

CAPE CHATTER

Nature Observations around The Cape

Issue No. 13

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*Latham's Snipe pictured in The Cape wetlands
last summer – let us hope they return*

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 still under development)

There's a free Whale App for that!

Local Whale App **‘Wildlife Whales’** (Whale Notifications and Guide) provides whale notifications and other information for Phillip Island and the Bass Coast, what to look for, behaviours and the best lookouts. Great tool to alert you, where to see them and better understand the whales at our back door.

A gentle easing into winter?

The autumnal weather seems to have slipped away this past week with a pick-up in the winds, some gloomy coastal mist, and the odd ocean squall. We are still waiting for the cold, icy blasts to hit off the Southern Ocean and Bass Strait ...maybe they will come in August and into September. Does anyone else feel like the seasons are slipping back a little?

Latham's Snipe ... and a good read

Some of you may be aware that last summer The Cape was home to several **Latham's Snipe** which were spotted around the larger wetland and the nearby 'bog' which has now been incorporated into the Stage 3 creek-line habitat restoration project.

The Snipe are now listed as **vulnerable** but used to be quite common in the area – hunting (by shooting) was the main cause of their demise! They breed in the northern islands of Japan and Russia and make an incredible journey (10-12,000 kms) along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway to spend the warmer months (Aug-March) in Australia. Sadly, bad news out of Japan recently indicates the population in the breeding grounds is **down a massive 40%** and the main cause could be the last Australian summer bushfires.

The Cape is proud to participate in the national Latham's Snipe Survey undertaken three times a year – the first one this season is on 26 Sep – and it is more important than ever. If you want to learn more about this project, check out the website www.lathamssnipeproject.wordpress.com. I will advise more info about the survey and how you can participate in coming weeks. Meanwhile, keep your eyes out from August and let me know if you see any of these beautiful, but very illusive, birds.

As an aside, if you want to enjoy a great, but sometimes sad read on what these remarkable birds encounter on their great migratory journeys, check out the fantastic book **Flight Lines** by Australian writer **Andrew Darby**. It follows the journey along the flyway of two tagged **Grey Plovers** from South Australia to the breeding grounds in north east Russia. It will give you an appreciation of what the Latham's Snipe endure to survive and how important our small role in their survival is.

A big thank you to Brendan Condon for acknowledging The Cape Snipe observations and taking on the advice from the Latham's Snipe Project Leader as to how The Cape habitat could be improved and protected for their future visits and survival. Let's hope they return.

More whale sightings

There are still whale sightings ... including a Southern Right Whale a bit further afield on the 23rd July on the George Bass Coastal Walk doing some uncommon tail movements. Seen by Joe R (Periwinkle) and Jeannie H (Sunlight) while on a coastal walk ... amazing. Apparently, there are still some young Humpbacks around as well.

It is all in the grass

The Cute ... Grass Munchers

I just love getting close-up pictures of **our Eastern Grey Kangaroos** - keeping a safe distance of course and letting them go about their business...eating grass!

The Crazy ... Grass Seed Eaters

I have previously written I could spend hours watching and photographing the antics of these crazy birds - **Galahs**. While there are not as many around at the moment, there is still a local flock up to all sorts of mischievous behaviour. The landscaping team told me that part of the flock consumed a fair bit of the 25 kg of grass seed they had just spread in the creek-line project, and the birds were so full they couldn't launch themselves into flight off the ground!!!



Feature Bird – Masked Lapwing

Thanks to future Stage 3 resident Robyn Shallard (Moonshadow) for her observations of **Masked Lapwings** at her current home. It is breeding time for these birds, but I am yet to see any evidence of a nest site within the confines of The Cape boundary despite the birds being active and noisy. Keep your eyes peeled in the grasslands and if anyone sees one let me know. Please do not get too close or disturb any chicks – these birds can be very protective and aggressive! There is a nest on Wilson's Rd near the intersection of Seaward – pictured below so you know what you are looking for...well sort of!



Above: Masked Lapwing



Above: Masked Lapwing on nest



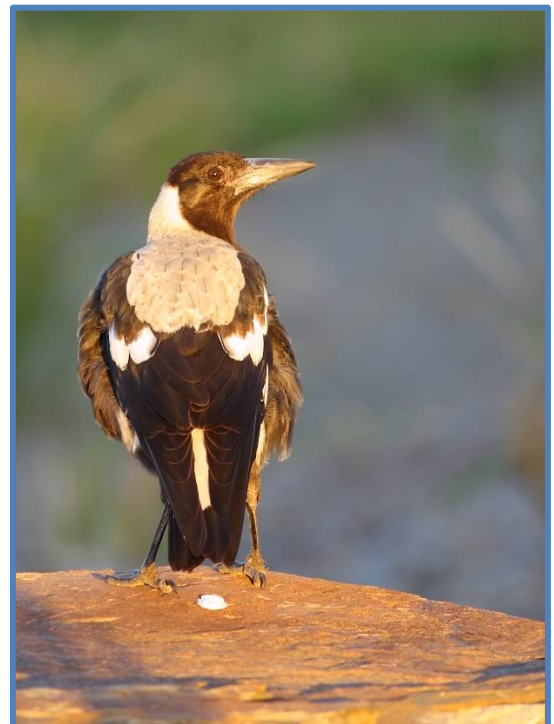
Bird Observations

On the bird front, things are a little quiet, but I am sure there is lots of breeding and nest preparation going on. I haven't heard the **Yellow-Tailed Black-Cockatoos** for a couple of days and **Galah** activity seems less frenetic, raptor sightings have come off a bit, but there is still lots of chirping in the bush and waterbird activity around the wetlands is building. The usual Cape residents are still about of course: the melodic songs of the **Grey Butcherbird**, the warbles of the **Australian Magpie**, and the wails of the **Little Raven**.



Above: Grey Butcherbird – attentive!

Below: Australian Magpie – and calling card!



Left: Little Ravens – unusually puzzled??

Now and then ...the emerging wetlands

A Facebook post by future resident Gary Colquhoun (Sunlight) about photo-documenting the development of The Cape from degraded cattle grazing land into a sustainable development prompted me to get a couple of photos together of the main wetland and how much it has evolved and grown in just over a year!



Above: The new wetland filled up on 10 May 2019, the same day as that unbelievable hailstorm that struck Cape Paterson.



Above: The wetland today after only 14 months – it promises to be an amazing habitat.

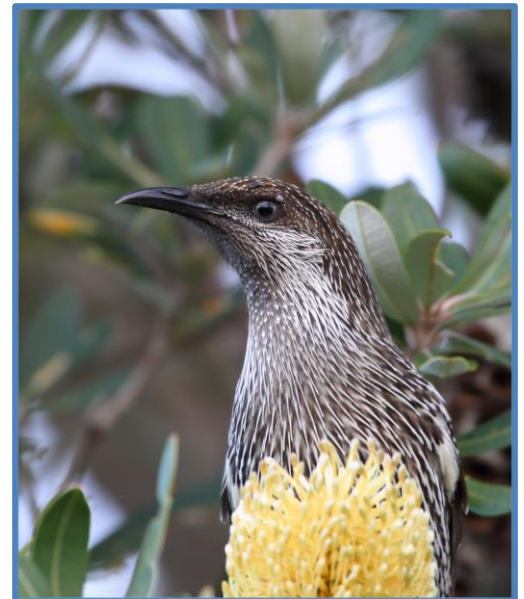
Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design @ The Cape

A very good blog well worth reading about the commitment by The Cape and The Sustainable Landscape Company to restore the estate to support some of the biodiversity that would have existed on site before it was cleared many decades ago. We can all see some of these developments such as the wetlands and creek-line restoration project brought about by good planning, landscaping, plantings and some policies around dogs on leads, no cats, house planting guidelines and permeable fencing facing open spaces.

You can read the blog at www.theslc.com.au/blog

Some other resident birds out and about ...

Our two **Wattlebird** species are always active around the estate. Can you spot the difference? In particular, the **Little Wattlebird** is quite common amongst our street habitat and are seen daily. Less so are the **Red Wattlebirds** but I think they will come into their own as the breeding season begins – they are also protective of their patch and their feeding sites.



Above: Little Wattlebird amongst Coastal Banksia



Above: Red Wattlebird on our garden fence