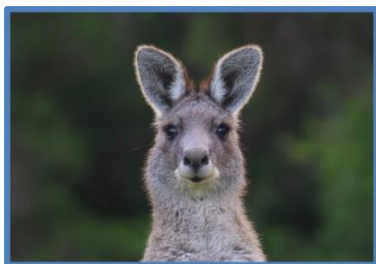


# CAPE CHATTER

## Nature Observations around The Cape



Issue No. 1

20<sup>th</sup> April 2020

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*

Welcome to Issue # 1 of '**Cape Chatter**'.

One of the objectives of The Cape project is to restore the habitat with indigenous flora and attract as much native wildlife back into what was previously degraded agriculture land. The proximity of the Bunurong Coastal Reserve bushland and coast to our south provides a wonderful haven for wildlife. Along with the fantastic wetlands, open spaces, residential native gardens and the soon to be constructed Stage 3 Open Space Reserve, we have the perfect stage for observing and enjoying the natural beauty as the development and landscape evolves.

Since mid-2019, a small group of resident 'birding' enthusiasts has been recording the many bird species within The Cape precinct. To date, 93 species have been identified, including six vulnerable/near-threatened species. A fairly decent pictorial library of The Cape's wildlife is also being established. Although The Cape is in the early stages of development, there is a whole new natural world evolving out there.

So, what to do with all this information and how to make it readily available for Cape residents to enhance their experiences of living at The Cape?

The purpose of '**Cape Chatter**' is to spark interest, stimulate awareness, encourage observation and help record the comings and goings of the natural environment as it evolves over time. It will hopefully add another dimension to your wanderings around The Cape.

Initially '**Cape Chatter**' will be distributed by email to interested recipients. I aim to release it at least weekly. Eventually it is planned to develop a web-based blog to which people can subscribe.

At the outset, '**Cape Chatter**' will be based on my regular wanderings around The Cape with my trusty binoculars and camera. But I am really keen for other 'naturalists' to contribute so we can broaden our knowledge base for the enjoyment of all residents and visitors to the community. The more involvement the greater the knowledge and understanding.

So, let me know if you see anything exciting which can provide material for future issues of 'Chatter'. And, if you want to join me on a walk and/or want to get into some nature photography, I am happy to have some company and share some tips (I am no pro and always learning – but it is fun and very therapeutic).

Now, flick over to the next few pages for an example of what '**Cape Chatter**' offers with some observations from last week.

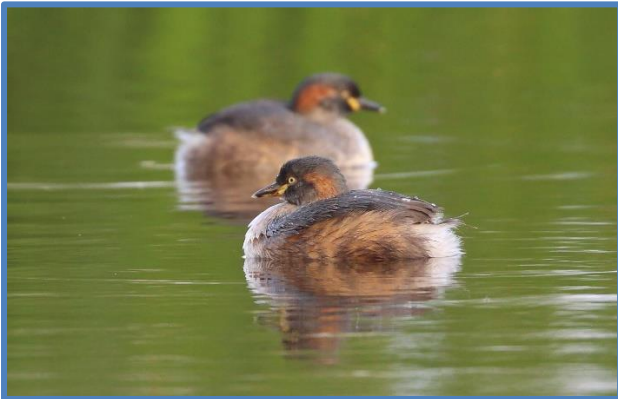
### Happy chattering

*David*

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**Instagram:** You can see more nature photos of The Cape [@dwhartney](https://www.instagram.com/dwhartney)

*All photos taken by David Hartney*



Above: Australasian Grebes 'floatin-about' on the larger wetland of The Cape. They are just starting to lose their breeding plumage. Over winter, the rufous neck side and black throat will disappear and become whitish.

#### Some useful resources:

Museum Victoria has a **free** app '[Museum Victoria Field Guide to Victorian Fauna](#)' which covers a diverse range of animals including photos and audio to help identify species.

'[eGuide to Australian Birds](#)' by Michael Morcombe and David Stewart is a wonderful app with illustrations and audio which you can take with you on your phone when out walking to help identify birds.

'[The Australian Bird Guide](#)' by CSIRO publishing is a fabulous reference book for identifying Australian birds and my go-to reference book.

## ***What's Waddling in the Wetlands?***

There are not as many ducks around the wetlands at the moment. During the past spring and summer, numerous duck species were about, including Pacific Black Ducks, Australian Wood Ducks, Chestnut Teal and Grey Teal, but they seemed to have moved on. There was also a lone Hoary-headed Grebe over summer but I saw no evidence of any breeding partner. In recent times, up to three Australasian Grebes have moved in. It is uncommon to see these birds fly, but you will see them diving if threatened and when feeding. Let's hope they stay around and breed in the coming spring.

At the moment, there is also a small flock of White-faced Herons that have been using the larger wetlands and adjoining boggy areas. I have seen up to five birds which are a mix of adults and juveniles. Helen T (23 Sunlight) has seen seven birds. I suspect this 'family' group alternate between here and the coast as you often see them flying overhead between the two areas.



Above: White-faced Heron. A small flock has been working the edge of the wetlands and the boggy area to the north of the larger wetland at The Cape.

## *Plenty of chit-chat in the coastal bush*

If you take a stroll along the coastal bush and pause for a moment or two, you may be lucky enough to hear the chitter-chatter of mixed flocks of small birds. They are usually hard to see amongst the foliage, but if you pause and are patient, you may be rewarded with some wonderful sights of inquisitive birds chirping and flipping about, sometimes from atop open branches.

Mixed flocks can comprise wrens, thornbills, silvereyes and scrub-wrens. You may also see a 'dancing' Grey Fantail nearby trying to get into the action.

Superb Fairy-wrens are petite, beautiful birds and quite common in the bush around The Cape. I ran into a lovely small group near the Wilson's Rd carpark last week and they were quite accommodating for the camera. I have seen a couple of males in their stand-out bright blue breeding plumage recently but most males will lose that colouring until the next breeding season.



Above: Grey Fantails constantly flit back and forth in an 'aerial dance', are quite inquisitive and will often get very close to you. Keep an eye out for them on the track between the dog park and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Surf exit. They are a migratory bird so their numbers will fluctuate during the year.

## **The Cape Birdlist – want a copy?**

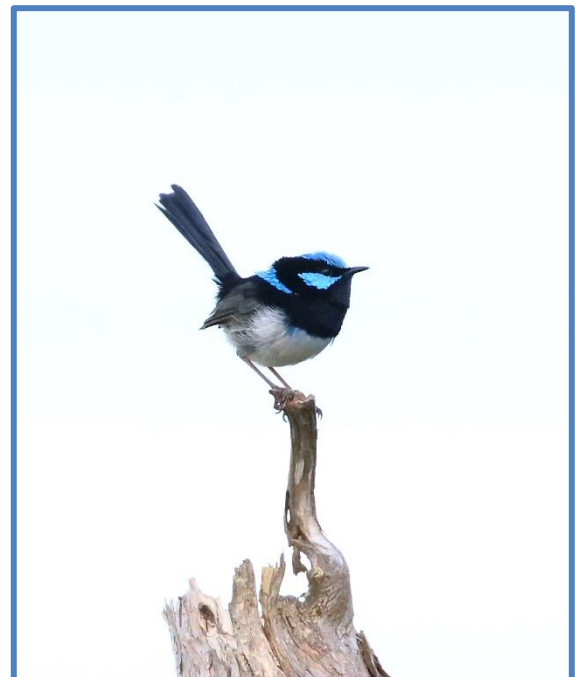
Joe Spano (11 Sunlight) and I have been compiling The Cape Birdlist. We are up to 93 species sightings. We would love it if others could help contribute with their observations and build the list.

If you would like a PDF copy for reference, let me know and I will email one to you.



Above: Female Superb Fairy-wrens are recognised by dull blue tail feathers and brownish eye rings and bill. The male has a brighter blue tail and black bill in non-breeding plumage.

Below: Male Superb Fairy-wren in bright blue breeding plumage and black eye stripe.





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## *Some exciting times last week at home.*

Great to see our first frog, skink and honeyeater appear in our newly constructed native landscape at 28 Sunlight. Considering nine months ago we were sitting amongst a construction site on denuded agricultural land, it just shows how important a native garden with lots of habitat can contribute to the rebuilding of our environment. Lots of frog calls can be heard in the wetlands and coastal bush and there have been very few small birds seen amongst The Cape housing areas. So, these sightings are good news for the future as our house gardens develop and the wetlands/open space reserves evolve.

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Above: Brown Striped Frog (Striped Marsh Frog)



Above: White-eared Honeyeater, the first honeyeater seen at our house. I have seen them in the coastal bush on occasions.

## A splash of colour amongst the grey gloom

Last week, migratory Flame Robins re-emerged around The Cape. They spend summer in the high country and migrate to 'warmer' climates in winter. I saw a small flock of five birds in the scrub at the end of Sunlight Blvd and a few have ventured very briefly into the Stage 2 area. The male (pictured below) has a beautiful orange-red covering from the chin to the belly. The females are more sandy brown with a grey-brown breast.



There are also some active Eastern Yellow Robins (pictured below) particularly on the edge of the coastal bushland in the vicinity of the track exiting to 2<sup>nd</sup> Surf. Both sexes look the same.

