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## Cape Chatter

*You're the "Voice" ... it is song and chatter time*

Spring is such a great time for enjoying nature. The bird action is at its peak, with plenty of song, chatter, nest building and territorial warfare happening. New 'migratory' birds such as waders are arriving along the coast from the northern hemisphere and there is lots of movement of other 'land' bird species returning here to breed from other parts of Australia. The wetlands are pumping, the bush and heath is alive with blossom and the sky is full of invertebrate action—its feast time for birds and much energy is used and replenished—making it a great time for bird watching. So download the new bird species list and brochure (see below) and get connected with nature and our wonderful birdlife—you will be surprised what you might see and hear like *Olive Whistlers* and *Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoos*.

*Olive Whistler* in full voice yesterday*Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo*, yesterday*The Cape Bird List and Brochure*

Now that we have four years of bird observations and the majority of the environmental construction and landscaping has been completed, I have pulled together a handy bird species list and brochure for residents and visitors to refer too when walking around **The Cape's** paths alongside the creek line, wetlands, ponds and retained habitat areas. It also provides guidance on how to behave with our native animals and highlights some of the local conservation projects the community is involved in.

You can print or download the list from the home page of the *Cape Chatter* website: <https://capechatter.com/the-cape-bird-species-list-and-brochure/>

## *A little wander brings some wonder ...*

The south east corner of **The Cape** is rich with birdlife and a wonderful place to wander along the track heading out to 2nd Surf. You pass by wetlands, swamp paperbark areas, heath and remnant coastal scrub. Yesterday (19th Sep), a couple of hours of slow walking keeping my ears out for the various song calls and looking for action brought some rewarding birding, with nearly 40 bird species identified through sight and sound.



The *Honeyeaters* are by far the most raucous, noisy and active family of birds this time of the year. The *New Holland*, *Yellow-faced*, *Crescent* are jetting about, sometimes stopping for a brief rest atop a tree to check out the territory. The *Red* and *Little Wattlebirds* are equally boisterous and constantly defending their feeding and breeding territories. Small flocks of the stunning *Eastern Rosella* can be heard chattering away and busily chasing each other. The *cuckoo* is more sedate, quietly going about it's business and sometimes stopping to sing and attract the attention of a partner. Meanwhile, the opportunistic *Grey Butcherbird* is always on the lookout for an unguarded nest for a quick meal!

**Clockwise from above left:** *Yellow-faced Honeyeater*, *New Holland Honeyeater*, *Red Wattlebird*, *Grey Butcherbird*, *Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo*, *Little Wattlebird*, and **left**, the colourful *Eastern Rosella*.

## *Wetland wanderings ... and a Lewin's Rail calls*

In addition to the land based birds, there were some lovely calls coming from the swamp paperbark marsh of the vulnerable and very secretive *Lewin's Rail*. I am yet to get a photograph of this bird, but it's distinctive call could not be missed. It is great we have these rarely seen and threatened waterfowl bird species so close to us, among both the natural wetlands/swamps and the constructed wetlands. Out of the corner of my eye I also caught a glimpse of a threatened *Latham's Snipe* resettling into some tussocks near the 2nd Surf exit track. Meanwhile, a *Little Pied Cormorant* was happy doing circuits and perching on a stump among the swamp and *Dusky Moorhen* were busy feeding.



**Clockwise from above left:** *Dusky Moorhen* in the south east natural wetland and the *Little Black Cormorant* landing in a dead tree among the marsh and in flight around the wetland.

## *Latham's Snipe Survey Results*



A week or so ago, several residents took part in the first of this season's *Latham's Snipe Surveys* as part of a project for the Australian Wader's Study Group. We managed to flush 7 snipe on our walk, which is the best September result since we started. The favoured spot was in the south east natural wetland, with more birds flushed in the 'bog', in the central creek line and one in the new east-west pondages. We have found the numbers increase in November and peak in the January count. Again, it is fantastic to see the birds roosting comfortably so close to human presence and a testament to the preservation of habitat and construction of new areas within the estate for these birds.

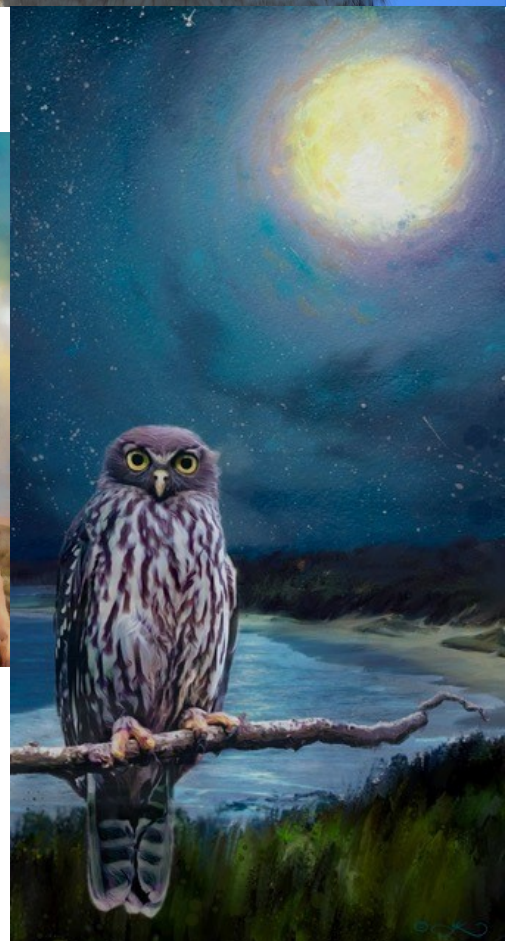
Many thanks to residents Jeannie, Joe, Gabi, Kerry and Ray for taking part in this valuable project work.

## *No laughing matter ...*

One of the most iconic sounds in the Australian bush is that of the 'raucous, boisterous, laughing calls' of the *Laughing Kookaburra*. Unfortunately, it is not a sound heard very often at **The Cape**, but there has been some recent activity from a pair suggesting this may be about to change. This bird is probably more common in the established treed areas of Cape Paterson, but because our local, mature tree stocks are exceptionally low, there is little to no suitable habitat for these birds to breed, as they need tree hollows to nest. A pair has been very active in the estate recently, especially at the southern end of Sunlight Blvd, where they have been heard and seen flying between the coastal reserve and houses. Maybe the pair has found a suitable nesting location ... or they are busy foraging in the coastal bush. Our records indicate their presence at **The Cape** is mainly between August and November, but they have certainly been more noticeable this September. We will have to wait and see.



## *Captured in Art—now seen and heard again ...*



All in one week! Rare observations these—an endangered *White-bellied Sea Eagle* flying over the estate and the distinctive call of a critically endangered *Barking Owl* heard within the estate one evening recently.

Both the Eagle and the Owl were featured in a beautiful small mural situated near the corner of Sunlight Blvd and Periwinkle Crt completed back in 2021 by resident Fran Kirkpatrick. The scenes were based on pictures of mine and resident Joe Spano, along with drawings by resident Helen Temple with key landscape features of The Cape and coastline as the background. It is wonderful to see and hear these rare birds (in life) and to be reminded of their precarious presence in this lovely art piece.

## Spring has sprung ...

The **Cape's** natural world is buzzing as the weather warms up and the animals emerge from their winter slumber. The *dragonflies* are droning, the *frogs* are croaking, the *snakes* are slithering slowly, *skinks* are scurrying about, *birds* are swooping, and the *wattlebirds* are at war. It's breeding time and that means keeping an eye out for swooping *Magpies* and *Masked Lapwings* as they protect their nesting territory. Also be careful on the roads and paths as young birds such as *ducklings* may be moving about, and some nests may be in some unusual locations like swales and verges. Down on the beach, the *Hooded Plovers* are starting to establish their breeding territories and developing nesting scrapes.



Sadly, the second of the season's *Masked Lapwing* nest (left) discovered on Weathertop Crest has failed. The eggs were discovered missing late on 13th September. The adult pair are still in the area and will probably have another attempt. Every disturbance to their nest means the eggs are exposed to predators such as fox and ravens. So if you see signs advising they are breeding in the area, please try and take a wide berth.

## Snakes emerging ...

Warm weather means snake time, especially around the wetland habitat areas, so be wary as you walk around the paths as snakes maybe be sunbaking nearby! It might be advisable to keep your dog on a short leash as well. Fortunately, most of our local snakes are *Lowland Copperheads*, which are not aggressive and reasonably shy, but they are venomous and may strike if unexpectedly disturbed or provoked.



*Dragonfly* (above) and *Damselfly* (right) are beautifully, constructed creatures which transform from freshwater nymphs. Their appearance signals a change in the seasons and warmer weather. The **Cape's** wetlands provide fantastic breeding grounds for the nymphs so we get to see good numbers of dragon and damselfly. The main way I notice the difference between the two: *Dragonfly* are generally larger, fly fast without landing often, and when they do, their wings are spread out. *Damselfly* are usually smaller, are dainty in the air when flying, landing often and pausing, with their wings folded in line with their body.



## Kangaroo Kapers ...

Nice to see several generations of the *Eastern Grey Kangaroo* mob about the estate, with quite a few joeys among the group. The mob is slowly habituating to human presence, but as their open habitat shrinks, they will seek out 'greener pastures' within the housing area, especially as the weather warms up and the grass dies out.



This series of photos were taken with a long telephoto lens over the past few weeks at the mobs various, favourite haunts. As always, if you see them on your walks or cycles, try and take a wide berth to avoid them scattering and keep dogs on leash. Scattering kangaroos is the main cause of injury and death as they are very skittish if unexpectedly disturbed. Also be mindful they start to emerge from their lay-up/rest areas just before dusk which is a popular walking time.

Please read the advisory signage around the estate for expected behaviours towards the kangaroos, and hopefully, we can live and feel safe in the estate together.

## Project KOALA ... two years on!

This month marks the 2nd anniversary of the first plantings of indigenous plant species to provide more treed habitat for a range of fauna species within **The Cape**, with emphasis on *Koala*. The mini-forest plots are booming and the growth has been amazing to date –so far success. In the coming months, *koalas* will be on the move looking for breeding partners, so keep your eyes out for them or the sounds of the distinctive grunting calls. They occasionally venture into **The Cape**!



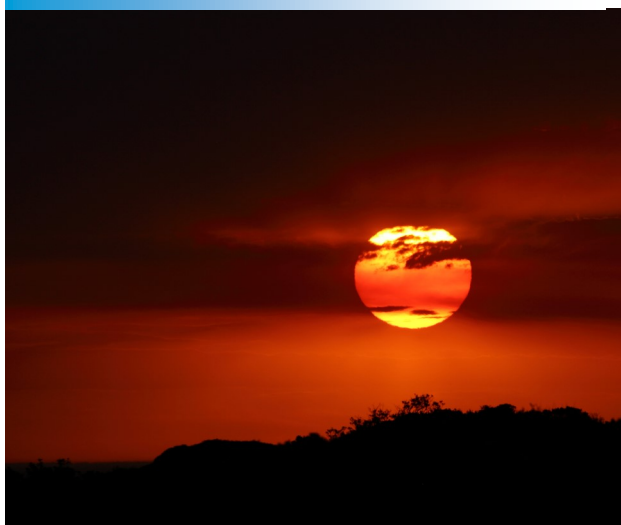
Left: The plots as they were on 13th Sep 21 and right, 13th Sep 23. The growth has been phenomenal in two years.



Left: *Koala* checking out the mini-forest plots from one of the few remaining mature *Coastal Manna Gum* within the estate, back in late 2021.

Stage 2 of the project is in the planning phase and is expected to be rolled out in autumn 2024. This phase will provide further vital stepping stones of vegetation for the animals to spread out and feed in safe wildlife habitats.

### 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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