



Manning Great Lakes Birdwatchers Inc.

Newsletter August 2016

Field Outings - first Thursday & third Saturday of each month (except January and December)

The Annual General Meeting of the Manning Great Lakes Birdwatchers Inc. held on 18th July 2015 elected the following Office Bearers:

President	Brian McCauley	0431 878 395
Vice President	Phil Johnston	6557 5831
Secretary	Janis Cossill	0405 054 930
Treasurer	Sheila Perrottet	6554 3032
Activities Officers	Shirley Henry	6556 7109
	Dave Cottrell	0407 664 119
Records Officer	Ashley Carlson	6557 5393
Publicity Officer	Tony Bennett	6559 2897
Public Officer	Liz McCauley	0431 878 395
Archives Officer	Lyn Davis	0401 865 784
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Committee	Helen Bevan	6555 4988

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From The Editor

We welcome two new members to our little gaggle in this edition. Firstly, Victor Fazio who has spent many years in the USA and secondly, Ella, daughter of Cameron who joined early in the year. I hope you both enjoy numerous outings with our motley crew.

Mondrook Gardens has been booked for our Christmas Party on Saturday 03rd December starting at 11:30am. It will cost \$25 per head for a two course meal. Please get your names to either Shirley or Dave (see numbers above) by 25th November.

As mentioned in the AGM summary, BirdLife have revised the taxonomic order of Australian birds and as such, attached to this newsletter is a revised record sheet which should preferably be used from now on. Talking of records, with the arrival of White-breasted Woodswallow already this season, it is time to start noting the arrival of other spring migrants such as White-throated Needle-tail, Little Tern, Eastern Koel, Rainbow Bee-eater and Rufous Fantail.

And last but not least, please note the change of email address for the editor.

Calendar of Outings (all outings commence at 8am unless shown otherwise)

- 01/09 Manning Point / Towibakh Reserve / Oxley Island - meet at Manning Point picnic ground
- 05-11 Camp - Bingara Riverside Caravan Park - Phone 6724 1209
- 17/09 Nulama Ponds / Taree Bicentennial Gardens - meet at the north side of McDonalds Taree
- 06/11 Falls Forest Retreat (318 Isaacs Lane) - take Johns River exit from the Pacific Highway, meet at the corner of Stewarts River Road
- 15/10 Booroohangary (6989 The Bucketts Way) - meet at Service Station on The Bucketts Way approx. 1km west of Purfleet roundabout
- 03/11 Pacific Palms / Boomerang Beach - meet at Pacific Palms Recreational Club on The Lakes Way approx. 20km south of Forster
- 19/11 'Tanglewood' Bootawa (225 Abbotts Road) - meet opposite Tinonee General Store

Cattai Wetlands - 21st May 2016

By Nicolette Bennett

Our smallest group for some time (12) assembled on a balmy 13 degree morning at Cattai. Today we welcomed a new birdie, Victor, into our group. Victor, a trained ornithologist, is now living in Tinonee after

spending 40 years in America. We welcome him to the group and look forward to calling on his expertise whilst on our eternal hunt for birds.

The trip into the area began with a good sighting by Janice and Barry of a Pheasant Coucal and, in the carpark, a pair of Varied Sittella high in the trees was spotted by Tony. This augured well for the day ahead. We set off around the lagoon in a clockwise direction. At the open-air classroom, those who stayed close to Ashley would have been rewarded by good views of Brown Quail.

A stroll onto the boardwalk and wonderful views of a Grey Shrike Thrush, jumping from boardwalk to bush hunting insects. In the foliage, Fan-tailed Cuckoo and the sounds of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo in the distance. At the first



Intermediate Egret - Photo B McCauley

neck of the boardwalk we all paused to scan the lagoon and spotted Black Swan and Hardhead. A most interesting sight was a Willie Wagtail imitating a Jacana by leaping from lily pad to lily pad, hunting for insects on the water. A further stroll around the lake and the

Southern Emu-wren, Variegated and Superb Fairy-wrens worked the greenery down the middle of the footpath. Sheila spotted the Mistletoebird plumped up enjoying the warmth of the sun's rays.

A well-placed seat halfway around the lagoon allowed the weary of limb to sit and contemplate life. Whilst doing this, hats off to Joy who spotted the first Comb-crested Jacana of the day! Five in all were spotted once the rest of the group caught up with the scene. Australasian Grebe, sleepy Black Swan poised on one leg, Hardhead hiding amongst the lilies and an active Sacred Kingfisher.

On the final leg of the 2.2km walk, much of the greenery around the drying creek had been trimmed recently, so we got great views of large numbers of Eastern Great Egret and an Intermediate Egret fishing together on the opposite bank. After a very satisfying three-hour stroll, we set up camp and enjoyed morning tea / lunch whilst listening to enthralling stories of politics, American-style, by Victor.

Ashley took the bird count, which was a great and very easy, 66 in total, including a pair of Tawny Frogmouth huddled on a branch at the front gate! Terrific day, great companions, 24 degrees and it's the end of May. Life does not get better than that!

Bird List - Brown Quail, Black Swan, Australian Wood Duck, Grey Teal, Chestnut Teal, Pacific Black Duck, Hardhead, Australasian Grebe, White-headed Pigeon, Bar-shouldered Dove, Tawny Frogmouth, Little Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Pied Cormorant, Eastern Great Egret, Intermediate Egret, White-faced Heron, Whistling Kite, Purple Swamphen, Dusky Moorhen, Eurasian Coot, Masked Lapwing, Comb-crested Jacana, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet, Eastern Rosella, Pheasant Coucal, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Laughing Kookaburra, Sacred Kingfisher, White-throated Treecreeper, Superb Fairy-wren, Variegated Fairy-wren, Southern Emu-wren, White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Gerygone, Yellow Thornbill, Brown Thornbill, Spotted Pardalote, Eastern Spinebill, Lewin's Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Noisy Miner, Little Wattlebird, Scarlet Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, White-cheeked Honeyeater, Noisy Friarbird, Eastern Whipbird, Varied Sittella, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-thrush, Australasian Figbird, Grey Butcherbird, Spangled Drongo, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Australian Raven, Eastern Yellow Robin, Silvereye, Welcome Swallow, Tree Martin, Mistletoebird, Red-browed Finch

Halliday's Point / Redhead - 02nd June 2016

By Liz McCauley

On a crisp, sunny, winter morning, eleven members met at the Black Head Bowling Club Car Park. Female Satin Bowerbird, corvid, Figbird and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike were vying for the best spots atop some high branches in the trees adjacent to the car park.

Whilst we were waiting for everyone to arrive a couple of us wandered into the adjacent forest to look unsuccessfully for the Noisy Pitta, which had reportedly been seen there recently. The understorey had been cleared and perhaps this accounted for the lack of anticipated small birds. In the understorey, Brush-turkey was frantically turning over the leaf litter. Nothing much else was seen or heard.

Once the rest of the members arrived it was decided to head down to a large Figtree adjacent to the Blackhead Bowling green. There were heaps of birds enjoying the fruit laden tree, some of whom were Satin and Regent Bowerbirds and also Figbird. A couple of King-Parrot were sighted sitting atop a distant tree.

We then proceeded to access the beach behind the club where we saw an Eastern Reef Egret (dark

morph) resting amongst the craggy rocks. A solitary mature Australasian Gannet winged its way across the top of the water plus a couple of Silver Gull and Crested Tern were noted. It was also good to see Sooty Oystercatcher here. The beachside Banksias were covered in blooms and we were surprised at the lack of honeyeaters. On the return trip we saw Spangled Drongo, Eastern Whipbird and Eastern Yellow Robin. All of us proceeded down to Blackhead Beach to partake of morning tea where we were approached by a couple of friendly Pacific Black Duck.

Our next stop, Khappinghat Reserve, suggested by Barry, proved to be a great alternative to the original destination. First bird sighted was an Australasian



Brahminy Kite - Photo B McCauley

Pipit. Lots of honeyeaters were seen amongst the blooming Banksias, New Holland, White-cheeked and Yellow-faced to name a few. Eastern Spinebill displaying glorious colour was seen flitting amongst the bushes. The thrill of the day had to be the raptors. Soaring in the sky above us was a Little Eagle, a Brahminy Kite and two Whistling Kite. Just in front of us two Australian Hobby were putting on a great display of stirring up the smaller birds. How fortunate we felt to see so many raptors

in the one spot. In the bushes Variegated and Superb Fairy-wrens entertained us. We were surprised at how few little birds were seen on this outing.

Our tummies started grumbling so we headed for Redhead to have our lunch stop in a little park at the end of the road. As we sat there eating we ticked off the birds flitting amongst the trees adjacent to us. The Golden Whistler was looking magnificent as he gave us an extremely close up view of his magnificent yellow breast. The female was also seen close by. Spangled Drongo was here; today we had seen them in all three locations. Grey Fantail, our first viewing for the day, and Willie Wagtail were busy fanning their tails. Also both a Fan-tailed Cuckoo and Eastern Whipbird were heard but not seen.

The day that had started out cool had us seeking out the shelter of the trees from the hot sun by lunchtime. All in all it was a great day's birding with sixty species seen.

Bird List - Australian Brush-turkey, Australian Wood Duck, Pacific Black Duck, White-headed Pigeon, Crested Pigeon, Bar-shouldered Dove, Australasian Gannet, Great Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Pied Cormorant, Cattle Egret, White-faced Heron, Eastern Reef Egret, Whistling Kite, Brahminy Kite, Little Eagle, Australian Hobby, Purple Swamphen, Dusky Moorhen, Sooty Oystercatcher, Masked Lapwing, Crested Tern, Silver Gull, Galah, Rainbow Lorikeet, Australian King-Parrot, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Laughing Kookaburra, White-throated Treecreeper, Regent Bowerbird, Satin Bowerbird, Superb Fairy-wren, Variegated Fairy-wren, White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Gerygone, Brown Thornbill, Eastern Spinebill, Lewin's Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Little Wattlebird, Brown Honeyeater, New Holland Honeyeater, White-cheeked Honeyeater, Eastern Whipbird, Golden Whistler, Australasian Figbird, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Spangled Drongo, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Torresian Crow, Magpie-lark, Eastern Yellow Robin, Welcome Swallow, Common Myna, Red-browed Finch, Australasian Pipit

Point Road / Tuncurry Rockpool / Sporties Club - 18th June 2016
By Janis Cossill

Despite the threatening weather, 18 members gathered at the Point Road boat ramp. As we began to record all four cormorant species, Australian Pelican and Australasian Darter, an Osprey flew past carrying a fish. A smaller bird intent on getting the fish was darting and diving, continuing to pursue it for at least 5 minutes. At one point we noted at least 4 individual Osprey in sight at once. Several Australasian Gannet were working the lake as two Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo flew overhead. A White-bellied Sea-Eagle came low for a second, as an Australian Pied Oystercatcher hunted amongst the oyster leases.

We then made our way to the end of the Point Road and as we walked through the bush Superb Fairy-wren, Silvereye and Little Wattlebird were active. Coming to the opening by the beach there were Eastern Spinebill, Yellow and Brown Thornbills and a female Golden Whistler. A solitary Caspian Tern was working the water between the island and us. It had been raining lightly and as we went through the back of the caravan park it became heavier. A male Satin Bowerbird flew in as we were distracted by a cheeky Grey Fantail.

We all decided it was a good time to break for morning tea, it was raining steadily now. We had an

extended chat and cuppa but alas it didn't improve. A bird list of 51 for the day was quite acceptable and we all enjoyed each other's company.

Bird List - Black Swan, Australian Wood Duck, Pacific Black Duck, Rock Dove, Spotted Dove, Crested Pigeon, Bar-shouldered Dove, Australasian Gannet, Australasian Darter, Little Pied Cormorant, Great Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Pied Cormorant, Australian Pelican, Eastern Great Egret, White-faced Heron, Australian White Ibis, Eastern Osprey, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Australian Pied Oystercatcher, Masked Lapwing, Caspian Tern, Crested Tern, Silver Gull, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Little Corella, Rainbow Lorikeet, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Laughing Kookaburra, Satin Bowerbird, Superb Fairy-wren, White-browed Scrubwren, Yellow Thornbill, Brown Thornbill, Eastern Spinebill, Little Wattlebird, Red Wattlebird, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Golden Whistler, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Pied Currawong, Spangled Drongo, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Torresian Crow, Magpie-lark, Eastern Yellow Robin, Silvereeye, Welcome Swallow, Red-browed Finch

Harrington / Crowdy Head - 07th July 2016

By Brian McCauley

With the sky threatening a shower, the group of 8 intrepid birders ventured onto the Harrington Littoral Rainforest trail, if not only to get out of the freezing wind, but also to avoid the approaching rain. There had been recent sightings of a pair of Noisy Pitta and expectations were high. As we slowly made our way along the track very few birds were recorded but a White-winged Triller was heard and confirmed. Golden Whistler, Brown Gerygone, Brown Thornbill, Little Wattlebird and the ever present Lewin's Honeyeater made up the sum total of sightings. At the end of the track at the lagoon we were treated to a fabulous close viewing of several Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo including the food begging ritual between a mated pair. A couple of White-cheeked and Brown Honeyeaters were observed and as it started to rain we headed back recording feeding Rainbow Lorikeet, Silvereeye, Grey Fantail and a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike. The rain had stopped and we took morning tea in a spot at the entrance sheltered from the icy cold wind during which we saw a Spangled Drongo and Scaly-breasted Lorikeet.

Moving on to Crowdy Head, we stopped just before the harbour to watch Australasian Gannet and their spectacular high diving antics. Whilst there, a Regent Bowerbird was sighted back along the road along with several White-cheeked Honeyeater, Eastern Spinebill and a Drongo, also being recorded. Parking in the car-park near the toilet block we elected to walk to the old Quarry along a hitherto unnoticed track and before too long, Superb Fairy-wren, Australian Hobby, Red-browed Finch, Silvereeye, Grey and Pied Butcherbirds and a lovely pair of Brown

Cuckoo-Dove were added to the tally. At the seaside the wind was bitterly cold and really blustery so we only stayed for a few minutes to watch the whales blowing far out at sea. There was little to record at the lighthouse other than a better view of the whales so we followed Neil and Barbara who, after a brief look at the usual resident bunch of cormorants and terns at the harbour, led us to the camping / picnic ground along Crowdy Gap Road for lunch. On the way a Square-tailed Kite cruised overhead and at the campground a Whistling Kite was also observed.



Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo - Photo B McCauley

The Crowdy Gap walking track leads from here to the beach where one can see the harbour from across the bay. We saw some more Superb Fairy-wren, heard Eastern Whipbird and got a brief sighting of a White-winged Triller, as well as White-cheeked Honeyeater and a lone White-throated Treecreeper. It started to rain again so we headed off after a brief bird call and stopped on the way home at the rescue building to look for the Beach Stone-curlew sighted by Tony and Nicolette Bennett a few weeks earlier, with no success. We did however record several overwintering Bar-tailed Godwit and a pair of Eastern Osprey.

Thank you to the brave few who attended who, despite the cold, blustery wind and intermittent showers, the poor turnout and the low sightings, all contributed to make this a very enjoyable day.

Bird List - Australian Wood Duck, Pacific Black Duck, Rock Dove, White-headed Pigeon, Spotted Dove, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Crested Pigeon, Topknot Pigeon, Australasian Gannet, Little Pied Cormorant, Great Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Pied Cormorant, Australian Pelican, Cattle Egret, Australian White Ibis, Straw-necked Ibis, Eastern Osprey, Square-tailed Kite, Whistling Kite, Australian Hobby, Purple Swamphen, Buff-banded Rail, Australian Pied Oystercatcher, Masked Lapwing, Bar-tailed Godwit, Crested Tern, Silver Gull, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Eastern Rosella, White-throated Treecreeper, Regent Bowerbird, Superb Fairy-wren, Brown Gerygone, Brown Thornbill, Eastern Spinebill, Lewin's Honeyeater, Little Wattlebird, Brown Honeyeater, White-

cheeked Honeyeater, Noisy Friarbird, Eastern Whipbird, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, White-winged Triller, Golden Whistler, Grey Butcherbird, Pied Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Spangled Drongo, Grey Fantail, Willie Wagtail, Torresian Crow, Magpie-lark, Silvereye, Welcome Swallow, Common Myna, Red-browed Finch



Birding in the breeze - Photo L McCauley

AGM Summary - 16th July 2016

After a fulfilling meal of snags and a variety of salad type side dishes, the gather mob settled into the AGM. After the mandatory reading of minutes and reports, we got down to the business of electing the new committee, as shown above. The following general meeting covered several topics warranting further mention as follows:

1. The question has been raised about the use of bird calling devices on club outings and the suggestion of formulating a policy of any such use. Discussion followed on from the statement that the use of these devices is illegal in NSW National Parks (NPWS) and that BirdLife Australia requests participants 'Exercise restraint and caution during observation, ... and to limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds and avoid using such methods in heavily birded areas' in their 'Ethical Birding' policy. The general census was that the club should take a very pre-cautionary approach to the use of such devices and that a policy should be compiled.

2. BirdLife Australia has undertaken a major update of their working bird list (version 2). This update is the result of the publication of 'Handbook of the Birds of the World' and 'BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World. Volume 1: Non-passerines' and brings the working list into line with the 'International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'. What does this mean for our club? A precursory look at the list indicates some name changes, both common and scientific, and a major shuffle of the taxonomy, particularly within the non-passerines. Where to from here? Option 1 is to ignore it

and continue using the 2008 list of Christidis and Boles. Option 2 is for the Records Officer to re-sort our checklist and records to the new taxonomy and names. The records officer will keep you posted. And the post script is the attached revised records form. The only common bird name change of particular note for our group is that of the Emerald Dove which is now known as the Brown-capped Emerald-Dove. For anyone wanting further information regarding the changes to the list, please contact Ashley on the details as shown on the first page.

3. The question of setting up a Facebook Page for the club was put forward by Cameron to hopefully attract some of the younger generation. The group suggested that he put forward a proposal of what it would look like and how it work for further consider by the committee

Wingham Golf Course / Bootawa and Hillville Dams - 04th August 2016 By Janis Cossill

Only 4 brave souls ventured out into the wind and rain for our morning of birdwatching, in fact, we started it with coffee while a squall passed over. Instead of starting in Wingham Brush, too wet, we decided to try the golf course instead. Here we saw Australian Wood Duck and many Australian White and Straw-necked Ibis dotted over the course. Out came the sun and we encountered an amazing array of cockatoos and parrots - Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Galah, Rainbow and Scaly-breasted Lorikeets, Eastern and Crimson Rosellas and Australian King-Parrot, in the trees surrounding the clubhouse. Then we walked down the side of the first fairway (they told us one round had gone and that was all) and found Superb Fairy-wren, Red-browed Finch and Eastern Spinebill, which we watched for a while.

The next squall was threatening so we headed for Bootawa Dam. Here it cleared again for tea and we spotted both Australasian and Great Crested Grebes. Also here we saw our full complement of cormorants and some Hardhead. A Wedge-tailed Eagle tracked overhead and a Black-shouldered Kite hovered over a field on the other side of the dam. Another downpour sent us off to Hillville Dam.

Once again the sun poked its head out for a while as we watched a Great Egret, some Pacific Black Duck and Hardhead. Far on the other side an Australasian Darter, Purple Swamphen, Eurasian Coot, Dusky Moorhen and Black Swan were identified. Along the edge of the road a Spotted Pardalote was heard, a Brown Honeyeater and Brown Thornbill and a disappearing female Satin Bowerbird were seen. As

the rain began again we decided it was time to call it a day.

It turned out to be an enjoyable morning for all with an overall total of 55 species encountered.

Bird List - Black Swan, Hardhead, Pacific Black Duck, Australian Wood Duck, Australasian Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Spotted Dove, Crested Pigeon, Purple Swamphen, Dusky Moorhen, Eurasian Coot, Masked Lapwing, Silver Gull, Australian Pelican, Cattle Egret, Great Egret, Australian White Ibis, Straw-necked Ibis, Little Pied Cormorant, Great Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Australasian Darter, Black-shouldered Kite, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Laughing Kookaburra, Galah, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Australian King-Parrot, Crimson Rosella, Eastern Rosella, Rainbow Lorikeet, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Satin Bowerbird, Superb Fairy-wren, Brown Honeyeater, Eastern Spinebill, Lewin's Honeyeater, Little Wattlebird, Noisy Miner, Spotted Pardalote, Brown Thornbill, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Pied Currawong, Australian Magpie, Pied Butcherbird, Grey Butcherbird, Willie Wagtail, Grey Fantail, Torresian Crow, Australian Raven, Magpie-lark, Eastern Yellow Robin, Red-browed Finch, Welcome Swallow, Common Myna

Other Snippets

Wagons Ho! by Nicolette Bennett

The Bennett's bite the bullet, hitch up and head for the hills ... Observations taken whilst touring south and west, July 2015

Stopping posts: Sandy Hollow, Dubbo, Narrandera, Shepparton, The Grampians, Halls Creek, South Werribee, Chiltern, Goulburn.

Interesting characters along the way: Park 'neighbour' seen carrying a bow; Chatty men liberal with their advice; Women flashing around in their best slippers; Single men living isolated lives in caravans and cabins

Weather: Although we knew it would be cold, the fact that we could count the number of fine days on one hand meant it was an unusually wet and windy winter season. The further away from the east coast we drove, the more water-logged the paddocks and roads became. Temperatures ranged from 7 to 13 most days. Our coldest night was in Chiltern where it was a chilly zero. The toothpaste was frozen and the mirrors were frosted over. Our windiest time was in Werribee. Our site was in the middle of huge market gardens, fertile, but flat as a tack. The gale-force winds blew unobstructed from the Antarctic, up to Adelaide then over to us in windy Werribee.

Driving: Tony had the morning shift, I took the afternoon. It was a new experience to be overtaken by everyone - even the long haulers! Picnics along the

way were mostly taken in the car, as you can guess, it was usually raining. Flocks of many hundreds of Sulphur-crested Cockatoo and Galah became a common sight, picking their way through areas where grain had recently been planted or where cattle had just grazed.

Birds spotted in their natural environment:

Double-banded Finch, Apostlebird, Variegated Wren, White-Plumed Honeyeater, White-Bellied Cuckoo-Shrike, Nankeen Kestrel, Black Kite, White-winged Chough, Nankeen Night-Heron, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, Straw-Necked Ibis, Azure Kingfisher, Wedge-Tailed Eagle, Australian Shelduck pop their heads up in the middle of a paddock, White-browed Scrubwren, Superb Fairy-wren, White-faced Heron, Eastern Spinebill, Grey Shrike-Thrush, Pied Currawong, lots of Magpie, White-Throated Treecreeper, White-browed Babbler, Hardhead, Pied Oystercatcher, Black-winged Stilt, King Parrot, Black-shouldered Kite and Horsfield's Bushlark, Eurasian Skylark, Buff-banded Rail.

Seen in the paddocks were large families of Emu, black-faced sheep and merinos, wallaby, kangaroo, alpaca, wild goats and (in Shepparton), good sightings of the Australian Water Rat.

Werribee Zoo was covered in red-hot pokers and natural vegetation. We spotted Australian Bustard, Brolga, Freckled Duck, Cape Barren Goose, Magpie Goose. In the open plains section were hippo, rhino, giraffe, ibex, buffalo, camels and lion. On an island enclosure, good views of silver-backed gorilla - to name just a few.

Entertainment along the way: Watching other people hitch/unhitch their caravan (fascinating for a time, but we got over it eventually); walks around the van parks which in the most part were in bush settings; wet evenings cuddled up to a Kindle; visiting a zoo along the way; enjoying the company of our friends in the Grampians for a week; lovely walks to stunning views and waterfalls at Halls Creek when the weather permitted.

Strange events: Having a read at 9.15pm when the quiet was broken by an ear-piercing whistle from a train. Was it coming right through our van? It certainly sounded and felt like it would. Next day came the revelation that behind the trees at the back of our site was a major railway line and we were just 500 metres from a major crossing. You live and learn. Being dive-bombed by a nutty magpie was also an interesting experience. It wasn't spring, there were no nests. It just took a fancy to us (or not), I guess.

The Guessing Game: Instead of playing the kids game 'I Spy', we took to guessing what crops we were

looking at along the way. I think every farmer should put a sign up, so we can be much better informed. We DID see a huge farmstead informing us that it was a joint project with China and also spotted the inevitable Fonterra factories when we passed through the dairy regions.

Towns of note:

Shepparton: down the end of a dirt road some distance from town, we found a lovely vineyard restaurant called Tallis. A term used loosely as there was not a vine in sight. The centre of town featured an enormous lake which provided a lovely focus for the locals and a natural habitat for birds and animals.

Ballarat: Many of the old buildings of architectural worth have been retained or cleverly adapted which makes the place very special. We chose to spend time at the Eureka Stockade Exhibit. This was situated in a stunning modern building and had brilliant hands-on displays. We spent an easy 2 hours there.

Dunkeld: They call this place the 'other Grampians'. We lunched at an art deco pub then took a walk through an arboretum.

Horsham: We found the local family-run theatre and with a huge audience of 10, took in *The Wilder People*, starring Sam Neil, which was good for a laugh.

South Werribee: The veggie bowl of Melbourne. Rich alluvial soil packed into raised beds and sprouting a variety of vegetables such as dill, cabbage, cauliflower, spinach and artichokes.

Serendip Sanctuary, Lara: A wonderful place where you are free to walk around the grounds amongst the birds and animals.

Chiltern: What a pleasant surprise. A weekend music fest was underway. We strolled into this late 1880's town (one and a half streets with two pubs), found where the best music was and spent the afternoon enjoying some red wine and a bit of blue grass. One singer had a Janis Joplin-style voice and was encouraged to belt out some great songs. The band was composed of a tea chest drum, Indian drum, a banjo and two guitars. A pleasant diversion!

Signs along the way: Rice Strippers Ball; B+S Ball - no glass; Shirt Happens (ad for laundrette)

Summary: We've made it through our virgin trip as two virgin caravanners. I take back (almost) all my preconceived thoughts about caravanning. The country is our oyster. Bring it on, I say.

Forster Pelagic 31st July 2016 - Ashley Carlson

After canvassing dates and likely candidates about a possible pelagic boat trip out of Forster, the day arrived with great weather predictions. We met at 6:45am and were heading out by 7:00am on a gorgeous winter morning. Upright protrusions on the

horizon materialised into yacht masts, which Judith could advise us were part of the Sydney to Gold Coast race and that the race leaders were currently sitting off Old Bar. The marvels of modern tracking technology. Many Australasian Gannets wheeled about and many more sat on the water.

At just under 1.5 hours and 46km's from the heads, the depth sounder recorded 200 metres and John, the skipper, cut the motors. Dan, our guide (experienced pelagic observer), set about deploying a rag soaked in tuna oil on top of the water and flicking a mixture of chicken mince and dog biscuits into the water. The slick had been set and now we waited for the birds to come in. The wait was not long before both Yellow-nosed Albatross and Fairy Prion alighted on the water, behind the boat. First one, then two, three, four and five albatross at the same time. The day was looking promising early but unfortunately as the hours proceeded further birds did not arrive. The only other species to do a fly-by were a Providence Petrel arching and wheeling with silvery palms on the wing and a Fluttering Shearwater.



Yellow-nosed Albatross - Photo C Galle

We slowly trawled back along the slick hoping something had come in and only came across several prion, which were possibly the same birds from the back of the boat earlier in the day. A Black-browed Albatross flew past the boat without looking sideways. Other highlights on our return included a large pod of Common Bottle-nosed Dolphins, with some individuals cruising beside the boat, and several Humpback Whales. Although it was a beautiful day on the water, the wind was probably not quite strong enough to get the birds up off the deck.

Mudbishops Point

Ever wondered why Mudbishops Point is named as such. Well Lyn Davis has located the following snippet from the archives.

Wal "Mud" Bishop was an Australian champion swimmer in the 100 yards and over events. He also held a State sprint swimming title. Wal was a member of the Water Police in Sydney. He retired to Old Bar and lived as a semi-recluse in a small cabin, with his only companion, his fox terrier, Tim.

Bishop had a flat bottom boat which he used to catch a variety of fish in the shallows near Old Bar. He lived on his pension and about 1930 he ordered 800 bricks and sand to build a big fireplace in his modest cabin. He also grew fruit trees and grape vines and regularly visited his friend Graham on Cabbage Tree Island.

Wal got his name "Mud" because his body would be covered in a fine layer of mud after his training swim at Rozelle Bay in Sydney.

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Unusual and Interesting Sightings - Compiled By Ashley Carlson

Date	Observer	Species	Location
Mid April	T Bennett	Glossy Ibis	Forster
05/05/16	E Burley	Pacific Baza 5x, Crimson Rosella 2x, Emerald Dove	Cattai Wetlands
09/05/16	A Stuart	Double-banded Plover 55x, Little Tern 50+, White-fronted Tern 3x	Mudbishops Point
10/05/16	B Ralley A Stuart	Noisy Pitta Comb-crested Jacana 4x, Little Eagle, Grey Goshawk Chestnut-breasted Mannikin 5x	Saltwater Cattai Wetlands
11/05/16	G Newling	Crested Shrike-tit 2x, Wonga Pigeon 2x	Saltwater NP
14/05/16	A Carlson	Painted Button-quail 6x	Minimbah
15/05/16	A Carlson	Boobook Owl	Minimbah
18/05/16	S Perrottet	Glossy Black-Cockatoo	Failford
20/05/16	J Cossill	Noisy Pitta	Blackhead
21/05/16	MGLBW	Intermediate Egret, Comb-crested Jacana 4x, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, Sacred Kingfisher	Cattai Wetlands
22/05/16	A Carlson H Kempers	Spotted Harrier Black-necked Stork	Pipers Bay, Forster Cattai Wetlands
02/06/16	MGLBW	Little Eagle	Diamond Beach
12/06/16	HBOC	Emerald Dove, Crested Shrike-tit 3x, Varied Sittella 7x	Seal Rocks
16/06/16	T & N Bennett	Beach Stone-curlew 2x feeding on crabs	Harrington breakwall
17/06/16	E Galvin	Bar-tailed Godwit 2x	Tuncurry boatramp
23/06/16	A Carlson	Emerald Dove	Pipers Bay, Forster
04/07/16	A Carlson	Buff-banded Rail, Brown Quail 5x	Coomba Park
10/07/16	C Galle	Sooty Oystercatcher	Forster Breakwall
12/07/16	E Galvin D Turner	Noisy Pitta, Varied Triller White-bellied Cuckoo-Shrike 2x	Blackhead Booti Booti NP
21/07/16	E Burley	Comb-crested Jacana 5x, Southern Emu-wren	Cattai Wetlands
26/07/16	G Castles	White-breasted Woodswallow 2x (1 st return)	Cattai Wetlands
01/08/16	D Neader	Osprey feeding young in nest	The Lakes Way, Green Point
03/08/16	E Burley	Barn Owl	Forster
04/08/16	A Carlson	Topknot Pigeon 15x Regent Bowerbird	Forster The Lakes Way, Pacific Palms
05/08/16	G Godwin A Carlson	Black-necked Stork Swamp Harrier	Pacific Highway, Croki Darawahk
06/08/16	A Carlson	Square-tailed Kite	Pipers Bay, Forster
08/08/16	E Burley	Topknot Pigeon 12x	Tuncurry
12/08/16	A Carlson	White-breasted Woodswallow 2x (1 st return)	Pipers Bay, Forster
17/08/16	A Carlson	Grey Goshawk	Charlotte Bay