December Outing in the Altona area.

Werribee Wagtails numbered 11 people when they met for their final outing in 2012 at Truganina Park. On the road to the carpark Straw-necked Ibis and Australian White Ibis were feeding in the paddock. Chris, Ceri, Gwen, Carole, Pat, Andre, Len, Nance, Shirley, Liz and myself braved the wind to begin our bird watching in the wetlands at the base of the 100 Steps of Federation. There were easy sightings of Welcome Swallow, Crested Pigeon, Common Starlings and Red Wattlebirds. On the wetlands there was a pair of Australasian Grebe on a nest, which was a floating mound of vegetation. Their breeding plumage showed a rich black head, a pale patch below the bill and a bright chestnut head stripe. A Green Finch was well camouflaged in water vegetation. An assortment of ducks, Spotted Crane and Purple Swamphen were around. Some of us walked around the Federation Hill and observed White-fronted Chats and Singing Honeyeater.

After morning tea we drove around to Truganina Swamp next to Nance’s Village. There was a small flock of Red-necked Avocet and another of Common Greenshanks keeping low out of the wind on a spit. We retreated out of the wind to the fence of the village. Then there was great debate over 2 white birds on the shore across the water. As one was displaying yellow-orange plumes. We decided on Cattle Egret, although there are no cattle in coo-ee. After a Swamp Harrier appeared the Egrets flew off and I took a photo of them. Banded and Black-winged Stilts, immature Black Swans, White-faced Heron and Whiskered Tern were also on the swamp.

A quick lunch and bird count, before a squall with showers finished our outing for the day. The bird count was 48 species. Thanks to Andre for great organisation and the Tim Tams. Sincere thanks to Susan for her excellent report.
January 2013  Wagtails Visit to Werribee River Outing.

What a way to start the year, at the Mouth of the Werribee River there were more species than you could imagine. As it was windy the birds were hunkered down and so comparatively easy to identify and bird list was impressive.

On to the K Road Cliffs. A popular fishing haunt.

On entering the Werribee Park Precinct, a group of Cape Barren Geese had gathered in the paddocks to feed. We had morning tea before entering the Mansion grounds. Four Black Kites were soaring overhead. This species moved into the area during the recent drought and conditions must be favourable because they have stayed. The Black Kite preys on small mammals, lizards, insects and frequents tips.

The Wagtails walked through the Mansion grounds to the Werribee River. Australian White Ibis and Straw-necked Ibis were feeding on the Polo ground. Somebody commented they were eating Pasture Cockchafer grubs. Through the scrub Galahs, Willie Wagtails, Fairy Wrens, Wattle Birds, a Shining Bronze Cuckoo and Song Thrush were sighted. At the ford we observed Whistling Kite, Black Duck, White-faced Heron and Reed Warbler. A pair of Nankeen Night Herons were spotted near the water’s edge after we had passed through the heritage orchard. There was a lot of discussion en route and calling with devices to identify a pair of Crested Shrike-tits.

We lunched back at the picnic ground where the bird count indicated we were a lot of pessimists for low predictions—68 species. Congratulations to Geoff. Some of the Wagtails drove over to meet the Ranger at the Werribee River Park. To whom do we thank for the Report?
Werribee Wagtails Outing to Ballarat 5th. February 2013

We met under overcast skies at Watton St, however with the expectation of a very warm and sunny day, there was also so trepidation. Seventeen people made the bus trip and we met up with others at the Gong Gong Reservoir, including Jim Gunn, who had travelled down from Wychenproof. We had a stroll around the Gong Reservoir grounds and picked up a number of bush birds including White-naped Honeyeater, Eastern Yellow Robin, and Bassian Thrush, a rare addition to a Wagtails list. Morning tea was enjoyed by most whilst sitting on a railing by the bus, before we headed off to Lake Wendouree.

The Lake turned out to be an unexpected gem of a site, with the first bird seen an Australian Crake [Spotted]. A walk around the reticulation ponds yielded not only a number of water birds, but also a young Australian Hobby and a Common Bronzewing for those who kept up. We crossed back to the lake proper and quickly had sightings of a pair of Blue-billed Ducks up very close. As we ambled along this trail we seemed to find a crake every 20 metres or so, and they were not at all fussed about people. Soon we found a Great-crested Grebe with a chick, they also were quite close, and cameras were soon clicking. We enjoyed our lunch under the very old and shady trees of Lake Wendouree, with a flock of about 20 Black-tailed Native Hens for company. Once again these birds were very used to people and not timid. After lunch we enjoyed a quick stroll along the lake foreshore and saw many more Blue-billed Ducks and our first Musk Ducks. On the way back to the bus, those who gave in to temptation enjoyed an ice-cream from the kiosk. Bird call resulted in a count of 64 and Liz won the chocolates.
March on the Treatment Plant.

Always a great time to visit the Plants, the migratory birds are getting into breeding plumage and contemplating the long flight to Siberia.

Sincere thanks to Susan Myers for the photos.

Thanks to Liz Hurley for up-grading the First Aid Box, let’s hope we do not have to use it.

WHAT COMES NEXT……
May 7th  Geelong /Bellarine
June 4th  Bacchus Marsh
July 2nd Eynesbury
August 6th Bus to Westgate and Botanic Gardens
September 3rd You Yangs
November 5th WTP  Bus  Bookings necessary Cost $15.

I understand Nancy Marriot has broken her hip, I will email you when I find out more details.