

CAPE CHATTER

Nature Observations around The Cape

Issue No. 19

12th September 2020



Native Clematis is now in flower around the coastal bush

The Cape is on the traditional land
of the Bunurong people

*"When we tug at a single thing in nature,
we find it attached to the rest of the
world..." John Muir*

Photography and words by David Hartney

Email: dwhartney@bigpond.com

Instagram: [@dwhartney](https://www.instagram.com/dwhartney)

(Web Blog 'capechatter.com' still
under development but coming very
soon)

Are we all going a little batty??

In a previous issue I wrote about some microbat habitat boxes that one of our ingenious residents Graeme McAlpine had built for installation on the tree stags in the creek line restoration project. Well ... last week the boxes were installed.

The 'bat team' admit up front that we are not sure if they will work but a lot of thought was put into the design and construction. There are two designs: both comprise a very small opening at the base for the bats to enter (but will prevent birds or other climbing critters from getting in); an inner chamber lined with socks for the bats to climb up into for warmth and an outer protective layer with an air gap in between for insulation. The boxes are made from Spotted Gum hardwood (thanks to the Spano's for donating the timber offcuts from their new home). The smaller, black 'winter' houses have been strategically placed to protect them from cold SW winds and the larger 'summer' houses from the prevailing hot NW winds.



Above and Below: Graeme McAlpine (left in mask) and Dave Leggett installing the micro-bat boxes.



A birds eye view...

For those not on **The Cape** social media platforms who haven't seen the latest aerial shots of **The Cape**, I have included a couple of snaps (courtesy of **The Cape** team) taken last week to highlight the wonderful work by the landscaping team of the habitat restoration underway throughout the estate.



Above: View looking SE over **The Cape** toward Cape Liptrap. The creek line restoration project is on the right of the picture comprising four ponds feeding water into the larger central wetland complex. Walking tracks and viewing points encircle the creek line. Below: View west to Cape Woolamai on Phillip Island with wonderful remnant coastal habitat on the left.



A ground view of the creek line ...

The landscape team have just about completed the hard structures within the creek line. Fencing around the habitat stags and ponds has been completed and tree/shrub planting under the stags has been started. Planting of wetland species along the creek and around the ponds will begin shortly. The fences have been designed so small mammals can traverse under the wire mesh and there are no top wire strands to prevent kangaroos becoming entangled. We have also installed 10 photos points (steel pickets with yellow tops) so we can photo-document the habitat evolving over the coming years.

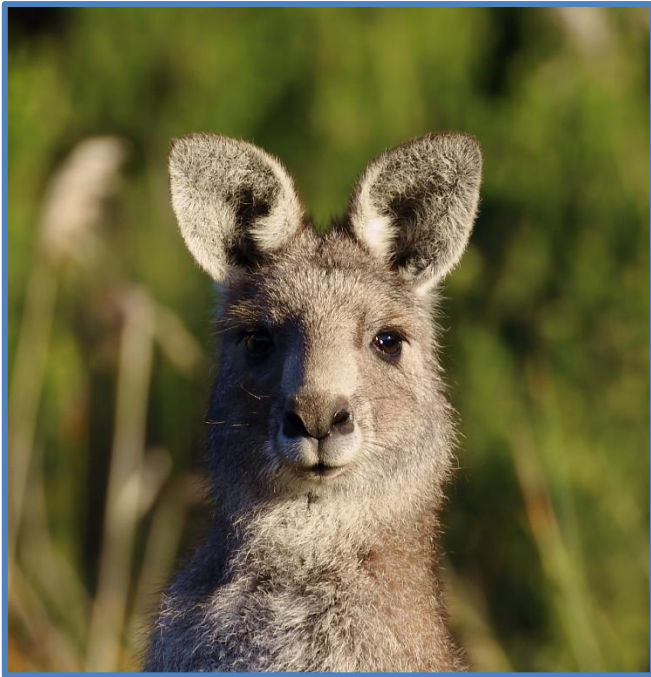


Above: Looking south from the Top Dam toward the wetland. **Below:** Looking north-west from Bottom Pond/Bog



Eastern Greys check out Stage 1

There was some nice video footage on **The Cape** social media of **Eastern Grey Kangaroos** moving through the home gardens and streets in Stage 1 during the week. As I wrote last week, the mob are slowly getting used to human presence in **The Cape** but are still skittish if unexpectedly disturbed. Just a reminder not to approach them quickly. If you come to be near them, just pause, let them go about their business and they will move on. And if you see anyone harassing them or riding after them on bikes – please kindly remind them not too. Some people just do not get it and the roos can attack if provoked!



Above: **Eastern Grey Kangaroos** in their more natural habitat pictured on Thursday. They are from the mob in the south east of the estate which I suspect is the group that wandered through Stage 1 and are regular Stage 2 visitors.

BIRDS OBSERVATIONS

My birding photography strolls have been curtailed a bit the past week (think Magpie attacks, windy conditions and photo projects for the Boss!). However, there is a bit going on. Seven **Grey Teal** ducklings were spotted with their proud parents on the main wetland. A pair of **Black-fronted Dotterel** are still working the new creek line and wetland. Over head, **Black Swan** have been about with **Australian White Ibis**, **Pacific Black Duck** and **Little Pied Cormorant**. Thanks to Joe Spano for his input on bird calls he has been recording, including **Crescent** (below) **White-eared** and **New Holland Honeyeater**. The **Silvereye** (below) are back in good numbers and we have heard **Grey Shrike Thrush**, **Eastern Yellow Robin** and **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** regularly in the coastal bush.



More than just a 'garbage bird'

The **Australian White Ibis** is a common bird around The Cape. It is wonderful to see them in their more natural environment as opposed to their increasing presence in cities where they scavenge in municipal tips. They are graceful in flight and you often see them in flock flight in V formation. Although a plain looking bird with white plumage, black wing tips and head, in breeding season, the adults develop a pink-red colour on a skin band on the under wing and cream plumes on the upper breast. The Ibis below was photographed flying over The Cape on Friday.



Above: Australian White Ibis in breeding plumage on the rocks near 2nd Surf beach

What is that noisy bird singing beautifully and hovering in the sky?

I was talking to Jennifer (the 'gatekeeper' at the Sunlight entrance!) the other day and she asked me about that beautiful singing bird she can hear in the open grassy spaces around the estate. We have two regular ground dwelling species here that look very similar. One is the **Australian Pipit** and the other is classed as an introduced species – the **Eurasian Skylark**.



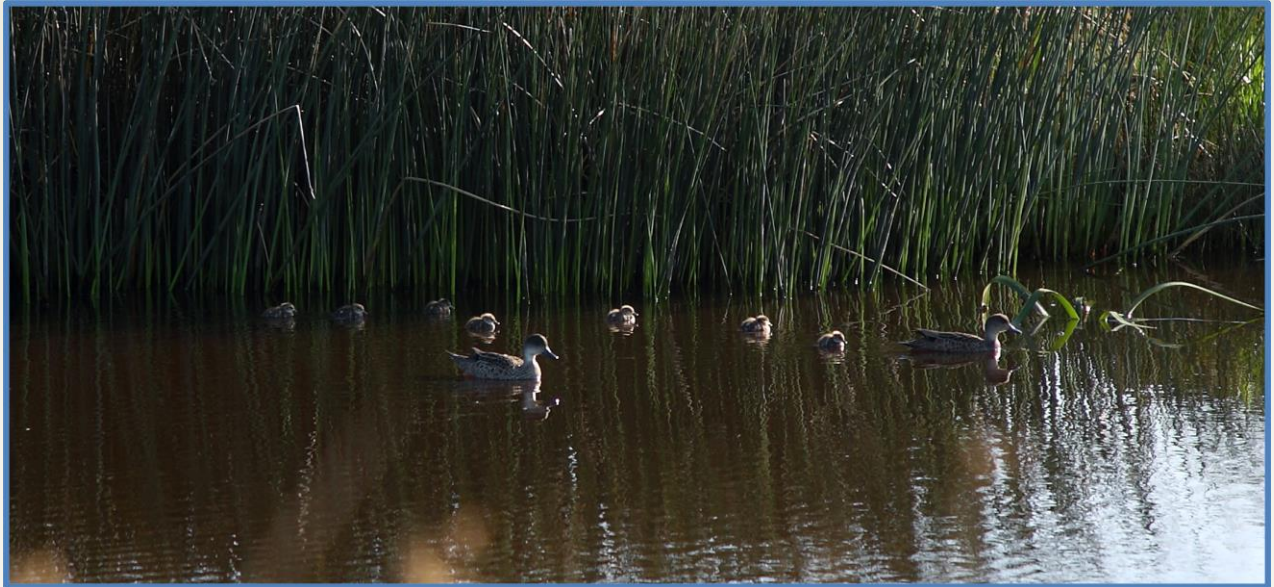
Above: Australian Pipit – it struts about on the ground and consistently bobs its tail when standing.

Jen was somewhat surprised when I said the bird she could hear was hovering above us. The **Eurasian Skylark** sings persistently while hovering in display flight high overhead and descends rapidly back to the ground. They are quite common around The Cape and are particularly fond of the newly seeded grass areas in the creek line and oval. Next time you are walking around that way, keep an ear out and look up – it is fascinating to watch.



“Seven little ducks come out to play ...” Next generation of Grey Teal

Great to see the wetlands providing important breeding habitat for our freshwater birds. The major central wetland complex has been a hot spot for Pacific Black Duck, Chestnut Teal and Grey Teal, along with Australasian and Hoary-headed Grebe, cormorants, heron, ibis, dotterel and snipe. So, it was lovely to see this family of Grey Teal - proud parents and seven ducklings - emerge from the thick sedges and rushes in the central ponds of the wetland last Tuesday morning.



Above: Grey Teal family emerging from the wetland vegetation on Tuesday



Above: Grey Teal adults pictured on wetland in July 2020. They breed from Jul-Dec and usually lay a clutch of 6-9 cream coloured eggs.