

CAPE CHATTER

Nature Observations around The Cape

Issue No. 7

4th June 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

Photography and words by David Hartney

Email: dwhartney@bigpond.com

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

Life a bit closer to home...

I seemed to have been tied up around the house a bit this week, but it hasn't stopped me keeping an eye on things 'natural' around The Cape, particularly overlooking the open spaces of Stage 3 and beyond.

Raptors aplenty!

The raptors have been busy around the western open spaces – I have observed a pair of **Whistling Kites** gliding about, plus **Australian Hobby**, **Nankeen Kestrel** (pictured left on the coast) and **Black-shouldered Kite** over the last few days – all very stunning birds. They seem comfortable in the area despite repeated attacks from Magpie Larks, Ravens and Magpies and even the odd Galah having a go!



Above: Australian Hobby



Above: Whistling Kite

Injured Fairy Penguin on 2nd Surf Beach

Great work by some Cape Paterson locals who rescued an injured Fairy Penguin on 2nd Surf Beach last week while out for a walk. Keep your eye out for these little fellas in distress – they can feed up to 50 kms from their home on Phillip Island.

Bird Observations for the Week

White-faced Herons are still very busy around The Cape and the less common **White-necked Heron** also visited the wetlands. **Pacific Black Ducks** are flying about, but the **Grebes** seemed to have departed for the moment. **Straw-necked Ibis** have been overhead in formation but have not landed on the wetlands – maybe too much activity in the area. We had a couple of nice sightings from Gabi and Chris, and Wendy and David of a small flock of **Red-browed Finch** (about a dozen birds) on the southern exit track to 2nd Surf. The usual suspects - **New Holland Honeyeaters** and **Superb Fairy-wrens** - are still plentiful and there are still flashes of blue! **Masked Lapwings** are gathering in numbers and voice and the flock of **Galahs** seems to be getting bigger, more boisterous, and cheekier. **Eurasian Skylarks** and **Australian Pipits** are starting to run across the grasslands and a small flock of about six **Crested Pigeons** has been conspicuous in the open spaces.



Above: **White-necked Heron**, is larger than the **White-faced Heron** (pictured below on the coast) and has a slaty-grey/black plumage and white neck and head (of course!!).



Above: Crested Pigeon



Above: Australian Pipit and Below: Red-browed Finch



BIRD OF THE WEEK – GREY BUTCHERBIRD

The **Grey Butcherbird** is often seen around The Cape and is at home in the coastal bush, open spaces, wetlands and around house sites. One of their dominant features is a long blue-grey bill with a black hooked tip – quite menacing looking! My bird guide says “...they often wedge larger prey in crevices or on spikes so they can dismember it...” hence its name. Charming! On the brighter side, these birds have one of the most lovely song calls including “melodious phrases, brisk rising and falling notes and throaty warbles”. This is what usually gets my attention when they are near the house – it is a beautiful sound. The pictures below are an adult **Grey Butcherbird** taken this week sitting on our fence, basking in the sun, singing to who knows who and watching intently for its next “prey”.



Above: Grey Butcherbird in full song



Above: Grey Butcherbird focussed intently on its next meal

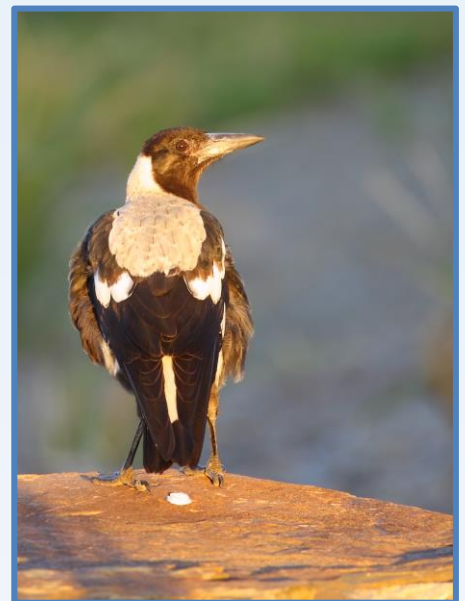
Grey Butcherbirds v Magpies

The Butcherbird pictured below is an immature bird perched on one of our tree stags in the garden, a favourite haunt for them, along with Ravens, Magpies and Galahs, particularly in the late afternoon.

This immature bird is probably in its first year because of the grey base of the bill and brownish back.



The **Grey Butcherbird** is roughly half the size of an **Australian Magpie** (immature pictured below leaving a calling sign on one of our habitat rocks!). Note the Magpie has a straight bill.



DID YOU KNOW?

Recent research advised by Birdlife Australia estimates up to 230 million native animals, mainly birds, are killed by domestic cats each year!

Stage 3 Creek Reserve Progress

The landscaping team are pressing on with the creek-line restoration despite the damp conditions underfoot, with Joel and the team laying more rock, habitat logs, jute mat, mulch, and “smudging” (tech term for smoothing the soil – you learn something new every day) the surrounds. It is really starting to take shape.

I am photo-documenting the development of this wonderful natural space and habitat and will continue to do so in the coming years, so we can track what native animals and plant species return to call it home.



Above: Looking north over the middle pond, one of four ponds between the top dam and wetlands



Above: Looking south toward the wetland and coastal reserve

The team hope to have the entire creek line landscaped by next week which is a remarkable job given the wet weather and above average rainfall we have had this year. Then it will be on to completing the walking paths some fencing and the installation of habitat boxes, particularly for micro-bats (more on that in future issues).

... talking about pests and threats to native animals!

Paul and Fran were relaying a story to me about a very healthy **Red Fox** hanging about their place in Seaberry Crt. They are about, and I believe the Bass Coast Shire have an eradication/baiting program along the coastal reserve. It reminded me of a photo I took several months back, of a fox heading back into the reserve from The Cape, looking very attentive.



Another potential pest is one of our most colourful lorikeets, the **Rainbow Lorikeet** (pictured below). An article in the latest Birdlife Australia magazine mentioned the problems these birds can create by their aggressive nature and becoming a threat to other native birds. We see a few of these birds fly over The Cape – they are more confined to ‘old Cape’. So, please do not encourage them by feeding them, despite how gorgeous they look.

