

CAPE CHATTER

Nature Observations around The Cape

Issue No. 31

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A Common Hover Fly settles momentarily on a Billy Button leaf. These native flies are important pollinators and can often be seen paused and hovering above flowers.

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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sorts of Cape nature information and
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Twenty-twenty in review ...

Well, we are nearing the end of a tumultuous year. I have taken many positives away from the year, not the least was having the time to explore the natural world of **The Cape** and put together **Cape Chatter**. I have seen many new things and learnt so much from my explorations and expeditions into most corners of **The Cape** and am amazed how much life abounds around us and how well the ecological restoration effort is supporting the return of native fauna and flora. I hope **Chatter** has helped this burgeoning community be more aware and appreciate the natural life which surrounds us!

In this Issue, I am reflecting on the seasonal highlights and some of my favourite snaps on **Cape Chatter** since it's launch on 20th April 2020. I am going to take a break and will return with **Cape Chatter** in January 2021. But first, I want to highlight the sighting of a new bird and another lovely little bird that demonstrates the success to date of the habitat restoration efforts at **The Cape**.

The wonderful wetlands ...

Just pause and think about this? In early 2019, a series of wetland pools were constructed to the south-west of Sunlight Blvd on what was degraded pasture land. On 10 May 2019, an amazing hail and rain storm hit the Cape Paterson area filling up the wetlands in a few hours on that wild morning.



18 months later and the wetlands are a wonderful habitat with masses of reeds/sedges, water ribbons and small herbaceous plants, connected to a newly restored creek line.



The little birds of the wetlands

While lamenting the lack of freshwater birds at the moment, there is an influx of little birds calling the central wetlands complex home. Sightings include *Little Grassbird*, *Silvereye*, *Willie Wagtail*, *Grey Fantail*, *Yellow-faced Honeyeater*, *Welcome Swallow*. The latest addition is the rather drab but stunning songster, the *Australian Reed Warbler* (bird number **108** on our list). Another of the small, elusive wetland inhabitants that are heard rather than seen, I was attracted to its beautiful singing repertoire and only managed this one quick good snap below.



When resident Joe Spano joined me to hear/see the *Reed Warbler*, we unexpectedly observed and were privileged to witness the very elusive *Little Grassbirds* in courting and mating behaviour. What a show they put on for us!



Above: The female began flapping its wings rapidly and then a nearby male started as well

... the male arrives at the female



Above: The male arrives and does his thing!



Above: The male dismounts – still lots of flapping



Above: The male flies away and reflects on his achievement in typical "man spreading" pose hanging onto two reed stems – and still flapping!

Here is hoping the *Little Grassbirds* colonise in this wonderful habitat and spread up the creek line – there are at least three birds currently around. The *Reed Warbler* is more likely to be a breeding summer visitor.

Reflections of Autumn 2020

Who could forget those lovely, cheeky *Galahs* who kept us humoured with their antics around the open spaces. They were one of the first birds to discover the new habitat stags in the creek line as soon as they were installed.



The lovely beach based *Hooded Plovers* finished breeding and started to re-gather in small flocks. As far as I know, one Hoodie chick survived the breeding season along the 2nd Surf/F Break coast. The migratory waders and seabirds from the northern hemisphere departed on their long journey home after the summer vacation.



We observed the first *Humpback* whale in late May heading north to the tropics on its annual migration from Antarctica – just wonderful creatures.

We witnessed spectacular sunsets with amazing colours gracing the sky and twirling about on our western horizon along with “cracking” wave sounds from 2nd Surf!

And many juvenile birds were active around the Coastal Reserve and edges of **The Cape**.

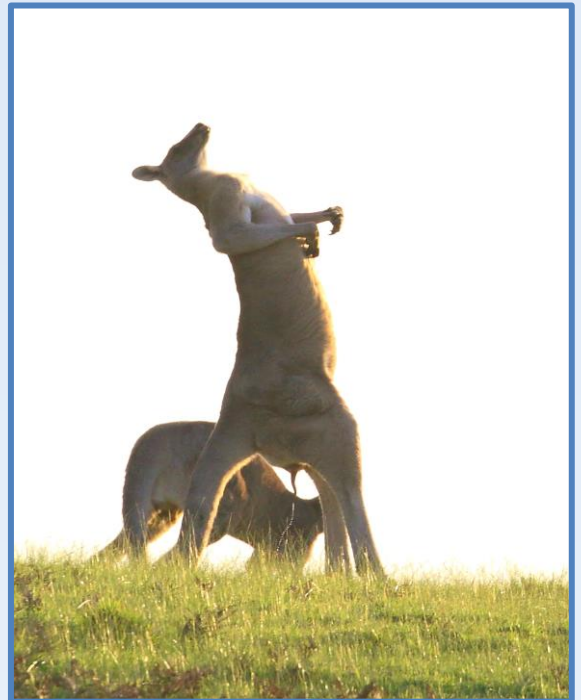


Winter survival in 2020

Our winter was highlighted by the sight of some stunning birds of prey with many raptors making use of the creek line habitat stags as observation points. Stand-outs for me were the *Black-shouldered Kite*, *Whistling Kite*, *Nankeen Kestrel* and the amazing *Peregrine Falcon* (seen trying to capture a Galah one late afternoon – the Galah escaped!).



The *Eastern Grey Kangaroo* mob were adjusting to life with us humans at **The Cape** and mob behaviour was on show in the '*battles on the ridge*'.



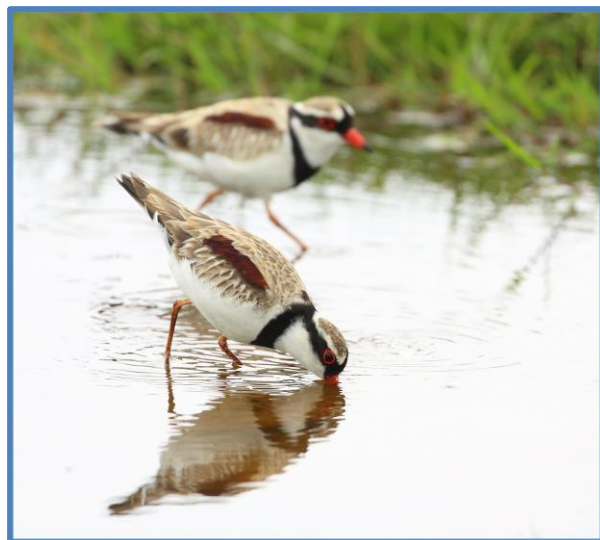
By mid-July, we were captivated by large flocks of *Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos* who loved feeding in the old 'Lone Pine' tree near the wetland.



Winter was the time we saw most of our local *Honeyeater* species about, including *Crescent*, *White-eared*, *Yellow-faced*, *New Holland* and the occasional *Eastern Spinebill*.



By late winter, we saw evidence of nest building - the most infamous nester being 'Darcy the Magpie' who haunted and attacked me for several months! Mr and Mrs Darcy had four offspring. Some of the inland migrant birds returned for the warmer months ahead, such as the lovely *Black-fronted Dotterel* working the new creek line habitat.



A big thanks for all those who provided positive feedback to **Cape Chatter** since its inception and especially those residents and "chatterers" who reported observations of birds and other animal behaviours around **The Cape** to me for inclusion in the weekly blog. A special thanks to resident **Graeme McAlpine** who took up the challenge of manufacturing and installing habitat and nesting boxes for *microbats* and *Eastern Rosella* in the habitat stags. Hopefully, we will see the fruits of his enthusiasm in the coming days when we see feeding activity or hear evidence of *Eastern Rosella* hatchlings. A great way to round out 2020!

Spring 2020 – the birds and the bees ... nature goes crazy!

The explosion of *Swamp Paperbark* blossom and *Capeweed* flowers brought nature to a crescendo from September. One of my most exciting experiences was seeing the *Blue-winged Parrots* in the open spaces west of the creek line. The sky was full of *Eurasian Skylark* and *Welcome Swallow*. *Australian Pipit* were scurrying around and there were *Grey Teal* and *Pacific Black Duck* hatchlings in the wetlands.



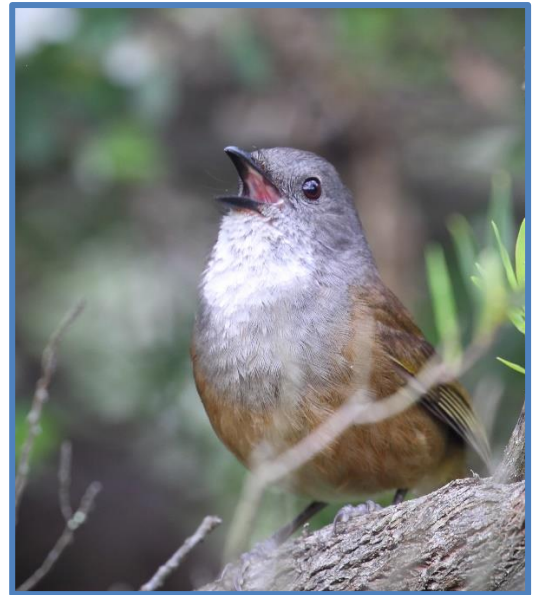
The south east sector was alive with small birds feasting on nectar – *Honeyeaters*, the returning *Silvereye*, *Superb Fairy-wren*, *Scrub-wrens*, and *Thornbills*.



October and the flowering Capeweed and blossom provided a smorgasbord of nectar, seed and insects for migratory *White-fronted Chats*, returning *European Goldfinch*, *Eastern Rosella* and the raucous flock of *Little Corellas*. In the Coastal Reserve, migratory *Cuckoos* arrived with their beautiful calls echoing across the bush.



Not to be outdone, the really beautiful songbirds, the *Whistlers*, came into their own as the amazing calls of the *Olive* and *Rufous Whistler* were constantly heard along with the distinctive sounds of *Eastern Yellow Robin* and *Spotted Pardalote*.



Leading into summer 2020

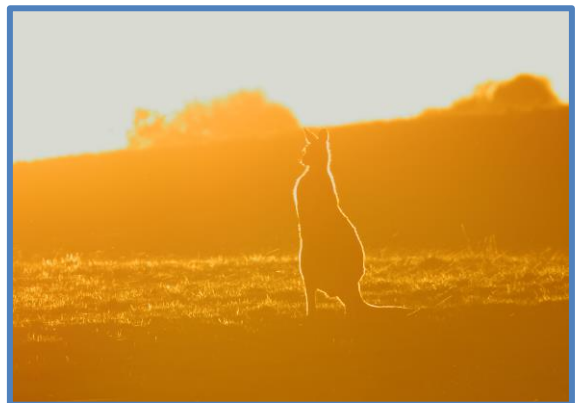
As we lead into another summer, the remarkable migratory *Latham's Snipe* has arrived all the way from northern Japan to spend summer with us, along with coastal sightings of other northern hemisphere migrants: *Pacific Plovers*, *Red-necked Stint* and *Sanderling*.

With good rain this year, the swampy heath and wetlands have provided ideal conditions for *frogs* (we now have 7 species identified). *Frogs* also means good tucker for snakes and the *Lowland Copperhead* have been hanging about, along with the lovely *Blotched Blue-tongue Lizard* and *Garden Skink*.



Our beautiful native mammals seem to be gradually habituating with us as *Short-beaked Echidna*, *Common Wombat* and the *Kangaroo mob* are still around in good numbers and taking up residence close by the housing area. There appear to be good numbers of joeys coming into this summer compared to last year.

The warmth is bringing a wide range of invertebrate, insects, and other bug life, especially into the wetlands. And the stunning sunsets just keep rolling on



On behalf of the natural world of **The Cape**, enjoy your holiday season, take care ... drive slowly and please keep your dogs on a lead. See you in 2021!