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Issue No. 130

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Nature Observations around The Cape



Cape Chatter

Five years on ...

Today’s 130th issue marks the fifth anniversary *Cape Chatter*. Where has the time gone? A key objective of **The Cape** development was to restore habitat with indigenous flora to attract as much native wild-life back into what was previously degraded agriculture land. I set out with this newsletter back in April 2020 to “*spark interest, stimulate awareness, encourage observation and help record the comings and goings of the natural environment of The Cape as it evolves over time*”. Along the way we have managed to gather scientific data to influence landscape design and maintenance within the estate, instigate community led revegetation projects, initiate animal welfare protocols around disease and injury, and undertake conservation projects to help threatened species such as *Hooded Plover* and *Latham’s Snipe*. And we have become close and personal with some local bird folk such as ‘Dary’ the *Australian Magpie*. Hopefully, followers of *Cape Chatter* have developed a better understanding of the behaviors and challenges faced by the local animals that also call **The Cape** area home, and who have to deal with our impact on their world.



Above: Dary’s latest offspring, checking me out in the garden. He has had successful broods every season since I arrived here in 2019.

A thank you ...

Cape Chatter is not a solo effort. Over the five years, many residents, visitors and followers have provided wonderful feedback and insights that have encouraged me to do each issue. To all of you, many thanks. But particular gratitude to those who actively support the estate's wildlife and nature efforts—the citizen science volunteers, the wildlife rescuers and carers, those who helped with community rewilding projects and those who provide the observations which are vital to looking after our natural world in the best possible way. **The Cape** development team has done an amazing job establishing this environment in addition to its ongoing maintenance. There are still things happening behind the scenes to ensure we are doing the best by our native fauna and flora—not just now but into the future.



Pictured are our only two fledged vulnerable *Hooded Plover* juveniles for the 2024/25 breeding season. Recognizing the impact a 220-home housing development would have on the local *Hooded Plover* breeding sites, **The Cape** development generously funded and entered into a custodial partnership with **BirdLife Australia** to help protect and raise awareness of this threatened shorebird species.





A small group of volunteers from Cape Paterson actively volunteer to monitor breeding sites and instigate protective management protocols during the nesting season. Hopefully this awareness and work will go some way to avoid this species becoming extinct!



A snapshot of the 2024/25 Hoodie breeding season ...

The season has just about come to a close. It started in early August 2024 and is still running into April 2025 (we remain monitoring our latest fledge). Our volunteer team have clocked up around **530** beach monitoring visits—a monumental effort. The table below summarizes the overall result for the local breeding sites. Our local breeding birds managed to get two juveniles 'into the air' this season at **F Break** and **Harmers Haven** from a total of **13** juveniles recorded along the whole Bass Coast from San Remo to Inverloch. Of the **9** local chicks which hatched, it was disappointing to lose two around 10 days short of flying (both suspected off-leash dog attacks) with the remainder lost in the first ten days of hatching (fox predation played a big role in these).

CAPE PATERSON TO HARMERS HAVEN BREEDING SUMMARY 2024-2025

NUMBER OF BREEDING PAIRS	NUMBER OF EGGS	NUMBER OF CHICKS	NUMBER OF FLEDGE
			

8

31

9

2

An average year again! Since records began in 2006 for our local breeding sites:

- ♦ *the long term fledge average is 2.6*
 - ♦ *The average number of chicks hatched is 7*
 - ♦ *The average number of eggs laid is 28*
- The species is just hanging in there!*

F Break miracle

The juvenile (pictured left) fledged here on 6th February. The nest from which it came was situated right in the middle of the F Break/Wilson Rd beach access track as a result of beach erosion in September 2024.

By some miracle it survived all the disturbance. It is the first fledge from this location since 2010 and only the fourth since records began in 2006.

The adult breeding pair are flagged and identified as **AS White** (female) and the male **XR White**. They are the territory pair east and west of the Wilson Rd track. This was their only nest—with **3** eggs, **2** chicks and the **one** juvenile. They have had **2** fledges together, the last in the 2022/23 season.



Harmers miracle

The chick (pictured right) fledged on 14th April and is still on site with its parents. It was seen having a good fly on 19th April!!

This is the first chick to fledge at the site since 2013/14 and the fourth since 2006.

The breeding pair this year had **5** nests together, laid **12** eggs, **2** chicks hatched and only **one** has survived. They have in total spent over **110** days of incubation and protection of the two chicks this season.

The adult female of the pair was flagged last season and is identified as **AP White**. She is a remarkable **18** year old bird that fledged from Phillip Island in January 2007.



Oh rats ... rodents abound

The recent observation of a *Black-shouldered Kite* consuming a captured rodent on the top of a tree stag in the central creek line of **The Cape** (pictured below) reminded me of the fact that we should be very careful in how we manage rodent pests (such as *Black Rats* and *House Mice*) around our homes and gardens to prevent killing native birds and native rodents. We have good number of native rodents such as *Bush* and *Swamp Rats* around the estate, which we do not want to kill with the wrong pest management approach. Here is some great advice from **BirdLife Australia** on what to use if you decide to bait rather than trap.



Rodenticides avoid these

Packaging for SGARs can be unclear, but as a safe bet avoid all products with the ingredients:

brodifacoum

bromadiolone

difethialone

difenacoum

flocoumafen



Rodenticides safer choice

Rat bait should always be a last resort. Where possible, use rodent-proof fencing and trapping methods. If you must use bait, follow the advice below.

Non-Anticoagulant Rodenticides

Active Ingredient: Corn Gluten Meal & Sodium Chloride

- e.g. **Ratsak Naturals**

Active Ingredient: Cholecalciferol

- e.g. **Selontra**

Note: Lower risk of secondary poisoning, but no antidote. Keep away from kids, pets, and wildlife.



Below: *Swamp Rats* are a reasonably common native rodent around **The Cape**. Be careful not to mistake them for *Black Rats*. If in doubt, it is best to try and catch the rat in a non-lethal trap and release if it is a native species or dispatch if an introduced species.

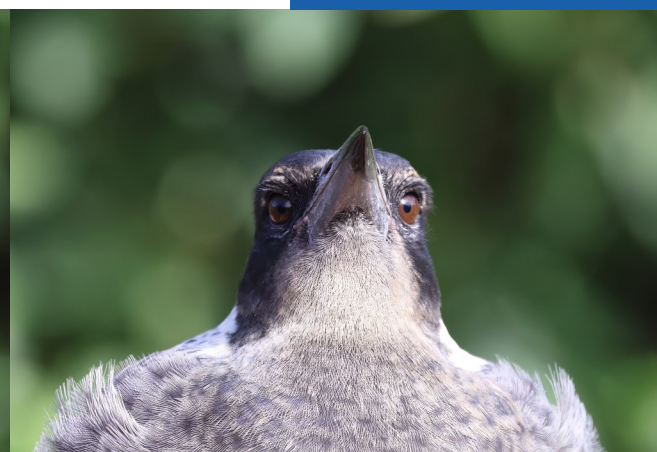


The wonderful Australian Magpie ... Darcy's family

The *Australian Magpie* is an iconic Australian bird – intelligent, melodious and in the top ten of birds counted in the Aussie Bird Count. They live in tight family groups and can be ferociously territorial during breeding season. My local *Magpie* is 'Darcy' and he has tormented me since I arrived at **The Cape** in 2019 because I happen to live in the midst of his territory. Every year he and the 'missus' have bred successfully. Given only one in four *Magpie* pairs breed and only an estimated 10% of male *Magpies* 'swoop' to defend their home range, this is one real impressive *Magpie*! I have no idea how old he is and how long he has been here!



Above left: The female 'missus' and **right** 'Darcy'. You can tell the difference between the sex by the back plumage—the female is mottled grey and the male pure white.



Young *Magpies* have a wonderful plumage—a silvery sheen that darkens over time. The bill is also all black/grey that changes to a dull white/black tip when adulthood is reached. Each year, Mr & Mrs *Darcy* have always retained one of the juveniles to help raise the next generation and then they move on. This past season, we have had their last lovely juvenile I have named 'Dozy' as it is often seen asleep around our garden. *Dozy* is a stunning young bird but recently he has swooped close to me a couple of times and I am not sure why. There have been a couple of other reports of swooping *Magpies* in the area which is quite unusual for this time of year, so we all may need to pay attention in coming months. Remember that these birds are only trying to protect their territory against perceived threats.

Above: Dozy asleep in the garden recently while soaking up the morning sun. What a stunning young bird!

Banksia flowering bringing in the noisy birds ...

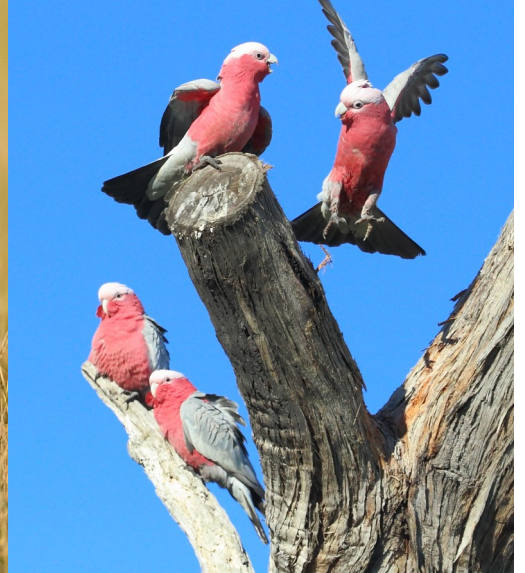
It is a strange time for birds at the moment. While it is changeover time between various migratory species, I must admit the sounds and levels of activity are unusually muted, especially from the smaller birds. The prolonged dry period is probably having something to do with it and there as there is a lack of invertebrates to feed on. Water sources are continuing to dry up. One thing that has brought in some of the more raucous birds is the flowering of the *Coastal Banksia* which dominate the streetscapes of the estate.



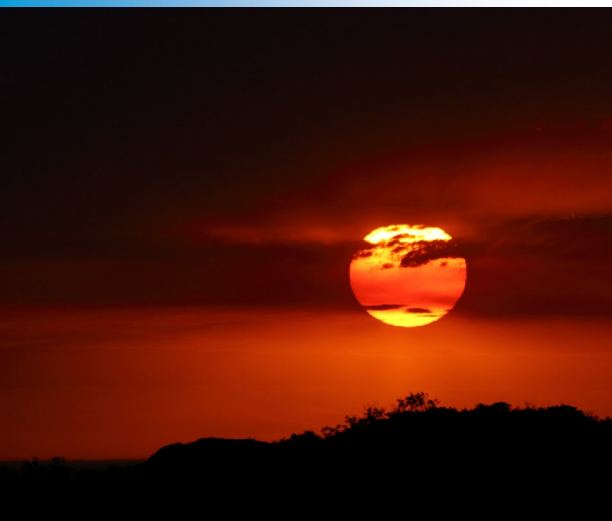
Clockwise from above left: The flower of the *Coastal Banksia*, the very noisy and energetic *Rainbow Lorikeet*, the *New Holland Honeyeater*, the *Little Wattlebird*, the *Eastern Rosella* (more of a ground feeder) and the larger *Red Wattlebird*. The wattlebirds certainly have their work cut out for them at the moment defending their nectar territories.



And of course the silly Galah ... total mayhem and noise



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.

Contact David by email or through the website to report interesting nature observations at **The Cape**.

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