PENINSULA FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC.
Mornington Peninsula, Victoria, Australia

NEWSLETTER: JUNE 2019

Fingal Beach, Selwyn Fault and Cape Schanck
16th March

One perfect sunny autumn day we started at The Pines picnic ground near Cape Schanck to walk down to Fingal Beach. There were great views along to Gunnamatta Beach on the way down, as we walked through Coastal Ti-tree, then mature Moonah. According to a sign along the way, some of the Moonah are up to 600 years old. The Coast Beard-heath were mature too, with twisted old trunks up to 2 metres high. There was only one mature *Banksia integrifolia*, but plenty of young seedlings. Coast saw sedge, rice flower, white correa, sea box and coast daisy bush made up the components of the Coastal Moonah Woodland.

Photo: Judy Smart

It was low tide, so we expected to find plenty of rock pool life. The pools had beautiful mauve and green seaweeds, but a surprising lack of life – no sea stars, anemones, crabs, and only one dead chiton. There must have been plenty of abalone though, judging by the number of people down there harvesting them. There were only a few birds on the beach too – Silver Gulls, Pacific Gulls and Pied Cormorants. We walked down to see Selwyn Fault, which Velimir will tell you about.

Then it was time to ascend the famous steps back to the car park. We had spare time, so we walked part of the way down the boardwalk at Cape Schanck, seeing Singing Honeyeaters along the way. **— Judy Smart**

Fingal Beach Plant List	
Acacia uncifolia	Coast Wirilda
Alyxia buxifolia	Sea box
Banksia integrifolia	Coastal Banksia
Correa alba	White Correa
Leptospermum laevigatum	Coastal Ti-tree
Lepidosperma gladiatum	Coast Sword sedge
Leucopogon parviflorus	Coast beard heath
Melaleuca lanceolata	Moonah
Olearia axillaris	Coast Daisy bush
Pimelea serpyllifolia var. *serpyllifolia*	Rice flower
Pultenea tenuifolia	Slender bush-pea

A GEOLOGICAL WALK

Starting from Pines Picnic area, we walked along Fingal walking track, observing fantastic scenes of waves crashing against the coast below us. We went down 400 steps, and finally reached the sand of the Fingal Beach. We split into two groups: the majority stayed to observe rock-pooling, while Judy and I started a challenging walk over rocky platforms, hopping over rocks along the coast in the direction of Selwyn Fault, which was our destination. We were going left, in the south-westerly direction – we went over basalt boulders and limestone rock platforms, which was not too difficult given that it was a low tide. Rock pools between the rocks were interesting to look at, but we didn't waste too much time because we wanted to reach our destination and return to our party as soon as possible.

Walking further along the rocky platform, hopping over basalt and (much larger) limestone boulders, we arrived at a beautiful small rocky cove, where smooth basalt rocks baked on the sunny beach.

Selwyn Fault. Photo: Judy Smart

After walking around the headland, we reached our goal – Herds Bay, where Selwyn Fault, a major geological feature, meets the Bass Strait. Selwyn Fault occupies almost the entire Peninsula, stretching along the coast, from Frankston

to Dromana and across Nepean Peninsula, before it cuts inland. East of the crack, impressive 80 metre high basalt cliffs, which are about 50 million years old, show the flow of lava. They are covered with much younger dune calcarenite, characteristic of the western Nepean Peninsula formation.

Selwyn's Fault is still seismically active, especially in the vicinity of Mornington.

Basalt Boulders on Limestone Platform. Photo: Velimir Dragic

We returned to the Fingal Beach and explored limestone hanging cliffs there. We joined the group and climbed back up the steps to have lunch.

We began the afternoon leg of the trip by driving south towards the Cape Schanck Lighthouse car park. We began a long climb down the boardwalk – stopping from time to time, not because we were tired but to enjoy a wonderful view.

To the east and north-west from Selwyn's Fault, the Bass Strait coast shows pronounced differences. (1) The cliffs that stretch east of the Fault belong to the Flinders-Fingal coastline and consist of nearly horizontal basaltic lava flow; (2) The part on the north-west belongs to the Nepean Peninsula formation, and consists of lighter-coloured cliffs of sandstone, with numerous coves and sandy beaches visible. Soft limestone rocks and clay, as well as some mudstone, can also be seen around the fault. The basalt cliffs that stretch from Cape Schanck to Selwyn's Fault, in places reach the height of up to 100 metres above the sea-level.

Long way down [and up] to Pulpit Rock Photo: Velimir Dragic

The black pearl on the geological crown of this region is the Pulpit Rock, a geological formation created by volcanic activity, which has resisted all weather challenges for millions of years, and remains standing upright on the base called Devil's Desk. **— Velimir Dragic**

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SEANA GATHERING AT PORT FAIRY
Friday and Saturday 22nd-23rd March 2019

According to the constitution of the South East Australian Naturalists Association Inc, the Annual General Meeting and General meeting have to be held at the Autumn Camp each year.

Most years, this has not been a problem as an associated field naturalists club has elected to host a camp. As this did not happen, the SEANA Management Committee decided to organize a Gathering, choosing Port Fairy in Western Victoria as a venue where field naturalists would like to visit and if possible encourage members of clubs, with representatives to attend to reach a quorum of ten or more clubs, so that an Annual General Meeting and General Meeting could be held.

First and second circulars with registration forms were emailed and mailed to all associated clubs and individual members, with a result of thirteen clubs and fifty-nine registrations received. Six members and a friend of the Peninsula Field Naturalists Club replied and attended the Gathering.

The Victoria Hotel in Port Fairy was booked for dinner for people who travelled on or before Friday the 22nd March to gather and perhaps arrange some activities for the Saturday. After an enjoyable dinner, Diane Lurhs from the Hamilton Field Naturalists Club gave a talk about interesting places to visit in the area, and about the excursion to Griffiths Island, intertidal zones near the lighthouse, Port Fairy , that she organized to lead for Saturday.

On Saturday morning, some people chose to go to various places of interest including volcanics of the region, Tower Hill and Mt Eccles, to see two different types of volcanic craters and surrounding country. A large number of people joined Diane for a walk around Griffiths Island, accessible by a footbridge from the main land.

The venue, Charlies on East in Port Fairy, was booked for dinner on Saturday night, and also provided a room for the AGM and General meetings, that were held before dinner, and afterwards to accommodate members to hear our guest speaker, Jodie Honan who spoke about the Latham's Snipe wetlands habitat, located in Port Fairy Township.

Jodie fought to save the wetlands from the local council

where they planned to sell the land for residential sub-division. Jodie, with supporters, fought for a period of fourteen years and the wetlands were successfully, and still are, retained as habitat for the Latham's Snipe.

On Sunday morning, the seven PFNC people met at Tower Hill Reserve for a walk and lunch before leaving for home or further sightseeing in this interesting part of Victoria. **— Pat Gomm**

GRIFFITH ISLAND

This walk was lead by Diane Luhrs from Hamilton F.N.C. We met at the causeway leading to the island at the mouth of the Moyne River, formed by a lava flow from Penshurst, 62km. away. Before beginning birdos noticed swifts in flight over a very dry wetland just across the road from the causeway. There were black swans and pelicans in the shallows at the causeway.

The track to the ocean was through regenerated bushland consisting of nearly all Rhagodia providing habitat for shearwaters which had already moved on leaving a few dead ones behind. Many starlings were inhabiting the few stunted trees providing interest for optimistic binocular users. The track led to the magnificent sight of large basalt boulders.

Shearwater nesting grounds. Photo: Coralie Davies

Travelling along the sandy beach we saw arctic terns, silver gulls, black cormorants, pelicans and a darter on the reef not far from shore. It was agreed that we saw a juvenile pacific gull floating in the shallows.

On the beach one of our group was keying out two species of cuttlefish. Who knew? He himself was then I.D.'d as Graham Patterson author of *Coastal guide to nature and history Port Phillip Bay* and past contributor to our Club.

On to rock pooling and it was hard going walking on the large rounded boulders not comparable to our easier experiences at Flinders' Mushroom Reef. We admired the tiniest of shells and other sea creatures in the sand slowly being covered by the incoming tide. In the vegetation behind us an egret and a white faced heron were well camouflaged in a dip of the landscape. A man-made reef fully protected the next beach near the lighthouse. A favorite of locals.

After lunch on the concrete wall leading to the lighthouse we noticed about 15 ruddy turnstones busy on rocks less than 2m off shore. Suddenly they flew off and landed on the rocky coast further along.

The tide was much higher when we returned from our 2 km 4 hour walk. Many thanks to Diane our well rehearsed guide. **— Coralie Davies**

MT. ECCLES

Mt. Eccles is a fascinating volcanic feature that I was keen to explore again, my previous visit being in 2009 during the S.E.A.N.A. Port Fairy Camp. Doris, Velimir and I were joined by S.E.A.N.A. regulars, Viv and Jan from the Warnambool club for the full day outing on Saturday.

Situated 57 km. north-west of Port Fairy, Mt. Eccles is a composite volcano with a crater lake, scoria cones, lava tubes and lava canals. It was active from about 30,000 to 7000 years ago and was initially formed by explosive eruptions of scoria and ash from 8 eruptive points which built a peak 179m high. Lake Surprise now fills 3 of these overlapping craters contained within the rim. Further eruptions splashed lava onto the sides of the crater, with layers of ash, scoria and lava visible in the wall. Eruptions also produced basaltic lava which flowed 50 km. to the coast, to the west of Port Fairy, some of the longest in Western Victoria.

The lava flows formed canals and tunnels; as it cooled a hard crust formed on the surface and helped to insulate the still-molten lava flow inside. When the supply ceased and it drained from the tube, a lava tunnel was formed if the crust was thick enough. If the crust was thin and the roof collapsed, a canal was formed.

Entrance to lava tube. Photo: Heather Ducat

The flows to the west of Mt. Eccles dammed streams creating Lake Condah and a large area of swamp. The indigenous Gunditjmara people built channels and ponds to

harvest eels and fish. The area shows evidence, dating back thousands of years, of large settled communities engaged in farming and smoking eels and fish for food and trade.

Lake Surprise. Photo: Heather Ducat

In the morning we walked around the high rim which gives a good view of Lake Surprise and the Mannagum woodland that clothes the outer slopes of the cone. With torches at the ready, we ventured into a lava tunnel accessed by sloping, slippery rocky steps. Near the entrance, the tunnel is about 5m. high, with a domed roof and flat floor. The roof gets progressively lower, sealing the end about 20m. from the entrance (difficult to judge in total darkness). Flow lines and drips of lava are visible on the walls; great fun to explore. From the northwest end of the lake a lava canal runs for 6.5km., a rough 2-3hr. walk on the collapsed roof of a lava tube. Sometimes canals were formed when a flow followed an existing stream-bed.

The crater rim is 2.6km. in circumference with a steep climb to the peak.

After lunch we walked the 2 km. loop track around the edge of the lake which is 1 km. long and 30m. deep. Woodland birds were scarce on the rim walk but our list was boosted in the afternoon by the addition of waterbirds. Other wildlife included a wallaby resting in a shady recess in the crater wall and a very crabby tigersnake.

After walking for almost 4 hours on very rocky ground we were all weary, Doris may have walked further than she planned, egged on by the excited chatter of Velimir and I. We all enjoyed a very interesting outing, the volcanic landscape and features are some of the youngest in Victoria, like walking through a textbook**.— Heather Ducat**

Birdlist for Mt. Eccles - Lake Surprise	
Australasian Grebe	Crimson Rosella
Pied Cormorant	Kookaburra
Darter	Eastern Yellow Robin
White-faced Heron	Grey Shrike-thrush
Australian White Ibis	Superb Fairy-wren
Straw-necked Ibis	White-browed Scrubwren
Musk Duck	Brown Thornbill
Pacific Black Duck	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Coot	Australian Magpie
Whistling Kite	Little Raven
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Grey Currawong
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	White-throated Treecreeper

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Ecuador and Galapagos Islands
Jack Krohn
10th April

Jack has spoken to us previously on the Western Port Biosphere, where he was DELWP representative. Jack is a dedicated bird watcher and photographer, and saw an astonishing number of brilliant birds in two and a half weeks in Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands. He showed us his field guides – Ecuador has over 1600 birds, and the field guide weighed 1.8kg, whereas GI has 185 birds, and the field guide was quite slim.

They flew into Quito, the second highest capital in the world, and from there travelled to a series of Magic Birding Lodges, which Jack highly recommends. Each one provided accommodation, meals, guiding, and a veranda with bird feeders, frequented by humming birds. On the walks they saw wildlife such as miniscule frogs, giant snails, agouti, squirrels and monkeys, as well as birds. The Ecuadoran birds have evocative names to match their gorgeous plumage – Mot Mot, Barbets, Trogon, Ant thrush, Turkey vulture, Swallow-tailed Kite, Toucanette, Violet-ear, Woodstar, Wood nymph, Jacobin, lots of Tanagers, and the most spectacular of all – the Andean Cock-of-the-rock, a bright red rock star of the bird world.

They flew 900 km west of Ecuador to the Galapagos Islands, and travelled around on a sixteen person boat cruise for seven nights, visiting San Cristobal, Santa Cruz, Floriana and Espanola Islands. While the British controlled the islands they had English names, but have now reverted to their Spanish names. The population of the islands is 30,000, and tourism is well controlled and planned, so that each group visiting an area has a designated time, and places of interest are not over-run by crowds. The wild life is tame and unfussed by visitors.

Although on the Equator, the climate is dry. The islands are over a mid-plate hot spot geologically, and volcanoes have erupted between recent times and 5 million years ago. Darwin visited the islands hoping to see an eruption, but was disappointed. The finches became part of his theory of evolution after he studied his specimens back in England.

The feast of wildlife for visitors starts with sea life – sea lions, bottle nose dolphins, and Galapagos penguins – the only Northern hemisphere penguin. These are only able to live on the Equator because of the cold Humboldt Current, which travels north from Antarctica. The famous giant tortoises vary according to which island they live on, with marked differences. Lava lizards colour up in breeding season, with red heads and colourful skin. Marine iguanas swim and feed on seaweeds. There are 185 birds, 30 of them endemic. The Blue-footed Booby is the iconic bird of the GI, and was nesting on Espanola. Other birds seen were flamingos, Lava Heron, Frigate bird, Waved Albatross, Brown pelicans, mocking birds, Yellow warbler, Galapagos dove, and of course the 'Darwin' finches.

Jack remarked that he would love to go back, and many of us felt like joining him, for such a wonderful experience. — **Judy Smart**

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Woodlands Historic Park
13th April

Woodlands Historic Park is situated in Greenvale, about 22 km north of Melbourne CBD. The Park itself covers a bit over 700 ha, and was grazed from very early in the colonisation of Victoria — from the 1840s. Originally largely Grey Box Grassy Woodland, it was extensively cleared before being declared a park, beginning in 1975 with more sections added in succeeding years. The bulk of the area was formerly contained in two pastoral stations, 'Woodlands' and 'Dundonald'.

Ruins of stable, and radar tower, Gellibrand Hill.

Our first port of call was the Providence Road entrance, near the historic Weeroona aboriginal cemetry. From here we walked up to Gellibrand Hill, which overlooks Melbourne Airport, and contains the ruins of the Dundonald homestead. Very little remains of the buildings, but a number of Hoop and Bunya Bunya Pines, and Cypress trees, mark out its location. On the return walk we crossed the fenced 'Back Paddock' where attempts are being made to reintroduce eastern barred bandicoot.

The most striking aspect of the landscape was its dryness. It was hard to imagine what the considerable population of kangaroos could possibly be living on. Under the Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*) the ground was virtually devoid of vegetation - no understory to speak of, and very little dried-up grass. Hopefuly the scene would be quite different after some rain - there are supposed to be nearly 250 plant species present in the whole park.

Birds observed on this walk included Red-rumped Parrot, Rufous Whistler, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Red-browed Finch, Silvereye and a female Flame Robin.

We then drove to the main entrance off Somerton Road, where the picnic ground sits beside Moonee Ponds Creek (completely dry). The riparian vegetation is dominated by River Red Gum (*E. camaldulensis)* with some very large trees.

Why it is not wise to camp under a red gum

The country here was just as dry, although there was a bit of understory. We were pleased to come across several groups of White-winged Choughs along the creek track, before heading off to Woodlands homestead, sighting Long-billed Corellas, more Red-rumped Parrots, and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos on the way.

Woodlands homestead's claim to fame it is that it is one of the earliest surviving examples of a prefabricated timber house erected in Victoria, dating to 1842. Its garden contains some interesting old varieties of plants, such as old varieties of Fuchsia.

White-winged Choughs

The visible geology is mainly granite hills (or granodiorite to a geologist), with several outcrops visible; the Park is situated at the meeting of these hills with the basalt plains to the west.

The most noticeable aspects of the Park were the large number of kangaroos, the scarcity of understory, and the erosion of Moonee Ponds Creek. Interestingly, the Management Plan dated 1997 identifies these three problems, amongst others. It is not clear that much has happened in the 20 years since. **— Lee Denis**

Granodiorite outcrop. All Photos: Lee Denis

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Surf Coast Fossil Finds
Tim Zeigler
8th May

Tim Ziegler is Vertebrate Palaeontology Collection Manager at Museums Victoria. Some of our members met Tim at the Lancefield fossil dig several years ago, and Tim grew up in Mt Eliza, another connection.

Tim spoke about a giant fossil 'shark fall' found at Jan Juc late in 2017. Like most finds, it started with a member of the public beach-combing. Phillip Mullaly recognised the significance of perfect shark teeth found in a boulder fallen from the cliff, and Museums Victoria investigated with a group of students and volunteers, who took rocks back to the museum to study.

Tooth of Carcharodes angustidens

The cliffs at Jan Juc are Jan Juc marl – a muddy limestone about 24 million years old. Fossils dating to 15 to 25 million years old of whales, penguins, shark, fish, crabs, brachiopods and bryozoa have been found there, exposed by wave action eroding the cliffs.

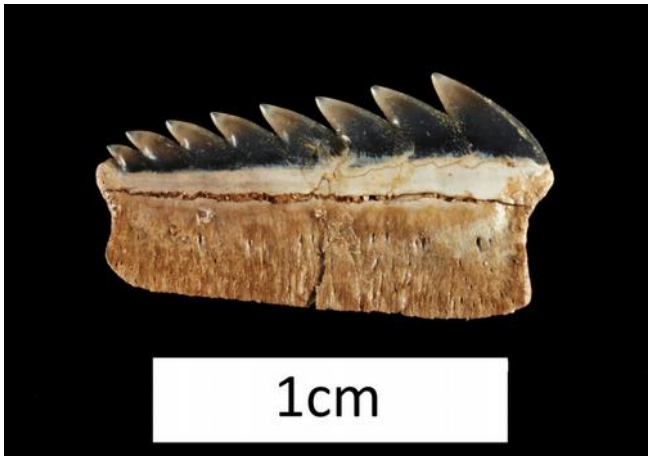
The shark tooth found belonged to a Late Oligocene shark called *Carcharodes angustidens*, a giant narrow teeth shark, which was 8 metres long and weighed about 5 tonne. Fossil finds have shown that these sharks were distributed in temperate oceans around the world for about 10 million years. Their fossils have been found in Belgium more than a century ago, and then New Zealand more recently, but this was the first Australian find.

Sharks shed one thousand teeth over a lifetime – they are constantly growing new teeth as the old ones wear or are lost in prey, so their jaws have a mix of finished and developing teeth. When the rocks taken back to the Museum were broken up they were surprised to find a total of 33 teeth belonging to one shark – 15 finished teeth (like the first tooth found by Phillip Mullaly, with complete roots and well preserved serrations) and 17 developing teeth (really only thin enamel shells) The developing teeth are soft and fragile so they don't generally survive as fossils, unable to withstand the impacts associated with transportation by the sea, so this indicated that they had been deposited where they were found by a single individual shark.

Despite the worldwide distribution of these sharks, this was only the third find in the world of such a collection of teeth ('associated dentition' is the phrase used by palaentologists) from the species. Incidentally, teeth of this species were

first identified by Louis Agassiz, a contemporary and correspondent of Darwin's, more than 180 years ago.

Then they found teeth belonging to 'Cow Sharks' (*Hexanchus* sp.) – smaller sharks which are about the size of a table, and which are still swimming around in the sea, known as 6 gill and 7 gill sharks.



Tooth of 'Cow Shark'. Photos: Tim Zeigler

This led to a hypothesis that the large shark had died, and the carcase was being fed on by the cow sharks. The teeth settled on the ocean floor in the sediment, eventually forming Jan Juc marl. Tim illustrated this hypothesis with graphic footage from a David Attenborough documentary, taken from a submersible, of sharks feeding on a whale carcase deep on the ocean floor.

The giant sharks became extinct 5 – 6 million years ago, at much the same time as the true giant baleen whales evolved, during a time of global decline in temperatures.

By extraordinary coincidence, a family found a perfect Mako shark tooth, about 13 million years old, on Moondah beach, Mt Eliza, the weekend before the meeting, and brought it along to the meeting to show Tim, who was quite impressed and said that it was a good specimen.

The Jan Juc shark teeth and their story are on display at the Melbourne Museum currently.

And also: there will be another Mega fauna festival at Lancefield November 23 this year, celebrating the Ice Age (60 – 70,000 year old) giant marsupials and kangaroos – all welcome. **— Judy Smart**

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Tortoise Head, French Island
11th May

The Club has had a few previous outings to French Island, and found the problem to be how to get around. Unless you have transport it is difficult to get to the most interesting spots in a day trip. For this trip it was decided to head down to Tortoise Head, which is the south-westerly point of the Island. Our guide was Bette Mitchell, who regularly takes part in wader counts there.

Tortoise Head from the North-west

After alighting at Tankerton from the Stony Point ferry — seeing a pair of dolphins on the crossing — the first part of the walk, possible at low tide, was across the wide shore platform just south of the jetty. On return we had to stick closer to the beach. This section seems to be actively eroding, with a cliff a couple of metres high. Several bands can be seen in this cliff, alternating light and dark, which seem to indicate a succession of accretion periods, each followed by a pause in which vegetation laid down a band of humus.

To reach Tortoise Head from French Island it is necessary to cross a wide salt marsh. The first part of the walk, across the shore platform or around the beach, is straightforward; but a little way on this route is blocked by mangroves — or, more accurately, by the soft sediments in which the mangroves grow. At this point you must cross into the salt marsh, which on this occasion at least was extremely wet.

Battling through the Shrubby Glasswort zone

Immediately landward of the mangroves is a band of Shrubby Glasswort (*Tecticornia arbuscula*), which contains some intermixed Sea-blight (*Suaeda australis*) as well as salt bush (*Atriplex* sp.) and Spear Grass (*Austrostipa*

stipoides) on the slightly higher ridges. This band is only about 10-15 metres wide. Behind it is a wide band dominated by Beaded Glasswort (*Sarcocornia quinqueflora*), with some *Samolus repens* and Rounded Noon-flower (*Disphyma australe)*. This extends up to some 500 metres wide, and is backed by farmland. A pair of Cape Barren Geese, some Shelducks and a flock of White-fronted Chats were observed. There was a discussion about snakes, but the weather being cool, with intermittent showers, it was agreed that no snakes were going to be out and about. Immediately we came upon a Lowland Copperhead. Confrontation was avoided and we went our separate ways.

This section of the walk was difficult, due to the large pools of water that had to be avoided. One of our party, regretting his choice of footwear, and deciding that his feet were wet enough, turned back at this point. The rest of us pressed on to the next challenge: crossing back to the shoreline. After walking about 800 metres through the herbfield, our guide directed us that we should cross back to the shore as we were now past the band of mangroves and could easily walk along the sandy beach. We followed these directions, plunging into the shrubby glasswort zone, where the bushes were 1 to 1.5 metres tall, until we ran into a wide lagoon between us and the shore. Skirting around this lagoon we finally reached the shore, but not before all of us had felt the sensation of cold water running into our boots, and a couple of us had fallen over altogether. From there the walk was straightforward, and we crossed over onto Tortoise Head proper . Originally it was separated by a channel from French Island; the channel between the two has been filled in by accretion. The former channel can be seen on the aerial photograph, but was not noticeable from the beach on the western side.

Emerging to the shore

Tortoise Head is composed of Older Volcanics basalt, which underlies much of French Island, in several flows dating to the Eocene (about 40-60 million years ago). The central basalt hill is about 800 metres by 200 metres, with its highest point about 30 metres, Extensive salt marsh on the eastern side makes the whole promontory about a kilometre across. The western side comprises sandy beaches, with some sections of cobbles, while the south end presents eroded cliffs to a high energy wave environment. The whole is classified a site of special geological interest due to the exposed sequence of weathered lava flows.

Amongst birders Tortoise Head is noted for waders and raptors. The only shorebirds that we saw were Red-capped Plovers, a party of Red-necked Stints, a small flock of 20-30 Pied Oystercatchers and a single Sooty Oystercatcher. Not surprising considering the time of the year. Also observed were three species of cormorant — Pied, Little Pied and Little Black. Raptors were more in evidence, sightings including Black-shouldered Kite, Whistling Kite, Nankeen Kestrel, Swamp Harrier, and a close view of a White-bellied Sea-eagle cruising over our heads.

Eroded cliffs at the southern end. All Photos: Lee Denis

We did not have time to climb to the top of the hill, but we could see that it was mainly grassed, with scattered shrubs or trees. The shoreline above the beach supported a vegetation including grass (*Poa* sp.), Boobialla (*Myoporum insulare*) and Coastal Wattle (*Acacia longifolia subsp. sophorae*), and this probably extends over the higher area. A few dead trees, which appeared to be conifers of some kind, could also be seen. Another excursion should definitely include climbing the hill and crossing to the eastern side.

After a very peaceful lunch at the south-west extremity of the promontory — actually another island that has been joined to the mainland by accretion — it was time to head back to catch the return ferry. On the return walk we stayed on the sandy ridge that extends behind the mangroves for a considerable distance, before crossing back to the salt marsh, and found it a much easier walk. An enjoyable day.
— Lee Denis

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BIRDING REPORTS

Balbirooroo (Balnarring), 4th March

Photo: Velimir Dragic

After a long dry summer and a very hot week it was a beautiful day of low twenties °C with a moderate sea breeze. It was an ideal day for bushwalking, but not for birding. Low water level after a series of hot days affected the usual variety of birds in this area.

But, after a shortage of waterbirds, on the end of our birding day we were surprised with a count of 38 birds on our bird list.

An additional interesting sighting was a Feather Horned Beetle *Rhipicera femorata*, Rhipiceridae family, order Coleoptera. Males use their fantastic antennae to locate a female that's emitting pheromones which indicate she is ready for mating. **— Velimir Dragic**

Bird List For Balbirooroo 4th March 2019				
Australian Shelduck	Straw-necked Ibis	Crimson Rosella	White-eared Honeyeater	Skylark
Australian Wood Duck	Purple Swamphen	Spotted Pardalote	New Holland Honeyeater	Richard's Pipit
Pacific Black Duck	Dusky Moorhen	Striated Pardalote	Eastern Yellow Robin	European Goldfinch
Chestnut Teal	Eurasian Coot	White-browed Scrubwren	Golden Whistler	Welcome Swallow
Hardhead	Black-fronted Dotterel	Brown Thornbill	Magpie-Lark	Common Blackbird
Hoary-headed Grebe	Masked Lapwing	Striated Thornbill	Grey Fantail	Common Starling
White-faced Heron	Galah	Red Wattlebird	Australian Magpie	
Australian White Ibis	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Noisy Miner	Little Raven	

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Cranbourne Botanic Gardens, 3rd April

We walked through the bushland section of the gardens, starting from the Stringybark picnic ground. As was the case everywhere, conditions were extremely dry. In cool but fine, overcast conditions the six members first took the Manna, Possum Gully and Trig tracks up to the lookout. Birds were not numerous — except for Grey Fantails, which seemed to be in flocks across the track to the lookout. Rarely seen so many flitting onto the track, exhibiting the reason for their name.

Despite the dry conditions most of the expected honeyeaters were observed — Red Wattlebird, Yellow-faced, White-eared, White-naped, New Holland and White-plumed. The 18 species recorded on this section also included a male Rufous Whistler near the summit, and the usual Superb Fairy-wren, Eastern Yellow Robin etc. A Swamp Harrier was the only raptor observed.

A second walk, this time to the Wylie Creek wetlands, added only another 11 species, including both Hoary-headed and Australasian Grebe, White-faced Heron, Swamphen, Moorhen and Coot. Probably the sighting of the day came when we spotted two birds far away across the grassy paddock. Initially two orange dots in the bins, we felt compelled to get closer, until we could see that they were juvenile Black-shouldered Kites**.— Lee Denis**

Photos: Lee Denis

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Seaford Wetland, 6th May

Seven birdos gathered at the Austin Rd viewing platform on a fine but dull day, with only a light breeze, to find that the wetland was all but dry. Some rain in the preceding week had left what can best be described as puddles; prior to that our local observers told us it was completely dry. Total observations: one Willie Wagtail. Things didn't get much better as we walked around the western edge of the swamp — no water and no birds. There were birds in the backyards across the road, including very noisy Rainbow and Musk Lorikeets in the Yellow Gums, and, curiously, a few in a palm tree.

Continuing on to the school we finally spotted a single male Flame Robin. Across the middle track we saw some Skylarks, and heard Little Grassbird and Golden-headed Cisticola.

There were more birds on Eel Race Drain - in fact all of the water birds listed below were seen there, or on the adjacent shallow pond in Downs Estate.

Most birds were sighted on the return walk on the eastern, Wells Road side, mostly bush birds including several honeyeaters, pardalote, Shrike-thrush etc.

Bird of the day was definitely Crested Shrike-tit in the eucalypts along the track. **— Lee Denis**

Flame Robin. Photo: Lee Denis

Bird List For Seaford Wetland 6TH May 2019				
Pacific Black Duck	Swamp Harrier	Rainbow Lorikeet	New Holland Honeyeater	Little Raven
Chestnut Teal	Brown Goshawk	Musk Lorikeet	Flame Robin	Skylark
Australasian Grebe	Nankeen Kestrel	Eastern Rosella	Eastern Yellow Robin	House Sparrow
Hoary-headed Grebe	Purple Swamphen	Superb Fairy-wren	Crested Shrike-tit	Little Grassbird
Little Pied Cormorant	Dusky Moorhen	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Shrike-thrush	Golden-headed Cisticola
Australian Pelican	Eurasian Coot	Brown Thornbill	Magpie-Lark	Silvereye
White-faced Heron	Masked Lapwing	Red Wattlebird	Grey Fantail	Common Blackbird
Great Egret	Spotted Turtle-Dove	Little Wattlebird	Willie Wagtail	Common Starling
Australian White Ibis	Crested Pigeon	Noisy Miner	Grey Butcherbird	Common Myna
Black-shouldered Kite	Galah	White-plumed Honeyeater	Australian Magpie	

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.

President:
Coralie Davies
0425 763521
Treasurer:
Linda Edwards
95846790

All correspondence to
Secretary
Judy Smart
51 Wimborne Ave
Mt Eliza 3930
mandjsmart@gmail.com

Newsletter edited by Lee Denis

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