



NEWSLETTER: SEPTEMBER 2018

Winter in Greens Bush 16th June

The long circuit at Baldrys Crossing makes for a fascinating winter excursion, with fungi, birds, mosses and liverworts and — potentially — orchids to spot. Although cold, the weather remained fine, with the trees providing shelter from the wind. Our first sightings came in the car park — Little Corellas, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and Crimson Rosella. Some leaves were probably those of Autumn Bird Orchid.



Sulphur-crested Cockatoo. Photo: Lee Denis

Leaving the car park we started on an anticlockwise circuit — a quirk of signage is that all directions and distances are based on a clockwise circuit, so the direction to Baldrys Crossing is always behind you if you go anticlockwise, even though both directions go to the same place. This can cause some consternation for newbies, but we were able to reassure them that we were going the right way.



Cortinarius austrovenetus. Photo: Lee Denis

Winter is really not the best time for bird sightings, but there were still some interesting sightings, including Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos, White-throated Treecreeper and Golden Whistler, but the fungi were the most varied. Some were readily recognisable using our *Field Guide to Australian Fungi* (Bruce Fuhrer) as well as comparing photos to those in the FNCV Fungi CD; other identifications are more speculative.

Fungi identified at Greens Bush, 16th June 2018
<i>Agaricus xanthodermus</i> — "Yellow Stainer". Lives on decaying vegetation. Poisonous
<i>Byssomerulius corium</i> — A crustose species on wood
<i>Cortinarius archeri</i> — A striking purple mycorrhizal fungus, under Eucalypts
<i>Cortinarius austrovenetus</i> — Another striking mycorrhizal fungus, with an olive-green cap and mustard-yellow gills; several clumps found
<i>Cortinarius fibrillosus</i> — Also a mycorrhizal species, with a kind of 'furry' cap
<i>Lepista nuda</i> — "Wood Blewett". An introduced species
<i>Morganella pyriformis</i> — A puffball, growing on decaying wood
<i>Mycena clarkeana</i> — Small reddish caps in clusters on dead wood
<i>Mycena cystidiosa</i> — Quite tall, up to 200mm, on leaf litter; noticable for its surrounding mass of sterile stipes
<i>Mycena nargan</i> — not completely sure of this ID; small dark caps with scattered whitish scales, growing on dead wood.
<i>Psilocybe subaeruginosa</i> — found on decaying plant matter;
<i>Russula persanguinea</i> — Very common along the track. Dark red cap with stark white gills and stem. Another mycorrhizal species.
<i>Scleroderma cepa</i> — A type of puffball, the spores are released by erosion of the spore mass
<i>Tremella fuciformis</i> — A whitish gelatinous mass which is parasitic on other fungi, on dead wood
<i>Tremella globispora</i> — Similar to <i>T. fuciformis</i> , also parasitic on other fungi.

We also noted what was possibly a yellow slime mould, crusting on wood. Of plants in flower there were none, with the single exception of a Tall Greenhood (*Pterostylus melagramma*), but the mosses were abundant, many with sporophytes. Also with sporophytes was the liverwort tentitatively identified as *Chiloscyphus semiteres*. — **Lee Denis**

Conservation Geology & Imported Geological Material in Natural Areas

Dr Geoff Yugovic

13th June

Jeff is a consultant ecologist, and friend of the Club. He has spoken to us before on Mud Islands, Salt marsh and estuarine vegetation, Ecosystems and top predators, and Kooweerup Swamp and grasslands. The paper he has written with Neville Rosengren on tonight's subject is going to be published in the Victorian Naturalist later this year.

He started with a diagram of the Earth's spheres, starting in the middle with the geosphere, radiating out to the hydrosphere, then biosphere, atmosphere and magnetosphere.

A definition: *anthropogenic geomaterial*: any geological material natural or synthetic that occurs where it does due to human activity. One example is Aboriginal stone tools and waste flakes, which were traded and carried, and found far from their origin. Good uses of anthropogenic geomaterial are the use of local stone for retaining walls and steps where needed, such as the sandstone steps at Schnapper Point Mornington, built 30 years ago by Doug Evendon from rock collected from other local works. Another is the basalt rock wall on the Esplanade Mt Martha at Margarita Ave, which was built from rock quarried nearby.

Poor uses of anthropogenic geomaterial are many. One example is at Warrnambool, where grey basalt gravel was used for a coastal pathway on limestone. Another is at Red Bluff, Black Rock, where broken concrete, asphalt slabs and hard waste were tipped to stabilise the cliffs. Also at Black Rock, muddy imported Gippsland sand was used to renourish the beach, and the locals campaigned successfully to have it removed. At Fossil Beach Mornington dumped rocks covered the fossil cliffs and limestone kiln. In order to have beach access for the cleaning machine at Moondah Beach, Mt Eliza, the Shire dumped rock as a ramp. This material was being spread along the beach by wave action. At Jeff's suggestion, the Shire removed the ramp and the geological material which restored the beach. Another example is a section of the Bittern Coastal Wetlands track at Hastings, which is a raised gravel track, and should have been boardwalk like the rest of the track.

Alternatives to imported geological material are organic mulches such as woodchips for tracks; board walks and timber steps; better design of natural tracks using breaching and barring to control run off and erosion; and the use of local stone. Management guidelines should include geodiversity values in management plans. — **Judy Smart**

Heard and McDonald Islands

Tania Ireton, Bayside Birdlife

8th August 2018

Tania spoke to us last year on *Islands of the Albatross Latitudes*, and this trip was to similar latitudes, but with interesting differences.

Heard and McDonald Islands are directly south of India, and a long way from everywhere! Most of the three week trip on the *Spirit of Enderby* was spent getting there and back, and only a few days at the islands.



Mawson Peak. All Photos by Tania Ireton

Australia's only two active volcanoes are Mawson Peak on Heard Island, and McDonald Island – they erupted in 1992 and killed all the vegetation. McDonald Island doubled in size recently from volcanic activity. Mawson Peak is much taller than Mt Kosciusko. The islands are 80% covered in ice and snow, and have 6 active glaciers. There is rain or snow on 3 out of every 4 days, it is always windy, and average temperatures range from 0 to 4°C. This is a much more severe climate than Macquarie Island for instance, of similar latitude, which is milder and well vegetated. The difference is caused by the Antarctic Convergence, which brings colder sea temperatures.

The islands were discovered by American sealers in 1833, and they lived there from 1855 to 1880, in appalling conditions, until they wiped out the Elephant seals. Since then there have been occasional scientific expeditions. It was made a World Heritage Area in 1997, and is managed by the Australian Antarctic Division. Although it was a whaling station, there are no weeds, and no feral animals. To maintain this pristine state, travellers to the islands have their clothing carefully vacuumed to remove all soil and weed seeds.

They arrived to stormy weather, snow and sleet, and had to wait for suitable conditions to disembark. While waiting a

Snow Petrel was seen, a first for Heard Island since the 1940s, and a South Georgian Diving-petrel landed in the boat.



Southern Elephant Seal

Atlas Cove was a feast of wildlife — elephant seals, King penguins, Gentoo penguins, Southern rockhoppers and Macaroni penguins, along with endemic birds such as the Black-faced Sheathbill, a carnivorous pigeon relative, which lives on carrion, and the Heard Island shag, as well as many albatross, skuas, fulmar prion, petrels etc. The vegetation is very simple – a grass, *Poa cookii*; Kerguelen cabbage, *Priglea* sp. and *Azorella selago*, cushion plant.



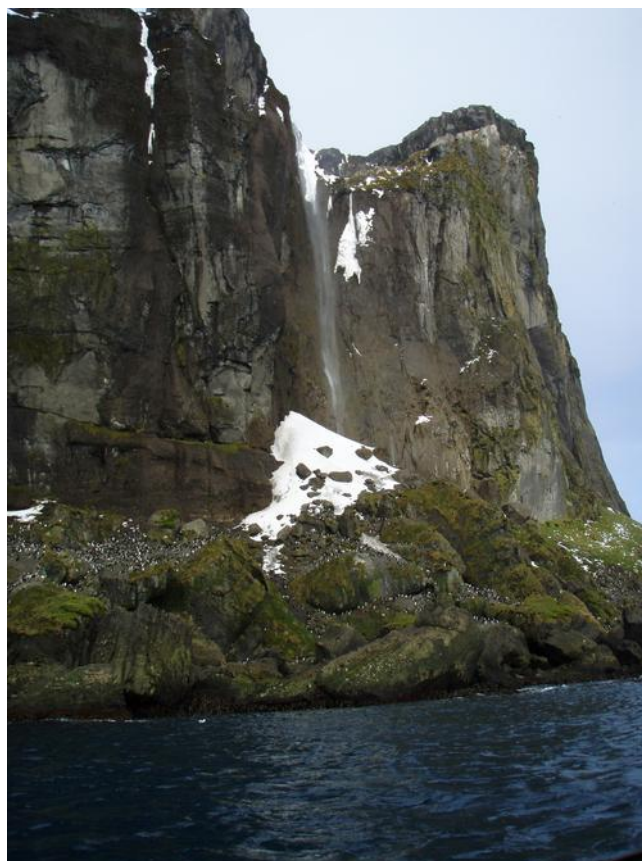
Black-faced Sheathbill

The McDonald Islands had to be seen from a distance through stormy weather, and are mostly volcanic ash. The last day was another look at Heard Island, and then came the hardest part of the trip – the 9½ days back to Albany through storms. A round trip of 10,000 kilometres.



Southern Rockhopper Penguin

Altogether they saw 68 species of birds, 15 of cetaceans, and 3 seals. Tania saw 8 new birds for her list. This was a trip for the hardy, and it was good to be an armchair traveller. —**Judy Smart**



Heard Island

Birding at Seawinds 2nd July

The coldest morning of the year so far developed into a chilly but fine and sunny day. The wind on top of Arthurs Seat had a bite to it, but conditions in the more sheltered bush were bearable as long as we kept moving. Our route took in the TC McKellar Circuit, and later around Seawinds gardens and out to the Flinders Cairn.

The TC McKellar Circuit passes mostly through an open woodland of Messmate and Narrow-leaved Peppermint over Forest Wire Grass, and Sword-sedge, with very little middle storey. A few scattered wattles — *Acacia melanoxylon*, *A. paradoxa*, and *A. mearnsii*; *Banksia*

integrifolia and *B marginata*, some *Olearias* — *O. lirata* and *O. argophylla* — various *Cassinias*, and *Pomaderris aspera*. Lower to the ground, Holly Lomatia (*Lomatia ilicifolia*) and King Ferns (*Todea barbara*).



Varied Sittella. Photo: Yvonne Incigneri

From the car park to the start of the circuit the clinking calls of Grey Currawongs were prominent; Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Galah, and Crimson Rosella could be seen and heard. All was quiet and still in the forest, but we were delighted to spot a party of at least six Sittellas foraging high in the canopy. With their rapid movements, and considering their size and position in the foliage, a clear photograph (thanks Yvonne) was an impressive feat!

Also spotted, though completely silent — one male and several female Golden Whistlers. More Crimson Rosellas

and some Brown Thornbills, and Yellow Robins in the thicker scrub, were all the additional sightings. Our attention wandered to fungi, lichens and other cryptogams.

After spotting a Grey Shrike-thrush on the way back — along with three kangaroos, one with joey in pouch — we returned to the Seawinds car park. After lunch, in the Gardens, we were able to add some further sightings — Eastern Rosella, Grey Butcherbird, Black and Wood Ducks, and, soaring over the valley from the Northern Lookout, a Wedge-tailed Eagle. Red-browed Finch on the track to the Flinders cairn, and Fairy-wrens around the Indigenous Garden, just about finished out bird sightings for the day. —

Lee Denis

Bird List For Seawinds 2nd July 2018	
Australian Wood Duck	Red Wattlebird
Pacific Black Duck	Eastern Yellow Robin
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Varied Sittella
Galah	Golden Whistler
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Grey Shrike-thrush
Rainbow Lorikeet	Magpie-Lark
Crimson Rosella	Grey Butcherbird
Eastern Rosella	Australian Magpie
Laughing Kookaburra	Grey Currawong
Superb Fairy-wren	Little Raven
Brown Thornbill	Red-browed Finch

Birding at The Village Glen 6th August

Once again Val Ford hosted us at the Village Glen, Rosebud. The weather was uncannily like the weather on our previous visit in September 2017— cold, windy, and a hint of rain. This time our numbers had shrunk to two, most of our regulars preferring fair-weather birdwatching. Nevertheless the two of us, with Val, set out on the usual circuit. In the end our bird count was almost the same as last year's.

Black and Little Pied Cormorants.

Val first took us to a couple of sightings she'd prepared earlier — a Nankeen Night Heron in the Cypress trees near the Admin Centre, and a pair of Tawny Frogmouths near the lake. These birds had been sighted during the Birdlife outing earlier in the month (as reported by Val in the September edition of the Mornington Peninsula Birdlife Newsletter, Vol 7 No 3; on that occasion the weather was 'very pleasant'). We were fortunate that they were still around for our outing, although our weather could not be described as 'pleasant'.



Superb Fairy-wren. Photo: Lee Denis

There was the usual collection of water birds, including the nesting Black Swan observed by Birdlife, a number of Hardhead, White-faced Heron, Great Egret, and Little

There were a number of Teal on the lake near the golf course, enabling a close look at the difference between Grey Teal and female Chestnut Teal. Very few birds over the swamp, but at least three Swamp Harriers soaring overhead. A few honeyeaters, a group of Superb Fairy-

wrens on the golf course. Our last sighting was made from the comfort of Val's dining room — a Spotted Pardalote on her bird bath. Thanks to Val for showing us around, and here's hoping we get some of that pleasant weather next time — **Lee Denis**

Bird List For The Village Glen 6th August 2018

Black Swan	Great Egret	Pacific Gull	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Fantail
Australian Wood Duck	Nankeen Night Heron	Silver Gull	Brown Thornbill	Grey Butcherbird
Pacific Black Duck	Australian White Ibis	Spotted Turtle-Dove	Red Wattlebird	Australian Magpie
Grey Teal	Straw-necked Ibis	Galah	Little Wattlebird	Little Raven
Chestnut Teal	Swamp Harrier	Little Corella	Crescent Honeyeater	House Sparrow
Hardhead	Purple Swamphen	Rainbow Lorikeet	New Holland Honeyeater	Common Blackbird
Little Pied Cormorant	Dusky Moorhen	Crimson Rosella	Eastern Spinebill	Common Starling
Little Black Cormorant	Eurasian Coot	Tawny Frogmouth	Eastern Yellow Robin	Common Myna
White-faced Heron	Masked Lapwing	Superb Fairy-wren	Magpie-Lark	

**Birding at Devilbend
3rd September**

Six members met at the Bittern Reservoir car park on a fine, mild to cool day. Firstly checking out the Reservoir we started with Blue-billed and Musk Ducks, Great Cormorants, Australasian and Hoary-headed Grebes, and the ubiquitous Coots. A few bush birds included Eastern Spinebill, Grey Butcherbird and Little Raven. A few Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos were making plenty of noise in the distance.



Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos. Photo: Judy Smart

Acting on information concerning a roosting site for Powerful Owl we then crossed the road to the Devilbend reserve. Evidently the information was not understood, so no such roosting site was found. Nevertheless there were plenty of birds, including Crimson and Eastern Rosella, Galah, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Little Corella, and many more Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos. The vegetation here is dominated by Manna Gums in some parts, Messmate in others; the most notable flowers were of the Kangaroo Thorn *Acacia paradoxa*. This is a drab shrub for most of the year, and a profusion of golden flowers for a month or so in early Spring.

The dam on the boundary held a Darter, but not much else. Continuing to the return walk we detoured to the water, where we added Swan, Little Pied and Little Black Cormorant, Whiskered Tern, and both Royal and Yellow-billed Spoonbill. All the while the Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo numbers were building, with a flock of more than fifty gathering and passing noisily overhead. Our final new sighting was Varied Sittella. — **Lee Denis**

No orchids were in flower along the Orchid Track, although Sun Orchid leaves were abundant. Worth a visit in a month or two.

Bird List For Bittern & Devilbend 3rd September 2018

Blue-billed Duck	Great Cormorant	Whiskered Tern	Brown Thornbill	Grey Fantail
Musk Duck	Australian Pelican	Spotted Turtle-Dove	Red Wattlebird	Dusky Woodswallow
Black Swan	Australian White Ibis	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	White-eared Honeyeater	Grey Butcherbird
Pacific Black Duck	Straw-necked Ibis	Galah	Eastern Spinebill	Australian Magpie
Australasian Grebe	Royal Spoonbill	Little Corella	Eastern Yellow Robin	Little Raven
Hoary-headed Grebe	Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Varied Sittella	Welcome Swallow
Darter	Swamp Harrier	Crimson Rosella	Golden Whistler	Common Blackbird
Little Pied Cormorant	Eurasian Coot	Eastern Rosella	Grey Shrike-thrush	
Little Black Cormorant	Masked Lapwing	Spotted Pardalote	Magpie-Lark	

Phillip and Churchill Islands 11th August

It had been quite a few years since our last club excursion to Phillip Island, so we were determined to go despite the discouraging weather forecast. Apart from some brief showers on the way the day remained fine, although there was a biting wind at The Nobbies. Once on the Island we were soon seeing Cape Barren Geese in abundance, most with chicks; the paddocks also held great numbers of Purple Swamphens and Ibis, both White and Straw-necked.



Cape Barren Goose & Chicks. Photo: Lee Denis

There was an interesting encounter when we pulled over at a lookout on the way to The Nobbies. A Cape Barren Goose became very excited, flying around us and honking loudly, which led us to have a close look around, whereupon we spotted another Goose in the low vegetation, clearly sitting on a nest close to the car park. What was remarkable was the comparatively low level of aggression of the birds, compared to, for example, a Noisy Miner. Whilst circling around us the Goose nevertheless kept its distance, certainly not making us feel in any danger despite the size of the bird.

At The Nobbies, rugged up appropriately, we walked to the end of the boardwalk — a very popular tourist destination despite the cold — and were able to spot some penguins in the shelters along the boardwalk, as well as Pacific and Kelp Gulls on the cliffs, and Gannets and Sooty Oystercatchers over the water.

Our next stop was Swan Lake, much more sheltered and even a bit warm. A Brown Goshawk took flight as we came around the last bend in the boardwalk, while yet more Cape Barren Geese with clutches of chicks roamed around the dunes. A Singing Honeyeater was sighted just before the

bird hides.



Little Penguin. Photo: Lee Denis

The birdlife on the lake differed between the two hides. From the hide on the left there was a greater variety, including Shelduck, Black-winged Stilt, Black-fronted Dotterel, and Flame Robin, as well as Swans and Coots. Fewer species were seen from the hide on the right; mostly there were Swans and Coots, with a single Little Black Cormorant, but we were entertained by a male Musk Duck performing its mating display, with much splashing and squeaking. A Swamp Harrier and a Whistling Kite patrolled overhead.



Double Rainbow at Churchill Island. Photo: Judy Smart

After lunch at Swan Lake we headed off to Churchill Island, arriving to a brief hail storm followed by a spectacular double rainbow, the colours of the outer bow reversed. With not much time left we went for a short walk along the shoreline track, spotting a few more birds, including Pied Oystercatcher, before heading for home. — **Lee Denis**

Working Bee at Langwarrin Flora & Fauna Reserve 1st July 2018

Each year the Club holds a working bee where we help out in a park or reserve around the Peninsula. This year our Club working bee saw us join the Friends of Langwarrin FFR for some weeding. This reserve is under the aegis of Parks Victoria and is the most significant natural area in the Frankston area. The Friends Group, under the leadership of Leon Costermans, celebrates its thirtieth birthday this year.

The Reserve is very popular with walkers and cyclists, most of whom are unaware of the wide variety of birdlife, orchids and other flowering plants, small mammals ranging from Agile Antechinus through Echidnas to Swamp Wallabies, frogs (at least six species), reptiles and fungi that the Reserve provides habitat for.

There are also many people who regularly visit the reserve specifically to find and photograph these things. Any day you are likely to encounter someone wandering, camera at the ready, looking for subjects of their particular interest.

The Reserve is also an historical site, with a history of military use dating back to the 19th century, including staging ground, internment camp and military hospital. A signposted history trail can be followed tracing some of the remnants of this period.

We were pleased to be able to help out in the maintenance of this invaluable asset for the Peninsula as well as the City of Frankston.— **Lee Denis**



Images of Langwarrin FFR: Variable Midge Orchid, Scarlet Honeyeater, Barred Skipper. Photos: Lee Denis

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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Newsletter edited by Lee Denis

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