

CAPE CHATTER

Nature Observations around
The Cape

Issue No. 20

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*Invertebrate (I think it is a wasp) feeding
among the melaleuca blossom*

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*

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(Web Blog 'capechatter.com' will be
public within the week)

It is all in the numbers ...

Who would have thought ... the 20th edition of **Cape Chatter** in 2020? And to help celebrate we have hit **100** bird species since we started the observation list last August 2019. The lucky species is the **Horsefield's Bronze-Cuckoo**, but more on that later.

In more exciting news, the next edition will be launched in the new **Cape Chatter** website (capechatter.com). What a way to celebrate the 21st! The website will automatically issue the **Cape Chatter** blog if you subscribe plus it will be full of all sorts of useful information and pictures around the natural world of **The Cape**. More to come on that as well.

Among the blossoms, it's a hive of activity

In between the storms and winds I managed to get a few visits in amongst the remnant melaleuca (swamp paperbark) and leptospermum (tea-tree) scrub around the edges of The Cape which is full of blossom. And what a crazy, active world thrives amongst this vegetation. Apart from scores of terrestrial invertebrates, the birds have gone nuts, particularly the **Honeyeaters**. The small song birds such as **Thornbill**, **Scrubwren** and **Silvereye** are everywhere and extremely busy. Not to be outdone, **Welcome Swallows** appear to be in their hundreds, **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos** are still around, and the **Little Corella** flock seems to be growing larger by the day. In the coastal reserve bush there has been an influx of **Cuckoos** over the past week, including **Fan-tailed**, **Horsefield's Bronze** and **Shining Bronze**.



The tiny **Silvereye** is such a noisy, active little song bird, and it looks like it was created to blend in with the melaleuca blossom.

A NEW HOLLAND HONEYEATER 'CORROBOREE'

The New Holland Honeyeater is the most prolific honeyeater at The Cape, the most active and most boisterous. You can not fail to notice them, especially in the south-east area on the 2nd Surf exit track. They are very protective of their 'nectar territory' and are quite aggressive toward other birds who stray onto their turf. At the moment, they are going wild amongst the melaleucas feeding frantically on the blossom nectar. This is peak flowering time so they are making the most of it.

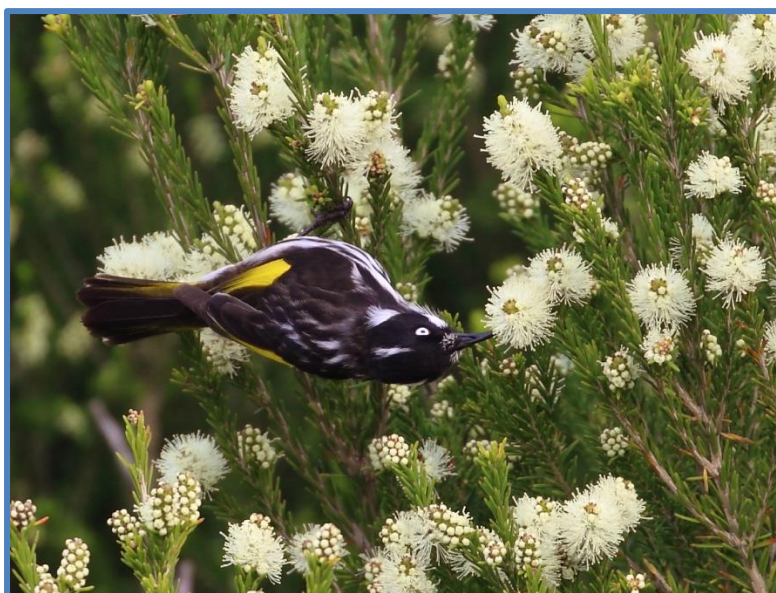
This bird also performs an interesting group behaviour – a 'corroboree' - which I was lucky enough to see on the edge of the coastal reserve, involving about 15 birds. A 'corroboree' involves a group of more than two birds in very close proximity, repeatedly calling and fluttering their wings. Call it mayhem!

Little is known about why these birds perform 'corroborees', but from some research, it appears an individual bird initiates the gathering and others join in. The birds are usually all adult males. One thought is that the behaviour coincides with the return of birds to an accustomed physical environment (territory) after a period of absence and is a way of recognising neighbours and others in the group by congregating in a non-aggressive way. Makes sense - there are so many more New Holland's about at the moment all feeding in a frenzy and trying to protect their territory.

Another interesting fact is that when feeding, their tongue extends into a blossom at ten times per second to obtain the nectar fluid. They do eat insects as well.



Above and Below: New Holand Honeyeater in the melaleuca blossom



Above: A 'small' corroboree of New Holland Honeyeater



Above: New Holland Honeyeater with insect catch yesterday



Above: Brown Thornbill amongst the melaleuca

Below: White-browed Scrubwren is another potential Cuckoo carer



Cuckoos about ...

Another sign of spring has been the endless calls of three **Cuckoo** species which have returned to The Cape, especially in the coastal reserve – the **Fan-tailed**, and the smaller **Horsefield's Bronze** and **Shining Bronze**. Over the last couple of days, I managed to see all three – I generally only hear them and rarely see them.

These birds are renowned for laying their eggs in the nests of other species who then carry out all the parental duties – great arrangement if you can get it! For our local cuckoos, the much smaller **Superb Fairy-wren**, **Brown Thornbill** and **White-browed Scrubwren** (pictured left) are potential carers.



Above: Fan-tailed Cuckoo



Above: Horsefield's Bronze Cuckoo

This bird, like the **Shining Bronze**, has a beautiful iridescent back which is green when lit by the sun – unfortunately, this photo was taken into the sun and the bird was facing me, so the detail is lacking but proof it's about in the coastal bush.

European Goldfinch flock

Great to see a flock of about 20 **European Goldfinch** feeding on the grassy open spaces at the northern end of Moonshadow Ave during the week. While an introduced species, they are a beautiful bird and quite a colourful sight with splashes of red and yellow when together in a flock. I have usually only seen them as individual birds at The Cape.



Above: European Goldfinch pictured at the 2nd Surf exit track

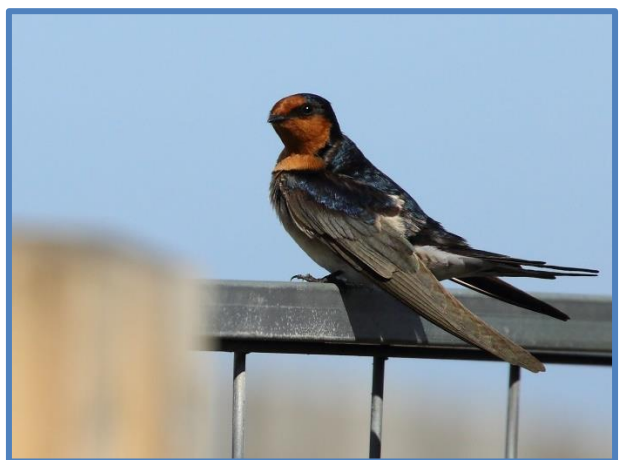
Darcy is looking a bit bedraggled!

Local Magpie 'Darcy' has widened his target base and is now swooping people other than me. Hopefully, the nestlings become fledglings soon and we can all get back to a normal life. I must admit he is looking a bit worn out. This picture shows him on my back fence having a rest after swooping me near the back door!



So many Welcome Swallows ...

Welcome Swallows have featured in previous issues of **Cape Chatter**, but I can't resist sharing some more photos of this beautiful little bird which was perched on our wicking bed trellis preening itself the other day. There are lots of them about now and this was a wonderful opportunity to get close and personal and admire their wonderful, colourful plumage. They do not sit still for long!



Above: Welcome Swallow perched and preening

Little Corella flock ... the sound of the Australian bush

Another indication of a change in seasons is the regular wake-up call from the ever-increasing **Little Corella** flock that is now way outnumbering the local **Galah** population. Fascinating watching them feed as a flock – they seem to ‘frog jump’ as a group – a few birds move to a new spot and then several small groups follow, gradually the whole flock has relocated until they take to mass flight with much noise.



Top: Part of the Little Corella flock over The Cape

Middle and Bottom: Ground feeding – usually with lots of fun and games

Little Corella are extremely active and must use a lot of energy. They feed on seed, bulbs, corms and grains. You can see they really get into the ground digging like **Galahs** which means some dirty faces.

The Faces of the Mob

The continuing series of portrait photos of our south-east area **Eastern Grey Kangaroo** mob taken during the week.



This lovely **Grey Fantail** is really getting into **Cape Chatter** – “read all about it!”

