correa reflexa</i>	Common Correa
<i>Cotula australis</i>	Common Cotula
<i>Drosera macrantha</i>	Climbing Sundew
<i>Eucalyptus cephalocarpa</i>	Silver-leaved Stringybark
<i>Eucalyptus viminalis ssp pryoriana</i>	Manna Gum
<i>Glossodia major</i>	Waxlip Orchid
<i>Goodenia ovata</i>	Hop Goodenia
<i>Hakea ulicina</i>	Furze Hakea
<i>Hypolaena fastigiata</i>	Tassel Rope-rush
<i>Lepidosperma concavum</i>	Sandhill Sword-sedge
<i>Leptospermum myrsinoides</i>	Silky Tea-tree
<i>Leucopogon virgatus var virgatus</i>	Common Beard-heath
<i>Lomandra longifolia var longifolia</i>	Spiny-headed Mat-rush
<i>Melaleuca ericifolia</i>	Swamp Paper-bark
<i>Olearia ramulosa</i>	Twiggy Daisy-bush
<i>Ozothamnus ferrugineus</i>	Tree Everlasting
<i>Persoonia juniperinum</i>	Prickly Geebung
<i>Platylobium obtusangulum</i>	Common Flat-pea
<i>Pterostylis nutans</i>	Nodding Greenhood
<i>Ricinocarpus pinifolius</i>	Wedding Bush

**Braeside Park
15th September**

Following our visit to The Grange Bushland Reserve we moved across to Braeside Park, where we were met by ranger Des Lucas, who gave us a brief talk before he had to head off to another park, not before admitting us to the Heathland Conservation Area. The vegetation here was not as diverse as at The Grange, but there was plenty to interest us, including the reputedly 800 year old river red gum, and a single orchid (*Pterostylis nana*). Braeside is more about birds though, with over 40 species noted.



Ancient River Red Gum. Photo - Lee Denis

Just over half of these were bush birds which included many backyard birds common in urban areas, but also Golden Whistler, Fairy-wrens, Spotted Pardalote and Red-browed Finch. The remainder were water birds of which the most notable were Blue-billed Duck and Musk Duck. A sudden squall had us hurrying to the bird hide, from where we looked out on a large collection - more than 50 - of Little Black Cormorants. The only raptor seen was a Swamp Harrier.

Walking along the track towards the wetland we were surrounded by the familiar alarm calls of the Noisy Miners—except that when we looked up all we could see were Rainbow Lorikeets. We watched them for some time and

were sure that the calls were coming from them. Afterwards Rog Standen did some research and reports:

I looked at Rainbow Lorikeets in HANZAB and that refers to a PhD study (Serpell, J. A. (1979). Comparative ethology and evolution of communicatory behavior in the Loriine parrot genus Trichoglossus (Vigors & Horsfield). Ph.D. Thesis, University of Liverpool, UK.) on vocalisations in these parrots, which stated that they have at least 26 different calls in at least 12 functional categories (eg contact, alarm, courtship and rallying calls). However, it also says that "mimicry is well known in captivity, but no evidence of it occurring functionally in the wild". Perhaps what we heard has not been published or recorded anywhere.

This is something we will look out for in future.

After trying - and failing - to locate the pair of Tawny Frogmouths the ranger told us about, we departed before the weather changed again. — **Lee Denis**



Red-browed Finches. Photo - Lee Denis

Bird List For Braeside Park 15 September 2018				
Blue-billed Duck	Little Pied Cormorant	Spotted Turtle-Dove	White-naped Honeyeater	Red-browed Finch
Musk Duck	Little Black Cormorant	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Golden Whistler	Welcome Swallow
Black Swan	White-faced Heron	Rainbow Lorikeet	Grey Shrike-thrush	Common Blackbird
Australian Wood Duck	Great Egret	Eastern Rosella	Magpie-Lark	Common Starling
Pacific Black Duck	Straw-necked Ibis	Laughing Kookaburra	Grey Fantail	Common Myna
Australasian Shoveler	Swamp Harrier	Superb Fairy-wren	Willie Wagtail	
Grey Teal	Purple Swamphen	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Butcherbird	
Chestnut Teal	Eurasian Coot	Red Wattlebird	Australian Magpie	
Hoary-headed Grebe	Silver Gull	Noisy Miner	Little Raven	

Roger Standen
North American Wildlife
9th October

Roger and his companions visited North America a year ago, seeing New York, San Francisco, the Sierras and the Grand Canyon. He was interested to compare similarities and differences with Australian wildlife. One difference is that most birds there migrate North-South as everything has to adapt to the extreme cold of winter, whereas only some Australian birds migrate within Australia.



Basalt columns - Eastern Sierras (all photos - Rog Standen)

He started with the bird most fascinating to Australians — the hummingbird. There are 19 in the field guide, and they saw Anna’s Hummingbird.

They have 32 species of sparrow, and nuthatches fill the same niche as our sittellas. Their American White Pelicans are very similar to the African and also Australian.

The Sierras are all granite, with basalt columns on a grand scale. The redwoods – Sequoia – are up to 1300 years old, and the oldest tree recorded is the Bristlecombe Pine at 4500 years old.



White-breasted Nuthatch

There is a great variety of squirrels, with different strategies for food storage for winter. The Native Douglas squirrel is a larder hoarder, using the same site every year, and creating large middens of discarded material. The Californian ground squirrel live in burrows, with each squirrel having its own entrance even though it is a communal burrow.

They scavenge and browse garden plants – like our possums. The Eastern Grey Squirrel hoards food in a great many small caches – several thousand per season, which they do not forget. The Rock Squirrel also digs burrows, and can survive without water for up to 100 days.

Elk live in forests at high altitude, (their ‘summer range’), and migrate to lower elevations for winter. Hunting reduced their numbers from an estimated 10 million before white settlement, to 90,000 in 1922. With protection their numbers are steady.

Coyote are related to wolves, though smaller than them. Domestic dogs, wolves and coyote can all interbreed and produce young.



Cliff Chipmunk

The least chipmunk is the smallest species and the most widespread. They scatter-hoard food, and do not fully hibernate, but enter torpor.

The Californian condor – the largest land bird in North America – was almost wiped out; by 1982 there were only 22 birds left. With successful captive breeding programs there are now 446 birds – 276 wild and 170 captive. Their main problem is lead poisoning from eating carrion shot with lead ammunition.

The North American Great Egret is the same species as ours, and their Snowy Egret is close to our Little Egret. Both were slaughtered for their plumes for the millinery trade, and it is estimated that more than 192,960 were killed before 1903, when Roosevelt started protection for them after lobbying by the Audubon and other bird societies.

Woodpeckers are like treecreepers on steroids! They nest in tree cavities, much sought after real estate. Aggressive European starlings invade up to half of their nests. Roger saw Red-bellied, Nuttall’s and the White-headed Woodpecker.

The Great-tailed Grackle is one of North America’s fastest expanding species — they were confined to Texas, and now they are reported in 21 states and 3 Canadian provinces, all since 1960, attracted by irrigation and urbanization. They are very intelligent, and can recognize individual humans. The Common Grackle is a problem to corn crops, and forage in great flocks, destroying crops.

It has recently been decided by DNA and morphological research that Grebes and Flamingos are each other’s closest relatives, which seems counter-intuitive. Three of the seven US grebes were seen at Henderson Bird viewing Preserve, near Las Vegas, and the Eared Grebe at Mono Lake, near Los Angeles in California.

The Mono Lake is an inland saline lake. There are no fish, just brine shrimp and alkali flies, providing food for millions of birds. After stream diversions began in 1941 Mono Lake lost half its volume of water, and doubled in salinity. In 1978 the community started a campaign to save Mono Lake, and eventually after a decade of litigation, the water board was ordered to restore a compromise water level. Before the water level drop Mono Lake hosted a million ducks, now only 14,000 can be counted, including Canada Geese, Mallards, Northern Shovelers, Northern Pintails, Gadwalls, Ruddy Ducks, and Teal. Californian Gulls breed there (the second largest colony to the Great Salt Lake), and Brewer’s Blackbirds, Grebes and Phalarope feed up there before migration.

Mule deer have a tough life – they migrate to high ground for summer, and lower ground for winter, having to cross highways each way, and being killed by traffic in great numbers. Mountain lions feed almost exclusively on mule deer, and follow them all year round, and as well as all that they are hunted by humans in season.



Stellar's Jay

Some more birds of interest- the Kinglet was the most common bird seen; there are 56 species of Warbler (not related to Australian warblers); the Blue Jay and Cardinal are spectacular and interesting.; there are no native parrots in North America- there was a Carolina parakeet, now extinct, and the Mitrid Parakeet is now resident, introduced from South America.

The Greater Roadrunner has no equivalent in Australia- it is 25-30 cm tall, generally runs, flies only rarely, can go long periods without drinking, is a member of the cuckoo family but makes its own nest, and eats from the ground- insects, reptiles, mice and fruit.

And Roger’s top bird for the trip? The Northern Flicker, a most beautiful bird. — **Judy Smart**

The Gurdies Nature Conservation Reserve 13th October

This reserve beside the Bass Highway near Grantville is a well-known spot for finding orchids. It comprises about 200 hectares, mostly of fairly open Messmate woodland, with some Narrow-leaved Peppermint and patches with Swamp Gum. Understorey includes various Acacias, some Olearia, Silver Banksia and Tea-tree. There is a working gravel pit in the centre that is off limits. A small creek runs through the Reserve to Western Port. I am unable to discover a name for this creek.

Our first stop was the Dunbabbins Road picnic ground, which is on the opposite side of the Reserve to the Highway. We were immediately greeted by a male Scarlet Robin which perched on the car’s wing mirror to take a look at us. He and his partner continued to flit around us later as we were having lunch. We suspected that they might have a nest nearby, but none was discovered. This spot gives a great view over farmland to Western Port Bay and French Island.

Our orchid sightings began in the car park as well, with a patch of Common Bird Orchids struggling valiantly through a pile of horse dung. Horses are allowed in the Reserve, but a sign instructs riders to take the dung away with them. Compliance doesn't seem to be high.



All photos - Lee Denis

We went through the gate at Dunbabb Rd and headed towards the Bay for a short way on the vehicle/horse/mountain bike track, before branching off onto a rather overgrown walking track. On the way we observed a number of orchids including Waxlips, Donkeys and a couple of Sun Orchids. The most common orchids were Pink Fingers.

Other flowers included quite a few of the pea family (Fabaceae) including Creeping Bossiaea, a Daviesia, Platylodium and *Pultenaea scabra*. Milkmaids were abundant, as were native violets and Love Creeper.

Following this track we eventually found our way to a disused quarry which slopes down to the aforementioned creek, along which were a couple of ferns including a fishbone (*Blechnum*) and False Bracken (*Calochlaena*), and White Elderberry. The creek was flowing, but small enough to cross with one stride. There were indications that at some times the water level is much higher.



Scarlet Robin

Birds included Whistlers, Rosellas, a couple of Cuckoos, Sittellas, Red-browed Finches and Honeyeaters including Brown-headed. Our bird(s) of the day were a pair of Blue-winged Parrots. A Wedge-tailed Eagle soared overhead.

This Reserve does not seem to have been much invaded by exotic plants. There are scattered Sweet Pittosporums, but not many other non-indigenous species.

Returning to Dunbabb Rd for lunch we had a look at the historical walk, a posted walk along Dunbabb Rd with a brochure telling some of the stories of early European settlement, when selectors replaced the squatters. I was unable to find the origin of the name "The Gurdies" (originally a settlement on the Bass Highway) but the brochure informs us that the area was part of a squatter's run called "Hurdy Gurdy". There is a Hurdy Gurdy Creek NCR a little to the north-east - perhaps it is this creek that runs through The Gurdies NCR.

After lunch we transferred to the Bass Highway entrance to the Reserve. Again Messmate woodland, but the roar of the passing highway traffic is very intrusive. We only saw one bird - a White-eared Honeyeater - and one new plant - a *Dampiera*. The Dunbabb Road end is much to be preferred. — **Lee Denis**

Plants of The Gurdies	
Orchids	
<i>Acianthus caudatus</i>	Mayfly Orchid (finished)
<i>Acianthus pusillus</i>	Mosquito Orchid
<i>Caladenia carnea</i>	Pink Fingers
<i>Caladenia catenata</i>	White Fingers
<i>Chiloglottis valida</i>	Common Bird Orchid
<i>Dipodeum roseum</i>	Hyacinth orchid (buds)
<i>Diuris orientis</i>	Donkey Orchid
<i>Glossodia major</i>	Waxlip Orchid
<i>Thelymitra pauciflora</i>	Slender Sun-orchid
<i>Thelymitra rubra</i>	Salmon Sun-orchid
Other plants noted (f=in flower)	
<i>Acacia dealbata</i>	Silver Wattle
<i>Acacia melanoxylon</i>	Blackwood
<i>Acacia provincialis</i>	Wirilda
<i>Acacia stricta</i>	Hop Wattle
<i>Acacia verticillata</i> (f)	Prickly Moses
<i>Allocasuarina littoralis</i>	Black She-oak
<i>Banksia marginata</i>	Silver Banksia
<i>Bossiaea prostrata</i> (f)	Creeping Bossiaea
<i>Burchardia umbellata</i> (f)	Milkmaids
<i>Comesperma volubile</i> (f)	Love Creeper
<i>Coronidium scorpioides</i> (f)	Button Everlasting
<i>Dampiera stricta</i> (f)	Blue Dampiera
<i>Daviesia latifolia</i> (buds)	Hop Bitter-pea
<i>Eucalyptus obliqua</i>	Messmate
<i>Eucalyptus ovata</i>	Swamp Gum
<i>Eucalyptus radiata</i>	Narrow-leaved Peppermint
<i>Goodenia ovata</i> (f)	Hop Goodenia
<i>Leptospermum continentale</i> (f)	Prickly Tea-tree
<i>Leucopogon australis</i> (f)	Spike Beard-heath
<i>Lomandra longifolia</i> (f)	Spiny-headed Mat-rush
<i>Olearia lirata</i> (f)	Snowy Daisy-bush
<i>Persoonia juniperinum</i> (fruit)	Prickly Geebung
<i>Platylodium obtusangulum</i> (f)	Common Flat-pea
<i>Pultenaea scabra</i> (f)	Rough Bush-pea
<i>Sambucus gaudichaudiana</i> (buds)	White Elderberry
<i>Viola hederaceae</i> (f)	Native Violet

Bird List For The Gurdies 13th October 2018				
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Blue-winged Parrot	Spotted Pardalote	Eastern Yellow Robin	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike
Galah	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Brown Thornbill	Varied Sittella	Dusky Woodswallow
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Golden Whistler	Grey Butcherbird
Rainbow Lorikeet	Laughing Kookaburra	Brown-headed Honeyeater	Rufous Whistler	Australian Magpie
Crimson Rosella	White-throated Treecreeper	Eastern Spinebill	Grey Shrike-thrush	Little Raven
Eastern Rosella	Superb Fairy-wren	Scarlet Robin	Grey Fantail	Red-browed Finch
				Common Blackbird

Nathalie Nunn
Environmental Planner, City of Frankston
Gardens for Wildlife

Gardens for Wildlife is a program launched by Knox City Council in 2006, designed to encourage residents to help locally threatened wildlife by planting locally indigenous and other Australian plants, to provide habitat and food sources for a variety of wildlife.

Frankston is planning to launch its own program in 2019, and Nathalie's presentation explained the thinking behind it as well as the details of its implementation.



Households would register to be part of the program. Once registered, a volunteer 'garden guide' will visit to provide advice and answer any questions. Participants will receive a garden report, an information booklet and a letterbox sticker to help promote the program, along with regular newsletters and invitations to events.

The aim of the program is to provide wildlife habitat to supplement the existing reserves, and to provide corridors between the fragmented patches of indigenous habitat.

- To these ends the fundamentals of habitat are
- Shelter: requirements differ between species. For example, arboreal mammals require trees and tree hollows, while reptiles require ground cover. Small birds require protection from predators such as is provided by prickly shrubs.
 - Food: the garden needs to cater for a variety of food requirements, such as leaves, nectar, fruit, roots, and also dead material.
 - Water, in a variety of sources such as bird baths of different sizes, ponds and damp areas to shelter frogs and reptiles.
 - Breeding sites - including tree hollows and nest boxes for mammals and birds, thick bushes, and specific larval food plants for butterflies.

Start the process by mapping out your existing garden - including 'borrowed trees' outside your property; defining your objectives - what would you like to attract to your garden?; find out about the plants indigenous to your area; and make a planting/layout plan, incorporating storied layers, microclimates, flow and access.

Recipe for a Wildlife Garden

- A tall mature tree indigenous to your area
- A patch of natural mulch for beetles and worms
- A clump of dense shrubs where birds can shelter
- Nectar plants for honeyeaters
- A cat-safe bird bath
- A frog-friendly pond with unpolluted water
- A warm, sheltered corner for lizards
- Daisies for butterflies
- A place to sit and enjoy it all

For more information visit <https://gardensforwildlifevictoria.com/> or contact Nathalie at Frankston City council. — **Lee Denis**

Baluk Willem NCR, Karwarra Gardens, William Ricketts Sanctuary 17th November

One perfect Spring day, mild and sunny, we set off for Karwarra Gardens at Kalorama, near Mt Dandenong. The Gardens didn't open till 1 pm, so we popped into Baluk Willem NCR, Courtneys Rd South Belgrave on the way. We usually go there a month earlier, when the orchids are in full season, so it was interesting to see it later in the spring. There were a plethora of yellow flowers – *Pimelea flava*, *Hibbertia riparia*, *Goodenia geniculata*, *Coronidium scorpioides* (button everlasting), *Tricoryne elatior* (Yellow rush-lily), *Lomandra filiformis* and *L. multiflora*, and *Acacia mearnsi*, as well as white *Pimelea humilis*, pink Trigger plants and *Xanthorhoea minor* (grass trees), all in flower. We found two orchids – the Microtis - Onion orchids had gone to seed, and there were a couple of very late *Lyperanthus suaveolens* (Brown beaks). *Kunzea leptospermoides* (Burgan) was in full flower and attracting a great many beetles, ants, bees and butterflies. Sword grass brown and Common brown butterflies added to the scene. It was a fleeting visit, so only a few birds seen- Yellow robin, grey and pied currawongs, rufous and golden whistlers, fan tailed cuckoo, little raven, grey shrike-thrush, kookaburra and brown thornbill.



Pimelea flava. All photos - Judy Smart

Then it was Karwarra Gardens, Kalorama. We didn't realise, but they have a big collection of Waratah species and cultivars, and most were in full flower, so our timing was immaculate. They were spectacular and beautiful. It is astonishing that the gardens are so close to the top of Mt Dandenong and yet are able to grow a great many WA flowers. Highlights for me were the great collection of *Lasiopetalum* and *Thomasia*, the *Orthrosanthus* still in flower (mine had finished flowering a month ago), and *Veronica perfoliata* (Diggers Speedwell), both the latter with beautiful Wedgewood blue flowers.

The gardens are only 2 hectares, but full of interest, and there is an irresistible Friends' nursery too. The Gardens have an interesting history – members of the Save the Dandenongs League in the 1960s lobbied the Shire of Lillydale (now the Yarra Ranges Council) for an Australian

plant garden. The Shire provided 2 hectares of weedy, mostly cleared farm land. Some distinguished volunteers helped – Edna Walling assisted, Ellis Stones rearranged the rocks, and Kath Deery over 6 years completely overhauled the gardens, all as a volunteer. She built paths, ponds, mounded beds and then planted. There were plant lists but no plans. The gardens as they are today are her vision, with of course ageing and unsuitable plants replaced as time has gone on. The Council maintain the Gardens, with a lot of help from the volunteers.



Waratah

The Gardens are open Tuesday to Friday 10 – 4pm, and weekends 1 – 4 pm.

Just down the road is William Ricketts Sanctuary, so we had to go there too. I will quote from the website which sums it up better than I could.

Hidden away in a dense inlet along the winding Mt Dandenong Tourist Road is the internationally renowned William Ricketts Sanctuary. The sanctuary is not only one of the Dandenong's more iconic experiences, but one of the most inspiring and tranquil places on the mountain.

A quiet gentleman who had spent much time living with aboriginal communities in central Australia, William Ricketts created the sanctuary as a place for quiet reflection and replenishing the spirit. He believed that all Australians should adopt Aboriginal philosophies,

respecting the spirituality of the mother earth and all things in the natural world. Some of his works throughout the grounds also depict his feelings on the takeover and devastation of white man into the natural environment.

Within the sanctuary grounds, there are over 90 different sculptures depicting the aboriginal people engaging with the earth in a pure forest setting. Carved into rocks and tree trunks that dot the paths that flow throughout the property, the themes in his artwork reflect his philosophies of connections with human, nature and the earth.

<https://visitdandenongranches.com.au/activity/william-ricketts-sanctuary>

The sculptures are made of kiln fired clay, which was fired to 1200 degrees C in his kiln. William Ricketts lived in the Dandenongs , with a few breaks, from 1934 until his death in 1993.

Closer to home , there are a few William Ricketts sculptures at Seawinds, Arthurs Seat. — **Judy Smart**



OT Dam 1st October

The area we know as OT Dam is a part of the Arthurs Seat State Park, accessed off Arthurs Seat Road. The track leads down through Messmate woodland to a deep gully where the dam itself is located. A circuit walk, which includes sections of boardwalk, circumnavigates the dam.

The dam was built by the O.T. Cordial Company in 1934. This company, which later became Kia Ora Cordials, produced a chilli-flavoured cordial, called O.T., and built the dam to irrigate their crops in the land below the dam. The business closed in the 1940s (this information from <https://www.visitmorningtonpeninsula.org>). There is some trade among collectors in the embossed bottles from early last century.



Pink Bells. All photos - Lee Denis

wildflowers. Particularly noticeable were the Pink Bells (*Tetradlea ciliata*), Common Heath (*Epacris impressa*), and several species of the pea family: Hop Bitter-pea (*Daviesia latifolia*), Grey Parrot-pea (*Dillwynia cinerascens*), Common Hovea (*Hovea heterophylla*), Austral indigo (*Indigofera australis*), Common Flat-pea (*Platylobium obtusangulum*), Golden Bush-pea (*Pultenaea gunnii* ssp *gunnii*), and Large-leaf Bush-pea (*P. daphnoides*). A few orchids were also found - Common Bird Orchid (*Chiloglottis valida*) and Tall Greenhood (*Pterostylis melagramma*). Of the several Acacia species two (*A. myrtifolia* and *A. verticillata*) were in full flower.

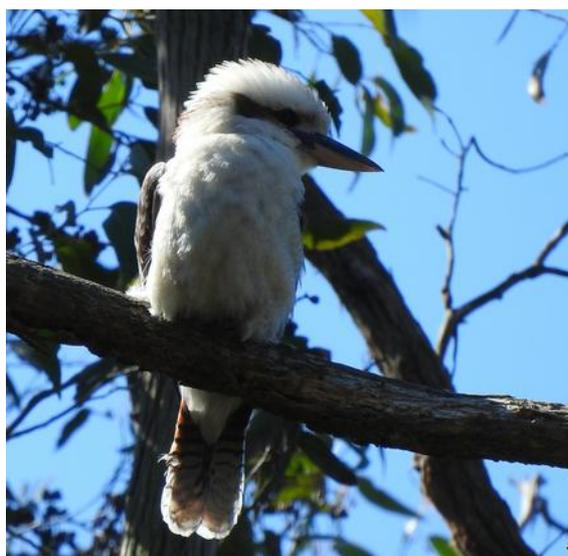
The birds were also abundant - often not our experience at this site. We observed both of the local Whistlers, both of the local Rosellas - the Crimson Rosellas being particularly active - , a couple of Honeyeaters including Brown-headed, some very loud White-throated Treecreepers, and a White-faced Heron on the edge of the dam.

As usual, no birds were sighted on the dam itself. Why this should be so is a mystery, but in all my visits I have only once seen birds - a pair of Pacific Black Ducks - on the water. Dams in Seawinds, on the other side of the ridge, usually hold a good selection of ducks. Perhaps the depth of water has something to do with it.

The walk back up from the dam is more of a challenge than the walk down, but we found some more Bird Orchids along the track to give an excuse to pause for a while! — **Lee Denis**

Our visit to OT Dam was intended as a birdwatching excursion but we couldn't ignore the abundance of

Bird List For OT Dam 1st October 2018	
White-faced Heron	White-eared Honeyeater
Straw-necked Ibis	Brown-headed Honeyeater
Common Bronzewing	Eastern Spinebill
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Eastern Yellow Robin
Crimson Rosella	Golden Whistler
Eastern Rosella	Rufous Whistler
Laughing Kookaburra	Grey Shrike-thrush
White-throated Treecreeper	Grey Fantail
Superb Fairy-wren	Grey Butcherbird
Spotted Pardalote	Australian Magpie
Brown Thornbill	Little Raven
Red Wattlebird	Welcome Swallow
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Common Blackbird



Birding at Coolart 5th November

Despite the weather forecast of 95% rainfalls, the usual group of the club members, prepared for all weather conditions, gathered in front of the Visitor Centre in Coolart. The 20 degree day, with bursts of showers, alternating gray and blue skies, proved to be a very successful bird-watching day. Our list numbered 47 bird species.

Yellow-billed Spoonbill, White-faced Heron, and a few flocks of Ibises and Pelicans.

About 50 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo flew over in small flocks with the noise that muted even the kookaburras' calls. At the top of one dead tree a Black-shouldered Kite was proudly observing its territory. A pair of Australian King Parrots were calling each other and carefully watching us during our lunch break.



Yellow-billed Spoonbill. Photo - Lee Denis

During the heavy showers we took cover in some of the bird hides, or in one of the homestead stables, and in between the showers we enjoyed the woodland, the wetland and the foreshore.

Passeriformes: Eastern Thornbill, Eastern Yellow Robin, Australian, Golden Whistler, Mistletoe-bird, Silvereye, filled the space of clean and crisp air with their calls and vivified the wet leaves greenery of the woodland.

There were not many Anseriformes in the wetland (Pacific Black Duck, Grey and Chestnut Teal only), but we saw

In the end, the highlight of the day was the crossing of the Merricks Creek and reaching Westernport. Instead of just billboard pictures and cautions: "Red-capped Plover nesting area ahead" that we saw in our previous visits to the place, this time we saw the real thing. Ten Red-capped Plovers were running, flying up and down around us. With reddish-brown crown and back-neck they are easy to distinguish and see despite being only 15 cm in length 30 cm in wingspan and weighing only 35-40 g.



Red-capped Plover. Photo - Lee Denis

They are feeding mainly small invertebrates, especially mollusc, crabs, shrimps and worms. The red-capped plover is a seasonal breeder on the coasts of Australia, but breeds in response to unpredictable rains inland. The plover nests on the ground close to wetlands; the nest is a small depression in the ground, with minimal or no lining. The clutch of two pale yellowish-brown eggs is speckled with black spots. Upon hatching, the young are open-eyed, mobile and relatively mature; and flee the nest.

Of the Charadriiformes we saw also Black-fronted Dotterel and Red-necked Stint. While trying to see a few other sea birds, a few dolphins swam in the bay, which, naturally, we were not able to catch with our cameras.

Every time I go to Coolart I have to stop under the Ginkgo tree and “feel the breath” of Gondwana via that living fossil and its characteristic leaves, sometimes yellowish, brown and dead, or green and luscious like now.

It is the only living species in the division Ginkgophyta, all others being extinct. It is found in fossils dating back 270 Million years. — **Velimir Dragic**



Ginkgo [Maidenhair tree] Photo - Velimir Dragic

Birding at Langwarrin Flora & Fauna Reserve 3rd December

It was very windy and conditions were awful for spotting birds. Here is a list of the birds seen:

Red Wattlebird. White naped Honeyeater. Yellow faced Honeyeater. White eared Honeyeater. Australian Magpie. Superb Fairy Wren. Eastern Yellow Robin. Black faced Cuckoo Shrike. Satin Flycatcher. Brown Thornbill. Rufous Whistler. Grey Shrike Thrush. Welcome Swallow. Crested Pigeon. Rainbow Lorikeet.

In an open lawned garden adjacent to the Reserve we had wonderful close up views of a White-necked Heron and a White faced Heron. Also Straw necked and White Ibis.

We found several Horned Orchids but most of the orchids had finished including the Purple Diuris which had been in flower a month ago.

We searched unsuccessfully for a reported Elbow Orchid which is currently in flower near the Dune Trail. — **Bette Mitchell**

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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