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October is a great month for bird watching. There is a bit of warmth, some humidity and rain, plenty of blossoming plants, and lots of invertebrates starting to appear in the air. There is heaps of chattering and chirping from our feathered friends and why wouldn't there be! The past week has also been *National Bird Week* which included *Birdlife Australia's Backyard Bird Count*, which is a fun exercise in citizen science where you can see how many birds in your vicinity you can identify in 20 minutes and then upload your observations via an app. It is a great way to learn about the local birds in the local area and the data is invaluable for researchers in identifying the 'state of the nation' of our bird life.

At **The Cape**, several residents have been completing counts which helps build our records on how healthy our stocks are as the estate develops. In the past week, we have added 2 new bird species to our growing bird list, which is now up to **123** species. The two new additions were both stunners—a *Grey Goshawk* and a *Satin Flycatcher*. And down on the coast, we have been visited by some mighty little migratory waders all the way from Siberia, with a small flock of *Red-necked Stints* (below) seen foraging among a flock of 8 *Hooded Plovers* on the rocky platforms of F Break.

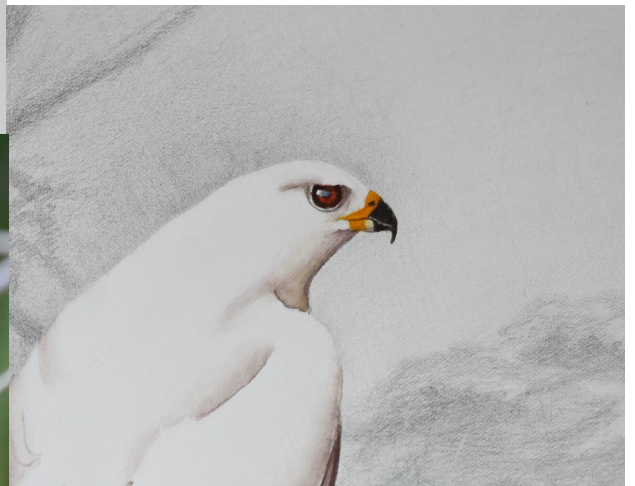


Cape Chatter

Bird 122 ...Rapt to see another hawk around ...



Talented artist, keen birder and resident, Helen Temple, recently showed me a drawing she had completed while doing a workshop with Tasmanian wildlife artist Robin Wingrave. It is an exquisite piece of a *Grey Goshawk* (left) which she has kindly let me show in *Cape Chatter*. So Helen was very excited when she informed me she observed a *Grey Goshawk* this week perched in a dead tree at the southern end of Sunlight Blvd. Having spent so much time learning the detail of the bird for her drawing, she was in no doubt that what she saw was a *Grey Goshawk*—brilliant white with some soft grey colourings on the back of the wings. *Grey Goshawks* are polymorphic with both a *Grey* (more prominent in northern Australia) and *White* morph (more prominent in southern Australia). Both morphs interbreed. They are a stunning bird. Many thanks to Helen for sharing her beautiful artwork and for her great observation.



Bird 123 ... the Satin Flycatcher



How is this for a beautiful bird—the latest addition to **The Cape** bird list. Resident Joe Spano and I set off on an Aussie Bird count expedition Friday afternoon—Joe with binos in hand and me with camera—and we came away quite excited when we observed a *Satin Flycatcher* flitting about in an old *Manna Gum* in the south east remnant habitat of **The Cape**. At first, we both thought that it was the more common *Willie Wagtail*—but the flashes of brilliant blue plumage on the head and back and flicking tail convinced us quickly this was a *Satin Flycatcher*. It is not a commonly seen species, especially in the far south of its range, where it is a summer breeding migrant.

I managed a few quick shots while it briefly perched among the *Manna*.

Above: The fantastic male *Satin Flycatcher*. The sun has highlighted the blue sheen of the dark plumage on the back and head. The chest below the throat is all white. The female has more grey-blue colouring with some buff tinges on the wing edges and throat.

More 'expedition' sightings ...

As Joe and I continued our expedition, we could hear the beautiful call of the *Olive Whistler*. This is a bird more often heard than seen, as it feeds on the ground and in low shrubs. We both first saw this bird back in 2020 in a nearby location. Its call is fantastic and among my favourites of the 'Whistlers'. We were not disappointed when a male popped into the top of an open bush and began its powerful, melodic notes to another bird nearby—hopefully a female! These birds are warm weather migrants to the area.



The blossom of the *Swamp Melaleuca* is starting to fade, but the bush is full of flowering *Teatree* and *Leucopogon* (Coast Beard Heath) which provide a wonderful environment for all sorts of small invertebrates which are attracting the small birds. The *Leucopogon* is also a phenomenal food source for birds when the fruits form and ripen.

The very active *Grey Fantail*, *Brown Thornbill* and *White-browed Scrub-wren* were very persistent in the heathlands as we wandered through.



Not to be outdone, the distinctive calls of the local resident *Eastern Yellow Robin* (below) rang out nearby and out appeared the stunning this small yellow chested bird on a nearby tree to check us out.



Above: The very inquisitive *Eastern Yellow Robin*.

Left: The even more inquisitive *Grey Fantail* sitting atop a flowering *Leucopogon*.

Sending us both 'cuckoo' ...

A couple of other visiting bush birds we could hear but could not observe, were the *Fan-tailed Cuckoo* and *Horsefield's Bronze Cuckoo*. Joe recently tracked down another cuckoo, the *Shining Bronze Cuckoo* (see *Chatter* No. 79) but these other two species were proving elusive and very frustrating to photograph. With the rain approaching, Jo peeled off home, but I rallied on and finally managed to get a distance glimpse of the *Fan-tailed* from the walking track leading to the 2nd Surf exit. We will keep looking for the *Horsefield's*!

Right: A male *Fan-tailed Cuckoo* with its distinctive yellow eye ring. This bird has an extremely recognisable trill call which is dominant in the heath bushland at the moment.



Flashes of Red ...

The mighty little *Red-browed Finch* are still about and regularly seen ground feeding among the grasses of the open habitat. They are usually in small flocks and like the *Silver-eye*, move together in flight with much chirping to their next feeding destination. Beautiful little birds. These shots were taken next to the walking track near where I photographed the *Fan-tailed Cuckoo*.

Small ground feeding birds rely heavily on the flowers and seeds of herbaceous plants, grasses and some weeds, so retaining areas of open habitat at this time of the year to support these species is important.



Above: *White-browed Scrub-wren*—another active bird at the moment.



On the way back, I dropped by the small south east wetland to see if I could hear the vulnerable little waterfowl, the *Levin's Rail*. I was not disappointed and it was great to hear it's call. It seems to have settled in nicely into the thick vegetation at the waters edge. I am yet to see this bird!

The final bird count for the expedition was 22 bird species—not a bad effort for a short period of time.

Closer to home ...

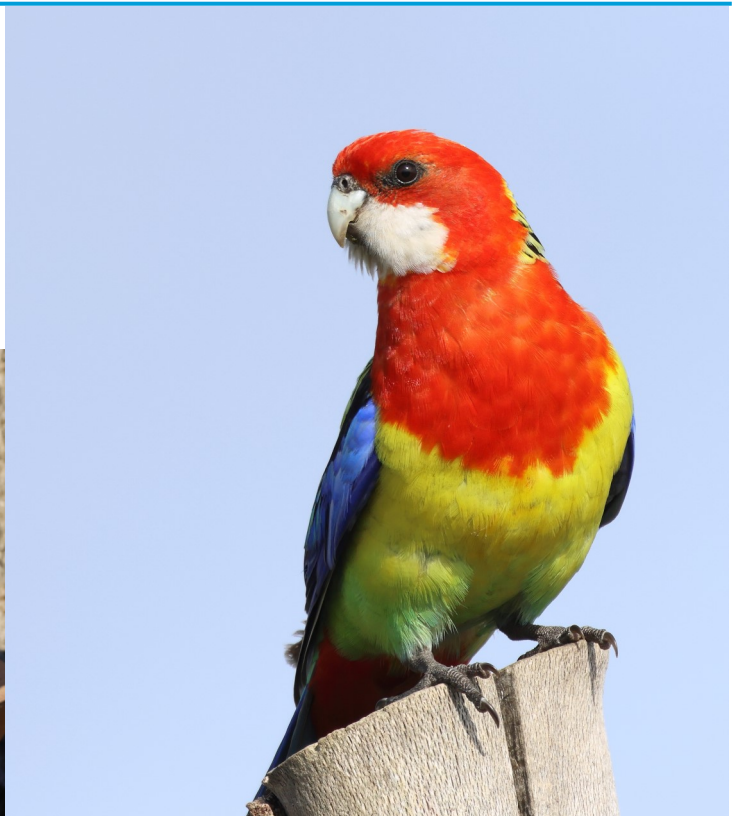
Garden structures are really important for our native wildlife. It is not just about providing food—but also shelter, protection, observation points and water, particularly as the weather starts to warm up. Water sources need not be expensive—in our garden, we only use cheap terracotta saucers placed above and on the ground for birds, reptiles, insects and amphibians to rehydrate.



Above: This *Grey Shrike-thrush* is a daily visitor to our garden and often stops by for a drink at the cheap terracotta bird bath.

Bees swarming ...

Thank you to resident Jacqui O'Connell for alerting the community to a bee swarm in a *Coastal Banksia* in Sunlight Blvd on Friday. There have been several swarms reported around the estate—here and on Wilson Rd, so please be careful as these guys can be pretty nasty!



Above: Many birds like to perch atop an open or dead tree trunk to check out what is going around the area. This morning, this stunning *Eastern Rosella* dropped by to perch on one of the garden tree stags we have placed for in the garden for this very purpose.

Warm weather critters emerging

As the habitat areas/wetlands and home gardens burst with growth and food sources, the slithery snakes are emerging in numbers, so be aware when walking the tracks or gardening at home. Down in snake gully near the central wetland, there are 3 *Lowland Copperheads* regularly being seen in the swales and habitat logs. So be careful ... and please remember, these are protected animals.



Above: Thanks to resident Glenn Satur for this great picture of one of the *Lowland Copperheads* in the rock swale. This one appears ready to shed its skin.

Down by the seaside ...

As mentioned, it is great to see some inter-continental migratory waders down on the rock platforms of Cape Paterson's coast. The *Red-necked Stints* have been hanging out near some local *Hooded Plovers* after their amazing long distance journey from their breeding grounds in Siberia.



Red-necked Stints weigh little more than a box of matches! It is the tiniest migrant wader and also has one of the longest migrations of any shorebird completing a return journey of some 24,000 km from the high Siberian Arctic to the southern tip of Australia. Tens of thousands of birds make this journey and they arrive exhausted and can be seen feeding ferociously along beaches rebuilding their strength. Thanks to residents Duncan Bell and Joe Spano for alerting me of their arrival.

Right: There are plenty of *Crested Terns* about along the Cape Paterson coast and they are often seen out on the rock platforms. Great photo here by resident Joe Spano—looks like there are a few more *Terns* on the way!!

Meet a few more of our local Hooded Plovers ...

A flock of eight Hoodies was seen on a recent monitoring session at known nesting sites west of Wilson Rd. Four of the birds were tagged: Orange RY, White AS, White DZ and White AW. 'DZ' and 'AW' were particularly close to each other; 'RY' usually hangs out in the 2nd Surf blowout, and 'AS' appears to be hanging around just west of Wilson Rd.



You can check out all the latest *Hooded Plover* breeding news in the Cape Paterson area at the *Hooded Plover Project* page on the *Cape Chatter* website. This allows you to follow all the crucial stages of the nesting season and will make you aware of what is happening if you are planning on walking near these nesting areas. Click on the link left.

<https://capechatter.com/the-hooded-plovers-of-cape-paterson-2/>

Recreating habitat for endangered species ...

We are currently dealing with severe flooding in south east Australia, but not that long ago we were dealing with destructive bushfires that wiped out many thousands of animals and their habitat. *Bird-life Australia* does wonderful conservation work for our vulnerable birds and has worked tirelessly to help many species affected by bushfire. One species is the gorgeous *Gang-gang Cockatoo*.

Community led habitat restoration projects, such as Project KOALA at **The Cape**, are very important schemes in rebuilding much needed habitat for our threatened species. Many of the plant species planted in the mini-forest plots to support local *Koala* into the future, along with the other extensive plantings of *Coastal Banksia* and other endemic tree species in the creeks and wetlands, are also suitable for bird species such as the *Gang-gang*. If these birds happen to come by our area in the quest for new feeding locations away from their traditional feeding areas, projects such as these will play an important role in securing their future existence.

We can all do our bit by initiating or helping out with community led revegetation projects such as Project KOALA or by planting useful and appropriate species where possible in your home gardens. *Chatter* hopes to see more such community led projects at **The Cape** initiated to support our growing list of threatened animal species.

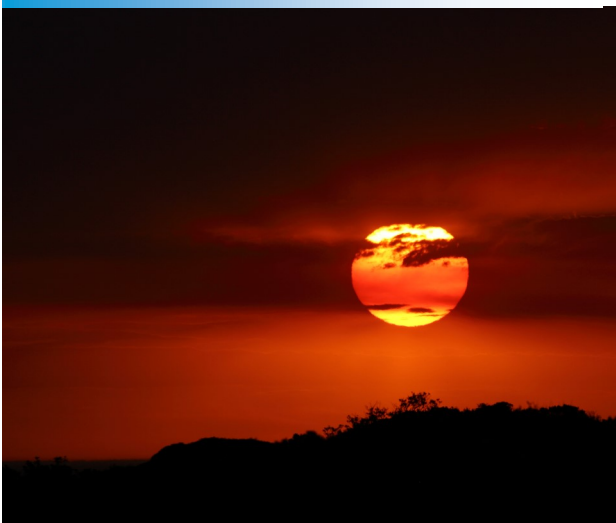
If you would like to know more about or volunteer for the Gang-gang Recovery Project, go to <https://www.birdsinbackyards.net/content/article/Join-BirdLifes-Gang-gang-Recovery-Project>

"The Gang-gang Cockatoo's plight is particularly alarming, having gone from a species considered of Least Concern straight to a recommendation by the National Threatened Species Committee that it be listed as Endangered. While the dramatic change in its conservation status is largely the result of the 2019-20 fires, the species population has been slowly declining in recent years - by approximately 69 % in the last three generations."



Above: *Gang-gang Cockatoo* pictured at a simple bird bath at my previous property at Woodend in central Victoria. It would be a tragedy to see this species disappear like many of its other *Cockatoo* cousins.

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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