

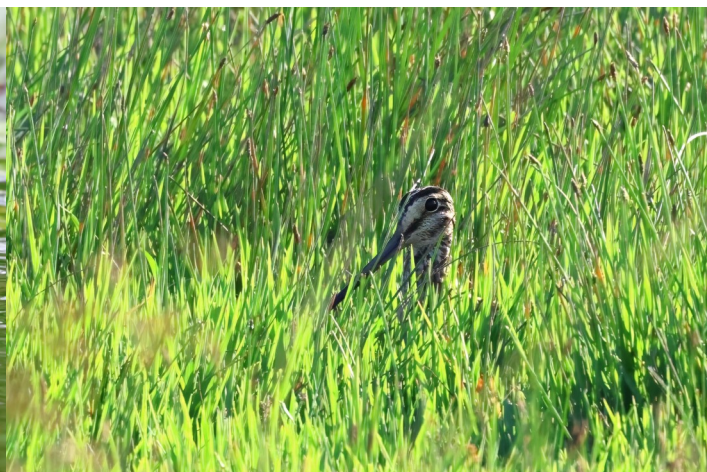
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## Cape Chatter

*Precious rain continues to fall ...*

Just when we thought we were in for a very dry spell leading into summer, valuable rain has continued to fall—topping up the creek line, ponds and wetlands, providing a real pulse to this ecological system ... and the wildlife is loving it. Small, secretive waterfowl and migratory *Latham's (Japanese) Snipe* continue to be seen and heard in good numbers in these locations. After four years of development and growth, the constructed habitats continue to amaze, not only attracting these special birds, but a whole range of other birds, reptiles, amphibians, mammals and invertebrates. A fantastic ecosystem at work right on our doorstep! It is worth taking a very slow and quiet stroll beside these landscape features—especially at dusk or dawn—you may be surprised what you will hear and see.



The central creek line ponds and the 'bog' are rich in animal activity at the moment. I managed to get more photos of the secretive *Australian Spotted Crane* (above left) in the small pond near the mini-oval and the very well camouflaged *Latham's Snipe* (above right) in the 'bog'. The *Crane* is also hanging out in the 'bog' darting back and forth from retained *Swamp Melaleuca*. The elusive *Buff-banded Rail* continue to be seen in the vicinity and the calls of a pair of vulnerable *Lewin's Rail* are still emanating from the central wetland.

*Chestnut Teal* are permanent fixtures of the creek line and ponds—the female left and male right—photographed yesterday.

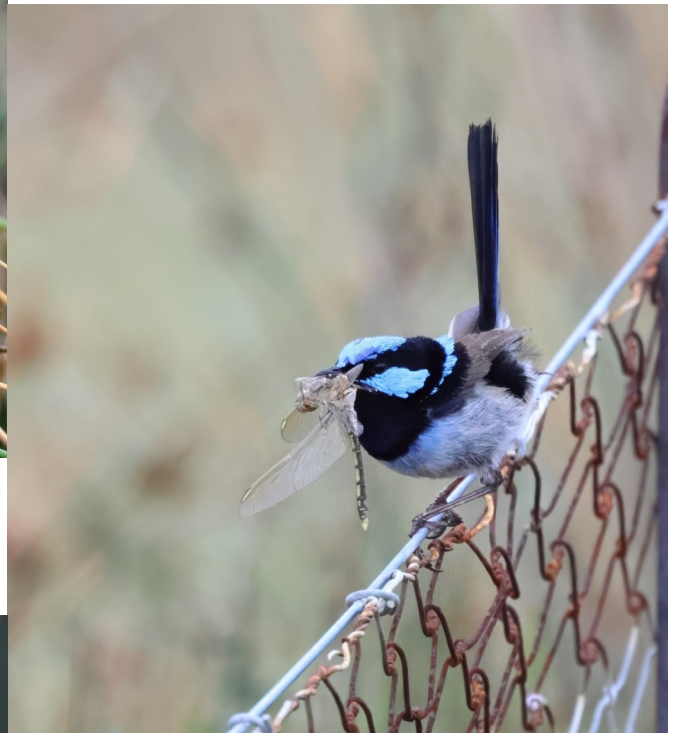




## *Some of the small birds around the water features ...*



**Left:** I am a huge 'fan' of this bird and don't you just love it when a bird lives up to its name! The energetic and constantly active *Grey Fantail* are having a great time flitting about among the sedges and rushes of the wetlands, occasionally landing, cocking and flaring the tail. They are also busy in the coastal bush. They are like aerial ballerinas and can be quite inquisitive coming close to humans.



**Right:** This male *Superb Fairy-wren* was so excited when he captured this *dragonfly* near the creek line. He held on to it for some time, busily protecting his catch from the rest of his family group. That's quite a meal for a little tacker!



**Above:** A rare moment when this tiny *Silveryeye* landed and perched in the creek line allowing me to get a few quick pictures. These birds usually hang out in small groups and are extremely fast movers, flying in and out of shrubbery chasing small invertebrates. They are also happy to move between the water features and the coastal bush. We have two sub-species of *Silveryeye* at **The Cape:** this is the *ssp westernensis*, the other is the *ssp lateralis*, a migrant from Tasmania which is distinguished by rich brown flanks. Both are around at the moment.

**Below:** The distinctive calls of the *Australian Reed Warbler* are still being heard from the central wetlands along with the constant piping whistles of the very similar looking *Little Grassbird*.





## *Larger waterbirds around ...*



The large *White-necked Heron* (above and right) have taken to **The Cape's** water features this year with good numbers still around feeding in the ponds and 'bog'. In even bigger numbers, are the smaller *White-faced Herons* (below). They are permanent residents of the estate and coast—last evening a good size flock of 20 birds flew overhead at dusk.





## Magpie (or Mud) Lark ...



These medium sized black and white birds are quite common around the estate, in particular among the creek line and ponds and the 'bog'. Despite their constant presence, they are a difficult bird to photograph as they always fly away before I can compose a picture. I managed a couple of shots of these males a few evenings ago ... finally!



## Wilson Rd way ...

The Wilson Rd dam on the west side of **The Cape** is always worth a good look for water birds, with a range of ducks, grebes, shorebirds, swans, herons, ibis and spoonbills about. It is part of *Chatter's* observation area so any birds seen here are included in the bird list. Here are a few of the nice locals pictured recently.



*Yellow-billed Spoonbill* (above left), *Royal Spoonbill* (above right) and a *Hoary-headed Grebe* (left) are part of the Wilson Rd action at the moment. There were three *Yellow's* and one *Royal* (listed in Victoria as near-threatened) working the shoreline together, working their bills left and right as they 'shovelled' through the reeds. I am yet to see a *Yellow* within **The Cape** estate but the *Royal's* often wander in to feed, especially in the 'bog'. The *Hoary-headed Grebe* is also a casual visitor to **The Cape's** wetland ponds, along with the other local *Grebe*, the *Australasian Grebe*.

A *Great Egret* (listed as vulnerable in Victoria) was also seen around the wetlands recently along with a very busy *Whistling Kite* and *Black-shouldered Kite*—plenty of tucker there for them.



## Bronzewings, Pigeons and Doves



Eagle eye resident Joe Spano spotted a new bird species for our list—a *Common Bronzewing*—near the new south west *Bittern* wetland. There have been reports around the area but this is the first within the designated *Chatter* observation area. Nice work Joe—who also managed a photo on the i-phone for confirmation.

**Left:** The beautiful plumage of the *Common Bronzewing*, pictured away from **The Cape** but shown here for reference. *Bronzewings* are indigenous birds and closely related to our other indigenous pigeon, the *Crested Pigeon* (pictured below) which are common around **The Cape** and are usually be seen in pairs or small flocks of about a dozen birds.

The plumage of these birds is stunning when captured in certain light, with iridescent and metallic sheens flashing when hit by the right angle.

The bird species count is now **133**. I have updated *Cape Chatter's Bird Brochure and Species List* which can be downloaded from the *Cape Chatter* website at:  
<https://capechatter.com/the-cape-bird-species-list-and-brochure/>



The other two species of pigeons/dove at **The Cape** are the introduced *Spotted Dove* (above left) and the *Rock Dove* (above right). Both have adapted to human development and urban environments, but fortunately at **The Cape**, the *Spotted Dove* remains a wary bird using the coastal bush habitat primarily but is slowly moving into the built up environment. There have been few sightings of the *Rock Dove* fortunately, and it has usually been lost racing pigeons with bands. They are feral in most parts of Australia.



## Hoodie happenings ...

*“Still holding his breeding territory, local Cape Paterson hoodie White AW (right) is looking a little forlorn at the moment. After a couple of breeding seasons with White DZ (including last season’s fledge White DH) and partnering up on the breeding site back in August, AW is now alone. He has had 3 interested partners, White DZ, an unbanded bird, and Yellow 13 – and all have departed. DZ now has a nest further east on the Bunurong Coast at the same site where 13 had a fledge last season! Very complicated! I often wonder what the partner selection criteria are for Hoodies. Here’s hoping AW finds a partner soon”.*



## What do the coloured flags and letters mean?

Many of the Hooded Plovers are identified by coloured flags with a unique identifier and a metal identification band. This allows volunteers, monitors and researchers to track the birds breeding habits and whereabouts.

### ORANGE AND WHITE

**FLAGS**—Local Victorian birds.

Orange are older birds as all birds are now flagged with White.

**YELLOW**—Phillip Island birds

**RED**—Tasmanian birds

## The very special White KU ...

Cape Paterson’s popular Pea Creek estuary has become increasingly busy over the years with beach users. It is also an important Hoodie breeding site. Since the 2018/19 season, Orange YW (the male which fledged at Powlett River in 2015) and his partner ‘bare legs’ have worked tirelessly to successfully breed, becoming extremely resilient and persistent along the way. In that time, they have had 21 nests, laid 54 eggs, had 7 chicks and last season, the one and only fledge, the first on this site since 2012. That’s a **1.85%** egg to fledge success rate! The precious juvenile was banded in March this year as White KU – a very special little bird. Last week the sub-adult White KU was observed on one of the Wonthaggi ocean beaches with two other Hoodies. It is looking strong. It is great to see the next generation getting through the first year and working toward helping sustain this extremely vulnerable bird species. Great work YW, ‘bare legs’ and KU – makes all the effort by everyone in supporting these birds very worthwhile.

**Left:** White KU being banded by permitted banding experts from BirdLife Australia. **The Cape** residents and Hoodie volunteers Jeannie, Kerry, Lorraine and Joe had the privilege of assisting in the banding process after many hours of volunteering effort to help the bird get to this stage of its life.



Please observe the Hoodie advisory signage as you enter the access tracks to the beaches and along the beach where Hooded Plovers breed ... they need our help!

Remember you can follow the progress of the local Hooded Plover breeding season by going to the Cape Chatter website: <https://capechatter.com/the-hooded-plovers-of-cape-paterson-2/> or scanning the QR on the Hoodie advisory signs at beach access points and on approaches to enclosures when erected.

## Reptile news ...

There have been recent sightings of very young snakes and *Blotched Blue-tongue Lizards* around the estate. This young *Lowland Copperhead* was spotted near our back door on a warm evening recently, and the *Blue-tongues* are in the garden. The *Blue-tongues* are not very road conscious so please be aware they cross the roads at a very slow pace!



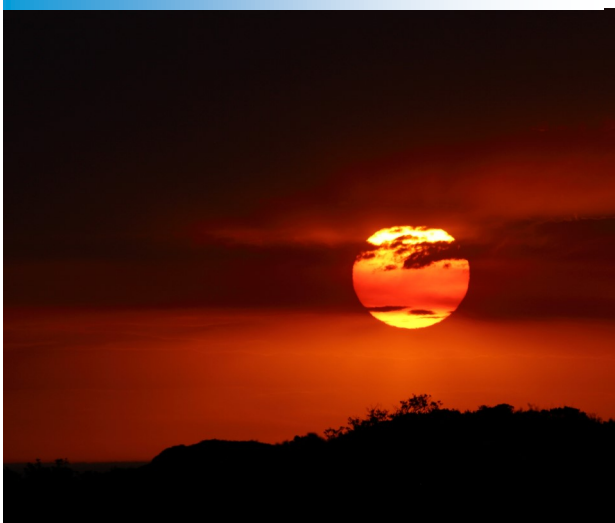
## Magpie movements ...

Looks like one of Darcy's young birds from this seasons hatching has disappeared. I have only seen one of the juveniles about with the parents so am not sure what has happened. The remaining youngin' is doing well (pictured right) and is now happily learning the skills of foraging and communication. Here it is in the *Kennedia* creeper on the back fence cleaning up a stack of small moths! And those eyes are checking me out seriously!

*In the next and last Issue of Cape Chatter for the year, I will look at the highlights and low points of 2023. In the meantime, happy chattering and connect with nature ... it is very therapeutic.*



## 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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