

# THE MELBIRDIAN



MELBOCA (BOCA's Melbourne Branch) NEWSLETTER NO. 56  
August 2007

## MELBOCA Branch Meetings

Meetings are held at the Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Avenue, Balwyn, not far from the Balwyn Library, Melway 46 E8, on the fourth Tuesday of each month (with the exception of December) commencing at 8.00 pm. Entry is by a donation of \$4.00.

Out-of-town members & visitors very welcome.

## Future Speakers

**Tuesday 28 August 2007 8.00pm.**

**John Barkla, "Madagascar – a Journey with Friends".**

John has been passionate about birds since the age of 10. He has been a member of BOCA for over 40 years and is currently a director of BOCA. He also sits on various committees of both BOCA and Birds Australia. John also loves to travel and has a great new interest in bird photography. He looks forward to sharing with us some of the 2000 photos he took on a recent trip to Madagascar.

**Tuesday 25 September 2007 8.00 pm.**

**Chris Lester, "To Antarctica in Search of Emperor Penguins".**

Chris, another inveterate birder and traveler in pursuit of his hobby, returned recently from a voyage to the Antarctic where he came face to face with some of the wonderful birds and mammals of the frozen south. This evening Chris will speak about his trip with an emphasis on the majestic Emperor Penguin.

## MELBOCA Committee

President	Graeme Hosken
Vice-President	David Plant
Secretary	Janet Hand
Treasurer	Bill Ramsay
Sunny Fernie	Linda Stock
Diane Tweeddale	Chris Wichems
<b>MELBOCA Contact:</b>	Graeme Hosken

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## Past Meetings

**22 May 2007.** The **Bird of the Evening** segment was replaced by an informative talk by Duncan Turnbull on his research into an alternative for wooden nesting boxes entitled, "Poly Nesting Boxes". To make wooden nesting boxes is expensive and costly to post. Duncan remembered a UV-stabilised plastic equivalent to corrugated cardboard called Coreflute. In his eleven prototypes he used black Coreflute as it is least likely to suffer UV degradation and birds like a dark interior. He has reinforced the inside of the entrance with timber. They are lightweight, waterproof and easy to install and should last five years. They fold flat for storage, transport and posting and he hopes the slippery surface will discourage possums.

Ten boxes have been sent to Clarksdale Sanctuary at Linton and another installed on his property at Amherst near Talbot. By observing these boxes it is hoped to establish if the birds adapt to this 'new-age' lifestyle. I think the last two photos shown proved that at least one bird has accepted the invitation and



moved in quickly—an Australian Owlet-nightjar was photographed in the Amherst box soon after it went up.

*Janet Hand*

Our **guest speaker** was Howard Plowright and the topic, "Jewels of the Arctic". His laptop presentation of the holiday he and his wife, Jill, spent in Iceland recently, held the audience spellbound. He started his talk with information on Reykjavik, the country's capital, and then proceeded to show areas around the east coast. Colourful villages with houses painted in bright colours, magnificent scenery and places with impossible names. The children of Iceland must be very good at spelling with their highest mountain named Hvannadalshuuker and a northern National Park, Jokulsargljufur. Very few, if any, of the audience had been to Iceland. Howard's talk was greeted with applause and got many thinking of making Iceland one of their holiday destinations. Thank you, Howard.

*Barb Longmuir*

**26 June 2007.** The evening started with the **MELBOCA AGM**. Forty-six people were present and four apologies were received. The President's and Treasurer's Reports were accepted and the new Committee announced. It was not necessary to hold an election as the four vacancies were filled. Bill Ramsay and Diane Tweeddale were re-elected and Sunny Fernie and Chris Wichems filled the vacancies created by the retirement of Celia Browne and Barbara Longmuir. Janet Hand, Graeme Hosken, David Plant and Linda Stock will hold their Committee positions until June 2008. Celia Browne and Barbara Longmuir were presented with potted azaleas in appreciation of their long service to BOCA and more recently MELBOCA. Both will still be seen around as Celia is restarting her Wednesday Wanderings in February 2008 and Barbara has volunteered to continue running The Shop at our meetings.

**Guest Speaker.** "Waterbirds of the Coorong" was the title of Robert Bender's talk about when he joined (with 15 other volunteers) an Earthwatch team, based at Salt Creek in January 2006. The Coorong is an estuarine channel that stretches 100 km from Kingston in South Australia north to the mouth of the Murray River. The northern lagoon is far less salty than the southern end because of the periodic flushing from the Murray. With two distinct lagoons, with different salt levels, they attract different bird species. The salty

lagoon attracts seabirds and migratory waders from Siberia, Japan and China.

A 1965 bird count yielded a quarter of a million waders, but in recent years the count has dropped to 20,000 – 30,000. The habitat has been degraded and the Coorong is dying. One sign of the changing environment last year was the attendance of brine shrimp in the northern estuary—caused by the damming of the Murray and the near complete closure of its mouth. Large numbers of Banded Stilts (up to 15,000) again indicates a saline environment. An important food source for many birds is *Ruppia tuberosa*, a shallow water plant that grows best in 50 cm of saline water. If the water level is too shallow or too deep it cannot thrive. Barrages at the Murray mouth are altering the rise and fall of salt levels—thus harming the *Ruppia* food supply.

Foxes are another problem for ground-dwelling birds. Robert outlined the work he and the other volunteers carried out in the eight days they were there. Summer was the breeding season for the Red-necked Avocet (numbers increasing) and Fairy Terns whose numbers have dropped from 1000 to 300.

Robert summed up that the Coorong area is in big trouble. Its status as a major feeding and breeding site for migratory waders is under serious threat and the mix of species is changing because of the changing salinity levels. Major declines have been observed among small migratory waders. Many of their problems relate to the water flow from the Murray, creating environmental flows along the Murray-Darling system as well as land clearing and illegal draining of wetlands.

He ended on a more positive note in relation to the wonderful array of forest birds—nectar-feeding honeyeaters, seed-eaters, insectivores, predators, currawongs and lorikeets. "The forest fauna looks pretty healthy."

*Janet Hand*



*Banded Stilts, The Coorong, March 2005 by J. Rogers*

## Wednesday Wanderings – a Summary

The 3-year program of bird walks entitled "Wednesday Wanderings – Warrandyte to Westgate, Exploring the Yarra" came to a fitting end when we cruised down the river from Docklands on board the historic *Nepean* on a recent winter morning.

Commencing in June 2004 and culminating on 6 June this year, the walks aimed at exploring the numerous reserves and parks, creeks and billabongs along the Yarra River between Warrandyte and the Westgate Bridge. The outings were voted a great success by Melbourne birders who were looking for bird walks within a 24 km radius of the City. The average size of the group was 25 members, proving that local, morning-only walks are popular.

An article in the April 2004 *The Melbirdian* predicted that, as well as observing many bird species along this meandering stretch of the river, we would also see kangaroos and Koalas, Platypus and possums, Common Wombats and Short-beaked Echidnas, lizards and snakes. And indeed we did!

At Jumping Creek Reserve in Warrandyte we saw two Koalas and a wallaby swimming across the river. At Pound Bend also in Warrandyte three Koalas and one Eastern Grey Kangaroo were observed. Norman's Reserve gave sightings of one Red Fox, several rabbits and again three Koalas.

A walk led by Marlene Lyell at Parks Victoria's Glynn's Reserve in North Warrandyte produced a great bird list of 49 species as well as three snakes, several rabbits, 3 Eastern Grey Kangaroos and one Common Long-necked Tortoise. An Australian Owlet-nightjar peeping from a nest box was the highlight of that walk.

Longridge Farm, Warrandyte was opened especially for us by Parks Victoria, and yielded another Koala, five Eastern Grey Kangaroos and a good list of birds. The layout of this peaceful reserve is most impressive with its attractive riverine camping ground and excellent facilities which, unfortunately, caters for tents only.

The walk at Tikalara Reserve, Templestowe on 2 February 2005 will be long remembered for its torrential rain all morning! (This may have been the last time some of us can remember a really good downpour!) Despite the rain, ten members birded with umbrellas from Beasley's Nursery to the confluence of Mullum Mullum Creek and the Yarra, and managed to log 25 species including an Azure Kingfisher. Staff at

the nursery tearooms weren't too happy when ten bedraggled birders sloshed in at lunchtime looking for hot soup! In February!

At Sweeneys Flats Reserve, Eltham, a Peacock was added to the bird list of 37 species; we also saw a Buff-banded Rail, five 'roos and a Koala at this little known and surprisingly pleasant reserve where we walked downstream to Griffiths Park.

In April 2005, 38 members walked from Westerfolds Park upstream towards Candlebark Park, crossed the river by the new footbridge and enjoyed some peaceful birding from the new observation platform at Lenister Farm on the north bank of the Yarra. 45 bird species were listed on that occasion.

Tawny Frogmouths were observed on no less than 13 (out of 34) walks; usually spotted by Geoff Deason who has eagle eyes (or should it be 'frogmouth' eyes?) for this bird. Australian Wood Duck 32/34; Pacific Black Duck 33/34. Stunning views of Azure Kingfishers were enjoyed on four walks. Other birds of note were a Barn Owl at Banyule Flats, a female Rose Robin at Fairfield Park and a Pied Oystercatcher seen from the *Nepean* in June.

Two Australian King-Parrots were observed at Banksia Park, Bulleen in November 2005—much further downstream than would have been expected. The closer we got to the City, the shorter the bird lists and, naturally, more exotic birds were seen and fewer native species. Sadly, Eastern Yellow Robins weren't sighted after the Bellbird Picnic area in Kew and Grey Fantails weren't observed after the Royal Botanic Gardens.

The reserve which yielded the most bird species was Bulleen Park which included Little Bolin and Bolin Billabongs—63 species were observed here in February 2006 and the list included three Latham's Snipe in Little Bolin Billabong. Surprisingly, this park beat Banyule Flat's score of 58 species.

37 birders arrived at Como Landing in February this year for the 'voyage' across to Herring Island, opened especially for us by Parks Victoria. We conducted a bird survey and the list was forwarded to Parks Victoria following the excursion. Despite the very small area and the drought, the morning turned out to be far more successful than was predicted and the bird list of 35 species was pretty remarkable—almost one per member. One member joked that two people weren't really trying! A highlight was good views of a

Nankeen Night Heron seen on our return journey across the river by punt.

The Royal Botanic Gardens were visited in March this year and, combined with a walk along the Yarra into the City afterwards, yielded 40 species which was a pretty good effort for a warm, blustery morning. Sadly, no Superb Fairy-wrens were seen on this visit to the gardens.

Perhaps the highlight of the series was the cruise on board the *Nepean* from Docklands down the Yarra past the Westgate Bridge and round the top end of Port Phillip Bay on 6 June. 30 BOCA members thoroughly enjoyed the 3 hour boat trip during which 33 bird species were listed and we enjoyed lunch on board the vessel. It was most pleasing to welcome three country members on this trip—Val and Peter Blake from Warrnambool and Marlene Lyell from Axedale.

I would like to thank all who attended the 34 walks for making them so successful and my special thanks also to guest leaders who stepped in when I was away or indisposed: to Geoff Deason who led three walks, Anthea Fleming for two walks, Marlene Lyell, Lyn Easton and Andrew McCutcheon who led one each. The total bird list for the 34 walks is 123.

Due to popular demand it has been decided to repeat the series of Wednesday Wanderings commencing in February 2008. There will be a small change—the walks will be planned for the **FOURTH Wednesday of each month** which will make it easier to meet printing deadlines for the *The Melbirdian* and *The Bird Observer* calendars. By starting at a different time of year, it will be interesting to compare bird lists for each reserve. I will look forward to catching up with the Wednesday Wanderers again in 2008.

Celia M. Browne

## Weekdays Outings Notes

**16 April 2007. Fairfield.** Twenty of us met at Yarra Bend Park under the leadership of Leonie Robbins. Rainbow Lorikeet and Little Black Cormorant were among the species flying over as we assembled. We walked toward Dights Falls covering both the riverside and the ovals. Noisy Miners were everywhere but a highlight was a flock of at least 55 Red-rumped Parrots foraging on one of the ovals. A further highlight was flocks of Musk Lorikeets feeding visibly in the low branches of flowering eucalypts. This is a species which is usually

heard rather than seen and we made the most of the near, clear views.

After lunch back at the cars we headed across the pipe bridge and up to Yarra Boulevard where we enjoyed the view of the tall buildings of central Melbourne. This stretch had not been expected to yield many birds but it surprised with Weebill, Spotted Pardalote and Grey Fantail in a patch of trees while Straw-necked Ibis and Great Cormorant flew over. Rock Dove, Spotted Turtle-Dove and Crested Pigeons were present at many locations but the only raptor was a Brown Goshawk. Despite the dry conditions and the cloudy sky, the count at the end of the day was 53 species and enthusiastic thanks were made to Leonie for her leadership.

**15 May 2007.** Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne. There were 27 people when we walked behind our leader, Pat Bingham, from the Stringybark carpark on a mild, cloudy day. The nearest area was dominated by Bell Miners but as we progressed, Superb Fairy-wrens and White-browed Scrubwrens were calling and moving among the heath. Flights of Pacific Gulls passed overhead throughout the day but no Kelp Gulls were observed. The terrain varied from closed heath to open grassland and wetlands which allowed for varied suites of birds. Near water, flocks of Purple Swamphens were so numerous that we compared them to chooks—they seemed to be coping with the years of dry conditions quite successfully. A Blue-billed Duck was observed by many but not all of us, on a small pond and both Australasian and Hoary-headed Grebes were present. No raptors were seen and the only parrots were Rainbow Lorikeet and Eastern Rosella. Mistletoe was in flower and numerous honeyeaters were seen near it, including Eastern Spinebill and New Holland Honeyeater. By lunchtime there was a bird list of 49 species—not bad for the record dry.

Lunch was enlivened by the visit of a couple of Southern Brown Bandicoots which were clearly used to picnickers—so much so that Pat was forced to lift her mug of hot pumpkin soup away from a small enquiring nose. None of us wanted to be scalded.

After lunch nearly everyone was able to drive on to the new Australian Garden where we strolled around independently and admired the overall garden design, the massed plantings and the individual species. Much inspiration was obtained from the

water-efficient plantings and many of us were heard planning return visits as time and the plants progressed. It even tried to rain as we were finishing for the day but not soakingly (unfortunately). Thank you Pat for a very successful birdwalk and an introduction to a fascinating garden.

*Diane Tweeddale*  
Convenor MELBOCA Weekdays Outings

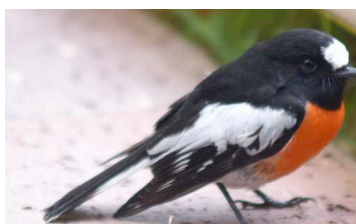
### **Costerfield Weekdays Outing 13 June 2007.**

Q. What kind of an outing begins with a solitary Crested Pigeon, takes in a multiplicity of red, red robins and ends with two Powerful Owls?

A. An invigoratingly cool Weekdays trip to the Costerfield area on a breezy day in June.

Seventeen members, many sporting snivelling noses and streaming eyes in the face of the brisk wind, had a great time trekking through the very dry, open Box/Ironbark woodland with Nena and Rob Brice pointing them in the right direction.

We looked for Swift Parrots despite having been warned that they seem to have bypassed the locality this season, and for Speckled Warblers which had been seen the previous week. Neither species showed up for us but a Wedge-tailed Eagle cruised overhead briefly. After listing a single Crested Pigeon and some Sulphur-crested Cockatoos in the Costerfield Hall carpark, and not much else, we were treated to very good views of Scarlet and Flame Robins, of both sexes, in several spots and often in bright sunshine. By the end of the morning one member commented that she felt "almost robbed out"!



Honeyeaters were also sighted. Brown Treecreeper was seen and heard by most, and about 15 White-winged Choughs.

Total number of species for the day was 38, but we ended with a delightful surprise. At the end of an unmade lane (abutting the McIvor Creek), two Powerful Owls were discovered in the branches of a tall eucalypt almost on the creek bank. This spot, unknown to most of us, is close enough to the Northern Highway for traffic to be quite audible. On arrival we walked down toward the creek over grassy ground between eucalypts and the group split up once more to see what could be found. Once the cry

"Powerful Owls" went up, everyone scrambled together to get very satisfying looks at beautifully marked feathers, staring eyes and awesome talons. No prey remainder was seen, but two pellets (one old, one new) were picked up carefully to be taken back to BOCA for the education program.

Just as we had decided to leave the two in peace, a Sugar Glider burst from what seemed to be the same tree and 'flew' across the creek to land on an opposite tree and scramble up the trunk. It must have decided that even this was too close for comfort as it took off again for a spot further away on the same bank. Everyone agreed that this was a truly spectacular finish to a very good day.

*Leonie Robbins*

*Photo of Scarlet Robin by Pete Marshall*

## **Bird Quiz**

1. In which Australian state would you expect to spot an Origma?
2. Which Australian birds are named after a suburb of Sydney?
3. Which early explorer of Australia's west coast first recorded the footprint of an Emu and caught Black Swans by chasing after them in a rowboat?
4. A 19th century illustrator named new species —Victoria's Riflebird and Prince Albert's Lyrebird in honour of the patrons of his latest publication? Who and what book?
5. The Owl and the Pussycat went to sea ...continue the quote. Who wrote this?
6. What had the author in previous question to do with the *Birds of Australia*?
7. What do the following species have in common? Yellow-throated Honeyeater, Green Rosella, Yellow Wattlebird, Dusky Robin.
8. Which Australian coin has a Lyrebird on it?
9. How many Blackbirds were baked in a pie?
10. What do Magpie-larks, Apostlebirds and White-winged Choughs have in common?
11. Who killed Cock Robin?
12. How many toes does an Emu have?

*Answers Page 10*

## Education Program



On the horizon...

October 21 – 28, 2007

### BOCA's 17th Annual Bird Week

#### "Parrots on Parade"



Each year, BOCA sponsors educational activities to promote awareness of birds with the goal of inspiring all Australian birders to take action and get involved in bird conservation efforts. This year, the focus is on Australia's wealth of parrot species. Learn which birds are doing well, which birds need help – and what you can do to make a difference!



The Parrots on Parade Bird Week Kit is currently under construction and will soon be available from BOCA

National Office and the BOCA website. Let us know if you would like a kit so you too can join in the Bird Week celebration!

Contact Annette Cook, Education Coordinator, [a.cook@birdobservers.org.au](mailto:a.cook@birdobservers.org.au) or Tel: 9877 5342

## Choosing your Digital Camera

This course, held over two nights, would suit a first-time digital camera buyer or those ready for an up-grade.

**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> October 7.30-9.30 pm**

#### Making the right choice

- Identifying your needs
- Understanding the jargon
- What other equipment will you need – eg. computer

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> October 7.30-9.30 pm**

#### Cameras in Action

Croydon Camera Centre will demonstrate a range of digital cameras – showing you what they can do and what they can't do!

Sessions will be held in the Edna Walling Room at BOCA National Office 183-185 Springvale Road Nunawading, please enter from the rear of the building, in Market St. Melway 48 F10

Cost: \$25.00 (members) \$35.00 (non-members)  
*All proceeds assist BOCA with education and conservation activities.*

**There are limited spaces – so book early!**

Contact Jenny or Hellena at BOCA 9877 5342

## Between the Mountains and the Sea Birding and Photography in Bairnsdale (and beyond)

**Friday 7 – Monday 10 March 2008**

Workshops to be held at Forestech – a short 20min trip from Bairnsdale

Forestech is located on the edge of the Colquhoun Forest. It is a campus of East Gippsland TAFE and offers courses in conservation and land management, as well as fine craft woodworking and cabinet making.

Activities and classes will include the following topics:

- Digital photography workshops
- Owls and old-growth forests
- Wildlife art classes
- Magical owl activities for kids
- Spotlighting in the forest
- Birds of coast, estuary and lake
- Search for (and discover) the Southern Emu-wren
- David Hollands to be guest speaker at Bairnsdale RSL Sat night

And lots, lots more

**Outings** to Nyerimilang Homestead which is situated in a beautiful cliff-top garden overlooking the Gippsland lakes, the Colquhoun Forest, wetlands, mountains and beach are possible. We will be sharing Forestech with the Lakes Entrance Rotary Art Show during the weekend.

**Cost:** \$105.00 (members) \$135.00 (non-members) (includes lunch, morning and afternoon teas on Sat and Sun and Mon)

#### Optional Extras

- Saturday night dinner at Bairnsdale RSL – with guest speaker David Hollands \$25.00/person
- Sunday night BBQ - \$10.00/person (venue to be confirmed)
- Additional field trips including, birdwatching from a boat, are being explored and details, including cost, will be available at a later date.

Single day registration is also available please inquire about fees.

Partners not attending education sessions do not need to pay the registration fee.

**Further information and booking forms available at [www.birdobservers.org.au](http://www.birdobservers.org.au) or by phoning 9877 5342**

**Accommodation** can be booked through **East Gippsland Visitor Information 1800 637 060**

*(As this is a long weekend and there are several events being held in Lakes Entrance we urge you to book your accommodation **EARLY!**)*

# INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

Entered 2 July 2007

The following Field Reports were received from members attending the MELBOCA monthly meetings held at Balwyn on 22 May and 26 June 2007, Email and WEB reports to the BOCA National Office.

The reports include Currawong, Corella, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Brown Thornbill, Song Thrush, Little Wattlebird and Crested Pigeon sightings within 60km Melbourne, plus other Field Reports.

## Currawong Sightings

### Pied

Most days '07	6+		Studley Park
	2-4	Winters Way	Doncaster
	2-4	Macleod Pde	Macleod
18 Apr '07	4	Royal Park	Parkville
12 May '07	23	Alpha Street	North Balwyn
31 May '07	7	Harrington Ave	North Balwyn
01 Jun '07	4	Gilpin Park	Brunswick
08 Jun '07	2	Royal Botanic Gardens	Melbourne
17/18 Jun '07	12	Valley Reserve	Mount Waverley

### Grey

No reports this period.

## Corella Sightings

### Long-billed Corella

18 Apr '07	6	The Avenue	Pakenham
11/12 May '07	25/35	Harrington Ave	North Balwyn
27 May '07	1	Plume Crt	Glen Waverley
15 Jun '07	31	Winfield Road	North Balwyn
19 Jun '07	20+	Cnr FTG Rd & Burwood Hwy	Ferntree Gully

### Little Corella

No reports this period.

### Corella Species

Most days '07	50-10	Carrum Downs/Skye area
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## Crested Pigeon Sightings

Most Days '07	1-2		Carrum Downs
	2	Pinewood Drive	Templestowe
11 Feb '07	7	Westerfolds Park	Templestowe
12/19 May '07	8/6	Cnr Greenville & Highland Cres	Mooroolbark
19 May '07	20		Carnegie
05 Jun '07	9	Civic Drive	Greensborough
10/12 Jun '07	21	De Winton Park	Rosanna

## Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo Sightings

12 May '07	2		Langwarrin
29 Apr '07	45	Tikilara Park	Templestowe
25 Jun '07	20+	Cobden Street	Kew
	10	Brown Street	Heidelberg

## Brown Thornbill Sightings

Daily '07	2-4	Pinewood Drive	Templestowe
30 May '07	1	Canterbury Road	Blackburn South
June '07	(heard)	Royal Botanic Gardens	Melbourne

## Song Thrush Sightings

No sightings reported this period.

## Other Sightings

28 Jan '07	Australian Hobby (1)	Wattle Park	Burwood
1-14 Feb '07	Regent Parrot (1F) (Possible escapee. Photo available)	Queens Road	Pearcedale
24 Mar '07	Gang-gang Cockatoo (3)	Scotchman's Creek	Mount Waverley
15 Apr '07	Australian King-Parrot (3)	Strickland Dve	Wheelers Hill
26 Apr '07	Darter (7)	Retarding Basin	Langwarrin
?? May '07	Gang-gang Cockatoo (?) Tawny Frogmouth (2)	Long Beach Cres	Templestowe Mount Waverley
12 May '07	Crimson Rosella (1)	Toynes Road	Little River
14 May '07	Powerful Owl (1)	Fitzroy Street	St Kilda
15 May '07	Swift Parrot (4)	Gilgai Woodland	Melton
18 May '07	Fuscous Honeyeater (1) Little Lorikeet (2) Rufous Night Heron (1)	Westgate Park Yarra River nr Rod Laver Arena	Fishermans Bend
20/22 May '07	Gang-gang Cockatoo (4)	Koonung Creek Res	North Balwyn
20/28 May '07	Boobook Owl (1)	Primary School	Williamstown Nth
27/28 May '07	Major Mitchell's Cockatoo (1 escapee) (previously reported and still in same area)	Plume Crt	Glen Waverley
02 Jun '07	Gang-gang Cockatoo (2)	Jells Road	Glen Waverley
05 Jun '07	Gang-gang Cockatoo (4)	Primary School	Syndal North
06 Jun '07	Collared Sparrowhawk (1)		Melton
09 Jun '07	Red-capped Robin (7)	Woodlands Historic Park	Greenvale
12 Jun '07	Galah (1)	Royal Botanic Gardens	Melbourne
18 June '07	Bassian Thrush (1)	Royal Botanic Gardens	Melbourne
23 Jun '07	Great-crested Grebe (1)	Greenvale Reservoir	Greenvale
24 Jun '07	Flame Robin (20+) Brush Bronzewing (1)		Baxter

A report has been received on 14 May of an all white Australian Magpie with a family of other Magpies at Maranoa Gardens, Balwyn.

### Pied Currawongs

Pied Currawongs are the housewife's best friends when it comes to washing day! They let us know to expect rain by giving their two-part call, "It's going – to rain". But when they give their three-part call, "It's going – to rain – tomorrow", they accurately predict wet weather.

Within our present forecasted wet weather period of late June/early July, I needed to wash thick winter sheets. Hearing a passing Currawong giving the two-part call, I did the washing and even though the sky was very overcast, it did not rain.

Not for nothing are they called 'Rain Birds'!

*Barbara James, East Malvern*

## Little Wattlebird.

Do you have this species in your garden or a park near you?

MELBOCA is examining the spread of the Little Wattlebird from the inner-city, coastal areas to the outer suburbs of Melbourne. MELBOCA welcomes your reports.

Information required: Observer's Name, Address, Date of Record, Location of sighting, ie. Street, Suburb, Post Code, Melway Ref, Number of birds optional. How long have you noticed this species in your area? Eg. 1983

Forward info to BOCA PO Box 185 Nunawading 3131 or Email: [gahosken@bigpond.com](mailto:gahosken@bigpond.com)

### Melbourne suburbs recorded so far where Little Wattlebirds have been observed. Is your suburb listed?

Balwyn	Clifton Hill	Langwarrin	Richmond
Balwyn North	Doncaster	Lilydale *	St Kilda
Black Rock *	Doncaster East	Lower Plenty	South Melbourne
Blackburn	Gembrook	Macleod *	South Yarra
Box Hill South *	Glen Iris	Mont Albert Nth	Surrey Hills
Burwood	Glen Waverley	Mount Waverley	Thomastown *
Camberwell *	Greensborough	Newport	Vermont South *
Camberwell East *	Hawthorn East	Patterson Lakes	Viewbank
Canterbury	Ivanhoe	Point Cook *	Williamstown
Carlton North	Kew	Reservoir *	

- Suburbs added May & June 2007.

Murray Haby reported Little Wattlebirds have been in his garden at Wellman Street, Box Hill South, first in May 1985, again in Jan '86 and May '88, returning on 15 Oct '90 daily until 12 Jan '91. In 1991, returned 16 Feb until 11 May, returned 29 Jun until 17 Aug, returned 4 Sep and have stayed since except for a brief period in Jul '05. Murray also indicated the demise of White-plumed Honeyeaters since the Little Wattlebirds have come into the area.

Please note that the above records cover the area within 60km of the Melbourne GPO. Refer to Melway Street Directory, Pages 1 & 2.

*Graeme Hosken, Recorder*

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### Musk Lorikeets & Oak Trees

On the Plenty River Trail (Melway 20 K8), there are a number of oak trees ranging from quite large to fairly small in size. On 28 May 2007 all the trees were resounding to the screeching and chattering of an estimated 400 Musk Lorikeets. They appeared to be gleaning insects from the outer branches and amongst the foliage. Due to the time of year, the foliage was in autumnal decline, though still mainly green and few leaves had dropped. I looked closely at the foliage within reach but could not discern any sign of insect life.

The following day I returned to the same group of oak trees which were still full of very active Musk Lorikeets. As I watched, dozens of birds descended on the trees

from all directions. This activity would suggest that the association of an introduced tree species and native Musk Lorikeets may be the result of some opportunistic autumn feeding, as there are very few eucalypts in flower on the Trail at this time of the year.

On 9 June I returned again and found Musk Lorikeets, though much less numerous, still active in the large oak trees. By this time the trees had shed some 50% of their leaves and the remaining foliage had almost turned brown.

As a matter of additional interest, during early May, I came upon a flock of ten Australian King-Parrots apparently feeding in one of the smaller oak trees. Unfortunately, they flew off before I could get a close look at their activity.

*John Prytherch, Lower Plenty*

## *Spring Coach Tours*

### **Bailleston – Nagambie Area**

**Sat 8 September 2007**

Birding with Fred Smith.

Fare per BOCA member \$45.00

Non-members \$50.00

### **Maryborough Area**

**Sat 13 October 2007**

Box Ironbark birding and spring wildflowers.

Fare per BOCA Member \$50.00

Non-members \$55.00

### **Wonthaggi Area**

**Sat 10 November 2007**

The attraction of heathland & coast, birding with Wesboc members at Powlett River or Cutlers Beach.

Fare per BOCA member \$45.00

Non-members \$50.00

#### **To book for Coach Tours**

Prepaid reservations only. Please post fare to BOCA, PO Box 185, Nunawading 3131, or for credit card bookings, phone Jenny on 03 9877 5342.

Late cancellations can be phoned in to the office, but for a refund, please confirm in writing.

A cancellation fee will be charged.

Please dress appropriately for the weather and wear sensible walking shoes. Don't forget your binoculars, hat, drinks & lunch. Extra baggage can be left safely on the bus when out walking.

Tours leave from outside the Hamer Hall (Melbourne Concert Hall), St Kilda Rd, Melbourne at 8.00 am sharp, returning approx 6.30 pm.

Melway Map 2F G7

#### **The Melbirdian Deadline**

Please submit articles for the October edition of *The Melbirdian* by 27 August 2007. Send to Jenny: [membership@birdobservers.org.au](mailto:membership@birdobservers.org.au) or post to PO Box 185, Nunawading Vic 3131

## **MELBOCA Website**

With many thanks to Damian Kelly for his website design and computer expertise, [www.melboca.org.au](http://www.melboca.org.au) is now on line. The material on the website is generally confined to bird species, birding activities and birding sites within 150 km of Melbourne. No password is required so it is easy to access. However, to maintain some control over the Members' Contributions page, all contributions will be moderated by a member of the Website Committee. It is your website, so please explore it and contribute to the Members' Contributions page.

At present the bulk of the photos displayed are by Damian Kelly and Bill Ramsay. We are desperate for more photos of birds that can be seen within 150 km of Melbourne, and any habitat photos of the sites listed on the Birding Sites page. Please email any photos that you are prepared to have displayed on the MELBOCA website to Damian Kelly: [info@melboca.org.au](mailto:info@melboca.org.au). Photos should be in JPG format, file size 500 to 1000 kb, not too heavily cropped around the bird, so that the images can be cropped by Damian to suit the required shape/size. All photographers contributing to the website will be acknowledged on the page(s) that their images appear.

Now that the website is up and running, the challenge is for the Website Committee to keep the site looking fresh with frequent upgrades and the addition of new material.

*Bill Ramsay*

#### **Answers to Bird Quiz**

1. NSW
2. Rosella after Rose Hill near Parramatta
3. Willem de Vlamingh
4. John Gould - *Birds of Australia*
5. Edward Lear
6. He was a lithographer who engraved many of the plates for Gould's illustrations.
7. Endemic species Tasmania
8. 10 cent coin
9. 24
10. Mud nests
11. The Sparrow with his bow and arrow
12. 6 – 3 on each foot