

Inside this issue:

Koala kapers 2*Time for birdwatching* 3*Speedy, small birds* 4*Freshwater fanciers* 5*By the sea* 6*Is this an omen??* 7

Cape Chatter

Pull the other leg!!

Be careful what may be lurking in your garden ... snakes, wombats, kangaroos, echidnas and other things!

The Cape natural world never ceases to amaze and demonstrates how fortunate we are as residents to live 'side by side' with native animals and birds. So, to say I was surprised was an understatement when my neighbour Robyn whispered from across the road last Saturday morning ... "Hey David, there is a koala in my backyard". Pull the other leg I thought, but lo and behold there was one! A local Cape Paterson Koala had ventured into the depths of **The Cape** and found a two year old *Coastal Manna Gum* in Robyn and Jim's backyard to spend the day resting and munching. This tree is now one of significance—it is far away from any other *Coastal Manna's* known to be in the area and it's tasty.



The *Koala* was not very obliging when it came to getting a decent, clear photo among the thick growth of the *Coastal Manna*. It was well hidden, sitting in the fork of one of the main trunks. This is a good sign for the emerging *Coastal Manna Gums* in the Project Koala mini-forest plots which are also at the 2 year mark and situated near several remaining mature *Manna's*. Photos by Jim.

Bass Coast BirdLife Australia bird walk

Resident Joe Spano and I hosted a bird and wildlife walk around **The Cape's** environs' last Friday for 20 bird enthusiasts from the Bass Coast region. All were very impressed with the extent of varied habitat and environmental landscaping works supporting a large variety of bird species and native animals. They managed to observe 46 bird species out of the 130 recorded to date despite not seeing the *Blue-winged Parrots*! 'Darcy' the *magpie* behaved, the *snakes* put on a quiet show around the wetland and the elusive *Buff-banded Rail* stuck its head out of the wetlands!

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

More Koala kapers ...

This time of the year is when *Koala* begin to roam—looking for partners and making grunting calls. We have had several confirmed observations within **The Cape** since 2019 and now have three photos to help identify the individuals. No one is sure how many *Koala* live around Cape Paterson, but they have been identified as pure *Strzelecki Koala* from DNA testing of scats. In addition to two different *Koala*'s photographed in September and October 2021 within **The Cape**, I reckon this latest fella, although it was hard to get a really clear shot, is different based on nose pigmentation and some markings on the eye-lid.



Above: Freckling on both eye lids and nose pigmentation of the *Koala* pictured in Robyn and Jim's *manna* on 23 Sep 23.

Below: *Koala* pictured **below left** on 16 Oct 21 near the Project Koala plots and **below right** on 15 Sep 21 in Sunlight Blvd.



Our latest *Koala* at Robyn and Jim's was well and truly gone by Sunday morning and a check of the Koala Project plots didn't find it in that area. They do roam widely in search of suitable food (not all *Manna*'s are tasty!) and at this time of the year, a partner. They will rest in treed vegetation, such as *Coastal Banksia*'s, and there was evidence it went south along Sunlight Blvd as scats were seen under one of the streetscape *Banksia* trees.



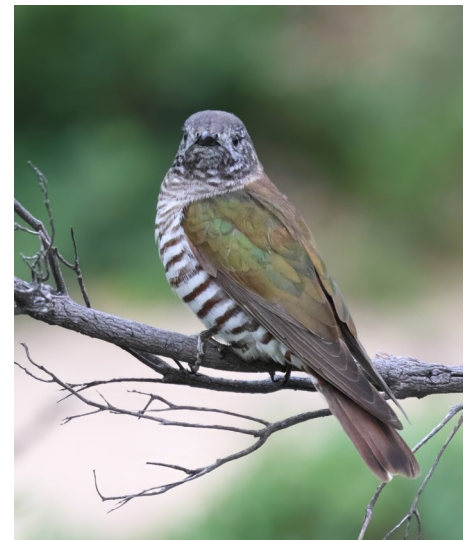
Hors d'oeuvre anyone?? Scats are really important in helping understand *Koala*. Several specimens were collected by Cape Paterson local and former CPRRA President Pete Muskens for analysis to determine the genome and hopefully confirming another Strzelecki. In total, Robyn reckons there were some 140-150 scats under the *Manna*—that is a whole lot of munching and *Manna Gum* hors d'oeuvres!

A great time of the year for birdwatching ...

We have entered peak time of the year for bird watching. There is so much blossom in the bush (particularly *Leucopogon*, *Melaleuca* and *Leptospermum*), small *invertebrates* (in the air, among plants and in the water) and flowering *herbaceous* plants. This past week or so I have been searching the coastal bush and heath, the wetlands/swamps and the coastline. There is plenty of action.

Coastal bush, heath and swamp ...

Last *Cape Chatter* I headlined the beautiful *Olive Whistler* alongside the *Horsfield Bronze Cuckoo*, and some of the distinctive calls we can hear this time of year. On a recent foray, another stunning little bush bird caught my attention, the equally impressive *Shining Bronze Cuckoo*.



Left to Right: Last weeks *Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo* (**left**) looks very similar in appearance to this weeks *Shining Bronze Cuckoo* (pictured **centre** and **right**). The '*Shining*' has more barring on the chest and under the throat, and the *Horsfield's* a dark stripe through the eye. When calling, the *Horsfield's* has a descending whistle and the *Shining*, you guessed it, a whistle with a rising pitch! Simple!!



The *Grey Shrike-thrush* (**left and right**) is very vocal in the bush at the moment. It has one of the most melodious songs that rings sweetly through the scrub. There is one that has fallen in love with car side mirrors at the F Break car park!

The *Grey Fantail* (**below**) another lovely bird—a 'ballerina of the bush' - dart around in aerial movements catching small insects on the wing with an accompanying high pitched song! They're very inquisitive as well, and serious looking.



The speedy, small bush birds ...

You have to be quick to get a good glimpse of the small bush birds as they are very busy and fast, darting in and out of vegetation chasing tiny insects. They must expend a lot of energy hunting and foraging. They are absolutely going for it at the moment!



Above: The mighty fast *Brown Thornbill*, foraging among the *melaleuca* and *leptospermum*.



Left: The tiny *Silvereye*, an extremely fast mover. Can you notice a difference in these two birds? The left one is a migrant from Tasmania, the sub-species *lateralis*. Can you imagine a tiny bird crossing Bass Strait? Well this one does it! It has distinctive rich brown flanks. The right bird is the sub-species *westernensis*—it is a mainland bird and lacks the dark brown. Both little stunners!

Below: The drab, but dainty female *Superb Fairy-wren* and the colourful male in his blue livery (**right**). All dressed up in formal, looking very serious and ready to go, but it looks like his dye is running a little!!



Freshwater fanciers ...

There has been some nice freshwater species foraging around the boggy paddocks, swamp areas and wetlands. I am still hearing the calls of the secretive *Levin's Rail*, *Latham's Snipe* are popping up from their roosting spots if disturbed, and some of the more uncommon water birds are making the most of the wetter conditions before they dry out.



Left: The first *Black Swan* cygnet of the year has appeared on the Wilson Rd dam, looking very proud of itself next to it's regal parent. In the past we have had 3-5 cygnets in the brood, so I am hoping this is not a sign of 'dry' times to come and the parents are controlling their breeding numbers.

Right: The uncommon *White-necked Heron* has also been active along Wilson Rd and across **The Cape**—there is a pair currently in the area.

Also uncommon visitors to the area but making the most of the boggy local conditions are a *Yellow-billed Spoonbill* (**below right**) and *Royal Spoonbills* (**below**).



Right: The calls of the elusive *Little Grassbird* have been emanating from the reeds and sedges of the constructed central wetlands. It is great to hear them again as they went missing last year after a good showing in 2021, when they were prominent along with the occasional calls of their close cousins, the *Australian Reed Warbler*. These birds are usually well hidden among the thick vegetation, and their call is what lets you know of their presence. If you have patience, they will sometimes appear at the top of the reeds for a moments pause.

By the sea ... and time for salted seafood

A few of our freshwater birds can often be found along the rocky platforms of the nearby coast. It is not surprising to see *Little Pied Cormorant* and *White-faced Heron* alternating between the wetlands/marshes and the coast ... such a varied diet! On my last wander down along the beach checking for *Hooded Plovers*, there were some nice observations of these birds and other shorebirds.



Above: Pair of *Sooty Oystercatchers* were mingling with *Pacific Gull* (right—with dinner for the night) and *Hooded Plovers* (below).



Above: *Hooded Plovers* are sorting out territory and relationships at the moment. AS (left) had a fledgling last season, while DZ and AW (centre and right) had a fledgling flagged DH west of Wilson Rd. It appears there has been a lovers tiff between these two, and while together back mid August, DZ has left the scene and was last scene nearby at The Oaks beach, just east of Cape Paterson.

Is this an omen???

For those who are wondering about the comings and goings of our local cult figure, 'Darcy' the male *Australian Magpie* ... well I must say, he is in top attacking form this season. He has at least one scalp to his tally—drawing just a little blood from a regular “jogger” passing by. A couple of days back, he came the closest he has to getting me directly when he nearly struck me behind the ear when I let my guard down while looking on the ground for *Koala* scats!

I will declare my hand now ... I am an Aussie Rules football (AFL) Collingwood Magpie supporter and I named Darcy after their dashing and attacking (now captain) Darcy Moore. A fine, upstanding athlete and person! I am hoping *Darcy* the bird's scintillating form this season is an omen for a win by the *Pies* over the *Brissy Lions* (aka “*Koala Bears*”) in the AFL Grand Final this Saturday, 30th September.

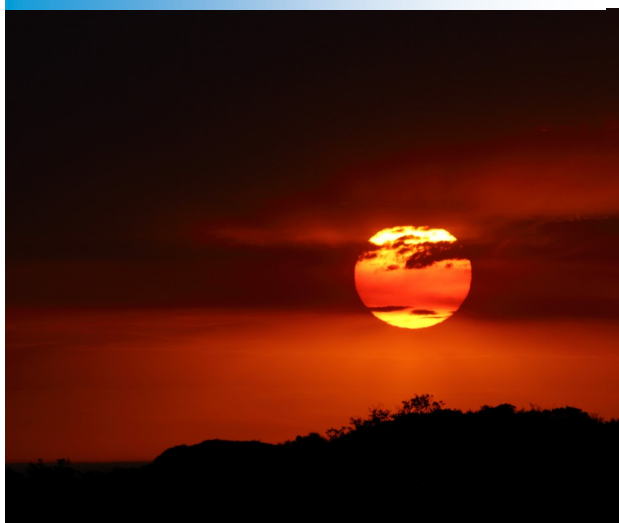


Above: 'Darcy' has been in prime condition all year and looks ready for another great breeding season ... it will be his fourth in a row since I first had the pleasure of knowing him!

Darcy's territory comprises the area east of Sunlight Blvd to the coastal reserve and north to at least Moonshadow Avenue and occasionally beyond. This includes the oval, the central wetland complex and all the walking/cycling tracks around that vicinity.

Portable signs advising of this territory and his swooping habits are in place at all the entrance points—so enter this area based on your own risk assessment. I choose not to go into that area for my safety and his welfare. He is only doing what is natural to him—defending his territory and nest against what he believes are threats.

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
