

CAPE CHATTER

Nature Observations around The Cape



Issue No. 2

27th 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

Off to a 'flying' start

Welcome to Issue # 2 of '*Cape Chatter*'.

The first issue of 'Cape Chatter' was a great success and thank you to the many people who provided positive feedback and support. It certainly sparked interest, stimulated awareness and encouraged observation. There is clearly a lot of interest in the natural world within The Cape community and to further developments of the environment for the benefit of residents, wildlife and flora.

Gabi (13 Sunlight) has become a keen Grebe spotter, Helen (23 Sunlight) told me about some raptor sightings, Paul and Fran (5 Seaberry) told me a lovely story of their fledged Welcome Swallows learning to fly and Jeannie (28 Sunlight) spotted five Hooded Plovers on 2nd Surf including what appeared to be a juvenile.

My wanderings this week have concentrated on the development of the Stage 3 Open Space, Galah activity and getting to know our resident Kangaroo mob a bit better.

Stage 3 Open Space Reserve

So, what is happening behind the temporary fence in Stage 3? For those on The Cape Facebook Group, Brendan recently outlined the development of the creek line down into the larger wetlands from the 'top dam'. This is part of extensive landscaping that will be undertaken over the next couple of months. A series of shallow rock pools will be established in the creek line supported by a 10m wide native flora corridor. A number of large tree "stags" will be put in place as perching spots for birds and provide habitat for other animals, including micro bats. (more on that in future issues).

The larger of the 'pools' north of the wetland has been designed to provide more 'boggy' habitat for freshwater birds and allow for excess water to feed an area to the west that has found to be a very popular spot for many birds, including the Latham's Snipe. Walking tracks and viewing spots will enhance our nature experiences.

This is going to be a wonderful environment in years to come and hopefully will attract a greater range of animal and plant species to be enjoyed by all. I am going to photo-document the development and watch for new species as they appear and share these observations in 'Chatter'.

Happy chattering

David

Instagram: You can see more nature photos of The Cape [@dwhartney](#)

(#birdsatthecape and #animalsatthecape)

'*Cape Chatter*' is distributed to those interested by email and is also uploaded to The Cape resident and owners Facebook Group.

All photos taken by David Hartney



Above: Pacific Black Duck (top) and Little Pied Cormorant (bottom). The only difference between the male and female ducks is the colour of the crown: females - brown and males - black. The Cormorant picture was taken previously on the rocks near First Surf beach.

More useful resources:

Mark (10 Seaberry) is a keen birder, particularly of small birds. He has highlighted a useful book on how to birdscape your garden to attract and provide habitat which he used to guide his plantings. The book is '*Birdscaping Australian Gardens*' by George Adams. Mark is happy to loan the book to anyone who is keen on building a bird friendly garden.

There was a handy article in the Weekend Australian magazine gardening section about attracting birds to your garden. I will provide a summary in the next '***Chatter***'. It also referred to a nice book by Darryl Jones, titled '*Feeding The Birds at Your Table*'.

What's Waddling in the Wetlands?

I think we are going to see seasonal residents and visitors in the wetlands and surrounding bogs, so keep your eyes open for new arrivals as the weather changes and the vegetation grows.

Having made the observation last week that there were not many ducks about, up popped a couple of Pacific Black ducks on the larger wetland. The three Australasian Grebes seem well established on both wetlands and I also spotted one on what I call the 'Top Dam' in Stage 3.

Over the weekend I noticed a small white egret amongst the flock of White-faced Herons that have made The Cape home at the moment. The Herons were not too pleased either! I am pretty sure it is an Eastern Cattle Egret but it is very similar in appearance to an Intermediate Egret.

A Little Pied Cormorant was also at home perched on one of the large rocks in the small wetland near the dog park. These birds will alternate between the wetlands and the coast.



Above: Eastern Cattle Egret in flight over the larger wetland at The Cape on Sunday. I managed to get a quick flight photo before it flew away, so I will keep a close look-out to get a picture with a bit more definitive detail, to confirm it is not an Intermediate Egret (which is unlikely). I saw a small flock of about five similar birds in the distance near Wilson's Rd the day before so keep a look out in the paddocks and you are likely to see them feeding near cattle.

Cattle Egrets are the smallest of the 'white' egrets. They are partially migratory and a winter visitor to this part of the world. You will often see them foraging with livestock taking disturbed food and also take a free ride perching on the back of cattle as they graze.

Those hilarious Galahs

It would be pretty hard not to miss the flock of Galahs that have been inhabiting The Cape recently. They have been particularly active feeding on grasses in the open spaces and generally creating havoc around our houses and construction sites. To say they are 'active, noisy and conspicuous' is an understatement!

I could watch these birds for hours. Their flock behaviour is playful, sometimes aggressive, caring, sometimes outright bizarre. I have seen birds lying on their back (one was eating kikuya grass, the other was doing bench presses with a stick!!). I have also seen birds pulling so hard on grass roots that they fall over themselves!



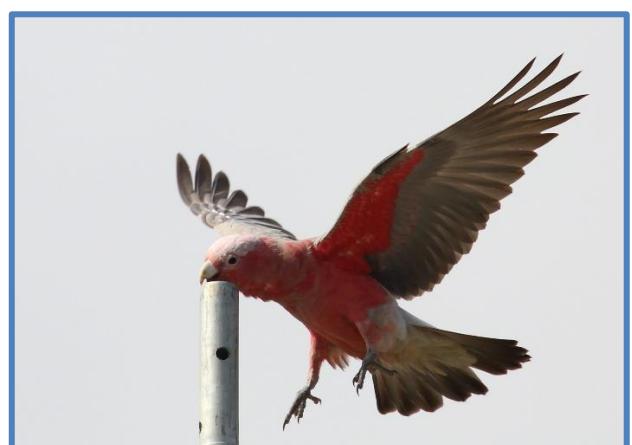
Above: No, this bird is not dead. This Galah (a juvenile) is laying on its back chewing dead grass! Go figure.

The Cape Birdlist - in the nervous 90's

The Cape Birdlist is up to 94 species sightings with the sighting of the Cattle Egret.

Fran (5 Seaberry) thinks she heard a Barking Owl up her way. Keep your ears open and if someone else hears it let me know and we'll add it to the list. Yes it sounds like a dog barking!!

Bird calls are allowed as identification, but without a photo, confirmation by two people is required. If you would like a PDF copy of the Birdlist for reference, let me know and I will email one to you.



Some funny Galah moments last week.

Top: A bit of Tango.

Middle: Attempting to land in the wind using the beak as an anchor.

Bottom: Failed landing attempt? Putting your head in the sand? No - It was trying to pull the roots of the grass out of the ground and toppled over!

PS. I am reminded of John Muir's quote on the first page.

New habitat coming in Stage 3

These photos show the first stages of the pondage area being built just north of the larger wetlands, watched by interested onlookers.



Meet some of our resident Kangaroos

I have been quietly trying to get close without too much disturbance to take some nice shots of individuals and behaviours within The Cape kangaroo mob. Having a long lens helps.

The mob are quite at home within The Cape, resting in the coastal bush and adjoining grassy bits during the day, grazing in the open spaces during the evening and exploring the streets and houses as well at night.

Some interpretive signage will be erected soon on how we should behave with these beautiful animals whilst still enjoying their company.



Above: These two females checked me out, but it didn't stop the feeding.

Below: Understandably, I took a wide berth around this big male Roo.

