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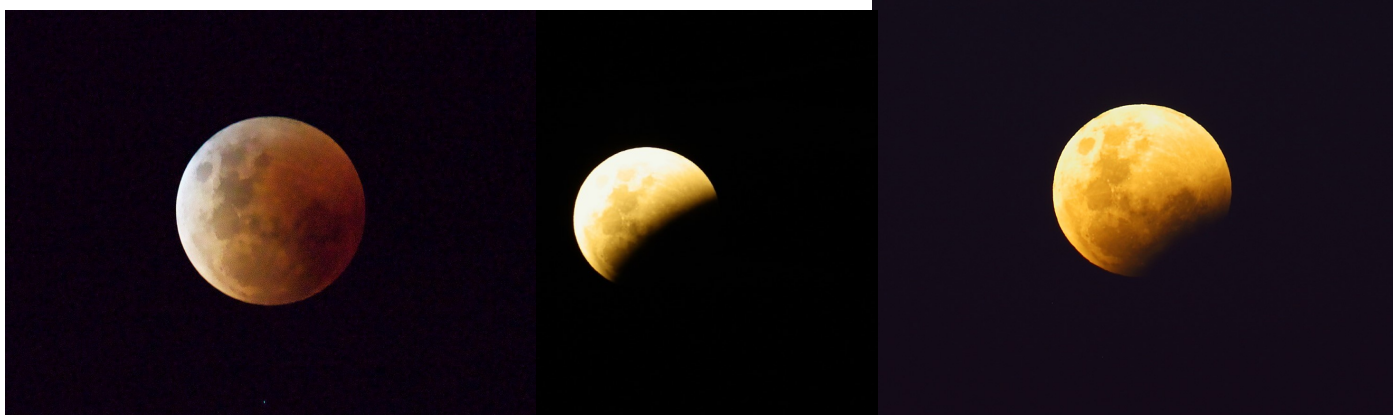
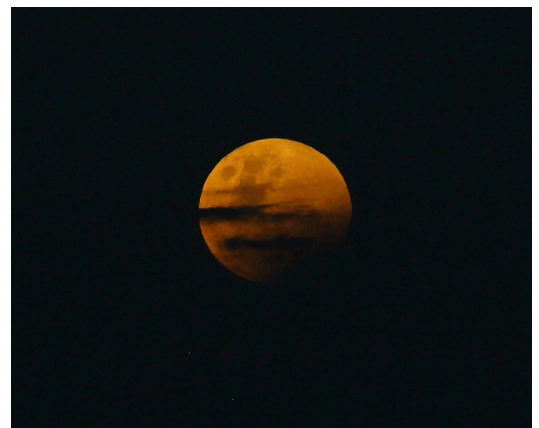
Cape Chatter

The 'crescent' on 'Moonshadow' Avenue ...

The stars aligned—well actually, the Moon, Earth and the Sun—to produce a spectacular lunar eclipse and blood Moon on the evening of 8 November. Some stunning weather helped the observation with just a little amount of cloud blocking out the unfolding event on occasions. Coincidentally, a lovely, uncommon *Crescent Honeyeater* has been visiting our garden facing *Moonshadow Avenue* with daily visits for a feed and bath. How appropriate this little beauty was around at the same time as the eclipse, given it is named after the *crescent* shaped markings on its chest, and it has a liking for hanging out in *Moonshadow Avenue*.

Night photography is not my forte, but I did get out and had a go at getting a few early eclipse images from the observation point at the western end of the ridge line above Weathertop Crest. This is a wonderful spot to watch the world go 'around', with the sun setting in the west and the moon rising in the east—just magical. We have had some spectacular sunsets over recent days as well!

This sequence of photos, clockwise from the right is, firstly, the early orange moon rising just above the horizon; next the first hint of the eclipse; and finally after half an hour or so. My blood moon photos from later in the evening are really not worth publishing!! But ... fellow resident and *Chatter* contributor Joe Spano saved the day and managed a lovely photo of the full eclipse (bottom left)—a challenging feat. Thank you Joe for sharing the great image.



Hope you were able to enjoy and see this total lunar eclipse, because we won't see another one in Australia until September 8, 2025.

The 'crescent' on 'Moonshadow' ...

The home garden habitat is really starting to emerge as a 'stepping stone' safe haven and foraging area for some of our small native birds. It's not all *ravens*, *magpies* and *wattlebirds*. We recently had a visit by a lovely little *honeyeater*, the *Crescent Honeyeater*, which was dropping in from the coastal reserve and feeding primarily on the flowers of an *Emu Bush* (on of three in our garden kindly provided by resident Graeme McAlpine a couple of years back). Nearby, is our small, basic terracotta birdbath—and both have become very popular for this little bird.



Food, shelter and water—the perfect ingredients for small birds, especially this Crescent Honeyeater.



The visiting bird is, I think, a female *Crescent Honeyeater*. The male has more distinct black and white crescent markings with dark grey-brown colourings, while the female is more olive-brown and the crescent is less clearly defined.

This bird has developed a set circuit through our garden, coming in from the coastal bushland, feeding on the nectar of the *Emu Bush* flower, sometimes accompanied by a quick splash, then a quick preen and rinse off, before departing further into **The Cape** toward the Stage 1 area and returning later. So keep an eye out up that way!

All this has to be done before the territorial wattlebirds realise their is an intruder in their midst and the little one has to move on. Tough life!

Notice the specialised, protrusible brush-tipped tongue used for nectar feeding.



Speaking of Little Wattlebirds ...



I know they are noisy, hyperactive and very territorial, but there is something special about the quill like plumage ... and they love the *Kangaroo Paw* when the ends of the flower opens up. This bird is becoming very confiding and I see it at close quarters from my study window where these plants are and sometimes quite close-up in the garden. Nectar energy is everything for these active birds.

Warm weather creatures emerging ...

Last *Chatter*, we featured the emergence of the venomous Lowland Copperhead snake, the most common snake around **The Cape**. It is normally a shy snake and will generally retreat from any threat and not attack unless provoked. So keep your eyes out for them on your walks and in your gardens. But among the garden vegetation with a closer look, apart from the big reptiles, the smaller skinks are starting to come out in the garden looking for small invertebrates that have begun flying around. These little ones will become food for larger reptiles and birds. Here is a sample of some of the little fellas I have located in our home garden among the rock and log habitat structures.



Above Left: *Garden Skink*, a small reptile about 5-6 cm long. There are 11 species of this skink across Australia. Interestingly, females lay eggs in communal nests containing up to 200 eggs, each individual laying up to four eggs each.

Above Right: *Southern Grass Skink*, about 10-12 cm long. This is a cold tolerant species. Females mate in autumn but store sperm until they ovulate in spring. They give live birth to 2-5 young.

And the invertebrates are emerging as well ...

Lots of colourful, tiny and interesting looking invertebrates have emerged with the warmth. All these tiny critters have been photographed in the home garden over the last few days. Not all are pests—many are important pollinators and pest controllers.



The 'Darcy' kids are developing ...

The young *Australian Magpies* are growing up quickly, and most mornings they sit on our back fence and just ponder life and preen. I am being very nice to them ... just in case they stay around into adulthood and assume the territory!!



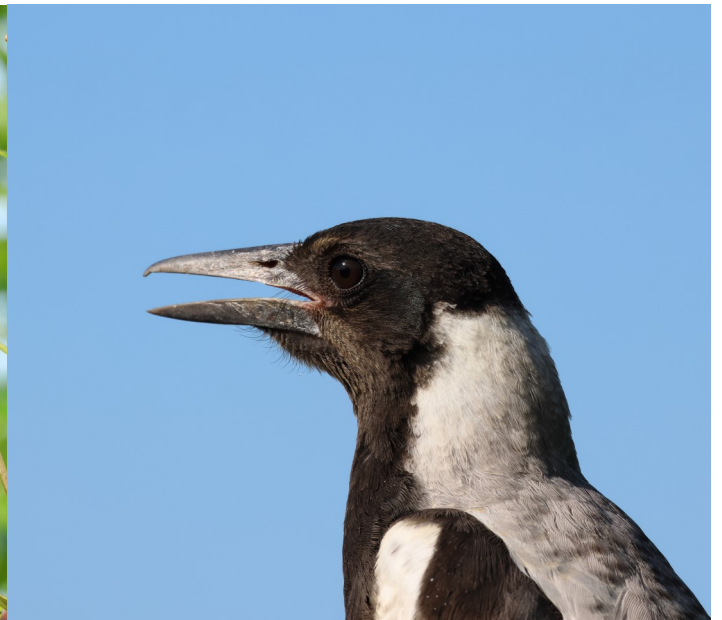
Above: This young bird is trying to work me out. They are extremely inquisitive birds and very intelligent, and while still a bit flighty, are slowly getting used to me going about my business in the vegie garden, where they tend to hang about.



Above: Preening is an important task for birds, and these fellas, while still very young, have already developed the skill for cleaning and grooming themselves



Above: For some of those hard to get to spots, these birds have already worked out that mutual cooperation is the answer. Quite clever for a few weeks old!



Above: Magpies do not like it hot! When the temperature gets up, they 'pant' to cool their body temperature. While the current temperatures are not really warm, this young bird is already developing the skill in anticipation of a hot summer ahead!

Down by the seaside ... a slow start to the Hoodie breeding season

Right: One of the Pea Creek *Hoodie* pair entering a nesting scrape in the estuary. The scrape is a shallow depression in the sand and several are made, with one finally selected as the preferred place to lay the eggs.

Please note: I am a trained *Hooded Plover* monitor and use a telephoto lens of 500mm plus focal length in accordance with Birdlife Australia's Photography guidelines to document the birds activities for science and education. Please stay well away from roped enclosures with signage advising of the nesting birds as prolonged disturbance interferes with their breeding.

It has been a slow start to the *Hooded Plover* breeding season. You can catch up with all the latest Cape Paterson breeding news at <https://capechatter.com/the-hooded-plovers-of-cape-paterson-2/>

The cold weather has probably hampered things but with the recent warmth, several nesting scrapes have been found at the Pea Creek and 2nd Surf blowout sites, and a couple of pairs are showing signs of breeding at a couple of spots in the small bays just west of Wilson Rd.



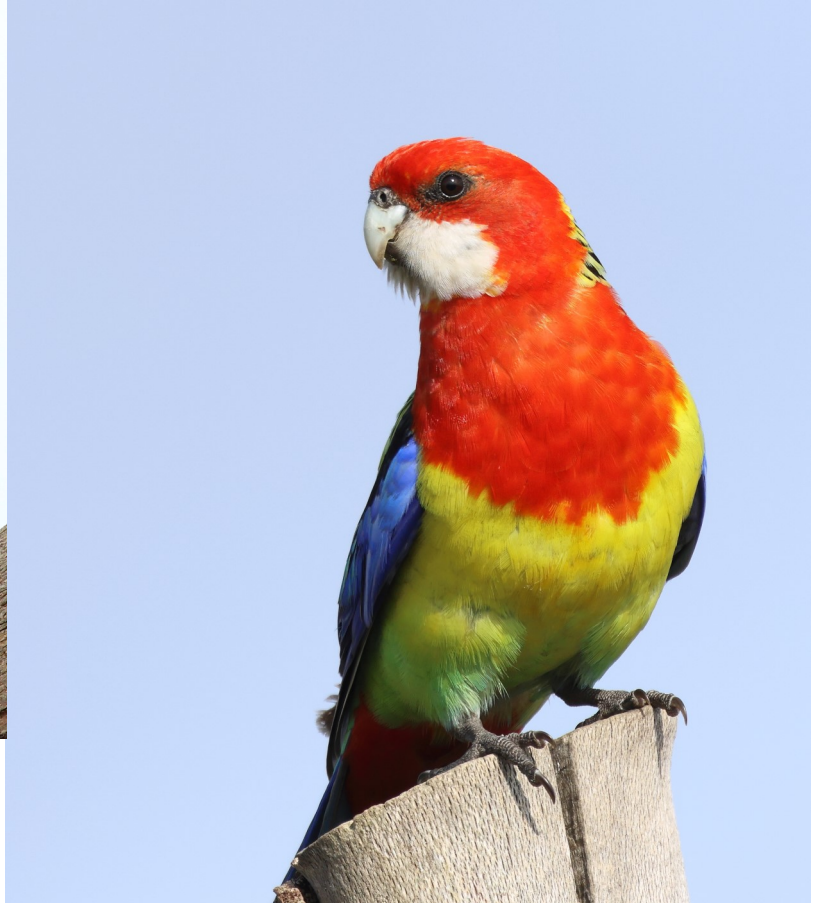
The remarkable tiny migratory wader, the *Red-necked Stint*, is still hanging about the Pea Creek estuary after its exhausting journey from Arctic Siberia, and is keeping the local Hoodie pair on their toes! Meanwhile, juvenile *Pacific Gulls* lurk overhead ... a threat to young Hoodies!

Eastern Rosellas in a box—promising ???

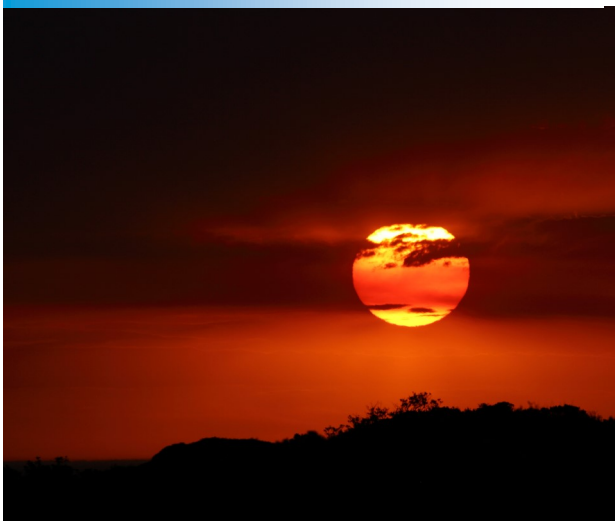
I had only a very fleeting observation, but yesterday I observed a pair of Eastern Rosella fly into the second most southern tree stag in the creek line, just to the north of the walk-over box culvert. One of the birds flew back into the coastal bush, but the other bird entered the nesting box and did not re-emerge in a hurry. I had given up hope of any nesting *Rosellas* with the aggressive behaviour of *Common Myna* and *Starling* which take over the boxes, but I am keeping the fingers crossed their may be some breeding action going on as I have seen this behaviour before!



The nesting boxes were made by resident Graeme McAlpine and the particular box in question was installed by another resident Rob James. Here is hoping for a positive outcome and reward for their work ...and more *Eastern Rosellas*!



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
