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## May Outing to Great Otway National Park

The Werribee Wagtails set off on their May jaunt in a Community Bus with Alex as the driver. Incidentally he was one of Shirley's students. We were pleased to have Shirley, our founding member along for the ride as we have missed her on previous excursions. We also welcomed back Ingrid who continues to enjoy birding in Australia. Interested bushwalkers from Lara joined us to look for birds and orchids. Liz's familiar blue Benz tagged along after Point Addis.

Our May excursion was to places in the Great Otway National Park which is home to over 170 bird species. Our first stop was Point Addis just south of Bells Beach. Spectacular views over Bass Strait and the sandstone coast provided little in the way of bird activity. The common Silver Gull and a Pied Cormorant were spotted on the shore. Crimson Rosellas were around and Welcome Swallows flitted above us. In the tea treed area behind the carpark we searched for the Rufous Bristlebird but to no avail. The reconnaissance party had seen one a week before. This coastline is home to the Hooded Plover, a shore nesting bird that is easily disturbed by beachcombing humans and their dogs.

Back in the bus we made our way to our morning tea stop in the dry forest of Ironbarks. On a nature walk we observed New Holland, Magpie-lark, Silver-eye, Grey Shrike Thrush and Grey Fantails.

Driving along the Great Ocean Rd views of Airey's Inlet bought exclamations of "Where's the camera". We turned towards Angahook State Park in Airey's and stopped at Distillery Creek.

A convivial lunch amongst the eucalypts where we indulged in Andre's Tim Tams and were pleased that Nancy can still join us, sprightly and alert. Walking along the creek we observed Striated Thornbill, male Golden Whistler, Yellow Robin and Currawong- Pied or Grey. It's difficult to tell unless seen in flight. The rare bird of the day was the Pink Robin, a female with cinnamon underparts with a pink tinge. A first sighting for many of us, we were pleased to have good but brief views.

Although we saw fewer birds than expected, 38 species in all, we enjoyed our day, the wonderful views from the Great Ocean Rd and the bush setting around Distillery Creek. Thanks to Carole and Dave for organising the day.

*PS An interesting conversation on the bus was about the chap who runs Devil Ark a Tasmanian Devil Sanctuary in NSW. To raise awareness and money for research into the Devil's face tumours, the director John Weigal has embarked on a 'big year of birding'. Beginning on the 1 January, John has seen 575 species to date. See [www.birdingfordevils.com.au](http://www.birdingfordevils.com.au)*



Australian Wood Duck  
 Australasian Gannet  
 Little Pied Cormorant  
 Australasian Darter  
 Whistling kite  
 Wedge-tailed Eagle  
 Nankeen Kestrel  
 Purple Swamphen  
 Masked Lapwing  
 Silver Gull  
 Galah

Sulphur-crested cockatoo  
 Crimson Rosella  
 White-throated Treecreeper  
 Rufous Bristlebird  
 Superb Fairywren  
 White-browed Scrubwren  
 Striated thornbill  
 Brown thornbill  
 Singing Honeyeater  
 White-eared Honeyeater

White plumed honeyeater  
 Red Wattle bird  
 New Holland Honeyeater  
 Crested Shrike-tit  
 Golden Whistler  
 Grey Shrike Thrush  
 Australian Magpie  
 Pied Currawong  
 Grey fantail  
 Willie Wagtail

Little Raven  
 Magpie-lark  
 Scarlet Robin  
 Flame Robin  
 Pink Robin  
 Eastern yellow robin  
 Silvereye  
 Welcome Swallow  
 Common Starling



## Rose or Pink Robin?

Those who took the afternoon walk on the Nature Trail at Distillery Creek in May saw two birds which were obviously (from their shape) robins - but which ones? Clearly not Yellow, or a male Scarlet or Flame the choice came down to female Scarlet, Pink or Rose - which can be very hard to tell apart. One was a juvenile with almost no distinguishing marks at all, so that remains a mystery - although as it was with the other (female) bird we assume it was the same species.

Fortunately we were able to get fairly good views of the bird, and the main distinguishing features were the very buff wing markings and a small pale mark above the bill. Only the female Pink has such buffy marks - the female Scarlet and Rose are much paler. Juvenile Scarlet Robins can have similar colours - and if both birds had the same marking I would perhaps reconsider the identification - but as one bird had markings and one didn't it seemed much more likely to be a female and juvenile Pink than two juveniles Scarlet of different ages.

Further indications were that they were foraging low down - Rose tend to be high in the canopy - and the fact that there had been recent reports of Pink in the area! Good photos of the female robins are hard to find on the net - the BirdLife Photography site does not have any of the Pink, but <http://www.boca.org.au/photogallery/picture/previous-bird-id-challenges/3969-rose-robin> clearly shows a female Rose has very pale wingbars. Dave T.

Thanks to Susan M for the photos,



### *A letter from Liz Hurley.....*

When I was at Menindee I went out to the Darling River while watching a grey shrike thrush being very busy in the undergrowth. I hadn't realized my feet had sunk in red mud so when I went to move I nearly fell over. I thought I would have to leave behind my 35 year old RM Williams boots in the mud. As I was wondering what to do a man came past in a ute and had quite a laugh at my expense. He had one eye, his name was Mr. Looney and was a bird watching photographer. I was amazed that he was laughing at me!! We had great chat and he told me where to go to see the birds. I drove home to Broken Hill in the dark - which I had wanted to avoid because of the emus and kangaroos.

Last week I went on a post office "mail run" with Trevor. Trevor drives 3000kms a week to deliver the mail to outback stations. Because of the nature of his work I thought Trevor would be shy with not much conversation. However I was very wrong. Trevor would talk under wet cement and 600 kms later, 22 stations, 15 gates, and 12 hours later of rain cold winds and mud I knew his entire life story. I met some extraordinary people including one old couple whose home had been flooded in 1996 and they had waited together on the roof for rescue.

RFDS work has been interesting. Have been out to stations for retrievals mostly of motor bike accidents - typically no helmet worn. Innamincka, White Cliffs, Tibooburra, Wilcannia, Moomba Etc. I had always thought of Western Australia as being the mining state and am amazed at the number of mines in South Australia. Tomorrow I am going to Mungo national park. The tourist bureau tell me everyone who went today had become stuck in the mud because of torrential rain.

Love and best wishes to everyone Elizabeth



## Werribee in Winter... June 2012.....

Chestnut Teal  
Pacific Black Duck  
Australasian Grebe  
Spotted Dove  
Common Bronze-wing  
Little Pied Cormorant  
Great Cormorant  
Little Black Cormorant  
Pied Cormorant  
Australian Pelican  
White Faced Heron  
Australian white Ibis  
Royal spoonbill  
Whistling kite  
Peregrine Falcon  
Dusky Moorhen  
Masked Lapwing  
Silver Gull  
Galah  
Sulphur-crested cockatoo  
Fan-tailed Cuckoo  
Kookaburra  
Superb Fairywren  
White-browed Scrubwren  
White plumed honeyeater  
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater  
Australian Magpie  
Willie Wagtail  
Little Raven  
Magpie-lark  
Welcome Swallow  
Common Starling  
Common Myna  
Red-browed Finch  
House Sparrow

After a very wet and windy Monday, Tuesday 5th June looked like being windier but not so wet. A hardy group of a dozen or so gathered for the Wagtails outing. First stop was at the mouth of the Werribee River - the bay was very rough and the birds were all sheltering - very little to be seen. On then to the K Road Cliffs, where the first couple of people to set off saw a Royal Spoonbill, which promptly disappeared before the rest of us could see it. Quite a lot of Galahs and Pelicans were around, and in the middle of one distant flock of Pelicans was a Peregrine Falcon. By now the cold and wind were starting to take a toll, and it was morning tea time so we decided to adjourn to the Cache cafe - highly recommended! After some welcome coffee and various additional slimming delights (thanks Shirley!) the more foolhardy set off for the Werribee River Park. Still very much a work in progress - the car park has been landscaped since I was last there and there is the frame now of an information board. Descending the slope to the river we were at least out of the wind, but there were still not many birds around until we found two Fan-tailed Cuckoos, and almost immediately a Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater. On to the fence for the Zoo - no Ostriches to be seen but we did manage a rhino and some sort of antelope. As we headed back to the cars the rain started again and in the car park was another Fan-tailed Cuckoo. At that point we gave up and headed home for lunch. 35 species was not a bad total for the morning - 3 people would have shared the chocolates if there had been any - Bev, Mike and Dave.

Sincere thanks to Susan who was again Reporter.

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Those of you on the email list will have received links to a new BBC series - "Secrets of Our Living Planet" - part of which was filmed at Mt. Rothwell. Mt Rothwell is a privately-run 400 hectare sanctuary at the northern end of the You Yangs. It is surrounded by a predator-proof fence and managed for the conservation of threatened mammals such as Bandicoots, Bettongs, Quolls and Rock-wallabies. It is mainly grassland with some patches of woodland. They run regular night-time spotlighting tours to look at the mammals - highly recommended.

We conduct a regular quarterly survey of the area - whilst it designed to help conserve mammals the lack of predators also shows up in the number of birds as well. The bird list for the property is now around 115 species - our next survey is on Oct 21st and you are all welcome

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### Future Outings.....

Ian went to the Brisbane Ranges a couple of days ago and many areas are still closed because of flood damage earlier this year.

So we will now go to the You Yangs (with Peter G as leader) in August - normal car pooling arrangements.

September we will go to Woodlands Park (near the airport) (and possible other places in the area) as a bus trip with Ian leading



## JULY OUTING TO POINT COOK COASTAL PARK

Black Swan  
Grey Teal  
Chestnut Teal  
Pacific Black Duck  
Australasian Grebe  
Hoary-headed Grebe  
Spotted Dove  
Common Bronze-wing  
Australasian Gannet  
White Faced Heron  
Australian white Ibis  
Black -shouldered kite  
Whistling kite  
Spotted Harrier  
Swamp Harrier  
Little Eagle  
Nankeen Kestrel  
Brown Falcon  
Australian Hobby  
Red-capped Plover  
Masked Lapwing  
Pacific Gull  
Silver Gull  
Galah  
Rainbow lorikeet  
Fan-tailed Cuckoo  
Superb Fairywren  
Striated Fieldwren  
Yellow Thornbill  
Yellow-rumped thornbill  
Brown thornbill  
Singing Honeyeater  
White plumed honeyeater  
Little Wattle bird  
Red Wattle bird  
White-fronted Chat  
New Holland Honeyeater  
Australian Magpie  
Willie Wagtail  
Little Raven  
Magpie-lark  
Flame Robin  
Silvereye  
Welcome Swallow  
Common Blackbird  
Common Starling  
House Sparrow

On the first Tuesday in July about 16 keen birdwatchers braved the winter weather to enjoy a few hours birding at Point Cook Coastal Park. Andre and Len had prepared the day well and were our guides around the Park.

At our first stop, the RAAF Parking Lot, we watched the male Flame Robin foraging for insects. This bird with its bright orangey-red chest and neck is often incorrectly called a Robin Redbreast. All the male Flame Robins seen during the day were with 2-5 females which brought exclamations from Andre about the ratio of females to males. Other birds identified at this spot were the Willy Wagtail, Spotted Harrier, Masked Lapwing and in the swamp grass Striated Field Wren. Australian Shelduck and Grey Teal Duck were on the lake. A group of Yellow Thornbills were on the wire fence.

We moved our cars to the Spectacle Lake Lookout. There we observed Magpies, Starlings, Magpie Larks and three more Flame Robins on the road. A pair of black shouldered kites landed in a dead pine tree. As we walked along the road 3 more raptors were overhead. Iain and Dave led the identification. The 2 with faster wing flaps and black deeply fingered wing tips were Whistling Kites. The other one was a Swamp Harrier. The Swamp Harrier had a paler rump and had slower wing flaps. Our third stop was at the main picnic area. There were plenty of New Hollands, Little and Red Wattlebirds, and Fairy Wrens amongst the Casuarinas. Shirley pointed out the male trees with their long rust coloured flowers. We walked down to the beach where an Australian Gannet was spotted a long way out. About 15 Red Capped Plovers were busy feeding on the shore. These short legged birds had a reddish cap and moved in short bursts. I think it was on our way back to have lunch that a pair of Australian Hobbies were identified. They eat dragonflies, lizards and small birds. Like most raptors the male bird is smaller than the female. After lunch the bird count was 41 or 42 birds.

Some of the group drove over to the Homestead road. We had a look around the gate area and out to the shore. Here we saw another 6 or 7 species including an immature Pacific Gull and a Singing Honeyeater, a first for me. Bev earned the honour of bringing the chocolates next time. It was a good day for learning about raptors and the weather stayed fine. Thanks to Andre and Len. Susan Myers Senior Reporter.

