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Cape Chatter

The wonders of ‘the bog’ ...

There is a fantastic small piece of precious habitat proving to be a birding hotspot within **The Cape**—I call it ‘the bog’ (a piece of wet spongy ground). While many Australians (and some Belgium's I know!) have another meaning for this word ‘bog’ (slang for a ‘dunny’ or toilet), I prefer to use the more refined Oxford definition. While it may appear at first a drab unkept area—this parcel of retained habitat has been left relatively untouched since the estate began the landscape development back in 2018—it is paying dividends for us nature observers and more importantly, the wildlife that is using it. At this time of year, ‘the bog’ is in full swing with all sorts of shenanigans going on among the animals. Snakes are slithering about, there is a cacophony of frog calls (especially the pobblebunks) with kangaroos lounging about. It is a wonderful place to stop and contemplate nature at it’s best at close quarters from the nearby viewing points and walking tracks. We are so fortunate to have it!



‘The bog’ was set aside back in early 2020 after the observation of several *Latham’s Snipe* in the vicinity. The site has now become the most popular location within **The Cape** for these vulnerable migratory waders from northern Japan which spend the spring and summer months in southern Australia during their non-breeding season. At this time of the year, *Latham’s Snipe* can be seen most days busily foraging in the damp, muddy habitat after their exhausting 12500 km journey from the northern hemisphere. Recent observations here have also included wonderful small waterfowl such as the *Buff-banded Rail*, *Australian Spotted Crake* and the calls of the secretive and vulnerable *Levin’s Rail*. You can watch *Eastern Grey Kangaroos* traversing this area in the late afternoon as they emerge to feed around the estate. Overall, it is a wonderful spot to enjoy nature at close quarters, so please respect it.

Recent bird action within 'the bog' ...

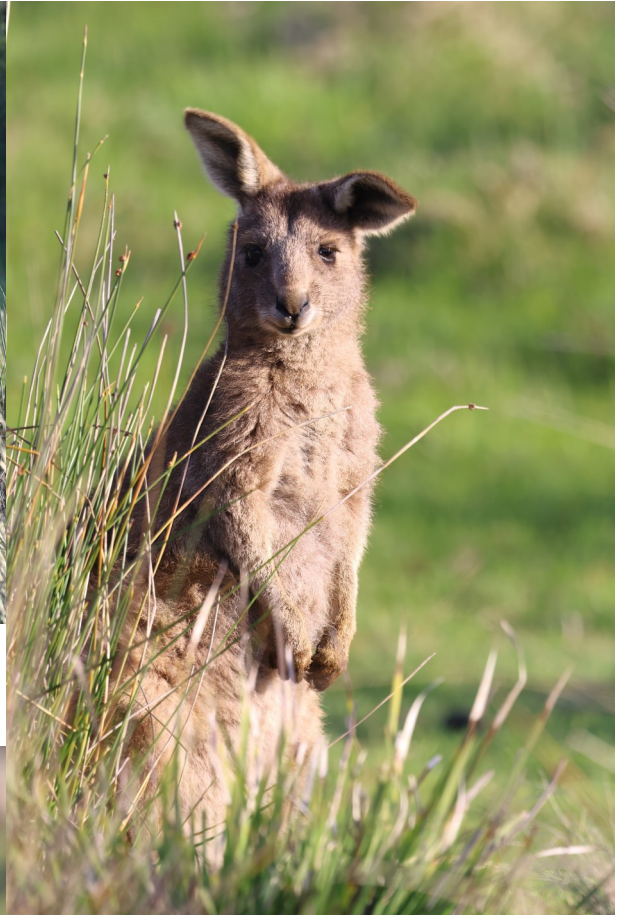


From the top: *Australian Spotted Crake, Buff-banded Rail and Latham's Snipe—current inhabitants of 'the bog'.*

Kangaroos love 'the bog' ...



'The bog' is used as a 'roo highway' by *Eastern Grey Kangaroo* most days. Late afternoon, they leave the day time safety of the coastal reserve to emerge into the estate's open spaces to graze during the night.



The much maligned Masked Lapwing ...

The local *Masked Lapwings* (or *Spur-winged Plover*) have been particularly conspicuous and aggressive this season. I can't recall a year like it in the past six years. I have had the opportunity to closely observe and photograph one particular clutch of four chicks from a nest in the vicinity of the Trumpeter Street/Sunlight Blvd intersection. Three chicks remain and as of 8th October, they are 35 days old. They still have another 2-3 weeks before they can fly (fledge). It has been fascinating watching the effort the parents make to protect these chicks against a range of threats—it is 24/7—and the various communication calls they make to warn the chicks and each other if they perceive a threat is too close! The chicks have to feed themselves from day one, so they have been ranging far and wide to feed. More recently, they too were using 'the bog' to forage, and the adults made sure the *Latham's Snipe* and small waterfowl were kept away from the chicks. It's not only us humans they can be aggressive toward!



Day 3

Day 9

Day 18

Day 23



Masked Lapwings ...

Day 31



Day 35



Above: The chicks are slowly growing and developing their flight wings. Here are some comparisons in size against the adult—at Day 18 (**left**) and Day 34 (**right**). They really have a growth spurt happening at the moment. The parents remain very protective and shepherd the young ones into cover if out in the open and a threat nears. They can cover quite long distances in a day. Last week, they were spotted foraging on the Weathertop Crest ridge and in the ‘the bog’ (**right**). Most of the time they have been near the oval and there are portable signs in place to warn people of their presence! Please try and give them space.



Little Corellas ... in their hundreds

Like clockwork, we are witnessing the transition from the winter flocks of *Galah* to the summer flocks of hundreds of very noisy *Little Corella*. I am not sure what triggers this phenomenon, but I am thinking it has something to do with the feed available and could be the emergence of the weed *onion (or nut) grass* and *capeweed* which are prolific at the moment. You can watch the antics of these hilarious and very social birds for hours, 'bubbling' as they forage among the open space habitat. What a sight to see hundreds in the air after lifting off as a 'blanket' of white, loud screeching as they flock to land at a new patch to devour or a two-story home to perch and preen! I wonder if there is a leader?



The call of the Reed Warbler ...

You know an ecosystem is healthy when you have a chorus of frog calls and the persistent call of the *Australian Reed Warbler* coming from the thick reed and sedge vegetation of the wetlands. And that is what is happening at the moment. Several *Reed Warblers* are calling persistently and occasionally you will get one pop up in the open and declare itself. Lovely song birds with plenty of attitude!

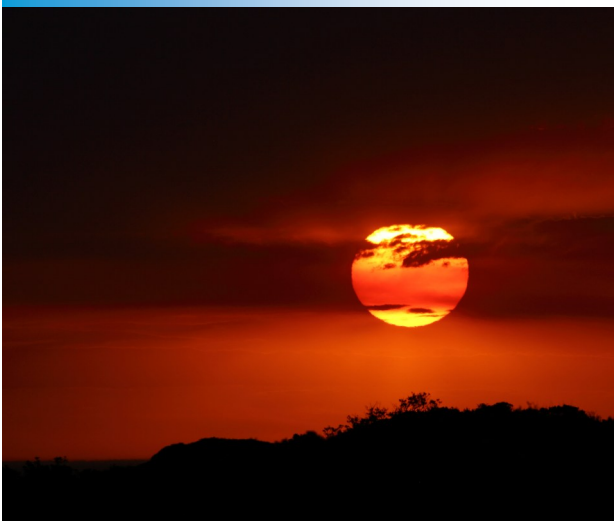


Snipe Survey results

We had the best September count of *Latham's Snipe* recently when the team (with military precision) did the first survey of the season. Good signs for the year ahead. Numbers should hopefully build in November and peak in January. Plenty of rubbish collected too!



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.

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