

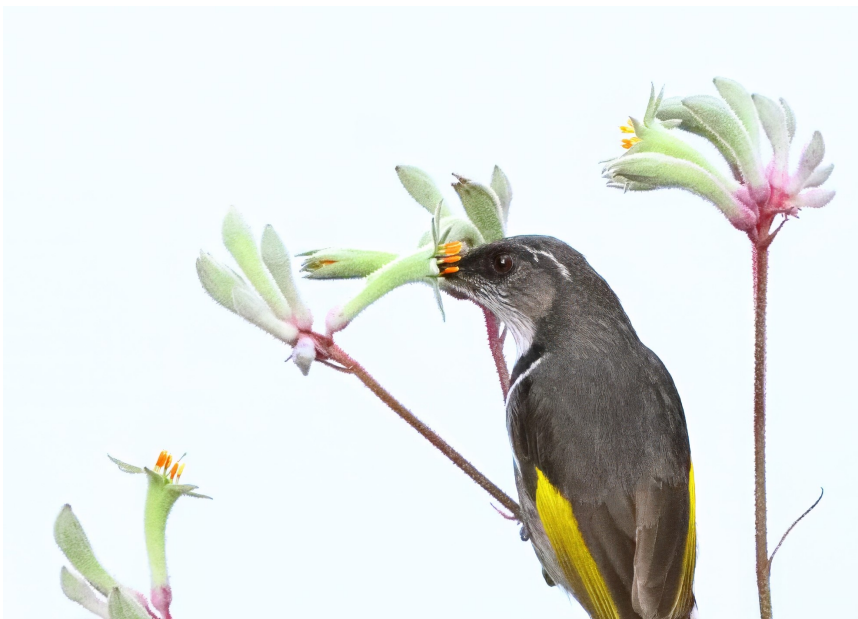
## Inside this issue:

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In this final issue of *Cape Chatter* for 2023, we look at the frenetic activity of some local *Honeyeaters* feasting on nectar and also review what's been happening in the natural world at **The Cape** over the last year.

A huge thanks to the many subscribers who provide wonderful feedback and encouragement to keep *Cape Chatter* going, to the many volunteers who put their time into the various local wildlife conservation and animal welfare projects, and also to those who provide their wonderful observations and stories that keeps *Chatter* chirping along.

A very merry and safe festive season for all the 'Chatterers'. After a short break, we look forward to getting back into observing and connecting with the natural world around us ... and please keep an eye out for our many lovely animals over the summer holiday period—they need our help!

*In the garden with nature ...*

I often sit in the garden contemplating life ... camera next to me and watching the world go by. Our rich patch of *Kangaroo Paws* has become a magnet for small *honeyeaters* with *Crescent* and *New Holland Honeyeaters* daily visitors, busily topping up their energy levels. It is a beautiful place to be, a time of reflection, thinking of close friends who have recently passed, those facing many difficult life challenges, where this world is heading and what it will be like for our future generations. Nature brings beauty and connection with how the world could and should be ... beautiful, caring and giving, but resilient and adaptive when the challenges arise. We can all learn a lot from connecting with nature!





## Happy Hoodie happenings ...



Here are a couple of nice stories which show the resilience of the vulnerable *Hooded Plover* which inhabit our local coastline.

### *One tough little Hoodie*

*Hooded Plover* Orange **KK** (left) is a favourite bird among some of our Bass Coast Hoodie volunteers. One tough girl, she was banded as a chick in Jan 2011 east of the Desalination Plant on Williamsons Beach and is approaching 13 years of age. Since then, the records show she has bred in 9 seasons with several different partners in various locations along our Coast: Cape Paterson 2<sup>nd</sup> Surf, west of Cape Paterson's Wilson Rd and around the Harmers Haven area. Her partner for the last 2 seasons was Orange **JS** and they had a fledge last year (the records indicate it was **KK**'s fifth). What makes her so tough is that she lost her right foot from a fishing line entanglement some time ago – but is still a feisty Hoodie and gets about without too much problem. I recently observed her back near 2<sup>nd</sup> Surf still going strong and obviously looking for a partner this season ... I will keep you updated on how she goes.

## *A Cape to Cape survivor ... and the value of banding Hoodies*

Last season, around mid-January 2023, a 2-egg nest was discovered at a small sandy point west of Cape Paterson. 65 days later, one beautiful juvenile bird survived, fledged and was banded White **DH** (yes, my initials) to parents White **AW** and White **DZ**. I often wondered where **DH** went and if it was still alive. I have been on the look-out in anticipation of seeing it while monitoring the local beaches. So, it was exciting news when I was told that **DH** had been observed recently at Maitland Beach South (Bear Gully) on the eastern side of Cape Liptrap in South Gippsland by volunteer monitors down that way. That is around 70 kms east of its natal territory! **DH** is looking very healthy and grown up at 11 months of age with the lovely dark head plumage distinctive of adult birds. It was also hanging out with another Hoodie! Just shows how far and wide Hoodies will roam and the value in banding for scientific/monitoring purposes.



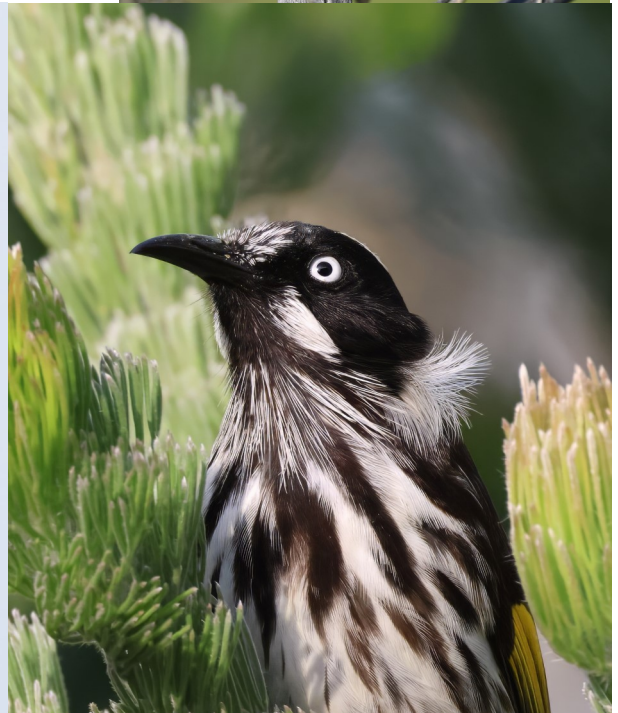
**Clockwise from top:** **DH** hatched from one of these two eggs; as a little chick at 15 days of age; as a fledgling (day 35) the day it was banded on 14 March 2023. **There is a 2.5% chance of an egg becoming an adult Hooded Plover!** All photos were taken in accordance with BirdLife Australia's photography guidelines and with a zoom lens while monitoring. Banding of **DH** was generously funded by **The Cape** as part of its ecological conservation strategy.



## *Mayhem in the garden ...*



It is absolute mayhem in the garden at the moment. The Red and Little Wattlebirds are at war, as always. The New Holland Honeyeaters attempt to fill the void when there is a break in the battles, and the small Crescent Honeyeaters and Silveryeyes take every opportunity to fill up on nectar and insects respectively when there is a lull in action before hiding among the thick, protective vegetation. A very young New Holland (left) was watching and learning!





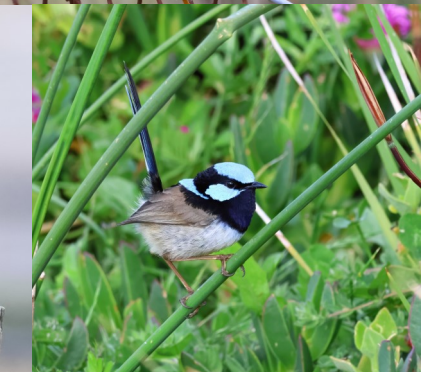
## Take a bow ...



Resident Joe Spano has been a great support in the development of *Cape Chatter* since it began, contributing photos and many observations for the bird list over the last four years. He is also as an active participant in *Hooded Plover* monitoring, *Latham's Snipe* surveys, and BirdLife Backyard Bird Counts. Last week, after Joe's observation of the *Common Bronzewing* (bird #133), we did a piece on local doves and pigeons, and Joe has topped it off with this lovely photo, **top right**, of a *Crested Pigeon* performing courting behaviour where it bows and shows off its iridescent feathers with erect tail. Absolute beauty ... take a bow as well Joe, great work!

## Holiday blues ...

There is nothing like watching the antics of *Superb Fairywrens* playing and foraging to lighten up your mood. Such fun with vibrancy in colour and movement!





## *The year that was ...*

The native wildlife is really starting to benefit from the extensive ecological restoration of the estate, the retention of habitat areas and the emergence of some wonderful indigenous home gardens. In particular, the water landscapes are becoming home to some lovely creatures: *Rakali* (Water Rat), *Snake-necked Turtle*, freshwater and terrestrial invertebrates and a variety of frogs to name a few. Some of the more secretive waterfowl have taken up residence, including the vulnerable *Levin's Rail*, *Buff-banded Rail*, *Australian Spotted Crake*, *Spotless Crake* and we are seeing increasing numbers of the threatened *Latham's Snipe* from northern Japan throughout the warmer months. Small birds abound among the ephemeral vegetation. Fantastic!



**Above:** Recent photo of some of **The Cape's** habitat areas—courtesy of **The Cape**.





## *But, as the built environment expands ...*

Despite the retention of habitat areas and ecological restoration works, as the number of built houses increases, we will see an impact on some species. There are probably other factors at play, but I have noticed over the past year a reduction in the number of ground foraging species that feed in the open spaces, such as: *Australian Pipit*, *Eurasian Skylark*, *Little Corella*, *Galah* and vulnerable *Blue-winged Parrot* numbers, which were down this year. We are gradually succumbing to the invasion of introduced bird species such as *Common Myna*, *Common Starling* and *Common Blackbird*, which are adapting very well to this “new nature”.



The *Eastern Grey Kangaroo* mob continues to adapt to the expansion of the built environment, and *Koala*, *Common (Bare-nosed) Wombat*, and *Echidna* have popped up in some interesting locations—all within the housing zone. Their biggest threats, and those of most of our feathered friends, remain uncontrolled dogs, feral cats, fox, vehicle collision and human disturbance.



The insidious disease, **mange**, is a continuing problem in the local *Wombat* population. Treatment options can be successful if applied soon enough. There are local carers who are able to apply treatments under the auspices of **Mange Management Inc.**

Please ring **Mange Management Inc** on: **0431 600 125** if you see a *Wombat* suspected of having mange. If it feeding in daylight, and has bare skin visible, it's very possible it has mange.

Likewise, we may well see more injuries to wildlife as the built environment expands and human presence increases. If you see any wildlife with an injury, please notify **Wildlife Victoria** on **03 84007300** and they will arrange for locally trained rescuers or vets to attend to the situation.





## Drum roll ... the success story of the year ...

I may be a little bit biased, but undoubtedly, the success story of the year was the fledging of four juvenile *Hooded Plovers* from four nests in the Cape Paterson area. Records dating back to 2005/06 when they were first started, shows the 2022/23 season was by far the most successful season since 2015/16 when six juveniles fledged from three nests. Coastal development along with increased beach use have a huge impact on these beach-nesting birds, so this result is amazing. There are many factors at play in achieving this result, but I would like to think the work being done raising awareness of the plight of these birds and changing beach behaviours has made a contribution. There is a lot of science behind the management strategies helping to save this species and they appear to be working with a stabilisation of the population numbers. But everyone can play a part by 'sharing our shores' with everyone and all of nature, especially during the busy holiday periods, and supporting the work by organisations like BirdLife Australia, volunteer monitors, and Land Managers, so we do not return to the path of extinction..

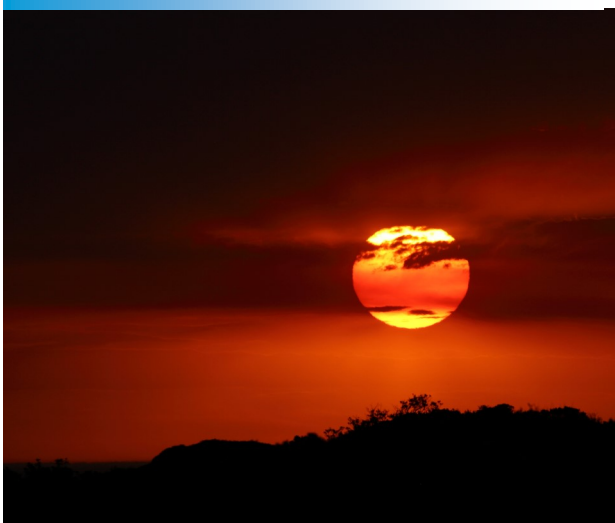


**Above from Left:** In addition to **DH** who is featured on Page 2, here are our other three stars: the fledge from the area just west of Wilson Rd, White **KU** from Pea Creek (who was also recently seen at Williamsons Beach on the Wonthaggi ocean beaches) and the 2nd Surf miracle bird. They are all now hopefully playing their part in helping to keep this species viable.

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.

*And again, a big thank you to the Directors of **The Cape** for getting behind protecting the Hooded Plovers of Cape Paterson through a generous donation to help raise awareness and develop more management strategies.*

### 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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**capechatter.com**

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