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Cape Chatter

One hundred reasons to celebrate ...

Apologies—it has been a while between *Cape Chatter* blogs. October has been a really busy month with preparation for the new *Hooded Plover* breeding season along our coastline. But I have finally found some time to get this Issue together. And why not ... because this is **Issue No. 100**. Who would have thought! After four years, we are still plugging away—observing and photographing the natural world of **The Cape**. This time of the year is probably the best window of opportunity for bird-watching and I have managed to get a few shots away with the camera. As well, a couple more new species have been observed by some 'hawk-eye' residents of **The Cape**. On that note, a huge thank you for the many residents who pass on their nature observations for inclusion in our species lists and blog stories, to the volunteers who participate in monitoring and surveying in the several important conservation projects for vulnerable species, and to those looking after the welfare of our wildlife. Finally, to all the followers and subscribers for supporting *Cape Chatter* over the past four years—many thanks.



Above Left: The *Scarlet Honeyeater*, a very unusual visitor to **The Cape** and new addition to the bird species list. **Right**, the stunning structure and colours of a beautiful *Leucadendron* flower, bringing colour to our garden and home to a plethora of invertebrates and birds ... and the closest thing in nature I could find that looked like 100 candles to celebrate this milestone Issue!

The Cape bird species list is now **132** species—see next page for the new species.

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

Two new birds species to the list ...

A couple of observations of new bird species over the last month with the *Scarlet Honeyeater* and *Striated Pardalote* added to the list, which now stands at 132 species since observations began in August 2019.



Above: Male Scarlet Honeyeater

Residents Jillian and Duncan who moved to **The Cape** from northern NSW, alerted me to the sighting of a *Scarlet Honeyeater* near the dog park. They know this species well from their previous home near Lismore. They are not common to this part of SE Australia, and tend to move south when things are becoming dry up north. I took these photos at my previous property in central Victoria in December 2017, another uncommon area for them. The period January 2017 to December 2019 was the driest period on record in NSW and was followed by devastating bushfires. I fear the sightings of these stunning birds may be a warning of things to come ... again!



Above: Female Scarlet Honeyeater

Resident Joe Spano recently heard the distinctive call of the *Striated Pardalote* around the estate, another unusual visitor given the lack of mature trees in the area. Not to be outdone and eager to get photographic evidence, Joe managed to get a photo of the pair not far from the Community Farm (**see image right**). *Pardalotes* tend to inhabit woodland environments and nest in tree hollows, so it is unusual to have them hang around **The Cape**. They do, however, adjust to built environments, and the picture **below right** shows a pair who have nested high in the cavity of a wall using a dead electric wire opening to enter and exit the nest.



Above and Right: *Striated Pardalote* images from central Victoria



Those magnificent Magpies ... for all you Darcy followers

Dary, the local cult like *Australian Magpie*, has done it again. This is the fifth season I have witnessed this magnificent bird and his partner breed successfully, with the arrival of two fledglings that are slowly developing into nice looking juvenile birds. Given that only one in four magpie pairs breed successfully, they are doing well. And of those males that breed, it is estimated only 10% swoop to defend their territory. Dary has it all. He hasn't stopped swooping just yet even though the fledglings are up and about—he had two swoops at me yesterday!



Above Left: Dary, the stare says it all. **Above Right:** One of the fledglings, looking a little scruffy, but growing quick.

Below: The new young pair hang out together and are busy learning from their parents how to communicate and forage.



Wetland wanderings ...

Despite many parts of Australia enduring drier than normal conditions, we are tracking for average rainfall at Cape Paterson this year. There has been plenty of water flowing through the creek line, ponds and wetlands, creating wonderful habitat for many species of fauna. Wetlands are wonderful breeding grounds for terrestrial and freshwater invertebrates, small mammals, amphibians, reptiles and a range of birds. There is a whole food chain in operation—and during the process, the water is naturally filtrated before it enters the sea and carbon is sequestered. So a very slow and quiet walk along the edges of these landscape features can be quite rewarding for us ... and of course the animals. Here is a snapshot of recent activity.



Above Left: The *Australian Reed-Warbler* and **right:** *Little Grassbird* have returned to the reeds of the wetlands. Both have beautiful and distinctive calls which is normally how I am alerted to their presence—they are very difficult to spot as they spend most of their time among the reeds foraging! If you are patient, sometimes they emerge to sit on a reed to call—and presto—a photograph!



Duck numbers are still a bit lower than normal but I would expect them to rise as the summer heat dries out other wetlands around the area. Still, we have some beautiful species to enjoy such as this pair of *Chestnut Teal*, male on the **left** and female **right**.

Wetland wanderings continued ...



Above: Pacific Black-Ducks have been enjoying the wetlands and adjoining 'bog', foraging among the muddy habitat. The bog is also a favoured spot for *Latham's Snipe* which are being surveyed again for the *Latham's Snipe Project* on 11th Nov. A quiet walk last evening along the ponds and creek line 'flushed' out 8 *snipe* which is promising. Also happy at home among the 'bog' recently have been *White-necked Heron* which have been seen in good numbers locally with the wet conditions. They also like the wetlands and new east-west ponds. They are less common locally than the smaller *White-faced Heron*, but both are skilful and patient hunters around water.



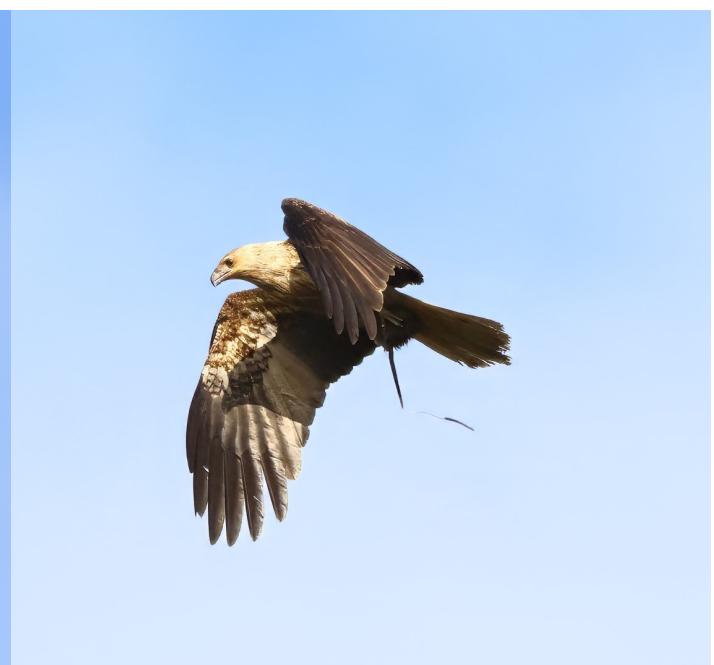
Other freshwater foragers ...

The smaller *White-faced Heron* ([below left](#)) stalking prey in the wetland with great concentration. We mostly associate *Honeyeaters*, like this *New Holland Honeyeater* ([below right](#)), with feeding on nectar, but they are skilful hunters of invertebrates. This one was feeding 'on the wing' above a wetland catching damselflies to take back to a nest. Precision work! Without these wetlands, we would have fewer invertebrates, a vital food source for birds and other animals.



Moving up the wetland food chain ...

Other than these freshwater birds, I recently witnessed a *Whistling Kite* (an uncommon visitor to these parts) circling overhead the wetlands. If you see a lot of activity and noise from birds such as *Raven*, *Magpie*, *Magpie Lark* and *Welcome Swallow* together, there is usually a raptor about and they band together to chase it away—they are big time predators! This particular *Kite*, descended quickly into the wetland and emerged with what I first thought was some plant attached to its talons, but on closer examination, discovered it was a rodent of some type being firmly held and its tail had been likely damaged during the attack!



Hooded Plover happenings ... the season so far

We are off to a slow start to the season. Of the 10 breeding sites being monitored between Harmers Haven and Cape Paterson, one site, in the Undertow Bay/Pea Creek estuary area of Cape Paterson, the breeding pair have had two nests—each with one egg—that have been predated and failed. This pair traditionally start earlier than the other local breeding pairs and generally have several more nest attempts—most which are unsuccessful. Last season, they had the first fledgling in 12 years in this breeding territory.



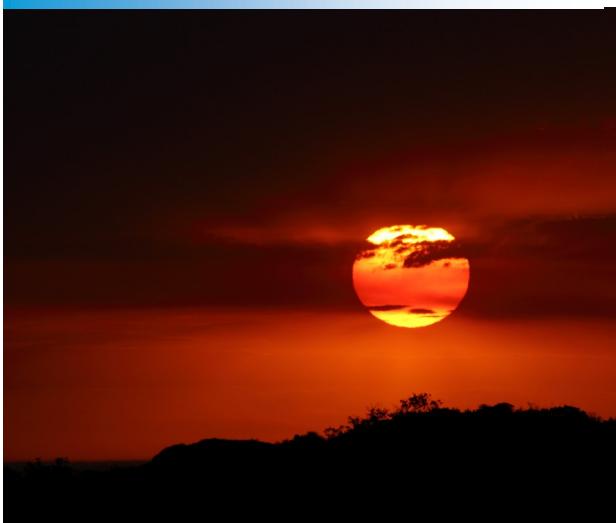
Above Left: Hooded Plover pair at Pea Creek/Undertow Bay area (Orange YW and partner) have had two nesting attempts but both have failed. **Above Right:** Hoodie monitoring is always eventful, like this interaction with a young moulting *Australian Fur Seal* which was startled and took to the water while a small team of volunteers were refurbishing enclosure equipment at a nesting site.

A reminder you can keep up to date with all the latest local Hoodie news at the Cape Chatter website link below or by scanning the QR code on the Hooded Plover advisory signage at beach access points and approaches to breeding sites.

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

Make yourself 'Hoodie aware' before you access the beach or when approaching nesting areas!

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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