

What a difference a day makes ...

CAPE CHATTER

Nature Observations around The Cape

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Flower of a Coastal Banksia (prostrate form)

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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Last Thursday evening I ventured back into the ‘wild south west’ of **The Cape** at the ‘golden hour’ – the wind was calm and the temperature about 25 degrees - a stunning evening. The bird life was amazing – so frenetic that I did not know where to point the camera! Lots of small and medium birds everywhere feeding on all sorts of invertebrates. I returned Friday evening for the same walk at the same time but with a different weather pattern unfolding, and saw only **one**, yes **one**, small bird. Where did they all go? And do they know more about weather systems than the technically advanced BOM and know when to charge up and bunker down before the bad weather hits?

My bird observations this week suggest we have passed the transitional stage and we are now seeing some of the cooler weather migrants arriving. These include the **honeyeaters**: *Crescent* and *White-eared* are now about competing with the mainly resident *New Holland* and *Yellow-faced*. As predicted last *Chatter*, the **robins** have arrived back – a female *Flame Robin* has been conspicuous in the south west along with the calls of the local resident *Eastern Yellow Robin*.



Above: Female *Flame Robin* **Below:** the colourful male *Flame Robin* has not been seen yet this year!



Bird observations before the cold front hit

The area around the old *Coastal Manna Gum* in the south west was particularly alive with the honeyeaters on the warmer days as they were sallying for insects amongst the foliage.

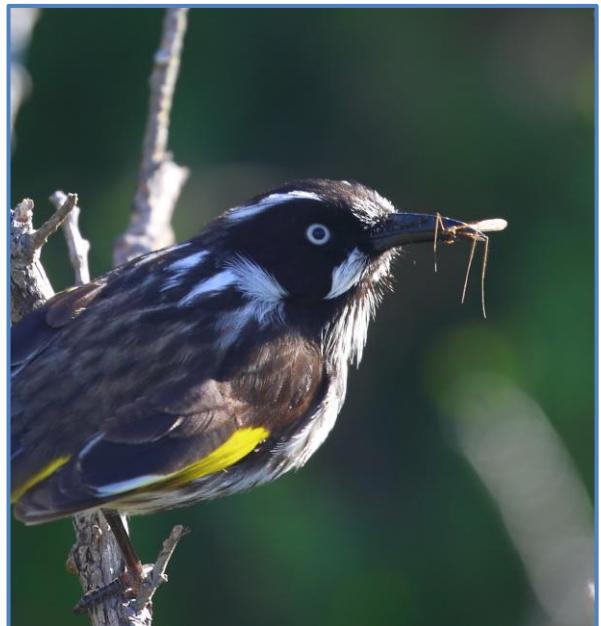


Above: Crescent Honeyeater

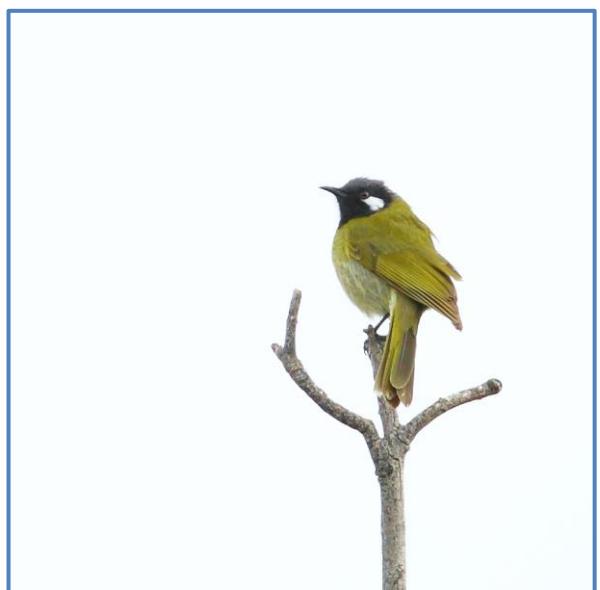


Above: Yellow-faced Honeyeater

It was also great to see the beautiful *Grey Shrike-thrush* (pictured right) in amongst the action – these are lovely birds with stunning song calls.



Above: New Holland Honeyeater



Above: White-eared Honeyeater



Birds seen before the cold front ...

Many of the smaller birds were active in mixed flocks darting in and about the shrubs gleaning insects: notables were *Brown Thornbill*, *White-browed Scrubwren*, *Superb Fairy-wren* and a small number of *Silvereye* (ssp *lateralis* – pictured right).



Above: *Brown Thornbill*



Above: *Galahs* rehydrating late in the afternoon after an active day working over **The Cape**.

Below: The lovely sight of a skein of seven *Black Swans* flying over **The Cape** in a westerly direction



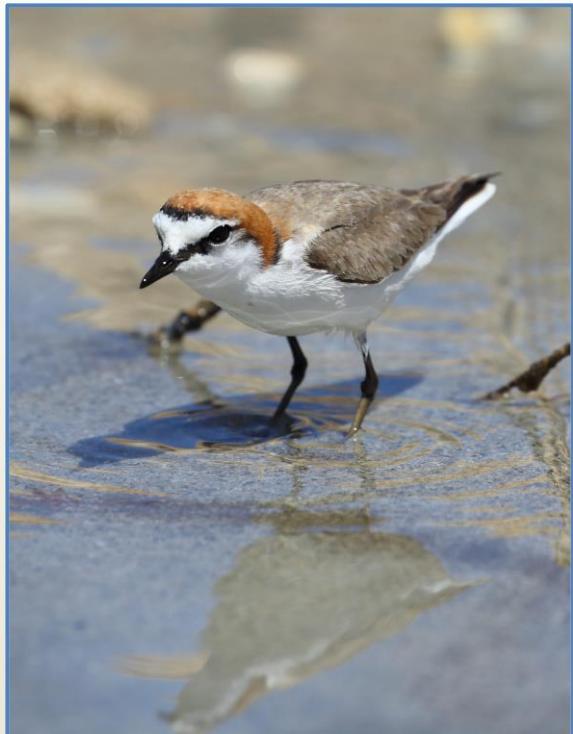
Above: *White-browed Scrubwren*

Other fantastic sights included a skein of seven *Black Swans* flying in formation over the **The Cape** in a westerly direction at dusk and the local *Galahs* drinking as a small flock from a tree lying in the convergence pond in the newly restored creekline – it is thirsty work being a larrikin!



Shorebird activity on 2nd Surf

Those residents who attended the very informative *Hooded Plover* session a couple of weeks back may remember presenter Kasun talking about the non-migratory shorebirds of Australia. Well, last week three of the species were seen: the *Sooty Oystercatchers* (pictured below) were about, and sharp-eye resident Joe Spano reported a flock of 10 (ten) *Hooded Plovers* along with four *Red-capped Plovers* on 2nd Surf. Great observations.



Above: Red-capped Plover (reference picture)

The *Red-capped Plovers*, although more common around Australia, are less likely to be seen along our coast line, so it was interesting to see them in a mixed flock hanging out with the 'Hoodies'. The Red-capped is a new sighting and brings our Bird List to **111** species.

Plenty of 'flicky tails' about

Willy Wagtails and *Grey Fantails* are everywhere at the moment along the edge of the coastal reserve with the 'Willie's' venturing often into the wetlands and home gardens. These are active, delightful and very inquisitive birds but hard to photograph as they rarely stay still!



Above: Willie Wagtail – contemplating its next flight



Above: Grey Fantail eyeing off its next meal

Faces of the “Mob”

Some of our *Eastern Grey Kangaroos* were lounging about in the late afternoon glow this past week enjoying the warmth before venturing into the grassy areas to feed at night. I managed to get some nice photos of some very relaxed *Roos* near the mini oval.



It is nice to see the *Kangaroos* are slowly becoming more acquainted with our presence and people enjoying lovely sights of these marvellous animals. Hopefully the signage on how we should interact with them is helping!

How our native animals can die from stress!

Remember that our *Eastern Grey Kangaroos* are very skittish and can easily scatter in all directions if disturbed unnecessarily, often running into hard structures and injuring themselves, or sadly, dying. They can also suffer from a condition known as **Capture Myopathy** (or stress myopathy). This condition occurs when excessive muscle exertion causes a build-up of lactic acid decreasing the pH level of blood affecting the heart, and consequently, less oxygen can cause the muscle to die. This process releases excessive myoglobin which then damages kidneys, lungs and liver leading to painful death in a couple of days or over a few weeks. Unnecessary human interference with kangaroos through stressing, capturing or restraining the animal are the main causes of this condition. Capture Myopathy is also known to be used by dogs as a hunting tool! The myopathy is common in all species, not just marsupials, and also affects birds such as long-legged water birds and raptors. (Ref: Paper by Anne Fowler BSc (Vet) (Hons) BVSc MACVSc (Avian Health)).



Above: Young female Roo ‘directing traffic’ around the mini-oval.

So please respect our native animals by observing and following the educative signage around **The Cape** and not stressing them unnecessarily, keeping dogs on leads and viewing all animals from a safe distance.

Are our Eastern Rosellas going to nest again?

This is puzzling me somewhat. I am still observing our pair of local *Eastern Rosella* continuing to check out the nesting box placed in a stag in the creekline. My source reference, *Australian Parrots*, says that breeding can occur into April and May, so maybe the summer and early autumn conditions are suitable for another attempt at breeding. I wonder what this cold snap will do to any plans?



Above: *Eastern Rosella* before flying over to the nesting box.



Above: The *Eastern Rosella* (assuming it is the female), checking out the nesting box on 8 Apr 21. The male partner was higher up in the stag keeping an eye out for predators, especially magpies and ravens.

Speaking of magpies ... read on about Darcy and his family.

Darcy ... looking very healthy indeed.

For those new to *Chatter*, I just happen to live within the territory of a 'lovely' *Australian Magpie* which during last breeding season, became aggressive toward me as a way of protecting its breeding territory. I named him 'Darcy'. Mr and Mrs Darcy had four offspring and it has been wonderful watching the family grow over the summer months and seeing the young birds grow and play and learn to live life as a Magpie. There has been lots of warbling and play recently and all the birds look in really good condition. Darcy, pictured below, looks exceptionally beautiful in the late afternoon sun on my back fence. I hope we can co-exist in a friendly manner during the next breeding season, but I do not like my chances.

