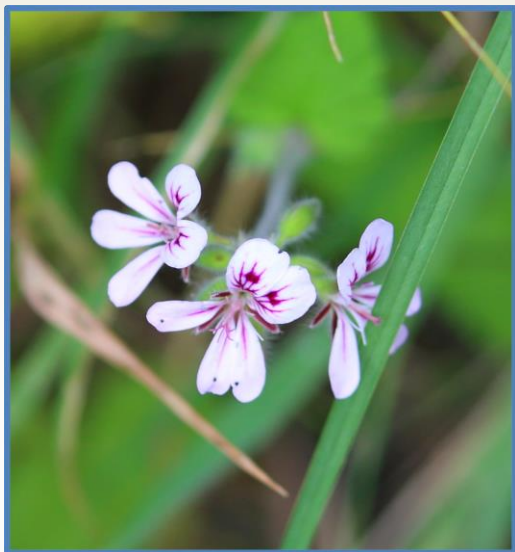


CAPE CHATTER

Nature Observations around The Cape

Issue No. 28

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*'Native Geranium' (pelargonium australe)
pictured in remnant bush in the southeast
sector of The Cape*

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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Snipes, Silvereyes, Sunsets, Seeds, and 'Saucy Rosellas'...

Another interesting journey with nature at The Cape this week. Standouts for me were the sound of crashing waves along 2nd Surf, the constant bird chatter within the remnant bush, and more stunning sunsets. I also witnessed the journey of a 'plant seed' emerge into a seedling which will become part of our future habitat; the *Latham's Snipe* were busy around the edges of our wetlands; the *Hooded Plover* in small flocks on 2nd Surf; little birds everywhere, especially *Silvereyes*; and we are pretty confident the 'saucy' *Eastern Rosellas* have taken up the nesting box.

Eastern Rosellas ... the continuing story

Over the past week, I have observed our pair of *Eastern Rosellas* showing behaviour that indicates they have taken up the nesting box in the southern most stag in the creek line. Most days, the male has been seen perched near the box, and on several occasions the female has departed the box with the male and returned to the box with the male. This is nesting behaviour from what I have read – the female only incubates the eggs, the male will provide food and occasionally, the female will depart the nest to feed for short periods. Nestbox builder Graeme McAlpine observed similar behaviour yesterday.

If she settles in the box, she may lay between 5-8 eggs and the incubation period is 19-20 days. By my calculations, we should expect to see some action between 8-10 December. How wonderful would that be? Lets keep the fingers crossed all goes well.



Above: The male Rosella at the nesting box. This was about 6.15 PM. Not long after this, the female came out and flew away with the male, presumably to feed. On another day, I observed the female return to the stag at 7.45 AM, sitting for about ten minutes before getting back into the box.

I am observing and taking photos from a fair distance. The box is close to the walking track, so please be mindful as disturbance may put a spanner in the works!

Latham's Snipe Survey

Big thanks to Jeannie Hartney and Helen Temple who accompanied me on the second *Latham's Snipe* Survey for this season last Saturday morning. Kitted out in our gumboots, we covered around 6 kms (in steps) walking through the various wetland and boggy sites within The Cape in search of this illusive bird which migrates from northern Japan.

It was a good result – our best yet. We flushed out **four** *Snipe* – two in the natural wetland in the south east sector, one near the small farm dam in the south west sector, and one just near the 'bog' in the central wetland complex.



I have continued to see *Latham's Snipe* during the week in the south east area of The Cape, not far from the walking track exiting toward 2nd Surf. Just a reminder that these birds are listed as a **vulnerable** species. They travel from their breeding grounds in northern Japan/Russia to spend the summer in south east Australia – a journey of some 12,000 kms!!

The Aussie Backyard Bird Count

The results of this year's Birdlife Australia Bird Count conducted in October are in. Resident Joe Spano and I completed several counts at The Cape identifying some 40 species in the week. Within Australia, 610 species were observed. In Victoria, the most observed bird was the *Rainbow Lorikeet*, *Australian Magpie* followed by the *Noisy Miner*. I have said enough about Magpies and their behaviour in previous Issues! The other two birds are in established Cape, but not seen frequently within The Cape estate and it would be good to try and keep it that way. Please do not feed and attract these birds to your garden as they can take over habitat areas to the detriment of our many smaller birds who we should be trying to attract.

Rainbow Lorikeets and Noisy Miners



Above: *Rainbow Lorikeet*. A stunning, colourful bird which can become extremely territorial and keep many other species away. They have adapted particularly well to urban environments, especially in situations where they have been fed 'unnaturally'.



Above: *Noisy Miner*, a native bird, is also very territorial and has readily adapted to urban habitat. They are very aggressive toward our nectar and insect eating smaller native birds.

Another Lewin's Rail Sighting

Thanks to Helen Temple who let me know she also saw an illusive *Lewin's Rail* early one morning on the way to work on the Wonthaggi Rd just past Seaward Drive.

A little bit of history on our resident kangaroo mob

Thanks to Brendan Condon for sharing with me some history of our resident mob of *Eastern Grey Kangaroos* at The Cape.

“The kangaroo mobs on our site have bred up since we took the 50 (odd) head of cattle off the site when we purchased it in 2004 and declared it ‘Land for Wildlife’. The first breeding pair took up residence around 2005/2006 and because we have protected the mob and they aren’t competing with cattle they have now built up in numbers to around 100, and many have dispersed from this site to other places along the coast over the past 15 years”.



Much effort has been made to attract the kangaroos to The Cape. How well they habituate with us as The Cape grows with more homes and people depends on the efforts and awareness of residents and visitors as to how we behave with them (and them with us). Interpretive signage on how we and the kangaroos can live together at The Cape is to be installed around The Cape soon.



Great garden habitat working ...

Great work by resident Chris Downie who has been keeping us informed on Facebook about his wonderful collection of native animals taking up residence in his garden in Periwinkle Court, including *echidna* and *blotched blue-tongue lizards*. It just shows how a well-thought out and designed garden with different levels/mixes of plantings, logs/rocks and natural food sources can provide attractive and secure habitat for our local fauna ...and how much fun is it to be up close and personal to these animals and observe their antics.



Above: *Echidna* checking out habitat in our house garden.



Above: *Blotched Bluetongue* in our house garden drinking from the aggregate. We have now placed some small terracotta dishes filled with water amongst our plants.

Please be mindful of these animals as you drive and cycle your way around The Cape. Take it slow, give way to them if you see them and let them go about their business as much as possible.

'From little things big things grow' ...

The Community Farm to be constructed at The Cape next year will include a plant nursery for residents to propagate vegetables and native plants for growing within The Cape and projects beyond. 'Nurseryman' and resident Graeme McAlpine and I had the opportunity to visit the Australian Ecosystems nursery last week to get a look at operations on a larger scale. This is the place where all the indigenous and endemic plants at The Cape are propagated and grown to provide the wonderful habitat for our native fauna.

I was fascinated by the complexity of the logistics involved in the process from collecting seed to delivery of the plants for planting out to re-establish vital habitat areas for our fauna.



STEP 1: Seed is collected by expert seed collectors concentrating on specific species and provenance.



STEP 2: Seed is sorted, cleaned and stored in an extensive seed bank. Not surprisingly, Graeme was like a kid in a candy store!!!



STEP 3: Seed is propagated in trays on a heated base in a controlled green-house environment.



STEP 4: Plants grow in various pot sizes in a controlled green-house environment.



STEP 5: Plants are ready for delivery to the next project – timing and plant development is critical.



Above: The result. The wetlands at The Cape about one year after planting. This habitat is now home to all sorts of little native critters and birds. A big thanks to the staff at Australian Ecosystems.

Bird activity in the area

Walks along the creek line and around the central wetland complex, have identified *Pacific Black Duck*, an active *Little Pied Cormorant*, *Australian White Ibis*, *Straw-necked Ibis* and *White-faced Heron* regularly. The *Little Grassbird* is still calling but illusive, and *Black-faced Dotterel* are still working the creek line despite Stage 4 works. A beautiful, *Black-shouldered Kite* and *Whistling Kite* have been overhead recently.

In the grasslands, the *Eurasian Skylarks* are still singing and hovering overhead, *Australian Pipits* are still scurrying about. Closer to the bush, you can still here the calls of *Eastern Yellow Robin* and the beautiful *Olive Whistler*. The *Red* and *Little Wattlebirds* are everywhere and the numbers of *Superb Fairy-wren*, *Brown Thornbill*, *Grey Fantail*, and *Silvereye* are also very healthy. It makes for a very noisy experience with lots and lots of chatter going on.

Yesterday, walking with good friends and fellow visiting “Chatterers” Debbie and Neil in the south east sector, we also ‘spotted’ *Spotted Pardalote* in old man manna gum, along with *Grey Shrike Thrush*, *New Holland Honeyeater*, *Yellow-faced Honeyeater*, *White-browed Scrubwren*, and *Spotted Dove*.

On a walk along 2nd Surf Beach we observed five *Hooded Plovers* together – a great sight and the first time for Deb and Neil. Please take note of the roped-off areas and signage as they are coming into breeding time.



Above: *Little Wattlebird* launching into flight and at **Bottom Right:** catching insects in ‘The Bog’ near the wetlands

With most of the blossom and nectar sources drying up, many of the birds are now resorting to feeding on insects and grubs on the wing and gleaning from the branches of shrubs and trees. The feeding activity is frenetic!!



Above: *Silvereye* (with grub) and **Below:** *Hooded Plover* on 2nd Surf Beach



Are there Koalas about ...continued

Last issue I mentioned about the small healthy population of *Koala* in Cape Paterson and that this time last year, and more recently, a *Koala* was heard grunting in the south east sector of **The Cape** where there is some remnant Coastal Manna Gum. Local Cape Paterson resident and friend Val Prescott sent me a lovely photo during the week of a *Koala* sitting in a Weeping Myrtle in her backyard in Heath Street, and I could not resist showing fellow "Chatterers". This guy looks like he is very, very, chilled!!



Good also to read the chatter around trying to improve *Koala* habitat on social media platforms in Cape Paterson – very encouraging for the community and the *Koala*!

I always take a peek in 'old man manna gum' and a couple of other manna trees in and nearby The Cape to check if a *koala* is about – no luck yet but I will keep on looking!

The Cape has begun planting out Coastal Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis ssp pryoriana*) and the coastal version of Snow Gum (*Eucalyptus pauciflora*) as future habitat trees for the local koala population and hopefully more will be planted to help preserve and grow this small, but important population.

Snakes, snakes ...

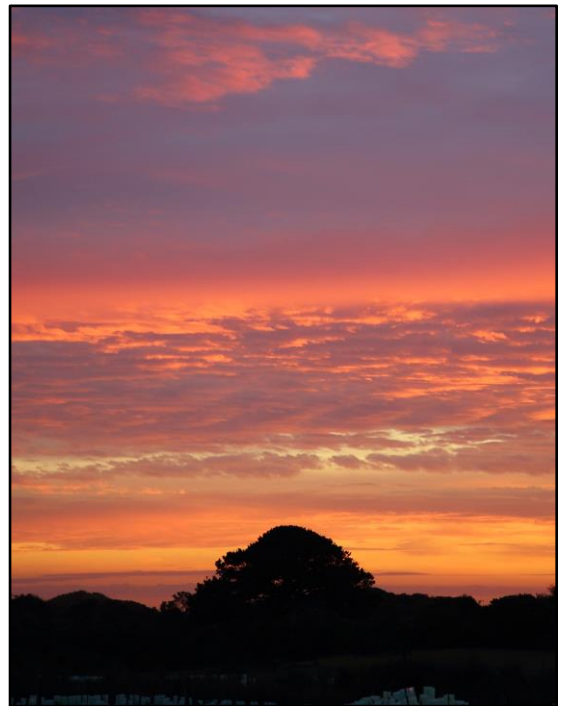
Lowland Copperhead alert ... seen by Tony and Jacquie O'Connell yesterday in a PVC drain under the walking track draining into the central wetland. Appropriately, just near the "Beware of Snakes" sign!! Keep alert.

More stunning sunsets at The Cape

The sunset photos below were taken last Sunday evening (22nd November) ... beautiful colours.



Above: Sunset over the new mini oval



Above: Sunset beyond "Lone Pine"



Above: Sunset between "Lone Pine" and the most southern tree stag, home to our Eastern Rosella nesting box.

Remember: Keep your observations and feedback coming. You can reach me through the contact section of the *Cape Chatter* website or by email ... or knock on the door.