

CAPE CHATTER

Nature Observations around
The Cape

Issue No. 24

24th October 2020



Superb Fairy-wren (male)

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)

Visit <https://capechatter.com> for all
sorts of Cape nature information and
to subscribe to this blog

Spring action ...

Plenty of nature signs to tell us that spring is certainly in full swing. Small bird activity is frenetic in the coastal bush and around the remnant vegetation; the wetlands are humming; the restored creek line is planted out and busy with birds and mammals; and the reptiles are starting to emerge.

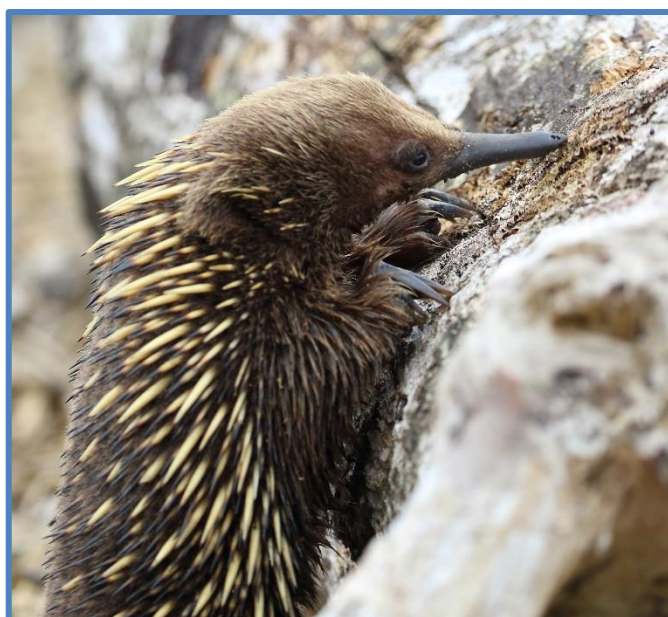
Highlights included: the spotting of two *Little Grassbirds* in the wetlands (lets hope for some breeding action), four *Black-fronted Dotterels* in the creekline (up from the mating pair featured last week) and a new species, the *Australasian Shoveler*, spotted by Rod and some of the landscape team in the bog and wetland taking the bird tally to **104**.

Aussie Backyard Bird Count ...

I have conducted six counts during the week for Birdlife Australia's 2020 Bird Count. I have done one in the house garden, two in the wetlands, one in the new creek line, one in the south-east corner and one in the south west/Wilson's Rd area. All up I have counted 40 different species! Joe Spano has completed two and come up with around 20 species. You still have time to participate if you want as the count concludes on 25 Oct 20. Only takes 20 minutes and it is fun! To participate, register at <https://aussiebirdcount.org.au/>

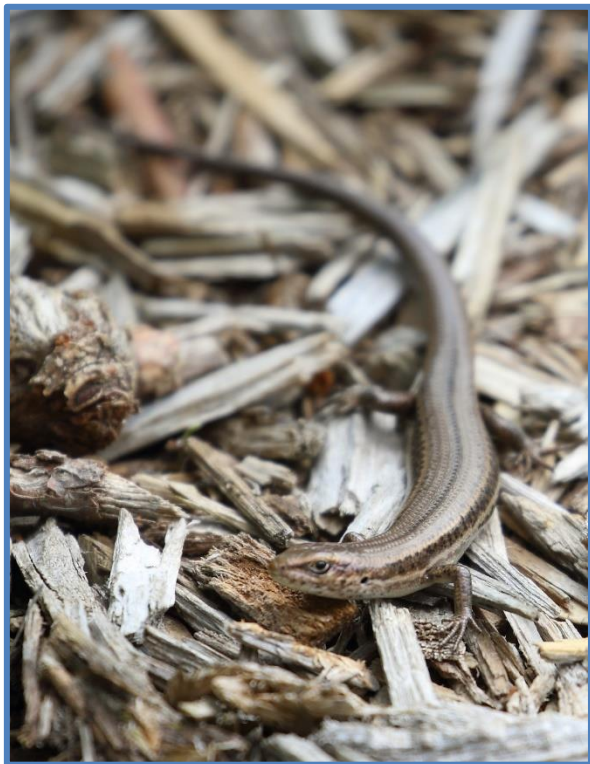
Echidna's are emerging ...

Good to see 'Ecci' the local echidna is out and about in Stage 1 again. There have been quite a few *Short-beaked Echidna* seen 'wandering' about **The Cape** emerging from the coastal reserve. During the week, a young one (pictured below) popped up halfway along the new creek line heading in a northerly direction along one of the walking paths towards the 'big toys' constructing Stage 4. Thanks to Joel from the landscaping team who managed to relocate him back near the coastal reserve.



Reptiles are “sunning” as well ...

Along with the *Blotched Blue-tongued Lizard* reported last week, it is time to keep your eyes out for slithery creatures emerging to warm up from their winter hibernation. Tony (TOC) reported a *Lowland Copperhead* in the open grassy areas in the western half of **The Cape** and little *Garden Skinks* are starting to appear in the house garden.



Above: Garden Skink among the bark chip mulch

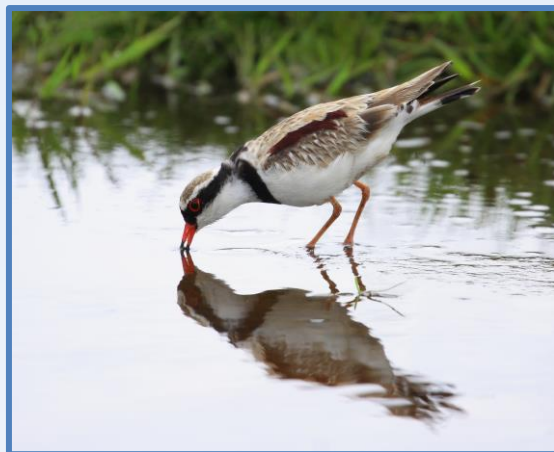
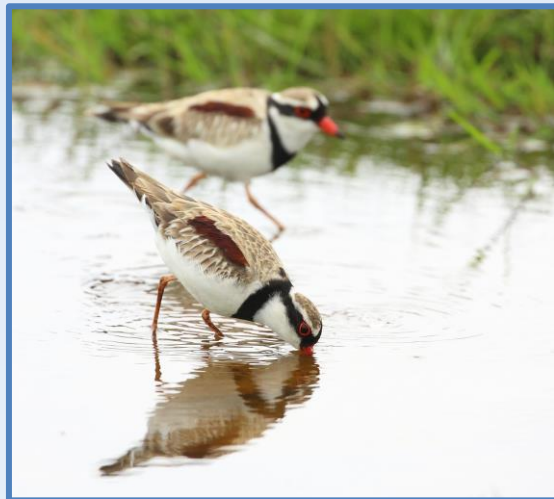
Darcy's offspring ...

Mr and Mrs Darcy, the swooping *Australian Magpie*, have bred three healthy juveniles (one pictured below) who are now fledged and learning to feed and play in a small family group. Darcy is still giving me the occasional flyover (maybe he is teaching his offspring!!)



More Black-fronted Dotterels ...

I was excited to see another pair of *Black-fronted Dotterel* mixing with the resident pair in the lower creek and central wetland. Yesterday, I managed to get some nice close pictures of a pair on the edge of the 'Snipe bog' at the bottom of the creek.



Just beautiful little birds enjoying the bog habitat.

Our beautiful small song birds ...

The coastal reserve and remnant bush within **The Cape** is alive with the beautiful sound of a range of small, delightful song birds. They are pretty active, fast moving and hide amongst the vegetation feeding, but occasionally they pop out into the open for a little squizz!



From the Top: Brown Thornbill, Superb Fairy-wren (male) and Silvereye (ssp *lateralis*)

Other bird observations ...

A few raptors have been about including sightings of *Nankeen Kestrel*, *Collared Sparrowhawk* and *Brown Falcon*. A couple of *Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos* (below) flew over during the week, but you would expect they will not be around much longer as they return to higher inland areas during the warmer months.



I finally managed a picture of a *Spotted Pardalote* (launching into flight below) in the south west sector – not a common sighting.



Shining Bronze and *Fan-tailed Cuckoo* can still be heard calling in the bush, the lovely little *Grey Fantails* are flitting about, *White-fronted Chat* and *European Goldfinch* are feeding along the creek line and overhead, tens and tens of juvenile and adult *Welcome Swallow* are flying about and swooping over the ponds.

Wetland wanderings ...

The call of the *Little Grassbird* is not as prominent, but a pair can be seen flying in and amongst the reeds and sedges in the central wetland complex if you watch for a while. I am on the hunt for a photograph of the *Australasian Shoveler* seen by Rod and the team about five times during the week. It is a single bird, larger than the more common *Teals* and *Black Ducks* and distinguished by powder blue upper wing colouring and a longer bill/neck position in flight. *Australian Wood Ducks* are about again.



Above: Pacific Black Duck 'reflecting' on the wetland

A pair of *Masked Lapwings* are still on the western edge of the central wetland but no sign of nesting. *White-necked* and *White-faced Heron* are busy as are the *Australian White Ibis*. Still no observations of any *Grebe* (they are on the Wilson Rd dam), but a local birder from old Cape told me heard some calls in the central wetland complex so they could be nesting in the thick ephemeral vegetation. We will keep an eye out.



Above: Little Corella flock making most of the Capeweed Dandelion which has exploded around The Cape.

Did you know that cockatoos and corellas are left-handed (or footed)? Why is that so?

Honeyeater comings and goings

Most of our local Honeyeaters are pretty active at the present. You can hear the calls of *Crescent*, *Yellow-faced* and *White-eared Honeyeaters* along the edges of the coastal reserve and of course the effervescent *New Holland Honeyeater*.



Above: Yellow-faced Honeyeater along the F Break track



Above: New Holland Honeyeater in the south east sector

And other honeyeater species such as the *Red* and *Little Wattlebirds* along with the *White-fronted Chats* are just as busy among the streets, empty house lots and creek line surrounds.

For those living at The Cape, have you noticed that the *Galah* flock is much less active and has been replaced by the raucous *Little Corella* flock?

The creek line has been planted out ...

The goal posts are up on the mini oval, the creek line has been planted out with indigenous plants and a sea of plant guards dominate the terrain. The landscaping team have done a great job planting many thousands of plants and apart from a few seats to be installed, their job is nearly done, and the fences will be coming down. Once opened-up, a new network of paths will take you through a whole new area of habitat that provides a fantastic environment for birds, amphibians, and mammals. Over time, this area is going to grow into an important bio-diverse area for The Cape.

When using the new walking paths, you are likely to come into much closer contact with some of our resident native animals, especially the kangaroos. Some interpretive signage is to be installed to inform you of some of our more vulnerable species in the area and how to enjoy the animal experience while at the same time letting them go about their business. Kangaroos especially can be very skittish if frightened or rushed at, so it is important to give them some space.

I will put some photos in the next issue of Cape Chatter (when the weather is more kind) to give you a feel of what the creek line looks like.

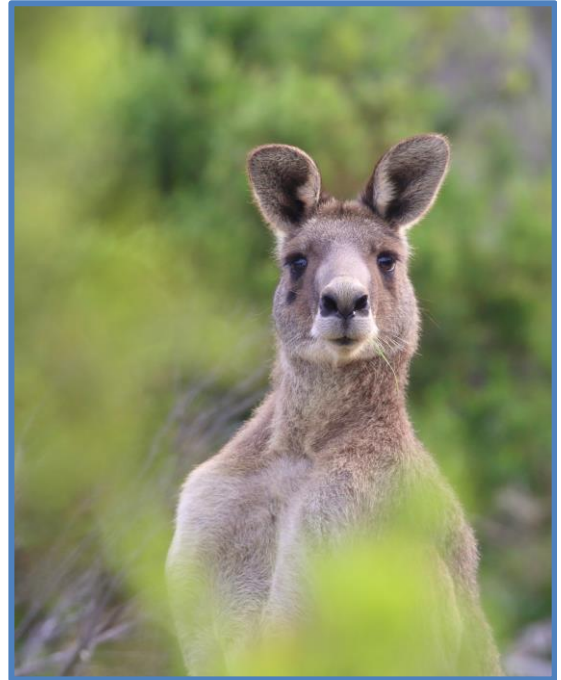
One Annoyed Raven!

This is one very intelligent bird – the *Little Raven*! I have highlighted this bird before when it took over our newly installed bird bath within an hour. Now daily, it brings in food scraps from the house building sites to soften up in the water before digesting the mash. Recently we had a slab of ham and pineapple pizza deposited. Jeannie decided to clean out the mess and when the Raven returned to a clean bird bath – he wasn't very happy!!

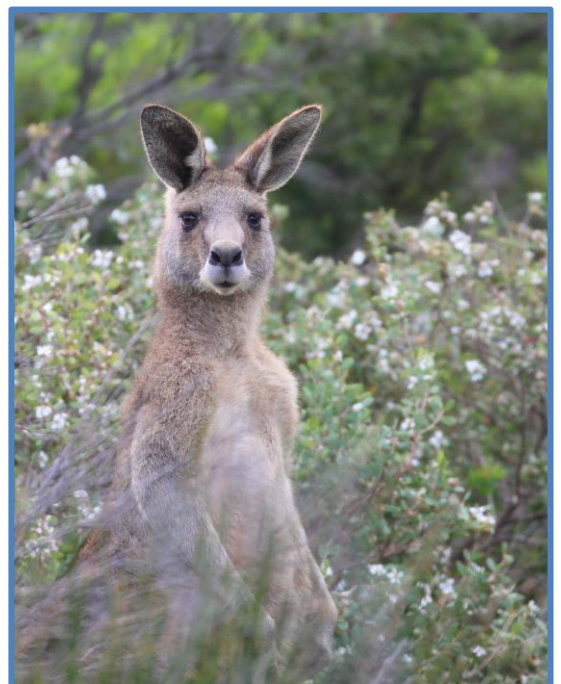


Faces of the Mob

The continuing series of portrait photos of some of our wonderful *Eastern Grey Kangaroo* mob emerging from the bush for their evening graze around **The Cape**.



Above: This is 'Marilyn' with the dark beauty spot who has featured in **Chatter** before. A lovely big male who I ran into in the south east sector on the edge of the coastal reserve during the week.



Above: A young male Eastern Grey Kangaroo emerges from the coastal reserve.