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Cape Chatter

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The plots thicken ... and the stars align!

The last issue of *Cape Chatter* focused on some of the work being done by the Development Team and **The Cape** community in making a positive contribution to the natural world within the estate through bio-diverse sensitive urban design and citizen science projects. Last Saturday, just over 30 owners and residents gathered throughout the day (in accordance with COVID restrictions) to complete the first phase of Project KOALA with 600 plantings in 12 plots toward habitat restoration. And, right on cue, today, the first reported koala sighting in **The Cape** occurred with a healthy and beautiful looking animal on the roam in some *Coastal Banksia* trees in the north east corner of the estate. Makes all those sore joints and achy muscles worthwhile—we just need this Koala to head toward the habitat areas!



Plover Appreciation Day—Thursday 16th September

Thursday is Birdlife Australia's Plover Appreciation Day, so if you are out and about on the local beaches, spare a thought for these lovely little birds that live under pretty tough conditions and take a moment to check them out from a safe distance. In addition to several residents volunteering as Hooded Plover Monitors and the Hooded Plover Awareness Day held for The Cape earlier in the year, we are hopeful of more collaboration in the future occurring between the local Hoodie volunteer group, Birdlife Australia and **The Cape**. We are now into plover nesting season, so if you are walking along the local Cape beaches, please try and follow the guidelines shown on local signage—this will improve chances for a more successful nesting season and hopefully, we get some fledglings. See <https://www.networkbirdlife.org/home/plover-lover-plans-for-plover-appreciation-day-2021> for more information, or Facebook [@hooded.plover.birdlife](#) and Instagram [@birdlife_hoodie](#). Hopefully, as **The Cape** develops, we can minimise our impact on these vulnerable birds, and in fact, give them a better future.



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. The plan is 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. 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 locally were planted last Saturday by some 30 residents/owners who signed up to be mini plot custodians or helpers. It was a great, fun day and the planting area looks a treat. Again, many thanks to **The Cape** Developer and landscape team for getting right behind the project with equal enthusiasm—now it is up to nature to do its thing with a little nurturing from us.



Lets hope this lovely iconic Australian creature can find its way into more natural habitat areas over time and thereby reduce the risk of trauma or death from roaming the urban streets. Many thanks to resident **Joe Spano** for his lovely shot of the *Koala* (right) and also for **The Cape** Development Team in quickly setting up some road detours to give the koala some safe space to move.



This is not a symbiotic relationship!!!

Last years followers of *Cape Chatter* may remember my 'run-ins' with a certain male *Australian Magpie* (named 'Darcy') who swooped me continuously for about two months while protecting his territory during the breeding season. He had a particular affinity to me for some reason. Darcy and the 'Missus' produced four offspring and I thought I might be spared this year if they had a year off. No such luck! 'Darcy' is at it again. The 'missus' is on a nest, and with the youngest of the offspring still in tow, 'Darcy' is back into aggressive mode. This year though, he appears to be attacking a wider group of threats to his territory. It may be of some comfort, that it is not just us humans that are threatened, as he is pretty determined to keep other birds away, including a few stoushes between *Magpie Lark*, *Masked Lapwing*, *Little Raven*, *Galah*, *Eastern Rosella*, *Whistling Kite* and *Common Starlings*. 'Darcy's' territory is centred on the central wetland complex, across east to Sunlight Blvd and up Moonshadow Ave. The central creek line and the southern few stags are also his domain, so if walking around that area and along Mary's Circuit, be warned!! I just have to walk out into the back yard to garden and I am under attack!!



Above Left: 'Darcy', the male, and the main man around our house at the moment. Such a beautiful bird—I wonder what is going on his mind as I took this photo of him in the vacant lot behind my house a few days back. **Above Right:** This is son of Darcy (SOD), another striking bird, still hanging around with the parents. He is a frequent visitor to our garden and I have taken to talking nicely to him in the hope we become friends in the years ahead if he stays around.



Speaking of territorial and aggressive birds, be aware that a pair of *Masked Lapwing* (pictured left) are in nesting mode near the mini-oval off the southern end Moonshadow Ave. These guys have also been seen flying overhead and swooping several people and also chase off other bird threats. Also known as the "Spurred Lapwing" (it has some sharp spurs on its wings), they too can become quite territorial and aggressive if you happen to walk into their space! So it might be best to take a detour if they show any aggressive behaviour toward you.

Its pretty scary living down in this part of **The Cape!**

Little birds starting to explore wider fields ...

Interestingly, over the past week or so, I have noticed some of our petite, smaller birds venturing away from the protection of the coastal scrub and having a quick peek into the home gardens. Other residents have reported this as well. I think this is a great sign that as our garden habitats develop, they will become important stepping stones containing food, water and protection for these small birds against the larger predator birds such as *Magpies*, *Little Ravens* and *Grey Butcherbirds*... and you will get a closer look at some of these beautiful and engaging creatures with lovely songs.



The recent roll call in our home garden includes *Grey Fantail* (above left), *Willy Wagtail*, (above right), *Yellow-faced Honeyeater* (below left), and *New Holland Honeyeater* (below right). In addition, a female *Flame Robin* was spotted on the Top Dam of the restored creek line. Once we have more vegetated stepping stones and more established home gardens, we should expect to see more little birds. Remember to build your garden with layers of plants and to provide some clean water, especially as the weather warms up!



Some other nice bird observations ...

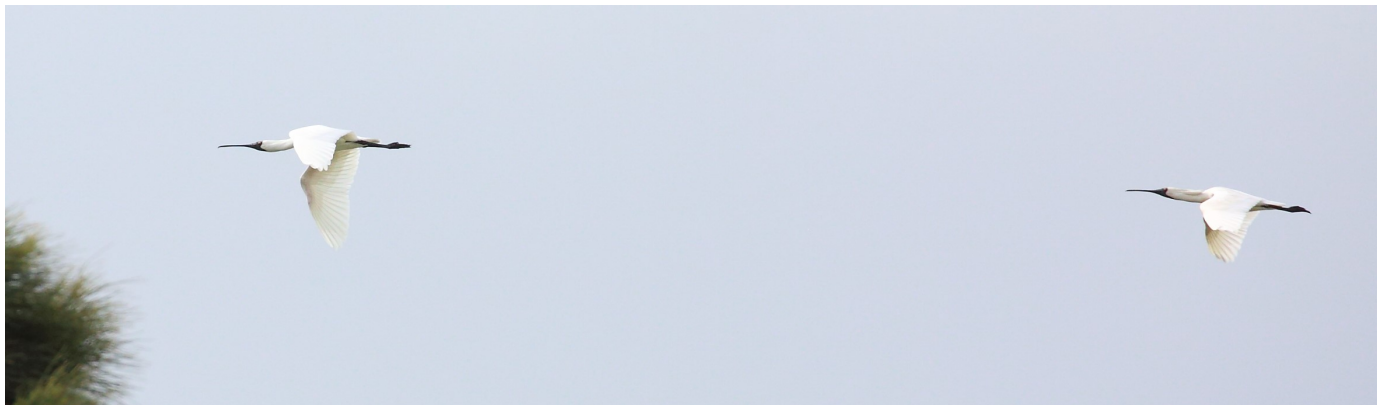
Thanks to resident Robyn Walter for the sighting of a lovely *Black Swan* family (parents and three cygnets) currently hanging out on the Wilson Road dam. There was a similar sighting this time last year with five cygnets. Joe Spano's 'keen ear' has him reporting *Fan-tailed Cuckoo* and the smaller *Horsefield's Bronze Cuckoo* from the coastal scrub of Yallock-Bulluk. These are migrant birds from further north in Australia and their trilling calls will be heard throughout spring. A couple of *Royal Spoonbill* flew gracefully over **The Cape** last week which was confirmed also by resident Peter W—they are lovely birds and listed as vulnerable in Victoria. The other lovely call emerging is that of the *Little Grassbird*, which inhabits both reconstructed wetlands. Often heard and not seen, it is quite vocal over the warmer, breeding months. There will be much more action to report in October which tends to be the busiest time for birds in this area.



Above: *Fan-tailed Cuckoo* in the coastal scrub. They have a beautiful trilling call throughout spring.



Above: *Black Swan* family on Wilson Rd—this photo was taken last year about the same time. This year, there are three cygnets with the parents.



Above: *Royal Spoonbill* pair in flight over **The Cape**. These birds are listed as vulnerable in Victoria. Sometimes, they can be seen feeding in the 'bog' near the central wetland complex.

The very secretive *Levin's Rail* is still about. On Friday and Saturday while working on the Project KOALA plantings, the calls of this little seen small waterfowl were heard emanating from the small wetland in the south east near the dog park. This is great proof that the re-wilding of the habitat at The Cape is working, especially in the wetlands, where this bird inhabits. It is rarely seen and feeds between dusk and dawn, preferring to remain among the thick growth of the sedges and rushes.

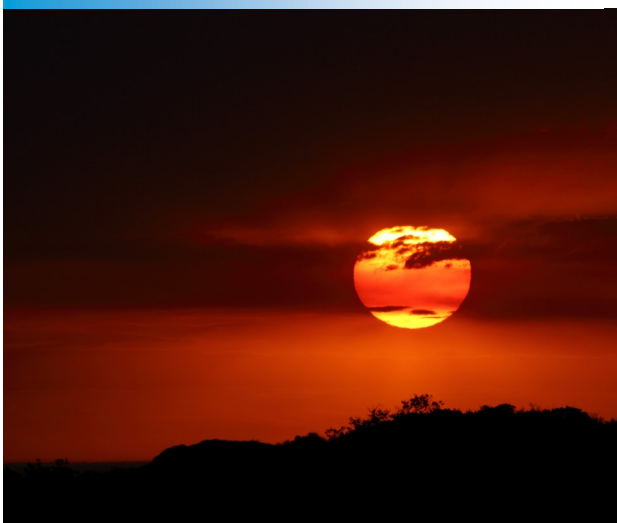
Right: *Little Grassbird* hiding out in the central wetland complex.



Some faces of the local 'mob' ...



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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