BIRD WATCHING - SERENDIP

Meeting: MAY 7TH at 10.00am
Cost: $2-50 pensioners
      $4-00 others (including 60's card)

Proceed along Highway towards Geelong - Serendip is sign posted with brown tourist signs, turn off near Avalon.

Most are bringing their lunch - sandwiches or BBQ so we can have "birdcall" after our tour.


JUNE 4TH - TUESDAY

The next proposed trip is to the You Yangs. I have made contact with the Ranger Geoff (052 822182) whose background is in ornithology. He is happy to show us birds and bird habitat.

Cost: $3-00 per car to enter the park
Meeting Time: 10.00am at entrance
BYO: Lunch

I do like to confirm bookings so would appreciate your reply by the 28th May.

You will see me at: Rose Garden - Wednesday
                  Current Affairs - Thursday
                  Music - Friday
                  St. Thomas - Sunday
                  or other times 18 Tyrone Street on 9741 2997.

SHIRLEY CAMERON
(The Golden Whistler)
1. MUSK DUCK
2. BLACK SWAN
3. AUSTRALIAN SHELDRUCK
4. PACIFIC BLACK DUCK
5. GREY TEAL
6. CHESTNUT TEAL
7. PINK EARED DUCK
8. HOARY HEADED GREBE
9. LITTLE GREBE
10. LITTLE PIED CORMORANT
11. PIED CORMORANT
12. AUSTRALIAN PELICAN
13. WHITE FACED HERON
14. CATTLE EGRET
15. SACRED IBIS
16. STRAW NECKED IBIS
17. WHISTLING KITE
18. SWAMP HARRIER
19. BROWN FALCON
20. PURPLE SWAMPHE
21. DUSKY MOORHEN
22. EURASIAN COOT
23. EURASIAN COOT
24. RED NECKED STINT
25. CURLEW SANDPIPER
26. BLACK WINGED STILT
27. RED NECKED AVOCET
28. MASKED LAPWING
29. SILVER GULL
30. YELLOW RUMPED THORNBILL
31. RED CAPPED PLOVER
32. NEW HOLLAND HONEYEATER
33. WHITE FRONTED CHAT
34. WILLY WAGTAIL
35. AUSTRALIAN MAGPIE
36. RAVEN
37. RICHARDS PIPIT
38. HOUSE SPARROW
39. EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH
40. WELCOME SPARROW
41. TREB MARTIN
42. FAIRY MARTIN
43. STARLING
44. MAGPIE LARK

Environments
Werribee wonderland rivals Kakadu

By Nikki Pratiniak

THERE'S more than sewage at the Western Treatment Complex in Werribee. The site boasts one of Australia's most magnificent wetland areas.

Mr John Barkla, chairman of the complex's wildlife management committee, said the Werribee wetland was on par with its more famous northern Territory counterpart, Kakadu.

"About one-third of all the birds that have ever been recorded in Australia can be found there (at Werribee)," said Mr Barkla. "It's very rich in birds, close to 270 different species."

And it's the sewage that attracts them, Mr Barkla added. "The water here is highly rich in sewage. It's full of nutrients and all sorts of things. It's the main reason the birds are there."

There are three main groups of significant birds at Werribee's Lake Borrie.

"There's the migratory waders that travel through Asia and the Arctic Circle," Mr Barkla said. "They come to Werribee when it's too bleak for them down there."

The 32,000 waders that fly to the farm each year include some of the world's rarest. There's the buff-breasted sandpiper, Cox's sandpiper and the Asian dowitcher.

"The second group are generally lumped together as water fowl," Mr Barkla said. "There are basically ducks, a whole host of common and rare species."

Many of the ducks hide out at the farm during droughts and duck-shooting season because hunting isn't allowed at Werribee. There's Australia's rarest duck, the falcated duck. It's joined by other waterfowl such as the chestnut teal, the pink-eared duck, the plumed whistling duck and spoonbills.

And then there's the orange-bellied parrots. The bird, considered to be as rare as giant pandas and Siberian tigers, flies to Werribee from Tasmania in autumn.

"They're very, very endangered," Mr Barkla said. "Only about 200 survive altogether and about 30 or 40 of those are seen at Werribee. That's 20 per cent of the existing population at Werribee, so it's very significant."

Lake Borrie at the farm is also the only permanent breeding ground for pied cormorants in Victoria. More than 1000 of these graceful-looking birds roost in the lake's dead trees every year.

And then there's the hundreds of other creatures that call the Western Treatment Complex home. Echidnas, platypuses, possums, dolphins, bats, fur seals, geckoes, little whippersnappers, marsh frogs and even feral cats and feral ferrets have been spotted at different places around the farm.

Despite the feral creatures, Werribee's wetland wonderland is considered to be internationally significant. Three major international treaties recognise this - the Ramsar Convention, the Japan Australia Migratory Bird Agreement and the China Australia Migratory Bird Agreement.

"It's the best place to go in Victoria to see birds and the amazing thing is that it's so close to Melbourne," Mr Barkla said. "There are just so many really beautiful birds. The spectacle is really marvellous."

"You can very easily in one day at Werribee see 100 different species of birds. If you lived in the UK, you wouldn't see that many species of birds in a whole year."

The wetlands and surrounding areas aren't open to the general public but people interested in watching the wildlife can apply for a visiting permit at the Western Treatment Complex in Nufarm Rd, Werribee. Inquiries: 9742 9209.