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Reminder to residents and owners of **The Cape**, to register your interest in a 'mini-plot' before the first planting day planned for early September as part of Project KOALA. Check your emails from the Body Corporate or The Cape Development Team and the Resident Facebook post for details—**respond by 6th August please.**



The sounds and sights of seasonal change?

There is a hint of seasonal change in the air. Several days of prevailing north westerly winds also brought a couple of surprising sightings high up in the sky. Resident Joe Spano reported the first seasonal calls of the stunning songster, the *Olive Whistler* in the area and I heard the calls of *Pied Currawong* on the eastern edge of **The Cape**—an uncommon observation. Joe also saw a small flock of about a dozen of these *Currawongs* in established Cape Paterson. And a couple of days ago with a strong wind blowing, a flock of about 10 *Pacific Gulls* was seen flying over **The Cape**—single birds are seen occasionally—and another uncommon sighting (despite us living on the coast) of an *Australian Pelican* high overhead. There is also indications of nest building—a pair of *Eastern Rosella* were seen checking out the northern nesting box in the creek line and *Australian Magpies* have been seen gathering materials at either end of the creek line. Be warned!



Above: *Australian Pelican*. These graceful birds are just beautiful in flight and I am always amazed watching them descend and glide slowly onto water as they land—just like the amphibious aeroplane, the *Catalina*, which was used extensively in the middle of the 1900's. Surely its design must have been based on the aerodynamics and shape of a *Pelican*!!

This is the first *Australian Pelican* I have seen in flight over **The Cape**. These birds are more likely to be seen around estuaries, protected bays and inland lakes—and of course around marinas and boat ramps, where they are adept at scavenging fish carcass/scraps from fishers. They travel widely to good quality feeding grounds (particularly in response to major inland water events). I wonder where this bird was coming from or going too?

The Common Wombat—myths and mange

The Cape is home to a number of *Common Wombat* (aka *Bare-nosed Wombat*)—it is quite a common mammal around the coastal area and the hinterland. It is a myth that a *wombat* seen out feeding during the day is sick as they will often come out late in the afternoon in cooler months to sunbake or make use of the warmer weather to eat. But if you do see one feeding continuously in daylight and looks lethargic, it may have **mange**. **Mange** is a painful and fatal skin disease caused by mites which can be treated if not too far advanced. More often than not, a *wombat* with **mange** will feed during the day to replenish its energy and offset the impact caused by the disease. It may be docile and also have poor sight. **Mange** is noticeable, primarily, by bare patches of skin along the legs and sides—but such skin markings can also be caused by scarring as a result of fighting between wombats.



There is currently a wombat with a bad case of mange in the south east sector of **The Cape**. It is feeding throughout the day but is still quite nimble. Our local “Wildlife Victoria” volunteer has been in touch with Manage Management Victoria and Wildlife Victoria to devise a treatment plan. This involves administering Cydectin in 20 ml weekly doses. The easiest way of doing this is by the placement of a flap over one of the wombats burrows which dispenses the Cydectin on the wombats back as it brushes under. The more difficult, but also more effective way, is to directly apply the liquid onto the wombat by getting close enough with a dispenser. Our volunteer has managed two applications using this method with a further three to be applied. Hopefully in about five weeks time we will start to see some positive results.



The extent of the mange on the wombat can be seen in the picture right ... and just look at those claws used for digging burrows and fighting! **Below**, the Cydectin is applied to the back of the wombat after a ‘stealth like’ approach by the ‘wildlife volunteer’. Hopefully several more treatments using this method can be accomplished.



The local Kangaroo mob ... out and about!

With the building and development going on at the moment within **The Cape**, I hear people saying: “what will be the impact on our local wildlife, especially the mob of *Eastern Grey Kangaroo*?”. The mob have an extensive area of habitat in the adjoining Yallock-Bullock Marine and Coastal Park to our south along with some lovely spots in protected areas to the south west of the central wetlands (I call this area ‘Green Beach’) where you can often see them resting safely during the day. They begin to venture out in to the open grasslands to feed late in the afternoon and will often be seen returning early in the morning to their rest areas. They also use the creek line for resting during the day where you can safely see them without disturbance. Recently I saw at least 60 roos in this area and an Aussie Rules footy team mob grazing on the sports oval. They are slowly habituating to our presence, and while the numbers may fluctuate at times throughout the year, we should continue to see good numbers here if we follow the guidance on how to behave with them. Make sure you check out the interpretive signs around **The Cape** and let them go about their business.



Joe has been out with his camera

Fellow resident Joe Spano was out with his camera yesterday afternoon catching a few bird photos while the weather was good, with some very nice action shots of the local *Galah* flock and an inquisitive *Australian Magpie* wondering what he was up to. I'd be careful with the look in those eyes at this time of the year!



Now we have two Swamphen ... will it lead to more?

The central wetlands and 'bog' area are becoming popular spots for waterfowl, with another *Australasian (Purple) Swamphen* (pictured bottom left) spotted. That makes two and we all know what that could lead too! In addition, we have an entrenched family of six *Dusky Moorhen* (pictured bottom right) on the central wetlands, so it is slowly becoming waterfowl central. Can you spot the difference between the two species? They both flick their tails constantly.



Flying in the wind ...

With some strong winds around, it is quite fascinating watching some of our larger birds and how they manoeuvre in the wind particularly when they are flying into it or against a cross-wind. Not sure what the small birds do other than holding tight to a perch somewhere so they do not get blown away! A few days ago a skein of graceful *Black Swans* (below) flew over—they are silent and appear effortless in flight and generally fly in a line with a leader. A flock of *Australian White Ibis* (bottom) also battled with the strong northerly wind as they were heading west—they were more sideways in flight and normally fly in an arrowhead formation.



By the numbers—our species list tally after two years ...

The 1st August marks the second anniversary of my arrival at **The Cape** which was the day I started the **Fauna Species List** with fantastic input and observations from many interested and supportive residents within **The Cape** community and established Cape Paterson. So here is our key species tally as of today:

- Birds—total species count is **113** (Marine/Coastal—22, Freshwater—18, Land-65, Introduced-8) of which **11** are threatened or vulnerable to extinction)
- Mammals—16
- Reptiles— 5
- Frogs—8

*Please keep your observations coming. They are so important in helping with conservation and bio-diversity efforts and in designing/planning for habitat restoration within **The Cape** and its interface with Yallock-Bullock Marine and Coastal Park.*

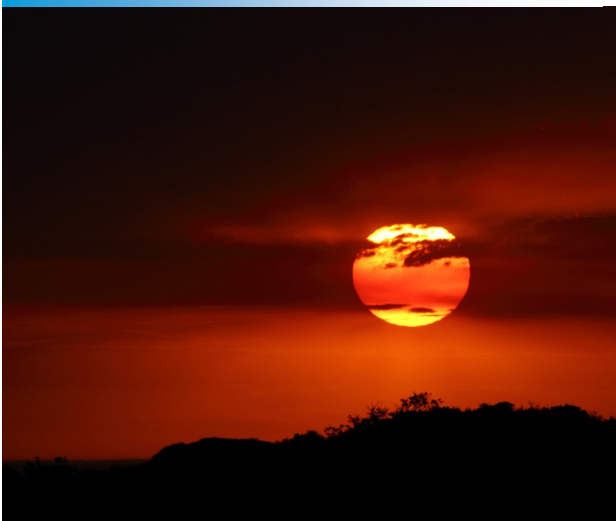
Snake Warning!!!

For those that thought snakes only come out in the summer months, be aware a *Lowland Copperhead* was spotted a few days back sunning itself. While it was a little sluggish, and we are in the depth of winter, this species can appear on sunny days to 'recharge its batteries'!



Above: The tiny *Southern Grass Skink* photographed in a home garden habitat.

Nature Observations around The Cape



The Cape is on the traditional land of the Bunurong people

The **Cape Chatter** blog is a periodic newsletter produced by resident of **The Cape**, David Hartney. You can subscribe to receive it automatically by email by visiting <https://capechatter.com> and signing up. The website also contains all sorts of nature information and pictures of the ecology, flora and fauna at **The Cape**.

All photos shown in **Cape Chatter** are taken by David Hartney unless otherwise credited.

Feel free to contact David by email or through the website to report any nature observations at **The Cape**.

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