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Right: I am not sure how many *Coastal Banksias* line the streets of **The Cape**, but they are certainly providing great food for our lovely *Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos*. This species is one of six black cockatoos in Australia—four are endangered through loss of habitat. The revegetation of indigenous banksias in **The Cape** will help conserve the *Yellow-tailed* species well into the future. We are so fortunate to see them close at hand in our streetscapes as they were on Sunday—it lifts my spirits!!



Nature connectedness, sustainable biodiverse urban design and citizen science

When I first devised the idea of the *Cape Chatter* website and blog over a year ago, my aim, along with like-minded fellow residents, was to observe and record **The Cape's** growing diversity of fauna and flora over time. Starting with a blank canvas, by sharing stories and pictures, I hoped to raise awareness and understanding, contribute to restoring the environment, for residents and visitors to better appreciate what is around us, and enjoy living harmoniously with this special part of the natural world. Using bio-diverse sensitive urban design principles, extensive areas of **The Cape** estate area have been set aside to re-establish native fauna and indigenous flora habitat on once degraded farmland co-existing with housing and community infrastructure. This issue of *Cape Chatter* looks at some of the fantastic work that has been achieved in bringing together the restoration of landscapes, the benefits of connecting with nature and some wonderful citizen science projects helping us as a community and our relationship with the natural world.

While the benefits of sustainable housing design features are at the forefront of development within **The Cape**, the relationship our community and infrastructure has with the natural world is also very important. Beyond our homes, ecological landscapes provide important habitats, shelter and food for our native fauna. Emerging indigenous home gardens, streetscapes, reconstructed wetlands, creek lines and the retention of sensitive habitat areas adjoining the Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park are all contributing to a unique, sustainable, biodiverse urban housing estate. As a community, I believe our legacy should be to nurture this land into a better environment than it was when the first sods were turned. We have underway several citizen science projects supporting this legacy, helping shape the future of the estate, but more importantly conserving our natural world for the benefit of all.

Cape Chatter



Landscaping of the creek line and wetland area (above) has created the 'bog' - important *snipe* habitat. **The Cape** changed the plans by removing a planned boardwalk going through this area, realigned the walking path to go around the area and installed a viewing point with interpretive signage to protect this area (below). Surprisingly, *snipe* are happy to roost nearby human habitation but are flushed out in flight if disturbed.



Other *Latham's Snipe* hotspots within **The Cape** include the natural wetland in the south east corner (below). You may not realise that when walking to 2nd Surf, there may well be several snipe roosting in this area over summer, merely meters away from you. The south-west corner is also good habitat, and it is hoped this area will be further developed for *snipe* and other vulnerable bird species with the future rewinding of this habitat zone.



The remarkable Latham's Snipe

Leading into summer 2019 while walking near the central wetlands, I saw a small bird with a long bill lift off from the watery edge and land in a boggy area nearby. "*Now that was not a duck*" was my first thought from this observation. A few days later, a very quick glimpse of one in the wetlands proved my suspicion we had the remarkable and vulnerable *Latham's Snipe* in the area. Coincidentally, a friend sent me a link about a *Latham's Snipe Project* led by Dr Birgita Hansen, Vice Chair of the Australasian Waders Studies Group. After making contact and putting our hands up to participate in the projects surveys, Birgita visited **The Cape** and with Brendan and myself, had a look and advised on some ideas around further habitat creation for *snipe* in the estate. Fortunately several *snipe* were 'flushed out' during the visit so I felt much vindicated! A small group of residents (Joe Spano, Gabi Tennison, Helen Temple and Jeannie Hartney) have now conducted 4 surveys. In the three surveys conducted last summer season (on specific dates), we observed 16 snipe in **The Cape**, a fantastic result and a valuable contribution to observations along this part of the Victorian coast.

Birgita yesterday published an article in the on line *The Conversation*, in which she explains the remarkable achievements of this migratory bird from northern Japan. See the article at <https://theconversation.com/this-birds-stamina-is-remarkable-it-flies-non-stop-for-5-days-from-japan-to-australia-but-now-its-habitat-is-under-threat-165964>, in which she recognises the work we have achieved here at **The Cape** in conserving snipe habitat:

"Urban development continues to threaten Latham's Snipe habitats. Several snipe sites in eastern Australia are at risk from housing developments and large infrastructure projects. However, a different way of doing things is possible. Eco-friendly developments like the Cape Paterson Ecovillage in Victoria provide hope. Here, researchers and citizen scientists have worked with the developer to help design conservation areas within the development to protect and restore wetlands for snipe." Dr Birgita Hansen, **The Conversation**, 30th August 2021.

The article is well worth a read. So if you happen to see a *Snipe* fly out of the bog or wetlands - just reflect - this little bird has probably flown non-stop for five days over the western Pacific Ocean to reach northern Australia, and then worked its way further south, exhausted and hungry, to spend summer at **The Cape**, rebuilding its stamina to fly north again to breed. And our efforts are contributing to its ongoing survival.

If you want to know more about *Latham's Snipe*, the interpretive sign overlooking the "bog" provides some basic information on what to look for and its features. More information on the **Latham's Snipe Project** can be found at:

<https://lathamssnipeproject.wordpress.com/>

There is also a link to the project on the home page of the *Cape Chatter* website: <https://capechatter.com/>

Hooded Plover Awareness at The Cape ...

Hooded Plovers are one of Australia's most vulnerable shorebirds. Their habitat is mainly open surf beaches and their future is under threat from animal predators along with human behaviour and activity. There was major opposition to **The Cape** development because of their presence along 2nd Surf Beach, and the impact a new estate nearby could have on their breeding. *Birdlife Australia* has a passionate band of local volunteers who monitor their flocking and breeding situation in conjunction with stakeholders such as *Parks Victoria* and *Bass Coast Shire*.

Earlier this year, a *Hooded Plover Awareness* session was organised for residents of **The Cape** and presented by *Birdlife Australia*. This coincided with guardian support to volunteer monitors by several residents of **The Cape** after some pretty poor behaviour towards monitors occurred. Since then, five **Cape** residents have completed *Birdlife Australia* induction training to act as monitors/guardians to help the small number of local volunteers over the coming breeding season. Activities involve observation, reporting sightings and behaviours and helping to educate the public on the beaches.



Monitoring of the breeding behaviours, nesting success and the threats the *Hoodies* face, is instrumental in supporting research and practical measures which can be used to ensure their survival. There is something special about witnessing a fledgling *Hooded Plover* survive against the odds and grow into an adult—it is quite an achievement! Last year there were no fledglings on 2nd Surf, the year before, just one! It is hoped our community efforts to support the local *Hoodie* volunteer group and our behaviours when on the beach, will contribute to improved breeding success rates.

If you think you would like to become involved in helping the *Hoodies*, you can register your interest at *Birdlife Australia*: by going to:

<https://beachvol.birdlife.org.au/>. Your support would be greatly appreciated.

The walk along 2nd Surf is a popular walk for residents of **The Cape**, and with the development booming along, our impact on this *Hoodie* environment is critical. For new and future residents and those who were unable to attend the awareness session, there are several interpretive signs at exit points from **The Cape** at F Break and the 2nd Surf car park as well as in the dog park shelter. These signs provide some guidance on how you can minimise your threats to these birds and how you can appreciate observing their behaviour, resilience and beauty, especially during the breeding season from September to March.

Birdlife Australia is a wonderful conservation organisation. You can help them as well by joining as a member or donating at their website: <https://birdlife.org.au/>

THE HOODED PLOVER

The Cape Peterson area and the beach adjoining The Cape is home to a small, threatened shorebird, the Hooded Plover. It is estimated that only 4000 birds remain in Victoria. You will normally see these birds feeding and resting along the beach and on the rocks. They can be observed between Second Surf and Wilsons Road near The Cape. They are listed as a vulnerable species and their breeding is seriously impacted by human behaviour. Unleashed dogs are one of the major threats to their survival.

Their nesting/breeding period is from mid spring to early autumn which coincides with the busiest holiday and recreation period along our coast. They nest on the upper beach just above the high tide mark and in the dunes. It is normally a simple depression in the sand. If disturbed,

the likelihood of successful hatchlings is extremely low - adult birds will abandon the nest, leaving eggs and young birds to predators and the elements.

Some easy tips to help the Hooded Plovers survive and breed successfully:

- Observe all wildlife from a safe distance and take notice of colony signage.
- Observe signage at beach access points which are placed there during the crucial breeding period - these beaches are patrolled.

Observe roped off areas and signage where nests are likely - do not disturb the nest or the birds - disturbed nests lead to no chicks

- Access the beach via defined paths
- Stay out of the dunes and walk along the water's edge
- Please note that dogs are NOT allowed on the beach at certain periods
- During the times when dogs are allowed, keep them on a leash
- Do not leave dogs unattended while you swim or surf
- If you see the birds on the beach, walk past them about 100m before setting on the sand

For more information go to capeschatter.com

Project KOALA ...revegetating treed habitat in The Cape

Project KOALA is a community led conservation initiative within **The Cape** to re-establish indigenous tree species to complement existing mature stands and link up with habitat restoration works being undertaken by **The Cape** Developer. Working in conjunction with **The Cape** Development and landscaping teams and the knowledge of local ecologists, a small group of residents has formulated a plan to rewild a number of planting zones within **The Cape** and next to the bordering Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park over the coming years. While there is an emphasis on expanding habitat for the local Cape Paterson koala population, the planting approach aims to replicate the coastal scrub using primarily the mini-forest approach of Japanese ecologist, Miyawaki, which will hopefully build habitat to attract a range of birds, small mammals, reptiles and invertebrates. The first of 600 indigenous plants sourced from the local Wonthaggi Seed Bank and Mela-leuca Nursery will be planted this spring by some 50 residents and family members who have signed up to be mini plot custodians or helpers on the community planting day!



More information on Project KOALA can be found on the *Cape Chatter* website at: <https://capechatter.com/project-koala/>

Looking after our wildlife ...

The Cape is a registered *Land for Wildlife* property, a voluntary conservation status which recognises our commitment to protecting our native wildlife. As the estate is home to a range of unique and iconic Australian animals, at times, we are likely to come face to face with animal injuries and sadly, death. We have a registered *Wildlife Victoria* rescuer resident in **The Cape** who is able to check any injured or dead animal (as well as for joeys) and take the necessary action. **Cape** residents have also kindly donated blankets and towels to use in rescue recovery missions. If you see a dead or injured animal, the best, first port of call is to ring *Wildlife Victoria* on **03 8400 7300** and the case will be forwarded to an available local rescuer. Another animal health issue is mange, particularly in wombats, which is prevalent around **The Cape**. Again, we have a **Cape** resident who is able to treat mange where possible. So if you suspect a wombat has mange, please report it to *Mange Management* on **0431 600 125** who will activate a treatment case with our local case worker.



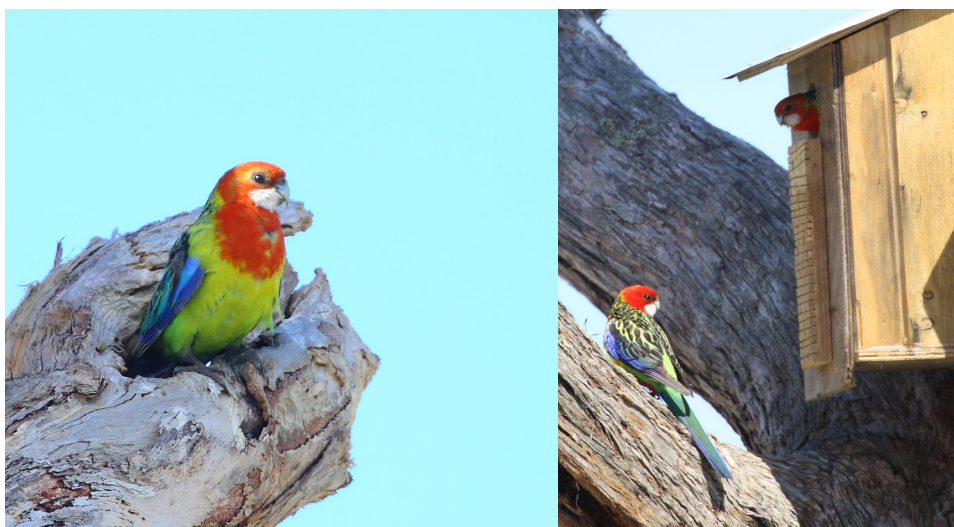
Both *Wildlife Victoria* (<https://www.wildlifevictoria.org.au/>) and *Mange Management* (<https://mangemanagement.org.au/>) are predominantly voluntary not-for-profit organisations who do wonderful work in protecting our wildlife. They welcome any donations to help fund their works. Go to their websites for details.

Habitat and nesting boxes ...

The Cape Development Team and the landscapers have designed and built some fantastic re-created habitats for our wildlife and for residents and visitors to appreciate the local flora and fauna, allowing us to reap the many positive benefits of connecting with nature. A walk down the creek line along *Mary's Circuit* and around the wetlands will provide you with a wonderful chance to observe and get close to nature—and it will only get better over time as the habitat develops and more species take up residence. The estate also has some wonderful and innovative talent, with residents coming up with all types of ideas to enhance the habitat for certain species. In particular, the restored creek line contains a number of large dead tree trunks (stags) which are providing vital perch points for many different bird species. What we do not have is a lot of tree hollows in which birds can nest. So resident Graeme McAlpine has come to the task by building a number of *Eastern Rosella* nesting boxes from recycled/leftover building products to support the breeding efforts of our small population and they have been placed in the stags with the support of resident Rob James (handy on a ladder from his Telstra days!). Graeme has also built micro-bat habitat boxes which have been installed in the stags with some design ideas and help from Jeannie Hartney.

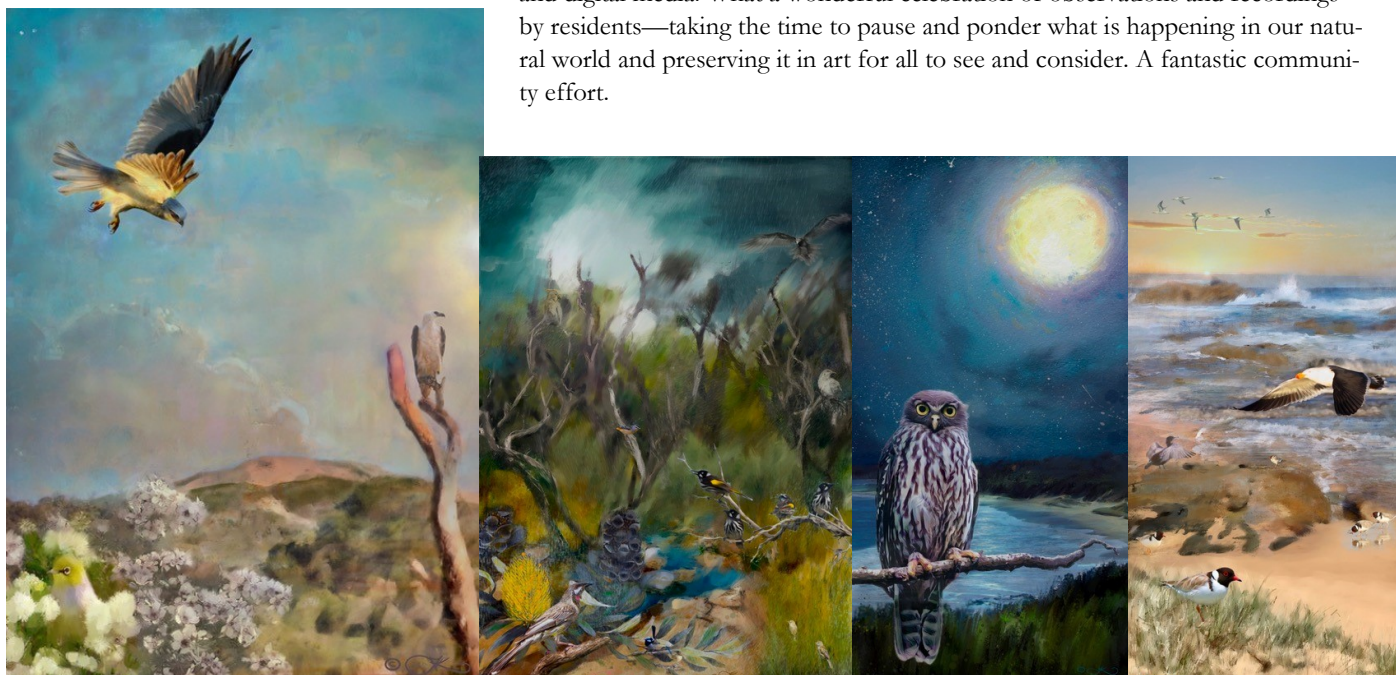
Graeme and fellow resident Trevor Reeves were also instrumental in building, through the Wonthaggi Men's Shed, a number of 'A-frame' *Hooded Plover* chick shelters for the local Bass Coast Hooded Plover group to install this breeding season. Research has found these simple shelters are a great way of ensuring *Hoodie* chicks are protected from predators before they fledge.

Right: The *Eastern Rosellas* took up the nesting box last year about a week after they were installed after checking out the one and only stag hollow.



Turning nature into art ... another connection

Another fantastic community initiative with a connection to nature was the creation of a small mural art piece back in April this year based on some photographs and drawings by **Cape** residents. The art work was created by resident Fran Kirkpatrick based on some photos by myself, Joe Spano and artwork by Helen Temple and Fran herself. It captured local bird species in distinctive habitat environments among local landmarks. Fran had a wonderful story for each of the four panels which she carefully created using a combination of the photos, artwork and digital media. What a wonderful celebration of observations and recordings by residents—taking the time to pause and ponder what is happening in our natural world and preserving it in art for all to see and consider. A fantastic community effort.



Do you need to change your tree netting?

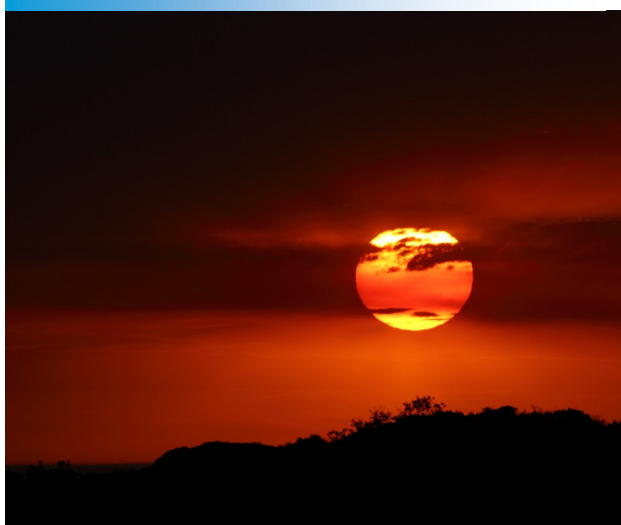
New regulations now apply to the installation of netting to protect your fruit trees from birds and mammals. Death from entrapment in netting is one of the major problems identified by Wildlife Victoria. From September, domestic fruit growers will be required to use netting with an aperture of five millimetres by five millimetres at full stretch. Penalties apply. See the article in the ABC for more details: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2021-08-25/vic-fruit-tree-netting-animal-cruelty-act/100393996?fbclid=IwAR32cJ0QZxxqXUWWUmIyn5W7aAxRP2fLvMQxT7eRvYclIVijlCHgxIS9dQQ>.

Some final nature observations!

A large flock of *Little Corella* (*below right*) has returned to **The Cape**—oh they make such a racket as they move around feeding in the open spaces. Classical Australian bird-mania! I have heard the beautiful calls beginning from the *Little Grassbird* in both wetland areas and the faint, distant call of *Fan-tailed Cuckoo* in the coastal scrub, sure signs Spring is here with the return of migratory birds. The swooping *Australian Magpie* **'Darcy'** is attacking me most days and that will only get more hectic as the breeding/nesting season progresses. A skirmish among five *Eastern Rosellas* (*below left*) in our home garden suggests there is some turf war going on among them—I am yet to see them take up a nesting box but they keep looking. And finally, some whale action, reported by residents Mary-ann Satur and Joe & Jo Spano, offshore both First and Second Surf, with breaches and blows. Mary-ann saw *Humpbacks* but Joe reckons his sighting could have been *Southern Rights*. And in late, breaking news from resident Alison McAlpine, a fairly 'habituated' *Kookaburra* is hanging around near Stage 1—reasonably comfortable with human presence! These iconic birds are not common at **The Cape**. It is best not to hand feed these wild birds—it is not good for their health and they may become aggressive.



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**.

Email: dwhartney@bigpond.com

capechatter.com
