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Cape Chatter

Peaceful sorties ...

Water is at the heart of ecological systems and at last, some decent rain has fallen and refreshed the landscape. **The Cape's** ecological landscape has been designed around water harvesting and natural filtration along with providing biodiverse flora habitat for fauna. It hasn't taken long to notice small changes in the range of species that have come back with the rain, especially the freshwater bird species around the wetlands and chain of ponds. I have spent some quiet, mindful time connecting with nature, watching and photographing various duck species feeding, preening on the water and in flight relocating between the various water sources. It is so much more peaceful watching natural 'bird sorties' over human initiated, long range destructive bombing raids!



Above: A 'plump' of *Chestnut Teal* flying over the east-west chain of ponds in a 'peaceful sortie'. This species has returned in numbers to **The Cape** since the recent rain. As they arrived, the flock of *Australian Wood Duck* that was grazing the open spaces over the dry months has up and gone (as predicted). That's a male *Chestnut Teal* top right in breeding plumage and females in his slipstream. You will notice the ducks more active from now as they prepare for the breeding season—many chasing each other in flight.

'Regenerative communities' and nature

I was heartened by the launch of a new website 'Regenerative Communities' see <https://www.regencommunities.com.au> by **The Cape** Director, Brendan Condon, which articulates the key principles underlying the design of **The Cape** community and for communities into the future. Principal among these are: transport, energy efficiency, local food, people and community, and sustainable housing. Importantly, water management/harvesting and building nature friendly landscapes are key principles which are often overlooked as we tend to focus more on new technologies as solutions—nature plays an important role in so many ways. So much work has been done rejuvenating the natural world at **The Cape** from a previously degraded landscape—it is a wonderful place to connect with nature—but much remains to be done. *Cape Chatter* has endeavoured to raise awareness and highlight these two key principles over the past five years through observation and photo-documentation. So, in coming issues, we will look back at the progress of rejuvenating the estate's natural world to see how **The Cape** is progressing as a nature friendly, regenerative community.



Above: Regenerative communities use sustainable transport to move about—like walking and cycling on formed tracks. Even the local kangaroo mob use these tracks to move about **The Cape**. What better way to connect with nature while out on a walk or ride while connecting with people and community!



Above: Providing water and natural structures in a home garden landscape can bring all sorts of surprising visitors into close proximity to connect with, observe and enjoy from the comfort of your home garden—a win-win.



Above: How privileged are we to have vulnerable birds that fly 12,500 kms from Japan to spend summer here—literally roosting in our back yards.

Connect with nature, nurture it and give something back—even a little!

Meanwhile—life on the water ... and in the air—the Teals

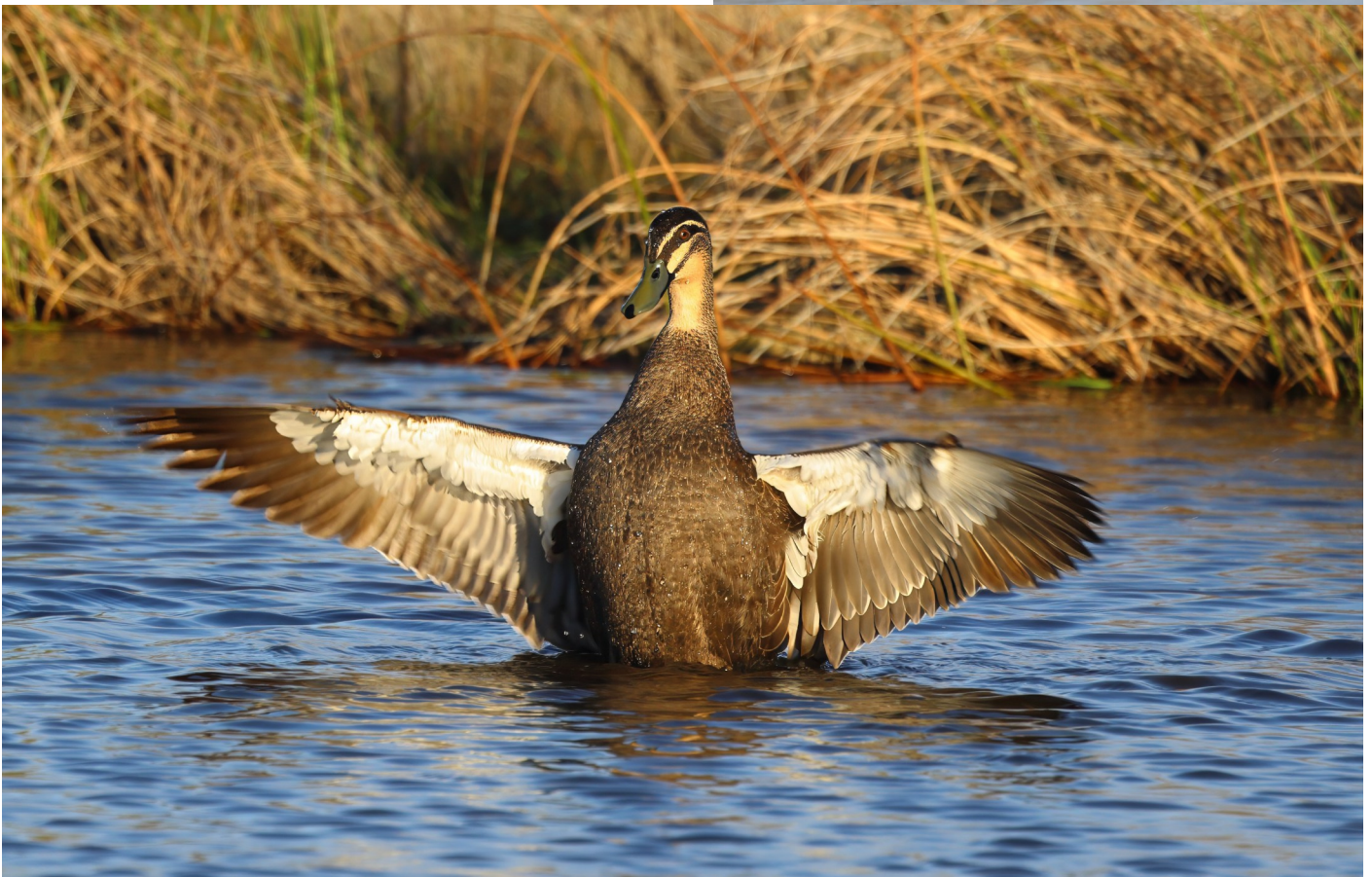
There are two type of *Teal Duck* at **The Cape**—*Chestnut* and *Grey*. *Chestnut* are more common here, have a 'warmer' brown plumage. The male has an iridescent green head in breeding plumage. The *Grey* has lighter grey/brown tones. Spot the differences below.



Pacific Black Duck ... incoming!



Pacific Black Duck are happy hanging out with the *Teal* although skirmishes will erupt during the breeding season over territory. *PBD* are a larger bird. It is difficult to differentiate between the sex, with head colouring the key—the female has a brown crown and the male a black crown. Sadly this species has hybridized with introduced *Northern Mallards* and we have some of them around the estate as well. Again, it can be difficult to identify the differences between the pure and hybrid.



That's the spirit (of Australia) ...

The local *Kangaroo* mob are relishing the new lease of life in the grasses with the recent rains. They have literally sprung back to life! There are quite a few joeys around that have found some new found freedom from mum's pouch. You can see them running around like energetic horse foals and returning to mum for more sustenance every now and then. I had a wonderful time recently watching this particular joey on the Weathertop ridge bounding about exploring the world and taking it all in.



Please give these creatures some space as they emerge at dusk to forage. It is there home too—and they were here before us!



Hope for the future ... Project KOALA blossoms!

Project KOALA lives on! I recently spent some time checking out the 12 mini-forest plots planted in the first phase back in September 2021. They have had a tough time getting through the prolonged dry and several *Coast Manna Gum* (*eucalyptus viminalis pryoriana*) have died—but most have made it through and new leaf growth is emerging. Interestingly, I was surprised to see what I thought was the first flower blossom for the project (albeit out of season—these are strange times) so I was pretty stoked by that. On closer inspection I found some old seed pods indicating there had been previous flowering that I had missed on previous inspections. So we are on a roll and there is hope this little mini-ecosystem will soon have a whole range of insects, birds, and koala amongst its midst. A real good regenerative community project bringing back nature!

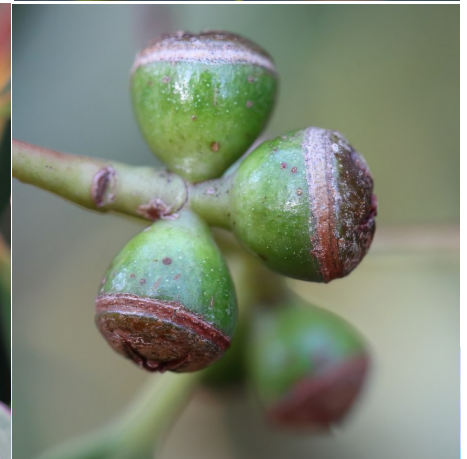


A community-led ecological revegetation project to re-establish indigenous tree species in The Cape



OBJECTIVES

- Engender a spirit of community through active engagement of **The Cape** resident community and utilisation of community knowledge and resources.
- Supplement the remnant treed vegetation within **The Cape** and along the edge of the bordering Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park.
- Complement the revegetated wetlands and creek lines within **The Cape** with additional tree plantings.
- Provide additional habitat through corridors and bio-links for native animal species, with emphasis on *Koala*, but a diverse and complete range of native fauna.



Project KOALA mini-forest plots looking south. Image taken 29 June 2025. Planted as tube stock on 11 Sep 2021.

Raptors aplenty ...

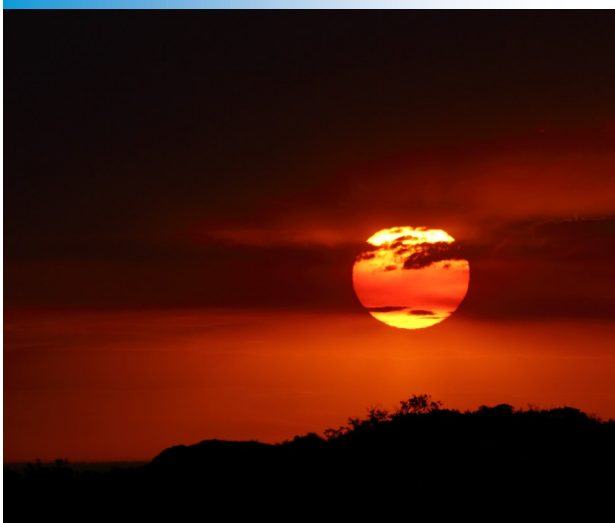
Nice to see a couple of uncommon raptors about the estate, including a wonderful *Wedge-tailed Eagle* flying over being chased by *raven* and *magpie*. A smaller raptor we used to see more often over the open spaces of the estate before the housing area expanded, has returned. A lovely *Nankeen Kestrel* (pictured right and below) was hanging about around the wetland and Sunlight Blvd area recently. Our most common raptor remains the *Black-shouldered Kite* (below right) who are very active still in the wetlands and creek line.



Remember, if you have rodent pest problems around your home and garden, please be careful if using rodenticides, trapping in a cage is preferred. Avoid Bunnings rodent poisons as they can be lethal to these birds!



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**.

Email: dwhartney@bigpond.com

capechatter.com
