

CAPE CHATTER

Nature Observations around The Cape

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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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Taking a "Walk on the Wildside"

I thought I would go for a walk along the edge of the coastal bushland on the southern edge of **The Cape** a couple of days ago to see what was around ... and I was not disappointed. Although the birdlife was quiet – we are in a transitional period at the moment – some interesting critters appeared. On the bird front, I did not see one *Silvereye* which were prolific over summer ... they are migratory birds and have taken off, but there were lots of *Grey Fantails* about along with the *Superb Fairy-wren*!

My walk started in the central wetland complex to see what was around, primarily to see if one of our resident snakes was still around basking in the sun. Low and behold, out from the waters edge slithered one of the resident *Lowland Copperhead*, looking absolutely stunning with it's bronze/coppery colouring.



Above and Below: Healthy and beautiful looking *Lowland Copperhead* emerging from the waters edge in the central wetland complex. These snakes are pretty shy – this one stopped and checked me out allowing me to snap a few shots – then gracefully turned around and returned from where it came. I am guessing it was heading toward its favourite habitat log when I got in its way.



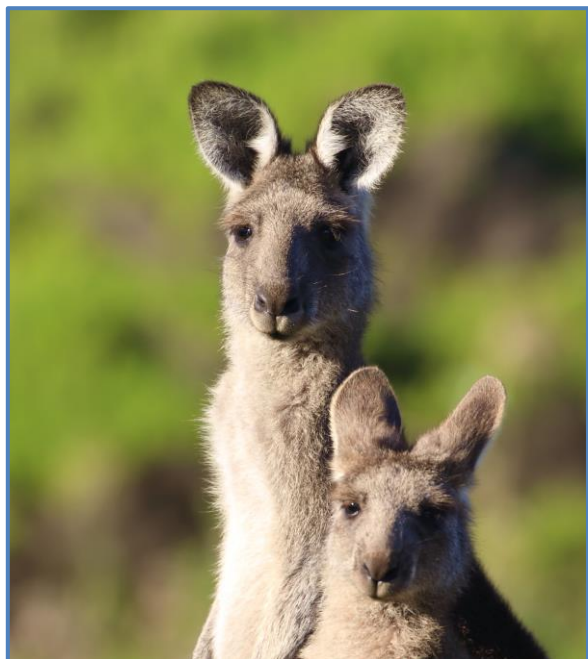
Further into my walk

Heading further south, and keeping an eye out for more slithery snakes, I came across a wonderful sight of a *Swamp Wallaby* emerging in the south east drainage line. This is only the second time I have seen this species at **The Cape** – previously I saw one in the south west corner of the estate grazing on some pasture grasses. These guys are solitary animals and usually bounce away when disturbed, but I did manage a couple of shots.



This is a pretty healthy looking animal with stocky shoulders and legs. It could be the same wallaby I saw over a year ago as they are uncommon around here.

Wandering further south into the wilds, I decided to take a rest and sat quietly for a while to see what was coming and going. Apart from a few *Eastern Grey Kangaroo* lounging and lots of *Grey Fantail* dancing around, a wily old *Red Fox* appeared and was startled by my presence – again not before I managed a couple of photos.

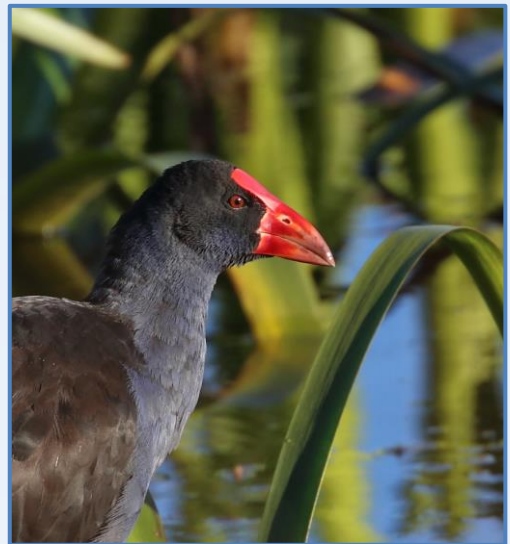


Birds in the wild ...

The bird scene was relatively quiet on the return journey, but it was lovely to see a *White-eared Honeyeater* (pictured below) in the vicinity of my favourite old man *Manna Gum*. This is a lovely bird that returns for the cooler months along with the *Crescent Honeyeater* and *Eastern Spinebill*. We should keep our eyes out for *Scarlet* and *Flame Robins* returning in the coming weeks as well.



Emerging from the thick, wild bush I decided to swing by the central wetland again. It appears our *Australasian Swampphen* (lone bird at this stage) and *Dusky Moorhen* (a family of four) have established themselves amongst the reeds and sedges.



Above: *Australasian Swampphen*

Below: *Dusky Moorhen*



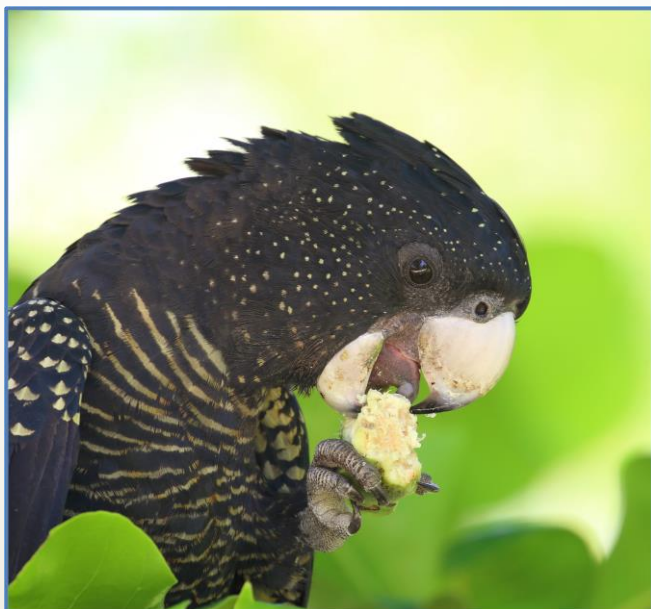
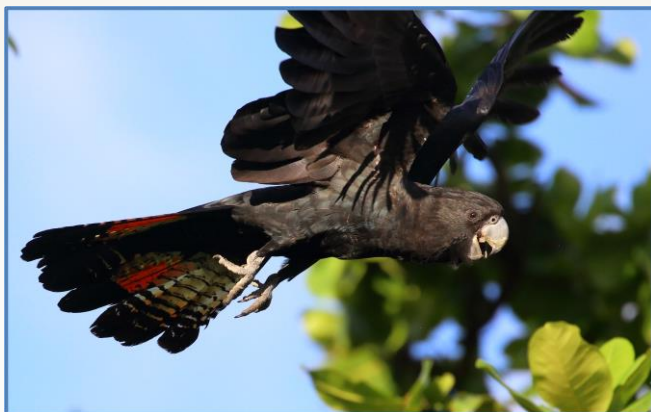
Nice to hear the *Little Grassbird* is still about and I also heard their call in the smaller wetland near the dog park. Seems they are here to stay which is testament to the re-vegetation/re-wilding efforts at **The Cape**.

‘Chatter’ goes ‘banana-bending’

I managed to escape from Victoria and have some time at ‘banana bender’ country in Townsville, North Queensland last week.

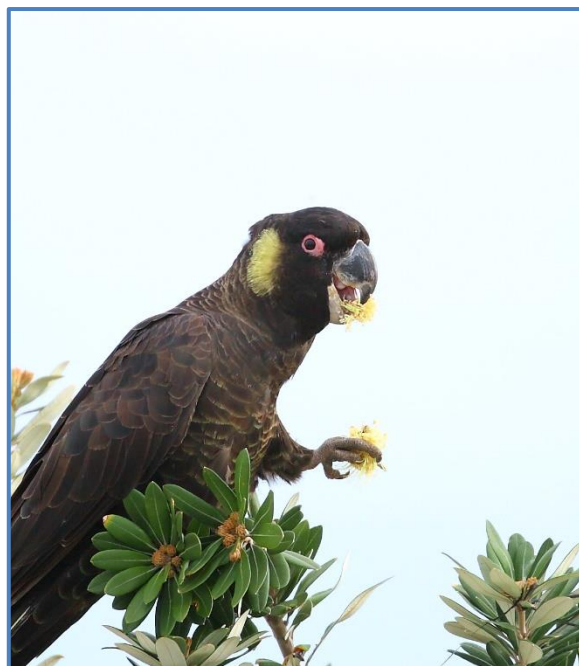
I managed to get a few photo walks in with my son Rhys and I thought I would share a few pictures of some of the wonderful birds you will never see at **The Cape** – but they have some ‘relatives’ we observe down here.

First, the *Red-tailed Black Cockatoo*, (pictured below) which are seen often along the beach front in Townsville amongst the giant fig and native macadamia trees.



Our local *Black-Cockatoo* of course is the more common *Yellow-tailed* which will start returning to **The Cape** in a couple of months to feed on coastal banksia, eucalyptus, and pinecone. These birds are two of the six Black-Cockatoo species found in Australia, are similar in size and hang around in flocks constantly chattering. Of the four other species – two are endangered, one is vulnerable, and one sub-species of another is endangered! Not very promising statistics.

At least our local *Yellow-tailed* (pictured below) are in good numbers. Note they are both “molly dookers” (left footed).



The call of the *Kookaburra* is symbolic of the Australian bush. While we do not have many around **The Cape** (probably due to a lack of mature trees), we do have the occasional ‘Burra’ visitor. Up north, as well as the *Laughing Kookaburra*, they also have the lovely *Blue-winged Kookaburra*. It is slightly slimmer with a larger head and bill and a streaked head.



Above: *Blue-winged Kookaburra* of the north

“Banana-bending’ continued



Above: *Laughing Kookaburra* – our local variety

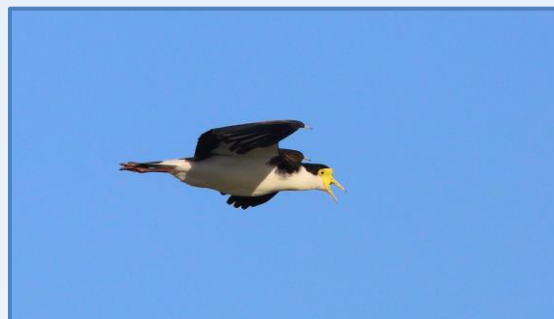
One final species I came across is the *Masked Lapwing*, a common bird here and in the north of Australia, although they are separate sub-species.



Masked Lapwing are also known as *Spurwinged Plover* because they have thorn shaped spurs on their wings. In the north, the ssp *miles* (pictured bottom left) lack the black breast markings of our ssp *novaehollandiae* and have longer yellow lappet (skin flap on the face).



Above: Our local sub species of *Masked Lapwing* and below in flight yesterday (if you look closely, you can just see its spurs on the wing bend).



Local ‘Chatter’

Sadly, the *Hooded Plover* chick reported in last *Cape Chatter* has not fledged and has disappeared (presumed dead) a week before it was expected to fly. That means there will be no new *Hooded Plovers* for Cape Paterson this season and only one from last year at F Break Beach. A very poor season despite the wonderful and tireless work of our local “Hoodie” volunteers and Birdlife Australia.

I noticed the *Eastern Rosella* pair have visited the nesting box a couple of times recently to check it out and the female performed what appeared to be courting behaviour (fanned tail and sideways tail wagging). A possible late season breeding attempt?? I’ll keep the eyes peeled!