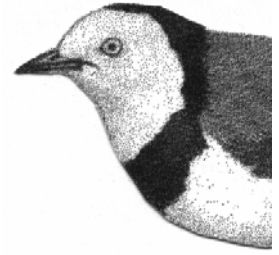


The Chat

Newsletter of the East Gippsland
Bird Observers Club



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Fire Recovery Surveys by EGBOC



Above is the blackened scene that on 26 February met EGBOC's first outing to the area ravaged by last summer's (2006-07) wildfires in East Gippsland. The view is of mixed ironbark-box-stringybark forest on the ridge top above Monkey Creek just north of Bruthen, on the edge of a huge swathe of country extending west and north into the ranges and across to Dargo and beyond.

EGBOC has initiated a series of surveys in selected sites to monitor the recovery of bird

populations in areas within and close to fire-affected locations.

So far, members have conducted 4 monthly surveys at Monkey Creek near Bruthen and at Fairy Dell near Wiseligh. We are also monitoring birds at the Waterholes Guest House (courtesy of Kaye Munro) that was surrounded by intense wildfire in January, which resulted in almost total defoliation of much of the forest on the upper slopes above the guesthouse. Waterholes surveys will be conducted

every three months from this May.

Sites were chosen on the basis of their accessibility for regular visits by EGBOC members and the availability of good baseline information on pre-fire bird populations drawn from EGBOC records over the years. In addition, the sites represent different suites of vegetation and bird communities with varying exposure to the recent fires.

Monkey Creek represents mostly drier mixed eucalypt forest bordering cleared and settled agricultural land, while Fairy Dell includes a significant stand of temperate rainforest surrounded by drier forest. Although Fairy Dell was not directly burnt, fire approached close to the site to the north. The buildings and gardens at Waterholes survived the fires, but fire burnt right down to the Nicholson River beside the guesthouse, and through the small wetland below the buildings, which had dried out in the drought.

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President's report ~ by Ken Sherring

Death of Joy Johnstone

All of us at EGBOC were saddened to hear of the recent death of Joy Johnstone. Joy was the first president of EGBOC. Club members Harvey Rodda and Len Axen attended Joy's funeral. (See page 2)

EGBOC at Field Days

We received many good re-

ports for our presentation at the Bairnsdale Field Days in April. Well done to all the members who contributed to this success.

Dates to remember:

June 25. Annual General Meeting at DSE office Bairnsdale. Guest Speaker: Grainne Maguire (award winning work

for the Hooded Plover project) **July 23.** Camp at Marlo to be lead by Len Axen.

May 8-10, 2008. EGBOC to host BOCA educational weekend.

From the Editor

As from our last issue, *The Chat* is now available on the EGBOC website at:

www.egboc.org.au

And from this issue, those with access to the internet will be able to read this newsletter online in full colour! Unfortunately, given the need to minimise our costs, and to retain the goodwill of DSE which provides access to their photocopier to produce copies of *The Chat* for distribution to members, we cannot print the hard-copy version in colour.

In this issue I have started a

new format for reporting our weekly outings, which consists of a slightly edited version of Harvey's exemplary outings reports. The full version of Harvey's reports is available on the web along with his detailed bird lists for each outing. These will be updated on the web every few months.

This issue, I am delighted to be able to include Ian Faulkner's informative and thoughtful comments on the Hooded Plover – a fitting sequel to Ken Sherring's story in the last issue. There must be something about those glorious autumn mornings we get in

this wonderful part of the world – they have inspired both Brian Bullivant and Jill Markey to set fingers to keyboards!

The Chat is published three times a year by the East Gippsland Bird Observers Club, PO Box 825, Bairnsdale, Victoria 3875.

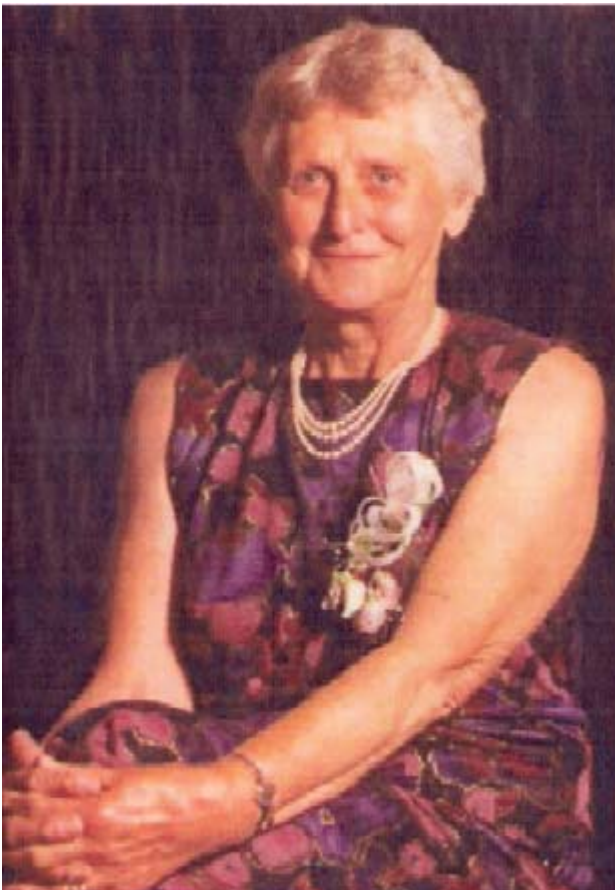
EGBOC is grateful to the Department of Sustainability and Environment for support in the production of the Newsletter.

The illustration of the White-fronted Chat on the cover is from *The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds* 1989.

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Obituary

**Joyce (Joy) Winifred Johnstone; nee Armstrong
1923 - 2007**



Joyce Armstrong was born in country Victoria at Boolarra in 1923 and like many of her generation, grew up with the surrounding countryside as her backyard. The rolling hills of Gippsland, the Strzelecki Ranges and the forested slopes of the area to be known as the Morwell River N.P. became places where Joy first learned to appreciate and love the natural environment around her.

Her interest in native flora and fauna continued to grow and upon her marriage to Jack Johnstone a lifetime spent camping and holidaying in the great outdoors began. Four children (Dawn, Heather, Phillip and Gail) together with a move to Tyers and the demands of running a dairy farm did not curtail these interests.

After selling their farm and moving to Lakes Entrance where they operated a tourist accommodation business, Joy's initial association with EGBOC commenced. Our records indicate that along with a small group of like-minded people (many of whom were Field Naturalists as well) the club began using Nyerimilang Park as a base and Joy

became our inaugural president in 1982.

Home survey observations, wetland surveys, weekly outings, camps and the BOCA Challenge Count became part and parcel of Joy's way of life. New and lifelong friendships were formed. Maisie Byrne, Joan Curry and in later years Jo Hope, formed a most formidable Challenge Count team that for many years reported on the Lake Bunga and Lake Tyers Forest Park areas.

In 1987 Jack and Joy finally retired and moved to Marlo. While this was some distance from many of the club's outings, Joy continued to attend the EGBOC camps and annual Challenge Counts. It also allowed Jacquie and I to meet our new neighbours for the first time. A back fence is no inhibitor to country people. Introductions were quickly made and many common interests shared.

Jack could indulge his love of fishing and the vegetable patch while Joy and I discovered some of the birding "gems" around Marlo. These included sightings of a Ringed Plover at the mouth of the Snowy River, an Emerald Dove near Bemm River, White-headed Pigeons at Jarrahmond,

Top-knot Pigeons at the Cabbage Tree Palms Reserve, a Song Thrush in our own backyards, and Blue-winged Parrots on the vacant block next to us.

Retirement also meant annual winter trips to the northern and warmer regions of Australia. More fishing opportunities for Jack and new birding areas for Joy to explore. Jacquie and I were soon to learn that postcards from the more remote places in outback Australia could only come from one source.

The message was always the same. A line or two to say they were in good health. A statement about how many fish Jack had caught. A note about the weather and loads of detail about new "lifers" that Joy had seen. The 4WD and caravan and then in more recent years,

their campervan, certainly received a workout.

Although Joy lost her soulmate in 2000, her birding expeditions continued. The campervan was sold and replaced by the "little green Subaru". Tag-along tours, new friends and more remote places beckoned. Even a car crash did not dampen her spirits.

In 2003 she sold the Marlo residence and settled in Yinnar near her brother and son, Phillip. She joined the Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists Club and we began a regular correspondence by letter and phone. Last year she drove to Alice Springs and joined a tour of the Kimberleys and the Gibb River Road. Our last postcard came from Mataranka to say she was camping under some eucalypts and watching two Red Gos-

hawks at a nest close by.

Upon her arrival home, I was delighted to receive a telephone call to say that she could "make it" to the Challenge Count at Marlo if I needed an extra hand. Would I ever?

Stepping on a Ground Parrot, sightings of White-winged Trillers, Glossy Ibis, Whiskered Terns and Brown Songlarks that weekend will always remain as vivid memories. But observations of a male Turquoise Parrot and Rufous Songlarks at Canni Creek the following Monday were simply "the icing on the cake".

Joy died peacefully in her sleep at Yinnar on March 14 2007. Her contribution to the EGBOC club over a 25 year period, her friendships with other club members and the wider birding

community and her passion for the natural environment will long be remembered by all who knew her.

Vale, Joy.

(Len Axen)

Hooded Plovers at Red Bluff ~ by Ian Faulkner

Hooded Plovers are an endangered species on the Victorian coast. In 2006 I volunteered to monitor the breeding success of a pair of plovers at Red Bluff in my capacity as a member of EGBOC.

When the first white settlers arrived in Lakes Entrance in the 1850s the lake waters flowed out 'over the rocks' at this headland which marks the eastern end of what was named the Ninety Mile Beach. The original name for the entrance was Ngrungit (pronounced n'ga-run-git) meaning 'entrance or opening' and also 'home of a monster or powerful force'. The beach from present day Lake Bunga to Red Bluff is the final mile, the most scenic, and popular with walkers, fishers, lovers and families. In 2005 a pair of Hooded Plovers were recorded as resident at the Bluff end of the beach.

I continue to be part of the project called 'Beach Nesting Birds and Recreationists' by Birds Australia. Our supervisor is Dr Grainne Maguire (pronounced Granya). The purpose is not to ban people

from beaches, but to find ways of accommodating both species.

On 31 May Len Axen, Ken Sherring and myself attended a meeting convened by Grainne at the Parks Victoria office in Bairnsdale, where we met various people in green uniforms. In early July my information pack arrived, including data sheets to be filled in every time I saw the birds. This was pigeon-holed and forgotten because, from my experience, Hooded Plovers didn't start nesting until warmer weather, around October. By July I had already reported the tracks of wombats, rabbits, foxes, humans and dogs. Childhood fantasies about Hiawatha and the Little Black Princess re-emerged as I traced not only foot shapes, but the endless variety of shoe treads left in the fresh sand after rain or wind.

Through August, September and early October the only sign of Hooded Plovers in twelve visits were sporadic trails of little (may I say cute?) footprints among humps of dried seaweed. They were scattered

among prints of ravens, seagulls, magpies, foxes, council ATV beachcleaners, surf-club 4WDs, bounding dogs and people. When the birds finally settled at the 2005 site in early November, laying eggs seemed a futile act of fertility.

Masked Lapwings who discover that cars do not drive on traffic islands often decide to nest there. Similarly, Hoodies learn that most people walk along the water's edge. They perch on a hump of sand at

the back of the beach and watch us. If a beachcomber diverges into the shell and driftwood zone above the high tide mark the plovers move ahead. My familiar pair don't move until I am 20 metres or less from them.

On 1 December only one bird was feeding on the water's edge. It began running when I was 100 metres away. I walked across the beach to the

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Hooded Plovers at Lake Tyers Beach, October 2006.
Photo: Ken Sherring

An old birdo's dawn ~ by Brian Bullivant

Hang on a minute – did I say 'old'? Elderly would be better but doesn't quite scan as well in a headline so it will have to be 'old' now that I've just turned eighty. But that does not prevent me luxuriating in magnificent dawns like this one at the equinox, tuning into the bird chorus, and making plans and my little rituals for the day that help keep me on track.

Six thirty, first things first – my 'new' Patchy needs to go outside for her toilet break, and I must take my first pill for the day and count out the eight others to come. I refuse to use one of those plastic boxes you can get from the chemist as I think the discipline to remember what has to be taken and when keeps the mind supple. Turn on the radio to ABC Classic FM. Now I need to wait for half an hour before eating, and I'm just dying for that first cup of tea and two sweet biscuits - another ritual.

We roam peacefully around Patchy's large run: the Magpies are tuning up, what memories they evoke of a training run around Lake Wendouree fifty years ago which drew my wife, baby daughter and me back as immigrants two years later. Two Grey Butcherbirds sing in duet and in the far distance I can hear Currawongs - a sign of a harsh winter so it's said; two Australian Ravens and an Olive-backed Oriole are now getting into the act and an Eastern Whipbird is just audible from the foreshore. They seem to be moving closer maybe due to the clearance of scrub that was their habitat.

With *that* first cup of tea in mind I check my watch – blast, still ten minutes to go, so we do the rounds of the rest of the property and check what the night might have brought. Patchy tugs at her lead, an essential restraint when outside her run to prevent her going after rabbits. Jack Russells can go for miles and my artificial knees are in no state to chase her. But she spots

something under one of the grevilleas and that's what has led to her frantic tugging. I can't see it but getting closer reveals a Common Bronzewing squatting there motionless and almost camouflaged into invisibility. How I envy her ability to spot and smell something well outside my limited senses!

Three Maned (Wood) Ducks are swimming on the reconstructed dam. It's filling rapidly since the rains and already other animals have taken up residence. I rescued a turtle from the local road last week and put it in the dam, much to Patchy's disappointment, she wanted it as a playmate; in the evening frogs start up a weak chorus so it looks as if the dam is getting back its health. A White Ibis stalks around the edge and I hope that the frogs will seek cover.

At last, that first cup of tea on the front veranda where I have one of those wooden double seats with a table between them - what bliss, basking in the sun with a puppy on my knees also alert to birdlife and all noises outside my range, head turning this way and that, ears pricking up and nose quivering – 'wiffing' I call it - to scents I would dearly like to smell, or perhaps not, she can get into muck that defies imagination. The last was rolling in a very dead fish on the foreshore; she needed two baths after that, I needed a gasmask!

Eighteen Strawnecked Ibis and two White Ibis are fossicking in the large vacant block across the road. Patchy spots them and gives her typical Jack Russell squeaking bark. But there's a funny acrid smell in the faint breeze and she tunes into that. Hello – all the Ibis have panicked and taken off. Something's scared them, maybe the fox I see around here occasionally. The acrid smell increases a little so there we both are, wiffing away in unison in the direction of the paddock. Patchy looks back at me as if to say 'good

on you mate, you're learning'.

A Crimson Rosella flies in to perch on the railing in front of us and I grab Patchy quickly. What magnificent colour! It could be one of the pair that has taken over a hole in the old Grey Box where they have raised broods for the past three years. Prior to that a pair of Eastern Rosellas used it for the same purpose before they were ousted by the more aggressive Crimson.

Some swans can just be seen on the distant lake and every so often I hear their muted 'whoop' against the always present roar of the surf. A deep 'cuck-caw' comes from the same direction, and I wonder whether it might be the Channel-billed Cuckoo that appears to have adopted Me-tung. A quick check of the 'bible', Simpson and Day, dispels that idea, 'a bubbling trumpet' they say. I'm still puzzled by what I heard, but not by the sound of a small group of Gang-gangs, that have been around for days making their unmistakable wheezing, creaky call. The soft coo-coo of a Spotted Turtle Dove starts up, a coda to the magnificent dawn

It's now nine o'clock in the morning - how time has flown - I'm having breakfast and watching what's going on in the patio about fifteen metres in direct line of sight below me. Five Common Bronzewings are preening themselves in the sun that bathes the new grave plot I've made to hold the ashes of the four dogs that have blessed my life since retiring to Nungurner. The plot is covered by pebbles and rocks from the foreshore where they all used to play, and hold the heat; the Bronzewings plump up their feathers and drowse among the pebbles.

The White Ibis has done the rounds of the dam and stalks grimly past the Bronzewings while one or two scuttle nervously out of its path. Two Peaceful Doves fly in and try to

usurp places on the warm stones, but are driven off and take refuge on the pergola roof just below my window. Patchy is big enough now to stand on her hind legs and growl at them but to no effect. Two Crimson Rosellas rocket in to see if there is any birdseed left in the large platter on the table inside the pergola. They're almost always the first to arrive when I refill it, and tease Patchy as she tries to catch them like in a game of chasey.

One of the Bronzewings is bathing enthusiastically in the large bird bath which forms part of the grave plot. Above it stands a striking replica of a temple shrine guardian from the Tomb of Warriors in Xi'an, dating back to 210 BCE and built on the death of Shi Huangti in the Ch'in dynasty, the first emperor to unite all the feudal states into one nation, China. He also ordered the start of the Great Wall.

The Bronzewing cannot be aware of all this, but I often wonder. I have just been reading about James Lovelock's theory that the health, ecosystems and everything on our planet form an integrated entity which he termed Gaia after a Greek goddess. That was in the 1970s but unfortunately the semi-mystical nature of his book led to it being rubbished as New Age speculation. But how prophetic it was with climate change looming, ice ages predicted and catastrophic changes already increasing! I see he has just published *The Revenge of Gaia*. I suppose it's his revenge really in light of the climate changes that have taken place since the seventies.

Breakfast's over, time to feed Patchy, but I could stay and watch what comes and goes below me all day. Ah – a Rainbow Lorikeet has dashed in squawking and taken over another birdbath for its energetic morning ablutions; a Red Wattlebird explores the coastal Banksia, and an Eastern Rosella has just flown to the Japanese maple that's putting

out fresh leaves after going brown and dropping its first growth during the drought. What crazy climate!

But I *must* stop and get on with other daily rituals. Besides, the coffee's gone cold, Patchy's badgering me for her meal and my legs are numb from sitting at table too long. As I get up and try to un-stiffen a thought strikes me very sadly indeed – how many dawns like the perfect one I've enjoyed are left to us if Lovelock and other climatologists are correct, as I think they are, having been a meteorologist for five years as a young man? Worse, will there still be birdos?

But, come what may, I hope there will always be groups of people dedicated to birds and with the kind of spirit EGBOC has. The following old Irish blessing (with a minor amendment) seems particularly appropriate to encourage our endeavours:

May the rain fall gently on your fields

May the wind blow kindly on your back

May the sun shine soft on your face

*May birds sing along your way,
and
the road rise to meet you as*

you go.

*And, until the time when we meet again,
May Gaia hold you in the hollow of her hand.*

Would you trust this person with your budgie?



Photo: Ron Mackenzie

Someone's got to do it! ~ by Jill Markey

Life doesn't get much better than this. Seven thirty a.m. looking out the kitchen window while waiting for the jug to boil for coffee, twenty Yellow-rumped Thornbills are very busy having breakfast in spite of being chased by a pesky Willy Wagtail. A very smart Spinebill kisses the window good morning before feasting on the nectar from a nearby flower. Two Little Wattlebirds and a New Holland Honeyeater

fly in and out of the flowering grevillas, the magpies sing and the little wrens pick happily under the wattle tree. Time to make the coffee and move to the front verandah take a seat and the parade starts again. The resident pair of Masked Lapwing having a leisurely breakfast are stalked by the equally resident pair of magpies and the chase is on again to see who is boss. The lapwings win as usual. A pair of

black cockatoos flies over, their call echoing across the valley; maybe this means rain. Not to be outdone, a flock of white cockatoo fly down from the hills, calling as they follow the river to who knows where. A flock of Straw-necked Ibis take flight from the lucerne paddock while a pair of Sacred Ibis join the Masked Lapwings for breakfast, and the White-faced Heron hav-

ing a pick in the soak is frightened off by the Brown Goshawk flying over. All this and it's only 8am. Life's good at Wiseleigh.

Outings Report: February to May ~ Harvey Rodda

5th Feb Nyerimilang. Cancelled due to Total Fire Ban.

12th Feb Hollands Landing / Victoria Lagoon. Species 37 (Total birds 636). Weather: Fine with strong easterly wind. Leader: Harvey Rodda. Attendance: 15. After last week's cancellation the group was back in action today. Unfortunately there was a strong easterly wind and Victoria Lagoon had virtually no water in it. No birds in Victoria Lagoon at the Green Shed (Onga Pump) or at Rucker Avenue. Not many birds seen from the Jetty in the "Straights".

Many Silver Gulls, a few Crested Tern sheltering from the wind at the Jetty, a few Little Pied Cormorant in the dead trees opposite. Very disappointing.

As we came through Bengworden we saw Deighton Creek had a strong flow of water from the good rain at the weekend, although a short distance further along the road Tom's Creek was dry. After morning tea we decided to return to Bengworden in the hope that birding would be better there. Unfortunately it was not, although everyone had an excellent sighting of a pair of Brown Falcons, we believe feeding on grasshoppers or similar, also a large flock of Cockatoos, a Whistling Kite some Thornbills, a Butcher-bird, Mynas and Starlings, both Ibis, Chestnut Teal and Swallows.

19th Feb Eastern Beach, Lakes Entrance. Species: 46 (Total birds 414). Weather: Sunny after early shower. No wind. Leader: Max Markey. Attendance: 16. Interesting sightings the Forest Ravens and 7 Little Egrets.

26th Feb. Monkey/Ramrod Creeks. Species: 46 (269 birds). Weather: Sunny with light breeze. Leader: Freda Harvey. Attendance: 24. This is the first in a series of surveys on the recovery after bushfire, of the Monkey and Ramrod Creeks area. Some of this area was possibly dam-

aged by back-burning. The undergrowth is gone but the tree tops are still alive and green. The old bridge on the original Omeo Road is gone, but fortunately much of that gully was not touched by the fires, it had only burnt along the ridges.

5th March Macleod Morass, Bairnsdale. Species: 57 (Total birds 2359). Weather: Fine. Leader: Harvey Rodda. Attendance: 15. On returning home last Wednesday from a trip to Melbourne, it was very pleasing to see there had been such good falls of rain in the district. Bosse's Swamp and several other wetlands were full. A great sight to see.

Birding today: many Swallows, Swamphens, Ibis and Coots, but very few ducks at the Sewerage Ponds. Walking around the ponds from the Saleyards track, several members got good sightings of the Baillon's Crane and Little Grassbird. Also seen the Blue-billed Duck, Musk, Hardhead, Shoveler and Pink-eared Ducks along with two Mallard. The duck numbers were good, with many not being identified. Very good numbers of Grebe and the different species of raptor, was the source of much discussion in identifying them. Ravens also were the cause of discussion, and with the benefit of Max Markey's knowledge, 3 species were identified.

The trip to Gelantipy was discussed, and with only one person indicating a definite intention to attend for the four days, it was decided to cancel the trip, and go to Cherry Tree instead. All members to be advised of this change.

19th March Cherry Tree/Burnt Bridge. Species: 52 (Total birds 264). Weather: Fine. Leader: Ken Sherring. Attendance: 13. It is my very sad duty to report the death of Joy Johnstone. She passed away on the 14th of March at her home in Yinnar. Joy was the foundation President of the East Gippsland Bird Observer's Club, and always very active. She moved to Yinnar a

couple of years ago to be nearer family, but that did not prevent her involvement with our club, still attending camps, and always involved with the Challenge Count. A wonderful lady who will be sadly missed.

Ken Sherring reports that at his home, Fairy Wrens going into their winter plumage and Wattlebirds flocking. Over the past three weeks he has also had sightings of the Restless and Leaden Flycatchers.

June Soutter reports that over the Labour Day weekend, 8 Noisy Friarbirds and 2 Restless Flycatchers at Simon and Rowena Turner's home at Bindi.

14th March, Len Axen reports 2 Noisy Friarbirds, Black-faced Monarchs and Rufous Fantails at Marlo Bushland Reserve.

15th March, Len Axen reports a Grey Goshawk at the Cabbage Tree Palms Reserve.

Joan Graves reports that over the past ten days she has seen up to 30 Gang Gang Cockatoo's feeding on the Hawthorns at Picnic Point.

Clive Richardson from Suggan Buggan reports that he has had 2 male and 1 female Hooded Robins coming to the bird bath at his home over the past 3 weeks. No sign of this species down by the old school.

26th March Glenaladale Pumping Station. Species: 48 (Total birds 729). Weather: Fine and sunny. Leader: Harvey Rodda. Attendance: 17.

Very good flow of water in the Mitchell River. Pity it cannot be used for human consumption at the moment, with water so short.

En route: Just short of the old Hillside Primary School, a Wedge tailed Eagle was sighted in an old dead wattle tree. The braches were hanging over the road, and the bird was perched there about 20 feet above the ground. In an old gum a short distance away, were 30 odd rowdy cockatoos. In a swampy area a short distance on, 2 Yellow-billed Spoonbills were feeding. As we

travelled along both

Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and Straw-necked Ibis were in the paddocks, with the greatest number of Cockies on the flats through the town, where Sweet Corn had been dumped in the paddock to feed stock.

Many Welcome Swallow at the pumping station car park. First highlight of the morning was when we stopped for a cuppa. Chris Healey had an old plum tree (about 40 metres away) under observation, with little birds flitting through the thick branches. He calmly announced it was a female Robin, and then, that it had a red cap. (Photos taken).

As morning tea continued, the alarm of birds was heard from the Sweet Corn planted next to Chris's old plum tree. Then to everyone's surprise a Black Falcon appeared from over another tree. He appeared to be chasing a little bird. He was only 30 metres away. On seeing us, he 'banked' and started to climb further. He circled a couple of times before moving back down the valley. He was seen again later in the morning. Ron Mackenzie obtained a photo of the bird.

The group then walked through to Lambert's Flat. En route a further 2 Wedge-tailed Eagles were seen, and a White-bellied Sea-Eagle was seen flying up the river.

Pat McPherson reports that on Labor Day weekend she went on a Field Naturalists trip to a property which joins Angus Vale, named "Mitchellvale". Apparently the D.S.E. have taken over management of the property. Birding highlights of that trip were the sighting of 9 Rainbow Bee-eaters and 1 male Red-capped Robin.

2nd April Stephenson's, Ellasville Road, Nicholson. Species: 55 (Total birds 2671). Weather: Overcast then clearing. Leader: Avril Yates. Attendance: 22. The morning started with very overcast conditions and not much sign of birdlife at all. Things improved the longer the morning went. After the recent rain the prop-

erty looked in excellent shape, with paddocks green, and fresh water in dams and swamp areas. Good morning for raptors, with the highlights being a Sea-Eagle high in an old dead gum, feeding on a fish, and a Peregrine Falcon stirring up the birdlife on one of the dams. Several Common Tern near the point below Stephenson's house and also on a bar near the mouth of the Mitchell River. A Common Greenshank disturbed in a swamp area, leaving, with a loud and constant call. Discussion on Ravens seen. 3 species identified, which is not usual. Large numbers of Starlings.

Peter and Rosemary Edwards report the sighting of a Black Falcon at their home at Newlands Arm last Thursday (29/3).

Ian Faulkner had a Grey Currawong in the trees at his home at Lakes Entrance yesterday.

Ken Sherring has also had Grey Currawongs in his garden at Swan Reach over the last week.

16th April Dukes Road, Rail Trail at Railway Station, Bruthen. Species: 54 (399 birds). Weather: Fine but overcast. Leader: Mandy Evans. Attendance: 21. An enjoyable morning for birding although the light made it very difficult to see the little brown birds at the top of the large trees. Many members got a good sighting of the 6 Spotted Quail Thrush in Duke's Road, also the Scarlet Robins and Jacky Winter. As we sat at morning tea the Thornbills were thick in the gums, along with Pardalotes and a White-plumed Honeyeater, which is a bird not seen very often in the Bairnsdale area. Also feeding close by were the Choughs.

At the "railtrail", many sighted the Australasian Grebe (in full breeding plumage) on a dam, and 2 Wedge-tailed Eagles soaring above. The Little Eagle disturbed a large flock of Cockies as he fending off two chasing Magpies.

Sue Welte has had 30 Gang Gang Cockatoo at her home at

Metung regularly over the past two weeks.

Last Saturday Max and Jill Markey had a flock of 150 Red Wattle birds fly over their home at Wiseleigh. Ken Sherring reports similar large flocks of Wattlebirds at Swan Reach recently.

23rd April Lake Bunga. Species: 54 (Total birds 865). Weather: Fine and mild. Leader: Ian Faulkner. Attendance: 16. Visitors: Peter Johnstone, Tom Speedie and Penny Kerr all from the Lakes Entrance area, came as a result of an article in the Lakes Post by Ian Faulkner telling of our Bunga outing. An excellent mornings birding with the highlights, the sewerage ponds birdlife, the Shearwaters and Gannets, and the variety of Honeyeaters.

30th April Wiseleigh, Fairy Dell Species: 45 (Total birds 404). Weather: Overcast. Leader: Freda Harvey. Attendance: 18.

Visitor Roger Newman. Good to see the post bushfire rehabilitation work done along the Fairy Dell Road and on the track at the rear of the homes at Wiseleigh (Freda & Carole's). Fairy Dell showing signs of stress from the drought, many of the ferns looking very poorly. Highlight of the day was the display put on by the Peregrine Falcon above the bush canopy. Max feels he was feeding on insects, as there were swallows in the same vicinity. Peter Edwards reports that this morning there were 23 Cattle Egret roosting in an old dead wattle on the edge of the lake in front of his home at Newlands Arm. Over the past fortnight a pair of Black-shouldered Kites have also used this tree as a perch. On Tuesday morning 1st of May Ken Sherring and Harvey Rodda had two Emu running in front of their car for a considerable distance along Quarry track in the Colquhoun Forest. 6 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos also seen along Quarry Track that morning.

Over the past fortnight Ken Sherring has had a pair of Scarlet Robins along the

fences near his home.

7th May Canni Creek Species: 48 (Total birds 321). Weather: Fine, with cloud then sunny. Leader: Harvey Rodda. Attendance: 22. Not many birds to be seen as the sun tried to peep through. The group then spread out over the racecourse, with great results, as shown by the number of species recorded for the day. Many Currawongs feeding on the fairways, Robins seen at different locations. A surprise to see 4 Swans fly by. Honeyeaters hard to find. Bellbirds calling everywhere. Swallows at both the starting stall shed and golf clubhouse. Choughs, Bowerbirds, Lorikeets and Thornbills in good numbers. Some members were fortunate enough to get a good look at the Crested Shrike Tit and the Southern Emu Wrens.

Peter and Rosemary Edwards had a Brown Goshawk on the lawn outside their kitchen window this morning, entertaining them for half an hour. Over the past fortnight they have also seen and heard a pair of Sea Eagles near their home. Pre breeding behaviour. (Of Sea-Eagles).

Max and Jill Markey report a storm went through Wiseleigh early last week. For an hour and a half after the storm, a stream of Sulphur Crested Cockatoos came up the valley, into the hills beyond their home. Estimated 1000 birds. They would come back of a morning, and return in the afternoon. This went on for 3 days.

Ken Sherring reports a flock of 14 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos at his home late last week.

Sue Welte reports the Gang Gangs that have been in the trees in her garden left last Friday. During the last week there have been 30 Cattle Egret on the farm opposite her home.

Claire Beecher reports that yesterday afternoon she became aware of noises on her roof. On going out to investigate, she found a Hobby eating some type of small prey. If any

other bird came into the area the Hobby became very vocal and frightened them off.

Len Axen reports that on the 3rd of May he observed 3 Large-billed Scrubwrens at Healey's Road at Marlo.

Ron Mackenzie reports he continues to frequently see the Little Corellas on Raymond Island, also 6 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos over the past week.

14th May Quarry Road, Mississippi Creek walking track. Species: 39 (Total birds 201). Weather: Sunny, no wind. Leader: Ken Sherring. Attendance: 22. Car numbers prevented the group from going to Oil Bore. Highlights of the morning were the sighting of the Spotted Quail-thrush, Gerygone and Large Billed Scrub-wren.

21 May Old Eagle Point Road / Silt Jetties Species 56 (Total birds 400). Weather: Sunny, late strong wind. Leader: Norma Earney. Attendance 21. Morning highlights were the good sightings of Little Eagle (Dark morph), White-bellied Sea-Eagles and Peregrines. Sea Eagles and Peregrines seemed to be pairing off with plenty of antics and chattering.

Harvey Rodda reports that Little Corellas have been around Nicholson during the last week. On two days there was a flock of 100+ birds. Harvey also reports that on a visit to the Bemm River with Chris Hodge on the 9 May they sighted of a Tawny-Crowned Honeyeater, several Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters along the Bemm River between the rubbish tip and Elephant Rock and a Wedge-tailed Eagle.

28th May Melwood Species: 51 (Total birds 471). Weather: Overcast. Leader Harvey Rodda. Attendance: 13. A very overcast day with poor visibility, but as the day progressed, good bird numbers. Bell Miners in big numbers and very vocal. Many Honeyeaters feeding on the lerps. The behaviour of the

Pied Currawongs was very similar to the Honeyeaters, hanging in the Eucalypts as though feeding on the lerps.

Very few birds along Pea Hill Rd, the highlight there being two Koalas. The area about the school had the best bird numbers. Seen there were most of the Honeyeaters, Mistletoebird and Parrots. At the conclusion of the day while we were having lunch at the school, we were entertained by 3 Grey Shrike Thrush, Willie Wagtails, Thornbills, Wrens, Treecreepers, Rose Robin and Honeyeaters. The highlight was a Peregrine Falcon overhead. A great day.

Norma Earney noticed 7 Royal Spoonbills near the boat ramp on the silt jetties as she came

to birds. En route to Melwood, 14 Cattle Egret on the flats near the Wy Yung football ground, and returning to Bairnsdale, 14 Choughs on Mt Lookout Road, on the Bairnsdale side of the Mount.

Max Markey reports 4 Flame Robins on the fences near his home at Wiseleigh about 19 May.

(Continued from page 3)
driftwood zone, looking for tracks of the second bird. With eyes focused on the ground close ahead a small shock went through me when I recognised the magic shape of eggs, three, among the strands of dried sponge. We were pregnant!

I refrained from placing warning signs because, in my opinion, the danger of attracting egg collectors is greater than the risk of crushing by feet. On 4 December there were only two eggs. We had a strong cold wind on Saturday 2nd, so perhaps the hen discarded the third egg for easier incubation.

The birds were visited every three or four days. If the eggs had been lost I would have tried to identify the cause from footprints, and prints can soon

disappear. They hatched on 28 December.

Warning signs were now placed at each end of the usual feeding area. The mobile chicks would now attract running dogs, although adults try to distract predators. Four days after hatching one chick was lost. The second was seen on 12 January. On 17 January the whole family was gone, hopefully to a better neighbourhood. On Thursday 1 February the adults were back at their usual spot, without any young.

For this particular site I make these conclusions:

1. The danger of eggs being trodden on is small. Over 28 days I only saw three sets of human prints within two metres of the eggs, although sometimes I didn't go close

enough to have seen footprints anyway. Cool, windy or baking hot weather keeps people away. The three sets of prints were by people who stopped near the eggs for some sort of recording, such as photo, GPS or phone call. They actively searched for the nest.

2. The public will tolerate, perhaps appreciate signs. They like to know and see the birds 'as seen on TV'.

3. Get rid of foxes, even if they did not eat Hooded Plovers this time! The cliff and hinterland are a state park, but serve as a fox refuge.

4. Plant native *Callycephalous* or Cushion Bush. This provides better hiding places for chicks than introduced Sea Rocket. Kites and Kestrels are native predators who focus on lizards and grasshoppers.

(Continued from page 1)

The EGBOC surveys depend on the ongoing commitment of members to their involvement over the next months, even years, of the recovery process. It is also a project in which the records that we have built up over the years come into their own, providing details of species recorded in different seasons at the selected sites, and relative numbers. EGBOC is

also fortunate to have access to bird lists kept by the Waterholes Guesthouse, including a series of surveys by Jenny Edwards.

At this stage it is still too early to assess the impact of the fires on birds. Hopefully, as our records accumulate, we will gain a better picture. A complicating factor, of course, is the related impact of the

drought in Southeast Australia.

Members who would like to join our surveys on a regular or occasional basis, or who would like to receive e-mail updates on results of each visit can contact Chris Healey (phone 5157 9036 or e-mail fel-kit@wideband.net.au).

2007 SCHEDULE
NO OUTINGS ON DAYS OF TOTAL FIREBAN
[Leaders to be confirmed]

Date	VENUE	LEADER	Date	VENUE	LEADER
FEB	5 Nyerimilang: Walk 2pm, OGM 3pm, BBQ 6pm	Dick - 5152 7340		16 Nyerimilang	Claire - 5152 3729
	12 Hollands Landing/Victoria Lagoon	TBA		23 Camp - Marlo	Len - 5154 8417
	19 Eastern Beach - BBQ lunch	Max - 5155 4094		30 Jones Bay/Riverbank Rd	TBA
	26 Monkey/Ramrod Creeks	Claire - 5152 3729	AUG	6 Blonde Bay	Ken - 5156 4413
MAR	5 Macleod Morass	Chris - 5157 9036		13 Mitchell River walk	Joan - 51524327
	12 Labor Day	No outing		20 Bulumwaal	Chris - 5157 9036
	19 Cherry Tree	Ken		27 Metung/Nungurner	Dot - 5156 3284
	26 Glenaladale Pumping Stn	Harvey - 5156 8245	SEP	3 Raymond Island	Ron - 5156 7773
APR	2 Ellasville-Stephenson's	Dick - 5152 7340		10 Rough Rd/Reynolds Rd	Ken - 5156 4413
	9 Easter	No outing		17 Macleod Morass	Harvey - 5156 8245
	16 Bruthen	June 5152 1082		24 Sarsfield	Chris - 5157 9036
	23 Lake Bunga	Ian - 5155 3377	OCT	1 Trestle Bridge	Max - 5155 4094
	30 Wiseleigh/Fairy Dell	Freda - 5157 5316		8 Nyerimilang	Chris - 5157 9036
MAY	7 Canni Creek (D)	Harvey - 5156 8245		15 Canni Creek (D)	Harvey - 5156 8245
	14 Mississippi Ck/Log Crossing	Ken - 5156 4413		22 Camp -TBA	TBA
	21 Silt Jetties/Old Eagle Pt Rd	Norma - 5156 6835		29 Lake Tyers Beach	Ken - 5156 4413
	28 Melwood	Alan - 5153 2206	NOV	5 'Greenhills' Mt Taylor	Betty - 5153 2053
JUNE	4 Macleod Morass	Harvey - 5156 8245		12 Point Fullerton/Sunset Cove - BBQ lunch	Rob & Jan - 5156 6582
	11 Bellbird Rd-Healeys'	Chris - 51579036		19 Angus Vale (D)	Ken - 5156 4413
	18 Lonely Bay	Len - 5154 8417		27 Red Bluff/Fishermans landing	Ken - 5156 4413
	25 AGM (at DSE) preceded by Howitt Park	Ken - 5156 4413	DEC	3 CHALLENGE COUNT	
JULY	2 Nicholson Rail Trail	Harvey - 5156 8245		10 CHRISTMAS PARTY	
	9 Lindenow South	Chris - 5156 9036			

MEET: at corner of Pinnock and McCulloch Streets, Bairnsdale (5152 6594 - Jose)

TIME: 8:50 am for a 9:00 am departure

BRING: Morning Tea, Lunch, a folding chair and binoculars.

(D) - indicates a distant site - prepare accordingly.

INQUIRIES: Ken Sherring - 5156 4413.

Schedule updated - Tuesday, June 12, 2007

It is a good idea to PHONE the leader to make other arrangements if not meeting at Pinnock St and to check what arrangements the leader has made for the day's activities. Do not assume the meeting place will be the same as last time!

Tail feathers:

Bird Dogs

The sheer joy of a dog chasing seagulls on the beach is wonderful! Even the gulls seem to enjoy the game. Our dogs don't get the chance much these days. But even when our old Border Collie (Timmy) had the opportunity in Darwin she rarely accepted the challenge. She also passed up the joys of chasing Sand Plovers, Turnstones, Sanderlings, Whimbrels, Knots and other international visitors to our northern beaches.

But the Orange-footed Scrub-

fowl in the backyard at home was another matter. Timmy very quickly realised that Felicity did not encourage the Scrubfowl — it had a nasty habit of waking us in the middle of the night with its blood-curdling gargling crowing! (I was prepared to accept this as the cost of such an interesting denizen of the garden). But Timmy never chased any other birds.

Now she chases nothing at all, preferring a sunny sheltered spot behind the house.

The mongrel terrier-cross, Ted, and the young Border Collie,

Tess are another matter.

From her earliest puppy days, Tess tried to herd the Welcome Swallows that zoom around the house. She even learned ambush techniques, heading in the opposite direction, to head them off as she careered around the house.

While she has calmed down as an adult — if only a little — she still has a go at the Swallows sometimes, as well as Wrens and Magpies.

Ted is proving himself as an ornithological adjunct for his skill in finding Stubble Quails in the paddock. They are his

specialty: if he can't put them up, they are not there!

But what Ted and Tess like to chase best are the White-winged Choughs — which respond with such satisfying boisterousness of their own!

Dogs clearly identify different species at least as well as most humans!

The Chat

If undeliverable, please return to:
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On the web at
www.egboc.org.au

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