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Cape Chatter

Beach nesting birds ...

Cape Chatter has been away at South Australia's Yorke Peninsula attending *Birdlife Australia's Beach Nesting Bird Conference* so apologies for the time between publications. The Conference brought together a group of very passionate experts, land managers and volunteers to hear about the 'state of the nation' of these vulnerable birds, including our very own local species, the *Hooded Plover*. There is still much to be done to arrest the decline of these bird species, but we came away very encouraged by the passion displayed by all involved along with good scientific research and management plans in place to support the ongoing protection and survival of the species.



Above: Can you spot the tiny 7-8 day old chick located in between the two adult *Hooded Plovers* on our local 2nd Surf Beach earlier this year? Sadly this little bird didn't get past the 12 day mark.

At a national level, the high level threats to these birds continues to be the effects of climate change on beach and coastal structure causing dune reshaping and beach erosion. Off leash dogs, fox predation and human behaviours on beach nesting sites is also a high level threat across Australia. Medium level threats include the impact of coastal developments with increased numbers of people on beaches and the growing numbers of predatory avian species (magpies and ravens) which tend to 'move in' and increase in numbers when such developments occur. The work by *Birdlife Australia* and its supporters is about monitoring and gathering data to make informed decisions and develop plans to help these birds. A huge effort is also being made to raise community awareness through education and communication so that behaviours can be changed ... hopefully we will start seeing the results of this hard work and advocacy. The 2021-22 breeding season is over so there is much to do in preparation for the coming season. If you are interested in helping out in any capacity in your local area, then check out the *Birdlife Australia* website at: <https://beachvol.birdlife.org.au/>

Bass Coast Beach Nesting Bird breeding results for 2021-22

The final breeding results for beach nesting birds along the Bass Coast from San Remo to Inverloch are in with some mixed results. Last year's *Hooded Plover* fledge numbers rose from a disastrous 5 birds to 11 (the yearly average is 11 to 12). All the fledged birds were west of nearby Harmer's Haven with success at the more remote beaches including the Desalination Beach, Powlett River, Kilcunda and George Bass Coastal Walk Sandy Waterhole. Unfortunately, no *Hooded Plover* chicks fledged from Harmer's Haven east to Inverloch, which includes the Cape Paterson coastal area. The threats at play outlined on the previous page are definitely at work here.



Four Red-capped Plovers and two Pied Oystercatchers chicks fledged at Inverloch's Ayr Creek Lagoon but there were no reports of Sooty Oystercatchers.

Over the winter months, the *Hooded Plover* birds will flock into groups of varying size before pairing up in Spring leading into the breeding season at which time they will establish and protect nesting sites. A flock of 8 *Hoodies* has been seen consistently along the local 2nd Surf Beach and west of F Break in the past few days – it is a popular flocking site.

We continue to get zero breeding outcomes of Hooded Plovers along the Cape Paterson coast ...



Above: Red-capped Plover chicks are extremely small and vulnerable like *Hooded Plover* chicks until they fledge.



Above: Pied Oystercatcher chicks are a little more robust than their smaller beach-nesting counterparts.



The Swamp Wallaby (*wallabia bicolor*) ...

We see quite a number of *Eastern Grey Kangaroos* regularly around **The Cape**, but less obvious is another lovely mammal, the *Swamp Wallaby*. I have managed to see them a couple of times during daylight hours emerging from the thick coastal bush, but they are not a common sight out in the open. So it is nice to see we are getting some good proof of their presence, particularly of a night, from a couple of sensor camera we have deployed in association with Parks Victoria in the remnant bush bordering **The Cape** and Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park. Even more enjoyable is seeing a joey wallaby in company of an adult!



Above: Adult *Swamp Wallaby* sets off the sensor camera and a fraction later is followed by a joey. Healthy looking critters as well. The picture above right is one of the few I have managed of a *Swamp Wallaby* in daylight at **The Cape**, taken back in the summer of 2020-21. This guy looks like he is on steroids! Another healthy looking critter.

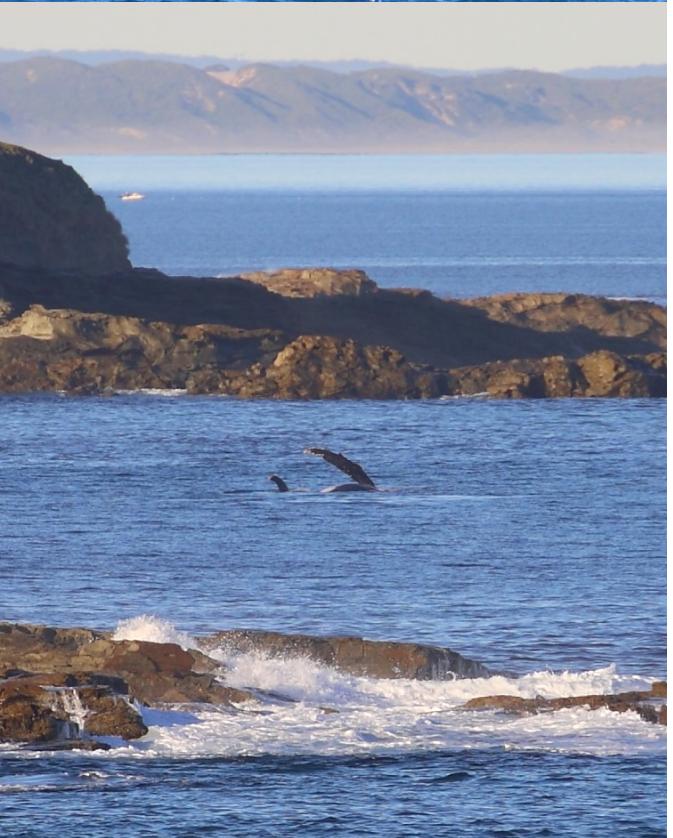


Predatory Red Fox

We continue to get vision of *Red Fox* captured on the sensor camera-as wherever they are placed. These animals are reeking havoc on our native wildlife with an estimated 1.7 million fox killing 567 million native animals yearly in Australia. We are yet to see any feral cats on sensor camera but they have been seen and photographed within the estate. The estimated 2.8 million feral cats account for the destruction of 1.545 billion native animals in Australia yearly!

Whale migration time ...

There have been reported sightings of migratory *Humpback Whales* off Philip Island and the Bunurong Coast in recent days so keep your eyes peeled and carry your binoculars if you are wandering along the beach or coastal clifftops. It is a great time to catch a glimpse over the next month or two as they journey north to their breeding grounds. On their return journey in Spring, they reportedly tend to veer south near Wilson's Promontory to their Antarctic feeding grounds and we get less chance to see them on this coastline. Keep your eyes out for the occasional *Southern Right* as well!!



While most of the *Humpbacks* are way offshore and difficult to see in detail, you can see blows and breaches and you occasionally get a small group come close in to shore off Cape Patterson and further along the coast past Undertow Bay, like above.

What's happening on the birding front ...

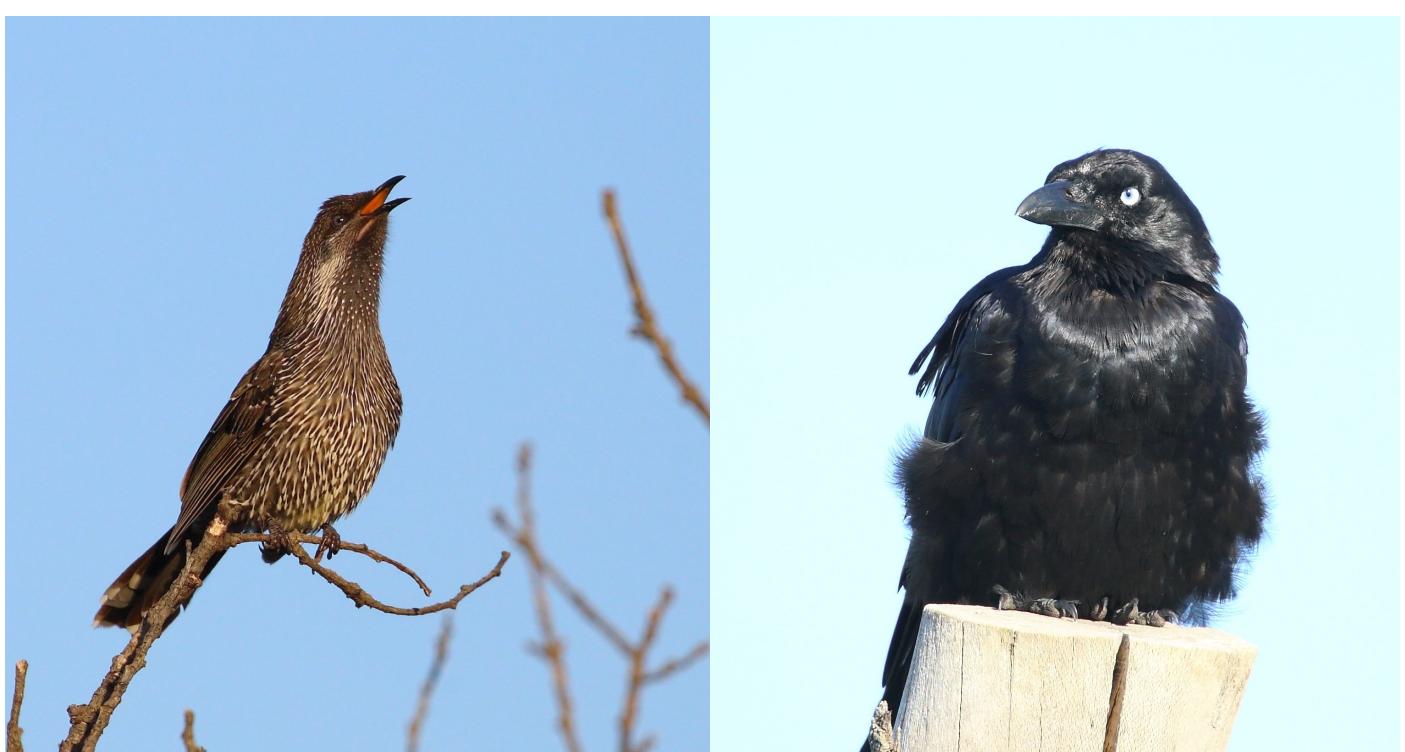
Not too much really We are in a bit of a hiatus. Since returning from Yorke Peninsula, I have been out with the camera a couple of times before the recent chilly blast came through, and it is the usual hardy birds accustomed to the local conditions that are about.

Typical are the resident birds *Australian Magpie*, *Little Raven*, *Masked Lapwing*, *Crested Pigeon*, *Magpie Larks* and *Wattlebirds*—they never seem to disappear! In the wetlands I saw *Australasian Swamphen* and *Dusky Moorhen* which now appear well established in **The Cape** and the odd *White-faced Heron* flying past—not too many ducks around!! Hearing the occasional call of the *Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo*.

Smaller birds worthy of note include the *Superb Fairy-wren*, *White-browed Scrubwren*, *Brown Thornbill*, *Grey Fantail* and a few *Silveryeye*, along with *New Holland Honeyeater* and *White-eared Honeyeater*.



Clockwise from above: *Australian Magpie* holding tight in the strong wind; the energetic *Red Wattlebird* feeding on *Coastal Banksia*; a grumpy looking *Little Raven*, and the most vocal *Little Wattlebird*.



Some of the smaller birds about at the moment ...



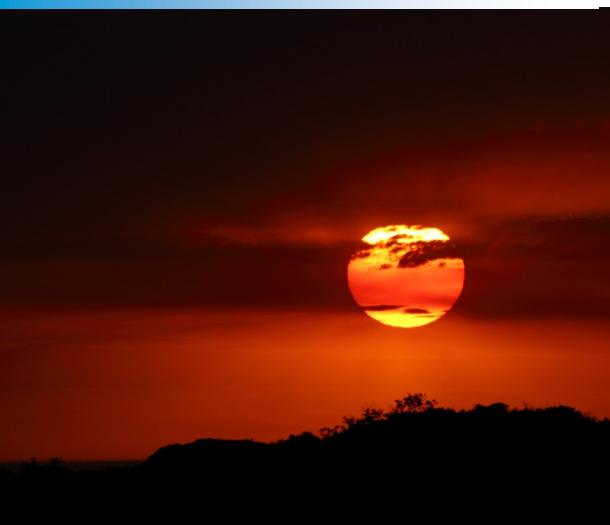
Clockwise from above: The *White-eared Honeyeater* is generally a cooler climate visitor to the area; the *New Holland Honeyeater*, the most populous honeyeater along with the *Wattlebirds* and is resident all year round; an adult pair of *Superb Fairy-wrens* (female top and male below) - also permanent residents; and the *White-browed Scrubwren*—a most difficult bird to see and photograph and more likely heard in the heath scrub and possibly that little brown blur flying very fast from thicket to thicket! It is also a permanent resident in the area.

In recognition of World Parrot Day (which was yesterday) ...

Some of our more colourful local parrots—from the common to the threatened—in recognition of World Parrot Day. Introducing the stunningly beautiful and threatened *Blue-winged Parrot*, the colourful yet pesky common *Rainbow Lorikeet*, and the eye-catching *Eastern Rosella*.



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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