GEELONG NATURALIST

MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE GEELONG FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC

In this issue...

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Editor's corner

This corner of the *Geelong Naturalist* is usually reserved for a word from the president of our club. Over the last two years I have enjoyed reading what Deborah has had to say—she has been insightful and thought-provoking in her comments. In the absence of a president, hopefully a temporary situation, I will ask various club members to fill this space so be prepared for a tap on the shoulder!

I've had water on my mind this week, perhaps because a period of rain was imminent. And perhaps because, like many others, I am dealing with grey water in my garden.

Everywhere I go I see plants under stress through lack of water, but I'm not too worried about them— the seed bank is in the soil and unless we get a real climate shift the plants will grow when the rains come. But I do worry about the fauna. What if things get so bad that animals, (birds, worms, snails, insects, and so on), can't breed before they die? There may be catastrophic things happening in the macro world already. I read about a migrating bird species in Europe that is dying out because its food source, a caterpillar, is morphing several weeks earlier than usual. The gender of baby crocodiles is decreed by a small degree of temperature, so we could end up with an imbalance one way or the other. Small changes in climate on a local level can have a huge effect, and the changes can ripple out in ways we don't see or fully understand.

What can we do personally? We can try to make our 'footprint' on the earth as small as possible. We can read what the scientists are saying. We can take part in surveys. We can join a Friends group. We can turn out lights and use Green Bags. We can vote. We can listen to the young people in our community. We can bring up the topic of the environment in conversations we have with friends and strangers. We can support environmental lobby groups. We can recycle. We can walk or catch a bus instead of driving. We can fight to protect reserves, and support programs such as Bush Tender, Land Care and Trust for Nature that support private land-holders protecting indigenous vergetation on their properties.

The global problems are overwhelming but we only need to look to our own 'patch', our own home, our own bad habits. But don't forget to do it cheerfully—a smile is contagious. And keep in mind that *'even if you're on the right track, you can still be left behind if you just sit there*'. (Anon.)

Lorraine Phelan (Editor)

Tonight...

...Trevor Pescott, leader of our Mammals Special Interest Group, will talk about 'Small mammals of Victoria's South West'. Because most are nocturnal and difficult to see, the small mammals of the Geelong region are little known. Some of their secrets will be revealed by Trevor.

At the June meeting…

...Chris Pitfield will talk about 'Biodiversity conservation within the Corangamite Region—lessons learnt'. Chris, who was a junior member of our club, has resigned his position with the CCMA and has accepted a position within DSE as a Senior Policy Officer within the Biodiversity and Ecosystems Branch.

REMINDER

2007/08 GFNC MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS NOW DUE

The club's subscription rates are listed on the orange coloured Renewal Notice that was enclosed with the April issue of the Geelong Naturalist. Please forward your payment to Hon. Treasurer, GFNC, PO Box 1047 Geelong 3220 (cheques made payable to Geelong Field Naturalists Club Inc.).

GFNC website

Any observations (plant, mammal, bird, reptile, invertebrate etc.) can be emailed to the GFNC email address or phoned to Barry Lingham (5255 4291) so that they can be incorporated onto the site frequently.

GFNC Web page:
http://home.vicnet.net.au/~gfnc/

e-mail address:
gfnc@vicnet.net.au

Mailing roster

May: Polly Cutcliffe

Members are encouraged to arrive early at general meetings.

The room will be open at 7.15 pm to allow members to chat to other members and visitors.

The photograph on the front cover, by Rob Ganly, is of an immature male Gang Gang Cockatoo feeding on green pinecones, Newtown, April 2007.

The photo on the back cover, by Craig Morley, is of Australian Magpie.

Skulkers and lurkers: Bristlebirds, Scrub-birds and Whipbirds
Bird Group meeting, 19 April 2007

...Marilyn Hewish

Those of us with twitching tendencies know that some Australian birds are hard to see. Three groups of birds have a particularly evil reputation. Margaret Cameron used the expression 'skulkers and lurkers' to describe them: the Bristlebirds, Scrub-birds and Whipbirds.

There are three species of bristlebirds, the Rufous, Eastern and Western: two scrub-birds, Rufous and Noisy; and two whipbirds, Eastern and Western. They are all shy, rarely come into the open and live at low level in dense habitats. Except for the Eastern Whipbird, they are rare and localised in distribution. They have loud far-carrying songs, important in communication in dark environments with limited visibility. Many perform antiphonal duets, in which the male starts a song and its mate finishes. Many are expert ventriloquists. These birds are sedentary. They fly poorly and reluctantly. Flight skills are unnecessary in their enclosed habitats. They are dark or dull coloured—bright colours are little use for birds living in the dark—but they have some white or pale colour on their faces, perhaps used in recognition or communication at close quarters. Another characteristic they share is that they drive bird-watchers crazy.

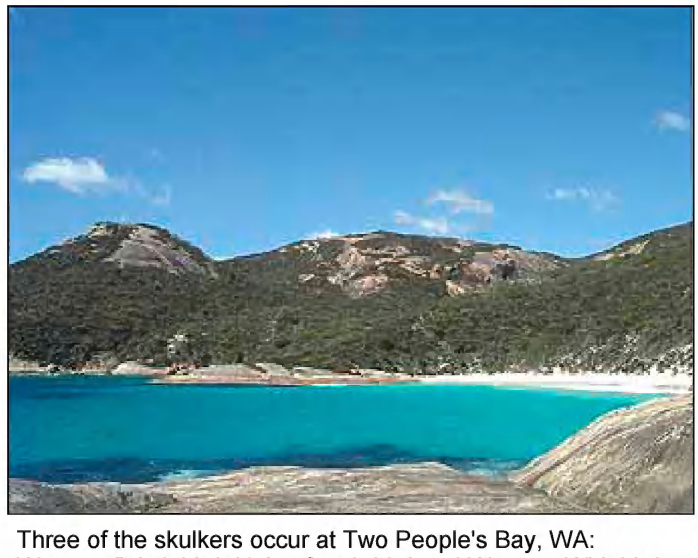
Rufous Bristlebirds occur in coastal heath from Torquay to the Coorong in SA. Locally, Loch Ard Gorge, Aireys Inlet and Point Addis are good places to see them. In the Otway Ranges, they range inland. We have recorded them in thickets of Blackwood and Prickly Tea-tree in the Carlisle heath 25 km from the coast. Perhaps the most bizarre location is the garden of the Blackwood Gully tea-rooms in Lavers Hill. We have drunk our coffee by the window and watched bristlebirds running under the shrubs and even on the verandah. In March this year, we saw a bristlebird sunning itself on a path.

Tame Rufous Bristlebird at Aireys Inlet, October 2005.
Photo: Rob Mackenzie.

When I was a beginner bird-watcher in 1982, Rufous Bristlebirds were hard birds to see. My first sighting was at Point Addis on a Challenge Bird Count in 1982. When I arrived at 6 a.m., Gordon McCarthy had lined up a bristlebird calling in a shrub. The bird was typically uncooperative, staying behind twigs and keeping to the opposite side of the bush, but eventually I got a good look. Anyone new to bird-watching in this area would find my frustration puzzling, because bristlebirds have recently become quite tame. In the carparks at Point Addis, Aireys Inlet and Port Campbell, they ignore cars and fearlessly approach people. They have a sweet tooth. In 1996, Margaret Cameron reported a bristlebird at Aireys Inlet eating a chocolate icecream she had dropped by the car. They are also attracted by jelly snake lollies, especially bright green ones.

Eastern Bristlebirds occur in two areas on the east coast of Australia, around the Victoria-NSW and NSW-Queensland borders. They live in heaths, melaleuca scrubs and rainforest gullies. My first and only sighting was at Barren Grounds Bird Observatory south of Wollongong in 1986. I 'flogged' the swampy heath with no result and eventually Richard Jordan, the observatory warden, took pity on me and helped. He heard a call and homed in on it, and we flushed a bird from under our feet. It flew weakly for a few metres and dropped down into a ferny patch. No amount of beating the bushes would make it fly again.

I've never seen a **Western Bristlebird**. They live in heathland near Albany in WA. Before a visit in 2005, internet research revealed that Little Beach at Two People's Bay was the place to look, as the birds cross a track to get to an 'island' of heath in the carpark. Arriving at 5:30 a.m., I sat in a comfy chair to watch. Bristlebirds began calling close to the track just after sunrise. No birds appeared. They obviously hadn't read the internet. A bristlebird called no more than a metre from the car. The scrub was so thick that I wrote in my notebook, 'The bird might as well have been on the moon'.



Three of the skulkers occur at Two People's Bay, WA:
Western Bristlebird, Noisy Scrub-bird and Western Whipbird.

Rufous Scrub-birds live in south-eastern Queensland and north-eastern NSW. I've never tried for them but in 1982 Dean saw their habitat and heard their calls in Lamington National Park (I went off in the opposite direction chasing Noisy Pittas). The birds favour dank dark beech forests with a dense understorey. Sean Dooley described the Rufous Scrub-bird as a 'wretched bird' and his 'bogey bird', and saw a 'low-flying brown meteor'. When he eventually saw one well he performed a victory dance. I will too if I ever see one.

Noisy Scrub-birds occur in dense heath near Albany in WA. In the 1800s, they were known in three areas in south-western WA: Waroona between Perth and Bunbury, the Margaret River-Augusta area and the Albany area. After 1899, they were

Continued on next page...

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thought to be extinct. They were rediscovered at Two People's Bay in 1961, and the area was designated a Nature Reserve to protect the scrub-bird.

Such is the scrub-bird's reputation for cussedness, that I arrived at Two People's Bay in WA undecided about whether to try for it. But the deafening calls proved irresistible. I scrambled into a thicket of two-metre high sedge clumps and banksias enmeshed in a tangle of brittle fallen branches. Over two hours, my ears rang as the bird called continuously a few metres away. I crawled on hands and knees, pushed into sedge clumps, watched at low tunnels in the vegetation, and staked out small gaps between bushes. I saw a few brown bird-shaped blurs. The next morning, the bird was in a clump of mallee by the track. I tried to crawl towards it, but it melted away. The heath was already flattened along the crawl-way. I wasn't the first to try this method.

Chasing the Noisy Scrub-bird, Two People's Bay, WA, September 2005.

I was fired up for the chase, however, and decided to out-think the bird rather than blundering around after the calls. The second bird had progressed through the heath, singing at intervals, and I realised that it must have crossed the walking track at some stage. At dawn the next morning, Dean and I sat on the track staking out the mallee clump. An ear-splitting call came from right next to Dean. The bird had come in to look at him. Dean had a clear view. I turned and a branch blocked my line of sight. The bird flew back. Relations between Dean and I became strained. But the bird was calling again close by. I waited for five minutes, the calls slowed, stopped. The bird dashed onto the track, paused, looked at me, and then disappeared. Dean and I were friends again.

Eastern Whipbirds are more widely distributed than the other skulkers, and rather less retiring. They occur down most of the east coast of Australia, reaching the Dandenongs in Victoria, and their habitats are coastal scrub and wet forests with dense undergrowth. My first sighting was at Mallacoota in 1981. I stalked the bird to a particular bush by its whip-crack call, and then waited quietly. It came out into a gap in the branches and posed for me. The birds seem to be curious, and sitting or standing quietly often brings them out.

For us, **Western Whipbirds** have been the most intriguing of the skulkers. They occur in several disconnected populations; in heath in Eyre Peninsula, Yorke Peninsula and Kangaroo Island in SA, and in south-western WA; and inland in mallee-heath along the SA-Victoria border. In our experience, they are the best ventriloquists. One bird had us spinning around as the call progressed around the horizon to finally end in a bush a metre in front of us.

Dean and I worked long and hard trying to glimpse these infuriating birds. We first heard them in 1982 at Innes National Park, SA. The park pamphlet showed a photo of a Western Whipbird. Its discovery in 1965 was the main reason for the establishment of the park. The pamphlet directed us to dune heath at West Cape, where I heard calls over several years but saw nothing. We also heard calls in 1996 at Comet Bore north of Bordertown, SA, and in 2005 at Two People's Bay and the Stirling Ranges in WA. However, we discovered the place where we saw our first birds by accident. In 1989, we heard calls near Royston Head in Innes National Park. This place looked hopeful. The birds were in mallee clumps and the surrounding heath was quite sparse. Thus we could close in on the birds while they called, and they couldn't leave the mallee clumps without showing themselves. We spent hours tracking calls and had several glimpses. While trying to help me, Dean got the best views. Finally I spotted a bird preening itself just inside the foliage. By lining myself up with gaps in the leaves, I got a patchwork view of the whole bird. It had taken three hours (but really it had taken seven years).

Habitat of the Western Whipbird, Royston Head, SA, November 2006.

The distribution map for Western Whipbird shows it ranging into western Victoria. However, the last confirmed Victorian record was in 1974, and even unconfirmed reports ceased in 1985, more than 20 years ago. However, while camping along the Murrayville Track in April 2005, Dean heard intriguing calls in sandplain heath with stunted mallee and native pine. We camped there in October, and woke in the dark before dawn to the sound of Western Whipbirds calling. We scrambled out of the tent in a rush. The birds were in the mallee-pine thickets. We waited for sunrise to try to track the birds down, but when the sun showed above the horizon, the birds shut up. Were they always there or just moving through? We don't know. No birds were heard on two subsequent visits, but we need to try again in spring when they are most vocal.

Our pursuit of the skulkers and lurkers has been a bit of twitching fun—a concession to our competitive instincts. However, while spending hours tracking down and trying to outwit these birds, we've learnt a lot about them. And we still have two to go.

Out and about

...Valda Dedman

Unusual Encounters

My attention was caught by a flash of gold in the late afternoon sun. A tiny butterfly had landed on a daisy plant. With wings fold vertically, it was no bigger than my little fingernail. It was busy sipping nectar with its long thread-like proboscis from one of the minute yellow flowers clustered together at the heart of the pink daisy 'petals'. Each bloom was really a hundred or so flowers surrounded by pink rays that help guide pollinating insects to them. Because it was so intent on feeding I was able to get a photo of the little butterfly which was new to me. It was a Greenish Grass-dart *Ocybadistes walkeri sothis* (sometimes known as the Yellow-banded Dart), the same species as appears on the cover of the December 2006 *Geelong Naturalist.*

Greenish Grass-dart *Ocybadistes walkeri sothis.*
Photo: Valda Dedman

As their name implies, grass-darts fly quickly from plant to plant, usually close to the ground. They belong to the Skipper (Hesperioidea) superfamily of butterflies, which makes up almost half of Australian butterflies, though we may not be as aware of them as of the often larger, brighter and higher flying members of the Papilionoidea superfamily.

It is not surprising that we have not recorded this Grass-dart more often in Geelong. It did not occur in Melbourne until about 1977 and it is assumed that it came in coils of instant turf. It is now well established in suburban gardens. It was first recorded in Victoria in 1960 at Noorinbee in East Gippsland. Its range in this state is sporadic and probably increasing. The Museum of Victoria records do not even include Geelong, although the species is recorded from Anglesea. It is included in the 1989 list of butterflies of Anglesea and nearby coastal areas by Mary White and John Landy (*Geelong Naturalist,* vol. 26, no. 2). There are three subspecies recognised in Australia; the local one is *O.w.sothis.*

The caterpillar is green and slender, covered with short white hairs. It grows to about 20 mm then pupates in a curled-over leaf or stem. Its food plants are introduced and native grasses and *Dianella* sp., which is where Lorraine Phelan found newly-mated butterflies in her garden last year.

Skippers often bask in the sunlight with the forewings open over the body and the hindwings held flat, as Lorraine's photo (December 2006 *Geelong Naturalist)* clearly demonstrates. Another distinguishing feature you can see is the tip of the antenna, which ends in a little hook, called the *apiculus.*

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One afternoon in March, when I was sitting at my computer, I felt something cold crawling on my neck. It was a tiny black and white caterpillar, less than 1 cm long. I took its portrait on my hand (oh the joys of one-handed digital photography!) and was able to identify it as an early instar of the Grapevine Moth *Phalaenoides glycinae*, one of whose larval food plants is fuchsia, under which I had been weeding earlier in the day. Before European garden introductions, the larvae fed on Guinea Flowers *Hibbertia* sp. and Willowherb *Epilobium* sp.

The caterpillar is attractively patterned in black and white, with a distinctive patch of orange near the posterior end, perhaps to confuse predators as to its head or rear. The Mistletoe Moth has a similar brightly coloured patch on a black and white body, but its pattern is sufficiently distinctive to avoid identification confusion and its legs are brown, not black.

If you look carefully at the photo, you can see two different leg types. The six on the first three body segments are jointed and end in a claw. They are the true legs, and are used for holding food. Walking is done with the soft, stumpy ones, known as prolegs, which have hooks, called crochets, on the tip to help them grip the surface. The final pair of legs are anal claspers.

Phalaenoides glycinae is regarded as an agricultural pest, although it has many natural predators, such as wasps and flies. It is claimed that the Common Myna, now itself a pest, was introduced to Australia in the 1860s to control it.

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We had been walking along an old timber tramway at Millgrove in the Yarra Valley, among tall treeferns and regrowth forest, a lovely lush area near the Dee River, where my husband spent his childhood. Suddenly we heard a trail bike starting up. 'Brr….brrr…brrp, brpp'. It stopped for a moment, then started and stopped again. The rider was having a bit of difficulty, it seemed. Was our peace going to be shattered? Our dismay turned to delight when we realised we were listening to a lyrebird down in the gully. It tried a few more times to get the bike going, then gave up. We looked for scratchings then, and found them beside the track and also had a glimpse of a dark bird dashing across a clearing.

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More about Dedman's Sun Orchid

Thelymitra dedmaniarum has a chocolate-vanilla perfume, with strong overtones of burnt sugar. It figures. [See *Geelong Naturalist*, vol. 42, no. 11, p 2]

Lake Lorne and McLeods Holes
Mid-week bird group excursion, Thursday 22 February
Leader: Gordon McCarthy

...Lynne Clarke

It was overcast when about twelve of us arrived at Drysdale station around 9.00 am, immediately commenting on the low water level in Lake Lorne. Telescopes lined up on the station did not appear to trouble the person keeping order there. Ravens and a Pied Currawong were seen in the pine trees and Australian White Ibis were doing over a grassy stretch nearby.

> ' ...was it an Australasian Shoveler? Eventually Gordon pronounced it to definitely be a shoveler. 'Why?' I asked him. 'Yellow legs,' was his succinct and accurate reply.'

On the lake recumbent Australian Pelicans draped on the nesting boxes were not disturbed. Raucous Masked Lapwings moved in and out—there were about twenty of them. Ten Black-winged Stilt stalked about the edge of the lake, their reflections making wonderful pictures, and thirteen Black-fronted Dotterels were avidly searching the muddy verge. A number of duck were pottering about, some roosting on the near island among the fallen trees. Much discussion ensued about a particular individual among them: was it an Australasian Shoveler? Eventually Gordon pronounced it to definitely be a shoveler. 'Why?' I asked him. 'Yellow legs,' was his succinct and accurate reply.
A female darter was drying her wings then disappeared. Soon after, her snake-like head was seen emerging on the surface of the water. The shoveler lifted its head from under its wing showing its distinctive bill. There was not a Freckled Duck to be seen. Perhaps there were some on the other side of the island? We drove around to the other side. A Hoary-headed Grebe swam away from us between the islands. No Freckled Duck. 'They must have heard the news of the water in the inland,' suggested Polly. How do they know???? No Blue-billed Duck or Hardheads either. 'We're a month too late,' said Gordon, who had seen many of all of them here three weeks ago.

We strolled around the lake beside a huge bank of Giant Honey-Myrtle, *Melaleuca amillaris*. Yellow-rumped Thornbills and Superb Fairy-wrens flitted about, with honeyeaters apparent and a Grey Butcherbird calling. The wide shallow area where the lake had been is now covered with grassy vegetation, and here was seen a flock of Red-browed Finches, and sitting, calling, on the tops of the hemp bushes, *Gynatrix pulchella,* were several Golden-headed Cisticola. We had superb views of them.

Gordon led the way to McLeods Holes. We pulled up near some willows and sat down on the grass under them looking out over the water. Not that there was very much water here either, but there was a much larger group of ducks, mainly Chestnut Teal, and a pair of Black Swans in the distance. Only after a time was our attention drawn to the little Black-fronted Dotterels just in front of us silhouetted against the sun. 'Seven!' 'No, nine!' Eleven was the number finally agreed on.

'Why have we seen so many of them today?' Barry wondered. 'You usually see them in pairs scattered about on farm dams. I guess it's because so many dams have dried up in the drought.' Some of us wandered off up the hill to be rewarded with views of a Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, and a rather rufous-coloured Grey Fantail. Barry explained that it must be Tasmanian, which regularly migrate: race *albiscapa,* as opposed to *alisteri* of the eastern and south-eastern mainland.*

We walked to the other waterhole, on the way seeing a Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater. There was lots of water here, but many fewer birds. Three exquisite Little Pied Cormorants were resting in the sun. We walked halfway round, not even hearing the clamour of a reed-warbler. A few ducks and coots scattered about. Gillian had especially come to see this waterhole—lake, really—why isn't it full of birds this dry year?

Thanks to Gordon for showing us these lovely places.

*Pizzey, G. and Knight, F. (1997) *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*, Harper Collins.

Birds at Lake Lorne

Australian Wood Duck
Pacific Black Duck
Australasian Shoveler
Grey Teal
Chestnut Teal
Hoary-headed Grebe
Darter
Little Pied Cormorant
Australian Pelican
Australian White Ibis
Straw-necked Ibis
Purple Swamphen
Dusky Moorhen
Eurasian Coot
Black-winged Stilt (x10)
Black-fronted Dotterel (x13)
Masked Lapwing
Silver Gull
Galah
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Superb Fairy-wren
Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Red Wattlebird
Noisy Miner
White-plumed Honeyeater
New Holland Honeyeater
Magpie-lark
Grey Fantail
Willie Wagtail
Grey Butcherbird
Australian Magpie
Pied Currawong
Little Raven
Red-browed Finch
European Goldfinch
Welcome Swallow
Golden-headed Cisticola
Common Starling
Common Myna

39 species

Birds at McLeods Holes

Black Swan
Australian Wood Duck
Pacific Black Duck
Grey Teal
Chestnut Teal
Little Pied Cormorant
Australian Pelican
Australian White Ibis
Straw-necked Ibis
Brown Goshawk
Purple Swamphen
Dusky Moorhen
Eurasian Coot
Black-fronted Dotterel
Masked Lapwing
Silver Gull
Spotted Turtle-Dove
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo
Superb Fairy-wren
Spotted Pardalote
Brown Thornbill
Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Red Wattlebird
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater
White-plumed Honeyeater
New Holland Honeyeater
Magpie-lark
Grey Fantail
Willie Wagtail
Grey Butcherbird
Australian Magpie
Pied Currawong
House Sparrow
Red-browed Finch
European Goldfinch
Welcome Swallow
Fairy Martin
Silvereye
Common Starling

40 species

Birds of the Western Port Phillip

(working title only!)

As an extension to the work already done on the planned book, *Birds of the Bellarine Peninsula*, by Tom Fletcher, it has been decided to extend the area to the east of the Princes Highway from Point Cook to Anglesea Heath including Cheetham Wetlands, Western Treatment Plant, Geelong city, Bellarine Peninsula, Mud Islands and Anglesea Heath.

To achieve this, Tom Fletcher has invited Hugo Phillipps to co-author with him. Any records, old photos and area lists, no matter how old, would be greatfully received and acknowledged. We probably all have pre *Geelong Bird Report* records collecting dust in a drawer or box under the bed, out the back shed and so on. These are the records we are looking for, no matter how irrelevant they may seem.

Tom can be contacted at 54 Woodlands Dve, Ocean Grove 3226, phone 5256 3737 or email <tpf54@bigpond.com>

Wider Geelong Flora Lecture

12 June 2007

Valuing riparian vegetation

Greg Peters, CCMA

Greg Peters is the River Health coordinator with the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority. He will focus his talk on streamside and instream flora.

Arrive 7.00 pm at the GBG Meeting Room for tea/coffee/ chat.

Lecture commences 7.30 pm.

RSVP Annette Zealley, Director of GBG Ph. 5227 0379 oe email <azealley@geelongcity.vic.gov.au>

For further information contact Dick Southcombe on 5243 3916.

Climate change

What will it mean for the Bellarine?

Barrie Pittock, author of *Turning Up the Heat*, and former head of CSIRO Climate Impact Group

Uniting Church Hall, Hesse St, Queensliff
7.30 pm Friday 11 May 2007

Gold coin donation

Valda Dedman is a little bruised and battered after a fall but is out of hospital and slowly mending.

Get well soon Valda. We want you back out there defending the environment.

Friends of Mud Islands

27 May	Weeding
24 June	Weeding
22 July	Victorian Wader Study Group and weeding
26 August	Weeding
October	Alternate excursion
23 September	Weeding
25 November	Seagrass monitoring and weeding

Please email fomislands@yahoo.com to register for any of these trips or phone Felicity on 5258 2559.

Barwon River walk, Winchelsea
Saturday 2 June

The Upper Barwon Landcare Network invites any GFNC members to join a Landcare celebration along the Barwon River on Saturday 2nd of June.

Feel free to join us for whatever parts of the day you wish.

10 am–1 pm	Walk along the Barwon River from Kargun Bridges to Kilwarrie Cottage—approximately 7.5 km (Winchelsea–Deans Marsh Road to Kildean Lane, just south of Winchelsea)
1 pm–3 pm	Lunch at Kilwarrie Cottage, Kildean Lane, followed by our annual meeting. Light lunch will be available for $8 per person or BYO. (Lunch will be provided by UBLN for Landcare members attending the meeting)
3 pm–5 pm	Walk along the Barwon River from Kilwarrie Cottage to Ingleby— approximately 5.5 km. (Ingleby is along Cape Otway Road)
5pm until lights out	Informal social evening in the historic Ingleby Woolshed. Includes a spit roast at 6:30 pm ($10 per person) Bring your own beverages and nibbles. Musical entertainment will be provided.

Some of the landholders along the river will be joining us to talk about their patch—Peter Dorman will be with us (local birdo).

This will be a great opportunity to see some parts of the river with old remnant trees that you normally wouldn't get to. The walking is easy going with some scrambling through fences. A car shuffle will be organised to retrieve vehicles.

Please let Neil know if you wish to join in.

Neil McInnes, Co-ordinator, Upper Barwon Landcare Network,
4/454 Murray Street, Colac 3250.
Mobile 0427 316 396.
neilubl@bigpond.net.au

Rambling on

...Marilyn Hewish

Moth mysteries

Three years is my record for the longest gap between seeing a creature and identifying its species.

On 13 February 2003, I sat on my favourite seat at Long Point in Long Forest, enjoying the peaceful scene and the shade of a magnificent Yellow Box tree. In those days, it took a lot to make me notice anything other than birds, but I soon became aware that the flowering Box Mistletoe was surrounded by a cloud of 'butterflies', fluttering and crawling among the blossoms. The huge mistletoe clumps hung down almost to the ground, so I was able to get up close, although getting a clear view of such active butterflies was difficult. They were exquisitely beautiful. The wings were black with intricate patterns of cream lines and spots and the body was black with bright red-orange stripes on the abdomen. There was some vivid orange colour near the head.

Long Point, Long Forest

The naturalist's hunting instinct was aroused: what were they? Butterflies so striking should be easy to find in a butterfly book. I whipped out my notebook and drew a sketch. Three years later, I had searched page by page through all the butterfly guides I could beg or borrow, and I was none the wiser. I let the puzzle sit on the back burner. Birds were my focus. Then on 18 February 2006, the butterfflies were there again. This was too much. I needed to know!

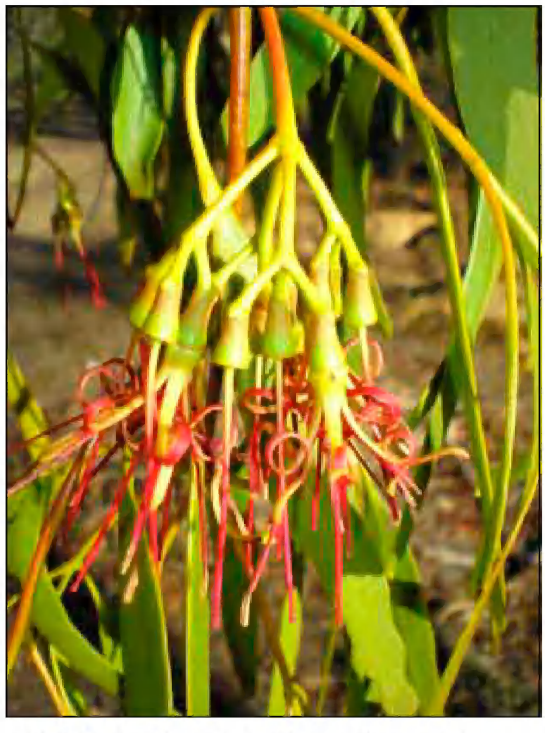
I did what I often do in such a quandary. I asked Rob Mackenzie. He suggested that I try day-flying moths. It had never occurred to me that there could be any such thing. Once I had borrowed Common's *Moths of Australia* from the GFNC library, the mystery was solved in about five minutes flat. Plate 22 shows the Mistletoe Moth *Comocrus behri*. That made sense. Mistletoe Moths on mistletoe. Most photos show the abdomen as black with a red-orange tuft at the tip, but from below there is some orange striping. The red colouring I'd seen near the head was from tufts of hair which the female has on her legs.

In 2007, they were back again, but this time earlier than I was used to. I saw a few on 27 January, and on 7 February there were huge numbers in the mistletoe, in the air and on the ground. Now that I know what they are, I feel like I'm greeting old friends each summer.

Some superficial research shows that the genus *Comocrus* is confined to Australia and the Mistletoe Moth is its only species. It is widely distributed in southern Australia in open forest and roadside eucalypts—but I've seen the moths only at one site in Long Forest. The caterpillars feed on mistletoe, including Box Mistletoe, and the adults take the nectar of the same plants. They could be in the mistletoe at Long Point all year, but I've noticed only the adults, not the caterpillars or pupae. The flight period is said to be spring, summer and autumn. I've seen them only in January and February, but I don't visit too often in summer because it can be very hot in the creek-valley. *Flora of Melbourne* says that Box Mistletoe flowers sporadically throughout the year. In Long Forest, most of my records of flowering are from mid January to mid April, and the emergence or arrival of the moths falls nicely into that period.

Memos to myself:
Look for Mistletoe Moths in other places, especially where there are large concentrations of mistletoe.
Make regular visits to Long Point in summer to find out the time period over which the moths are present.
Look for the caterpillars.

The book *Flying Colours* describes the Mistletoe Moth as, 'A beautiful day-flying moth which could be mistaken for a butterfly'. That's my excuse for the three-year delay in identification. Now, with an ever-growing collection of sketches and photos of other unidentified moths, I'll never run out of puzzles to solve and I can see myself beating that three-year record.



Mistletoe Moths gather at large clumps of flowering Box Mistletoe at Long Point, Long Forest, in January and February.

Books: *Moths of Australia*, I.F.B. Common, 1990, Melbourne University Press; *Flying Colours*, Pat and Mike Coupar, 1992, New South Wales University Press; *Flora of Melbourne*, 3rd edn, Australian Plants Society Maroondah Inc., 2001, Hyland House, Flemington, Vic.

Websites: Australian Museum Online; CSIRO Entomology, Australian Moths Online and Lepidoptera; Lepidoptera Larvae of Australia, Don Herbison-Evans and Stella Crossley (thanks Valda).

Eucalypt plantations as fauna habitat in mosaic rural landscapes

Dr Richard Lloyn, Bird Group meeting, March 2007

...Barry Lingham

Richard is a well-known scientist, wildlife officer and bird watcher who presented the results and analysis of his study of the wildlife within eucalypt plantations in Victoria. With the extensive areas of Victoria currently being planted with eucalypt species, Richard's study shows significant implications for the management and conservation of wildlife in our state. He undertook the study after noting that very little data existed on the species that inhabit eucalypt plantations. The study was funded via Joint Venture Agroforestry Program and Natural Heritage Trust grants plus DSE and DPI funds. It aimed to develop appropriate designs to increase biodiversity in commercial eucalypt plantations.

Richard began by noting some of the problems facing birds and other wildlife that inhabit bushland. Key issues were loss, degradation, fragmentation and overall reduction of natural habitat. Possible solutions involved restoration of habitat through conservation programs or commercial plantations, better management of the habitat, protection or buffering and reconnection. Plantation sites to study were selected from central Victoria and along the northern slopes of the Great Dividing Range. Various plantation design features such as size and shape, tree species, position in the landscape, geology, soils, topography and aspect, connectivity, shrub structure and relationship to remnant forest were investigated.

Plantation management systems were also studied. Actions such as irrigation and fertiliser use; pruning, grazing and scrub structure; management of pest weeds and animals plus harvesting all affect the biodiversity of the plantations. Some plantations are kept almost free of undergrowth and leaf litter, while others have shrubs or a grassy understory. The retention of some remnant trees played a significant role in attracting some species.

To establish the species present at each site, hair tube analysis of small mammals was conducted and counts made of bird and mammal species and populations. Mammal scats were checked and bat detectors were used to identify bat species. Experimental study of variations in planting systems involved five replicate groups of 1 ha sites. Each group had six treatments with differing variations of shrub planting patterns and nearby forest or farmland. The study sites were visited over a 5 year period from the initial planting.

A retrospective study of other plantations that were more than five years old investigated tree species, retained trees, shrub cover, proximity to forest, position in the landscape and embedded remnants. 109 different sites were checked.

The results obtained showed a variance in forest bird species due to many factors such as elevation, retained trees, dead hollow-bearing trees, logs on ground and the amount of mistletoe in flower or berry. The open-country bird species showed variance due to elevation, landform, grass cover, and plantation size. The overall results of the mean number of forest and woodland bird species present showed an approximate 10% decline from the natural forests to the plantations. There were more open-country birds present in plantations than in natural forest.

Analysis of specific sections of the bird population showed that the canopy gleaners such as Striated Thornbills and the tall-shrub gleaners like Golden Whistlers and Brown Thornbills were frequently found in plantations. Other groups such as the damp ground and low shrub gleaners like White-browed Scrubwrens and bark gleaners such as White-throated Treecreepers and Crested Shrike-tit were less likely to use plantations compared to natural forests. The commonly planted eucalypt species, such as Blue Gums, have smooth bark that does not attract treecreepers.

Arboreal mammal species were not as frequent in plantations as in natural forest. Open-ground gleaners that tend to feed away from tree cover were often found in plantations. Flame Robins move to more open farmland in winter after breeding in the forests. They have benefited from plantations that they use for foraging and roosting. The plantations also allow them to access some open areas more easily.

Open-ground gleaners that feed amongst trees also used plantations. Species in this category include the Scarlet Robin and the Buff-rumped Thornbill. Many of the species in this category are declining across Victoria. Nectarivores such as honeyeaters were found in plantations, but at a much reduced rate compared to forest habitat. Introduced species such as Goldfinch and Blackbirds were equally numerous in plantations and forests. Some rarer bird species such as Speckled Warbler and Grey-headed Babbler were found in few sites in this study, but have been found to use particular plantations elsewhere.

Richard showed graphs from a collaborative study by Sharon Rossi (Monash University) that clearly indicated a strong correlation between bird abundance and habitat complexity. Open cleared farmland had the lowest abundance followed by pine plantations. Eucalypt plantations showed only a slightly smaller abundance than natural forest.

Blue Gum plantation

The findings of the overall study revealed many important details.

- Eucalypt plantations can provide valuable habitat for many forest wildlife species.
- They can help protect (buffer) valuable small patches of remnant forest.
- They can help some species access parts of the landscape that would otherwise be unavailable to them.
- Their potential role in adding connectivity remains to be tested.

So the next time you drive past another huge eucalypt plantation, remember that they may not be the 'perfect' habitat, but they may have a very important role to play in the conservation of some of our disappearing bird species. With careful management and design, they can help overcome some of the damage caused by the large-scale clearing of our open forest areas.

Ian Clifford Hunt
9 June 1930—15 March 2007

In 1930 when the Great Ocean Road had a toll gate, when the road between Eastern View and Lorne was merely a rough stony track, when winter rains could cause great landslides that blocked the track for days—in late May (or early June) Cliff Hunt took his wife Isabella from Lorne to Geelong because she was due to give birth to their second child, Ian. She travelled in the sidecar of the Harley Davidson. They had lived in Lilydale briefly after their marriage but Cliff's brother at Lorne had work for him and they returned. Like his father before him Cliff became a carpenter/builder. Over the nine years following Ian's birth three more children were born.

After his school years Ian began work at the Lorne Post Office as a telegram deliverer and later as a mail deliverer. As servicemen returned from the war they were given work and Ian left the postal service. For a time he worked in the bush cutting firewood by hand for Erskine House and later worked on a dairy farm at Eastern View.

His older brother Bryan already had a fishing boat and at 16 Ian began commercial fishing with him. There were thirty-two fishing boats at Lorne. They fished for barracouta and crayfish out of Lorne and one season out of Wynyard where Ian also played in the local football team. For fifteen years he worked his own boat from Lorne before joining Bryan again in a joint venture with a larger boat dredging scallops in Port Phillip Bay from May to November for eight seasons and setting pots for crayfish during the rest of the year around King Island, Port Campbell, Apollo Bay and out on the western edge of the continental shelf of Bass Strait. Ian also worked for other fishermen at times out of Eden for tuna and out of Whyalla for snapper. Ian and Bryan were foundation members of the Lorne Fishermen's Cooperative and Ian was chairman of this organisation for four years.

Ian was given an interesting scientific task by Edmund Gill of CSIRO in 1973 charting an undersea fault which stretches from Torquay to Cape Otway a few kilometres out from the coast and collecting samples of rock and coral along the fault. This fault is an ancient cliff from the times before Bass Strait and Port Phillip were flooded by rising seas. Because of his involvement in this exercise he was invited to many sessions of the Royal Society of Victoria when there was discussion regarding breakwaters, entrances to ports, silting or coastal erosion, or Aboriginal pre-history.

There were times in the off-season from fishing when he and a younger brother went to Queensland harvesting sugar cane. Another year he spent time opal mining at Lightning Ridge.

Two Torquay fishermen moved to Lorne in 1947. One of them, Bill Thompson, was a qualified surf life saver and examiner and he recruited a group of six young men who were keen to gain the surf life saving qualifications. Thus the Lorne Surf Life Saving Club began in October 1947 with Ian and the others as its foundation members. They were greatly encouraged by Lillian and Sir Frank Beaurepaire. Within a few years, through much effort, the club house was built. Apart from the many rescues of swimmers in difficulty the senior and junior club members participated in numerous competitions. Ian was captain at the sweep oar in the team of five which won the Victorian senior surf boat championship in 1956 and the Flinders to Point Leo marathon surf boat race of 1959. With Don Stewart Ian won the Victorian surf double ski championship in 1955. In 1966 Ian was made a life member of the Lorne Surf Life Saving Club.

Among the numerous visitors attracted to the Lorne Life Saving Club was Dennis O'Hearn, sub-dean of the Arts Faculty at University of Melbourne, who became a firm friend of Ian. Perhaps he encouraged Ian to write the stories which in 1997 were printed under the title *Feel the Sea Wind*. They are not just memoirs. There are numerous colourful accounts of life during the depression, the war and the post war times. From his father Ian learned to be observant of birds and other animals and in his writing he includes beautiful descriptions of the behaviour of other creatures including fish. Twenty or more years ago he joined the Field Naturalists in their excursions and with Roma, his friend, he continued to participate in their activities. Ian was very active in the 150th anniversary of the arrival of John Hunt in Geelong in 1848 with his wife and family.

In his forties he joined the Lions Club and remained an active member for 32 years. He enjoyed the social activities and helping elderly or needy people. This had been typical of his parents who, over many Christmases, had a swagman or some other visitor at their table. One year the swagman helped Ian's father battle the 1939 bushfire which threatened their home.

He travelled widely through Australia and overseas with Roma. In later years Ian took up painting in oils, and more recently he constructed intricate replicas of three famous sailing ships. Some of these paintings and replicas were on display at his funeral. These artistic tendencies enhanced his photographic skills. He is survived by his friend Roma, his sister Valerie and her husband, a brother-in-law John, and the children of his brothers and sisters.

Submitted by Roma Julian

Snippets from the journals

Environment Victoria has prepared an eco-friendly guide to help us make good decisions at the supermarket. It can be downloaded from their website at www.environment victoria.org.au

EVNews, Issue 225

To see how your energy supplier's Greenpower product rates, visit www.acfonline.org.au/greenpower.The chart has been set ip by environmental groups to help consumers choose green electricity products.

Habitat Australia, vol. 35, no. 2

Bamganie excursion

...Graeme Tribe

Twelve members visited the very drought affected bushland and what a contrast to our six other excursions to this spot which were all in lush springtime conditions.

The bushland canopy was quite open and the forest had minimal leaf cover. Woodbourne Creek is obviously spring-fed as it had abundant clear still water and is much used by macropods. We found several small (12 mm) opened freshwater mussels on a submerged rock.

There was a Koala skeleton and two dead Blue-tongue Lizards by the creek.

We recorded only 12 bird species in the reserve, three species of butterfly (Common Brown the most numerous). Flying insects were virtually non-existent, although ant nests (without many ants) were abundant. Echidna diggings were numerous.

There was almost a complete absence of fungi and only three plants were found flowering (one Cranberry Heath, two Parsons Bands orchid and abundant Sugar Gums in the northern plantation.

En route home we drove to the Leigh River near Bamganie where the sight of complete degradation and desertification of the farmland in the valley shocked us all.

Bird list

Wedge-tailed Eagle
Crested Pigeon
Crimson Rosella
Laughing Kookaburra
White-throated Treecreeper
Superb Fairy-wren
Buff-rumped Thornbill
Yellow-rumped Thornbill
White-eared Honeyeater
Jacky Winter
Australian Magpie
Raven sp.

12 species

Reptile report

...Lorraine Phelan

Grass (Garden) Skink	2	03.04.07	Sheoaks, East Road; found under dry stumps on the ground, 10.00am, warm, sunny day.	TPe
Spencer's Skink	1	08.04.07	Barwon Downs, Mclaughlin's Track off Delaney's Road; sun-basking on trunk of healthy blue gum about 2 m above the ground, among bark ribbons, 9.30 am on warm, sunny morning.	TPe

Observers: TPe Trevor Pescott

Mammal report

...Trevor Pescott

Mammal Atlas additions

Agile Antechinus	1	03.04.07	Taylors road, near Meredith; came inside farmhouse.	CBa
Agile Antechinus	2	03.04.07	Brisbane Ranges National Park, Kangaroo Track; in trap in tree.	MSG
Brush-tailed Phascogale	1	04.04.07	Brisbane Ranges National Park, Kangaroo Track; caught in trap.	MSG
Brush-tailed Phascogale	1	03.04.07	Sheoaks, property on Sheoaks-Steiglitz Road; caught in trap.	MSG
Common Wombat		18.11.06	Anglesea, Gundrys Road; hair in funnel trap.	ANG
Common Wombat	1	25.03.07	Little River, house on east side of You Yangs; seen in garden.	BLy
Sugar Glider	5	21.03.07	Taylors Road near Meredith; emerged from hollow at dusk.	CBa
Common Ringtail Possum	1	28.03.07	Deans Marsh-Pennyroyal; disturbed from tree-hollow.	MCo
Common Ringtail Possum	1	02.04.07	Shannon Ave., Newtown, near Leach-Wood Gardens; road-killed.	TPe
Eastern Grey Kangaroo	50	10.03.07	Sheoaks, Sheoaks-Steiglitz Road; in open paddocks, grazing.	CPa
Red Fox	1	09.04.07	Birregurra, Cape Otway Road; road-killed.	TPe
Red Fox	1	11.04.07	Batesford; interaction with Little Ravens observed.	RGa

Observers: ANG ANGAIR observation; BLy Bev Lyon; CBa Chris Baird; CPa Cambria Parkinson; MSG Mammal Survey Group; MCo Melanie Costanzo; RGa Rob Ganly; TPe Trevor Pescott.

The Common Wombat observations are quite extraordinary because the natural populations that were here at the time of European settlement were exterminated by the early 1900s. While they did inhabit some areas around Bellbrae, for example, they were seen as pests partly because their burrows were hazards to horses and their riders. There is a summary of the former distribution of wombats in an article in *Geelong Naturalist* vol. 22 no. 3, November 1985.

The Gundrys Road report was the result of routine searching for mammals by members of ANGAIR who use hair funnels to obtain samples that are later identified by expert Barbara Triggs. Because the wombat is not known to occur in the area being surveyed, the sample was double-checked to be sure. Since there are houses on small acreages along Gundrys Road, it is assumed that the animal was a pet that had strayed from home. Bev Lyon, whose farm abuts the eastern side of the You Yangs, had noticed some unusual disturbance to the house-gardens, so when the security light came on at around 2.00 am, she went to investigate. She first thought it was a Koala ambling across the yard, but a second look revealed a wombat. Where it came from she does not know, for the nearest known population is at Lerderderg Gorge a long way to the north.

In an article in *The Victorian Naturalist,* vol. 100 no. 6, Nov/Dec 1983, L.E. Conole and G.A. Baverstock wrote about the

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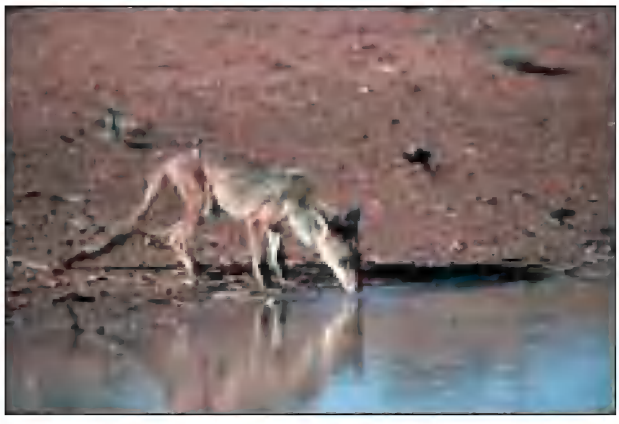
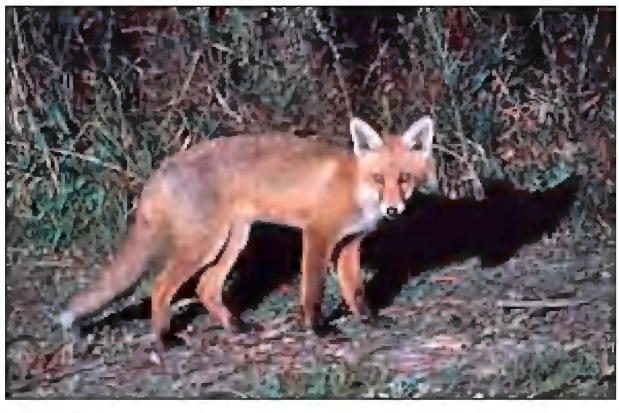
mammals of the Lorne-Angahook State Park, and of the Common Wombat they said 'A juvenile [Common Wombat] observed on the Mt Sabine Road in late 1982, and subsequently discovered dead after Ash Wednesday in 1983, is presumed to be an escaped or dumped 'pet' '. (At the time, a popular television series featured a wombat as a pet.) Curiously enough, though, Mt Sabine once did have a population of wombats that were destroyed by a Lands Department officer, according to Ballarat naturalist Gavin Cerini.

The two Red Fox reports are vastly different, one from the other.The road-killed animal was a beautifully-pelaged vixen, probably only six months or so of age. Her fur was lush, deep golden chestnut on the back and soft grey beneath—no wonder in the bad-old-days the pelts were much sought after for coats! But Rob Ganly's fox story was about a large, mangy animal that he saw slinking through the trees at his favourite birding place near Batesford. Its objective was a sheep carcase that was being attended by 14 Little Ravens. 'As the fox approached,' he wrote, 'a 'platoon' of four Little Ravens advanced on the fox and for the next five minutes, they (and they alone!) kept the fox at bay, and it only once got to sniff the carcase before being driven off again, this time by the whole group. I can only assume that the carcase was not very appetising to the fox, as 14 Little Ravens could not protect their spoils from a determined meat-eater.'

Regarding the Brush-tailed Phascogale entries on the Atlas, they were caught as part of a deliberate attempt to determine the distribution of the species in the Brisbane Ranges-Anakie-Meredith area. A more complete report on our search, including some excellent sight records from south-east of Anakie, will be published over the next few months.



A scrawny fox pauses to drink at an outback waterhole.
Photo: Trevor Pescott



This young fox is in excellent condition.
Photo: Trevor Pescott

Mammal trapping
Anglesea-Aireys Inlet, 17–20 May 2007

We will do some trapping in the Anglesea-Airey's Inlet area as part of the GFNC excursion.

Thursday 17 May	1.00 pm	Meet at the intersection of the Anglesea (Great Ocean) Road and Forest Road to set the traps.
Friday 18 May	8.00 am	Meet at the same place to check the traps.
Saturday 19 May	8.00 am	Meet at the same place to check the traps.
Sunday 20 May		We will check the traps as part of the Club excursion.

If you are able to help with the setting or checking the traps phone Trevor on 5243 4368 or email <ppescott@optusnet.com.au>

Debris caused by two Gang-gangs in Newton in April. See photo on front cover.
Photo: Rob Ganly

Did you know?

Did you know that Geelong Field Naturalists Club is a shareholder in the Timboon Bushland Cooperative (Yarro Waetch)?

The cooperative was formed to purchase Yarro Waetch before it was put on the open market. The bushland is north of Timboon on Hirsts Road off Browns Road and is alongside the old Camperdown railway line (that is now a walking track).

The Cooperative is holding a weeding session at the Yarro Waetch on 6 May. Guides will meet weeders at the entrance at 10.00, 11.00 and 11.30.

An AGM will then be held at 1.00 pm at the Timboon Senior Citizens Centre. BYO lunch from 12 noon. Tea and coffee and biscuits provided.

Canoeing on the Lower Barwon
GFNC Excursion 4 March 2007

...Barry Lingham

After postponing the trip by a fortnight due to high temperatures and winds on the original date, an enthusiastic group gathered at Taits Point at 8.00 am to begin the expedition. There were 11 starters, so we needed five canoes (large 'Wobbegongs') and a kayak to paddle the journey.

Diana Primrose and Peter Williams

Graeme Tribe gave us an overview of the Lower Barwon from the Second Break down the river to Lake Connewarre, past the reverse delta and islands and into the lower reaches of the river estuary. Graeme has extensive experience of the area and used aerial photos to illustrate his comments. He explained that the first breakwater (on Breakwater Road) was installed under the direction of Foster Fyans to provide fresh water for the original Geelong township. During the late 19th century, the Second Break was installed further down river, opposite Reedy Lake, so that a supply of fresh water could be available for irrigation and stock on the river floodplains.

Taits Point was formed by a basalt flow that extended into the lake during the Newer Volcanic times when the area had active volcanoes, such as Mt Duneed. The basalt would have blocked the Barwon and created a massive dam upstream of blockage. Water from the Barwon may have flowed into Corio Bay via the Moolap lowlands. Eventually, the river broke through the blockage. During the last ice age which lasted up until about 10 000 years ago, sea level was more than 100 metres lower than current levels. This meant that the Barwon River flowed rapidly through the zone around the current Lake Connewarre, cutting a deep valley as it flowed out across the dry plains of Bass Strait.

At the end of the last ice age some 600 years ago, melting icecaps led to a rapid increase in sea level to about two metres above the current level. The Barwon River valley would have been inundated back to Buckleys Falls. The area filled with silt deposits and formed a shallow bay. It was during this period that extensive oyster beds were present.

Having gained a geological and historic perspective of the area, we set off at a steady pace in pleasant weather and paddled across the upper section of Lake Connewarre to where the Barwon River enters the lake. The lake was less than a metre deep, but the river section was about two metres deep. As we paddled up stream, we noted the saltmarsh vegetation and Tangled Lignum bushes along the banks. The peace and quiet was disturbed by an engine-powered paraglider that buzzed around to check us out. We passed a small channel that was the outlet from Reedy Lake. The outlet is usually closed, but can be opened to allow for periodic drainage of the lake.

After 40 minutes, we reached the basin where the Second Break blocked our path. We spent some time checking the simple but effective system of floats used to close the gates in dry times and open them when the river level rose.

In 2006, a fire burned much of the vegetation on the northern side of the river for a distance of about 1.5 kilometres. It even jumped the river in one section. The Common Reed has quickly re-established in the burnt zone. A walk along the river led us to a grove of River Red Gums. Many Blue-winged Parrots were perched amongst the trees. Presumably they use the grove as a roost and feed on the surrounding saltmarsh and grassy areas. Just past the grove of trees was the inlet channel from the Barwon into Reedy Lake. An adjustable barrier is used to allow water to flow into the lake.

We returned to the canoes and paddled back down into Lake Connewarre, landing on the northern shore and ascending the hill to view the scenery. There were impressive views over Reedy Lake and the Upper Barwon through to Geelong, the You Yangs and Corio Bay to the north west. Looking southeast over Lake Connewarre, we could see Ocean Grove and the Barwon Heads Bluff. The route through the delta islands to the Lower Barwon was clear from this height, but many paddlers have become

Campbells Point

View north, Campbells Point

Continued on next page...

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disoriented when they try to find their way to the river entrance when they are at water level.

Pressing on, we paddled to Campbells Point for lunch. The point consists of clay soils with a lot of iron minerals present in 'buckshot gravel' and the rocks around the point. At the point, a hill some seven metres high was topped with the remains of many oyster shells. This aboriginal midden dates from over 5000 years ago when oyster beds flourished in the shallow seas. Remains of these beds can be found in Lake Connewarre, as detailed in Dr John Sherwood's recent talk to the GFNC.

Lunch was eaten while sitting in the shade of some ancient twisted Moonah trees. Graeme found a Sea Hare and we saw the mass of eggs attached to it. These slug-like creatures grow up to about 15 cm long. They feed by browsing algae from the Lake floor.

Sea Hare

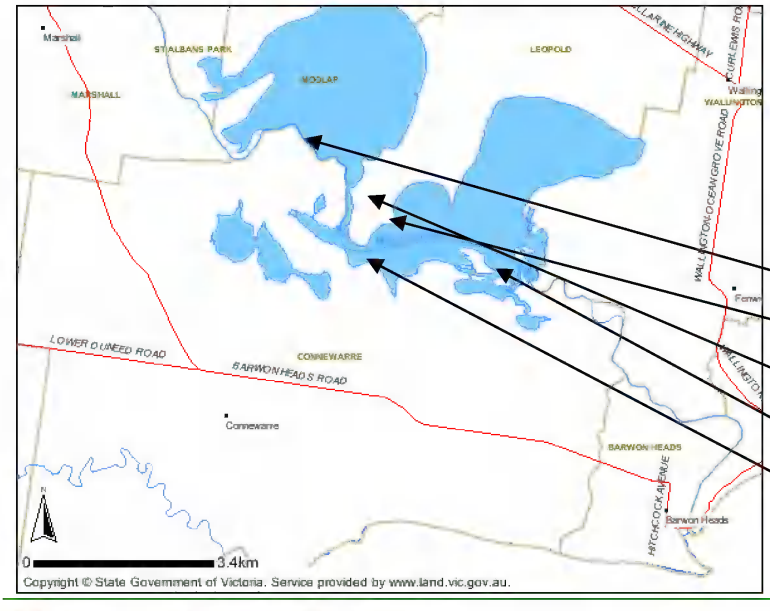
After lunch, we battled through the shallow, muddy water near the delta islands to reach the outlet to the Lower Barwon. We saw large numbers of waders feeding on the mud flats, including Red-necked Stints, Curlew Sandpipers and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, with some birds starting to move into breeding plumage. They leave on their long journey to Siberia near the end of March. Water was still rushing into the lake, even though high tide at Barwon Heads had been about three hours previously. We waited about 20 minutes before tackling the moving water. Once we were able to leave the entrance section, the river speed slowed and we were able to make progress a little more easily. This section of the river has clay banks that are riddled with the holes made by crabs. Larger holes show where eels have tried to get to the crabs they like to eat.

The river carves a sinuous path through the estuary area to the Sheepwash at Barwon Heads, before straightening a little in the section to Ocean Grove. We finally arrived at the Tribe's residence, where we appreciated the refreshments on offer. Despite aching muscles and weary bones, we all agreed that we had been able to enjoy experiences that were unavailable to land-based explorers.

View to delta

Bird List

Black Swan	Common Greenshank
Pacific Black Duck	Red-necked Stint
Chestnut Teal	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
Little Pied Cormorant	Curlew Sandpiper
Pied Cormorant	Pied Oystercatcher
Little Black Cormorant	Red-capped Plover
Great Cormorant	Masked Lapwing
Australian Pelican	Pacific Gull
White-faced Heron	Silver Gull
Great Egret	Crested Tern
Australian White Ibis	Crested Pigeon
Straw-necked Ibis	Blue-winged Parrot
Royal Spoonbill	Superb Fairy-wren
Whistling Kite	Spotted Pardalote
Swamp Harrier	Brown Thornbill
Nankeen Kestrel	Red Wattlebird
Purple Swamphen	Australian Magpie
Eurasian Coot	Little Raven
Eastern Curlew	37 species



The Second Break

Campbells Point—site of the aboriginal midden.

Hilltop where we got good views

The delta area

Taits point

Plant Group

...Dick Southcombe

Small plants with tiny flowers consume lots of time with large books. This occurred at our April meeting when Joe brought a small, yellow-flowering aquatic plant, complete with roots, for identification.

It soon became obvious that it was a bladderwort. [Refer *Flora of Victoria Vol. 4,* Family Lentibulariaceae, Genus Utricularia. Utriculus = little bladder.]

Unfortunately we were unable to obtain an illuminated view through the microscope because the transformer was missing (now in its rightful place). The plant was identified as *Utricularia gibba* Floating Bladderwort, a common weed of aquaria and gardens throughout the world.

We then turned our attention to the eight Victorian bladderworts, especially Fairies Aprons *U. dichotoma* which is locally common throughout south-west Victoria.

Thanks Joe for the specimen. Hopefully more plant specimens will be brought to our May meeting.

Note: According to Nick Romanowski, bladderwort flowers are small, showy, yellow or purple and held above the water so they have the appearance of tiny aprons. But the really interesting fact is that they are carnivorous. *The finely and intricately divided foliage contains many tiny bladders, actually tiny traps for minute underwater animals, and these are virtually spring-loaded to snap shut on being disturbed, drawing water and prey inside.*

Reference:

Romanowski, N. (1992) *Water and Wetland Plants for Southern Australia*, Lothian, Melbourne.

Butterfly survey

...Valda Dedman

I am willing to collect records of butterfly sightings in the Geelong district. Please provide date and place and time of day as well as behaviour details and some idea of numbers. If you can't identify it, send a description. Butterfly caterpillar sightings are also acceptable (with food plant), but no moths please. Include the very common Cabbage White because there are only a couple of months (perhaps none) when it does not fly.

The Victorian Butterfly Database (Viridans) lists 21 for the greater Geelong area; White & Landy (see *Out and about* this issue) list 41 for Anglesea and the coast. Many of the Museum of Victoria records are not recent.

Send your records to me at dedmanv@iprimus.com.au or phone 5243 2374.

From the specimen table

....Dave King

On the specimen table at the GFNC General Meeting, March 2007, an invertebrate specimen was presented for identification that turned out to be a rather putrefied wasp. Fortunately sufficient remained to make the positive identification as that of a Flower Wasp.

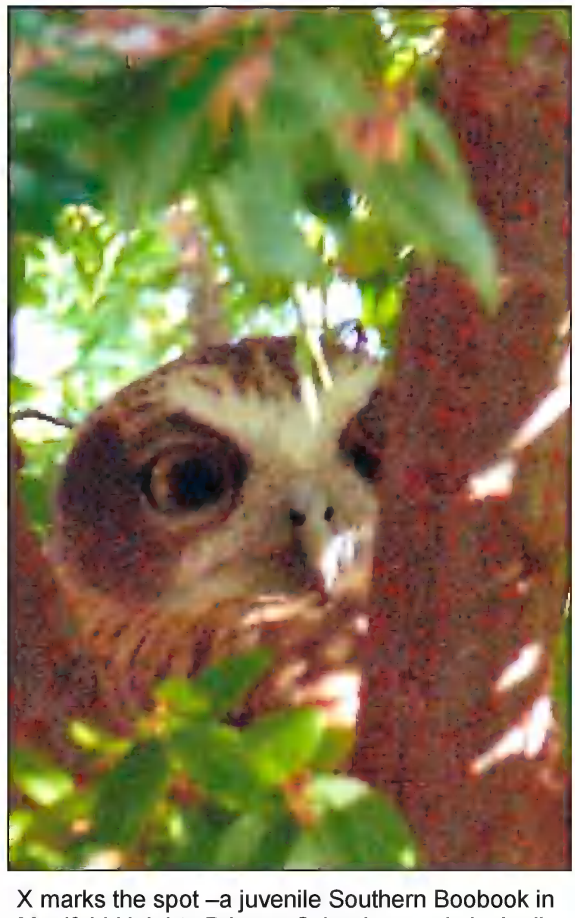
Further investigation of these remains established it to be a *Scolia seror,* Scoliidae; significant diagnostic features being the narrow wings having a metallic blue-purple sheen and veins not reaching the distal areas. The large eyes are distinctly emarginate. It is a generally black wasp, having a hairy body and legs with conspicuous spines.

For a relatively more detailed description of a related Scoliid, refer to the article by the writer in the *Geelong Naturalist*, Vol. 40, No. 8, December 2004.

Preserving for the specimen table

....Dave King

If invertebrate specimens are to be presented for identification more than a day or two after they are deceased, they require adequate preservation. This can be readily achieved by immersion in a solution of three parts methylated spirits and one part water. Failing this, immersion in a dram of Sherry, Port or Scotch, whichever is your favourite 'tipple'. Pouring a glass for oneself can mollify any stress that results from this course of action. It is highly recommended!!



X marks the spot –a juvenile Southern Boobook in Manifold Heights Primary School grounds in April.
Photo: Joe Hubbard

Bird observations April 2007

... Barry Lingham

The change of seasons is now in full swing, with autumn bringing an influx of species that either move though the Geelong area or over winter here. It has been a great month for birdwatchers, with over 100 species reported.

Robins have returned (Pink, Rose and Flame), and five lorikeet species were noted. Flocks of Musk, Purple-crowned and Little move into the area near the start of April. Yellow-faced and White-naped Honeyeaters have been passing through on migration, but some birds remain in the area to feed on blossoming gums. The has been another record of a Painted Honeyeater at the You Yangs. This species, although rarely seen south of the Divide, has regularly reported over the past few years.

Hooded Plovers have been seen in larger groups. Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos have also been seen in bigger flocks—of more than 60 birds. The first Orange-bellied Parrot observations for the season have been made, while some of the cuckoos have not left the region. It appears that some cuckoos over-winter—keep an eye out for them. The record of Painted Button-quail at Batesford is significant as these birds have only been recorded in a few sites where open woodland habitat is found.

The following observations are a selection of those submitted. All records will be published in the annual *Geelong Bird Report*.

Observers: AW, Allison Watson; BAt, Bryant Attwood; BH, Brian Hart; BL, Barry Lingham; CMo, Craig Morley; DHe, Dean Hewish; GFl, Glenn Fletcher; GMc, Gordon McCarthy; GMcC, Glenn McCarthy; HS, Hans Streefkerk; JCo, Joan Cohen; JH, Joe Hubbard; JN, John Newman; LFl, Linda Fletcher; LPh, Lorraine Phelan; MHe, Marilyn Hewish; MHw, Mark Holdsworth; PWa, Phil Watson; RGa, Rob Ganly; TFl, Tom Fletcher; VC, Vern Cohen

Species	Number	Date	Comments	Observer
Darter	1	4/4	Deakin University, Waurn Ponds, a female.	LPh
Little Pied Cormorant	Present	8/4	Avalon Beach	VC, JCo
	106	19/4	Alcoa wetlands	RGa
Cattle Egret	5	15/4	Barwon River, Newtown, roosting above Darter nests.	BAt
Royal Spoonbill	10	8/4	Avalon Beach	VC, JCo
Black-shouldered Kite	1	8/4	Gnarwarre	BAt
	1	23/4	Pigdons Rd, Waurn Ponds	LPh
Black Kite	4+	3/4	Limeburners Bay	JH
	1	3/4	Batesford/Stonehaven. A pair on 11/4.	RGa
Whistling Kite	Present	8/4	Avalon Beach	VC, JCo
	1	11/4	Queens Park	BAt
	2	11/4	Batesford, on private property.	RGa
Grey Goshawk	1	March	Drysdale, present for most of March.	GMcC
	1	7/4	Serendip, a white bird.	GMc
	1	14/4	Buckley Falls Park, a white bird, flying with Sulphur-crested Cockatoos.	BAt
Collared Sparrowhawk	1	7/4	Ocean Grove	BL
	1	12/4	Fairmont Rd, Newtown	CMo
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	25/3	Moriac	BL
	2	26/3	Portreath Rd, Bellbrae	PWa
	1	6/4	Fyansford	JH
	2	11/4	Batesford/Stonehaven	RGa
	1	15/4	Bellbrae, flying low.	PWa
	1	19/4	Alcoa wetlands	RGa
Brown Falcon	1	26/3	Forest Rd, Anglesea	AW
	2	11/4	Batesford	RGa
	1	15/4	Gnarwarre	BAt
Peregrine Falcon	1	9/4	Newtown, a juvenile.	JH
Brolga	2	20/3	Hospital Lakes	BH
	2	6/4	Black Rocks in lucerne paddock.	per BL
Painted Button-quail	Present	3/4	Batesford, on private property. More than 150 platelets found but birds not seen or heard.	RGa
Banded Stilt	1000	8/4	Avalon Beach	VC, JCo
Double-banded Plover	4	19/4	Alcoa wetlands	RGa
Black-fronted Dotterel	2	17/4	Balyang Sanctuary	BAt
Hooded Plover	6	21/3	Lake Victoria, 5 adults and 1 juvenile.	BL
	2	7/4	Black Rocks, a pair, one banded.	GMc
	6	12/4	Point Roadknight, 4 adults and 2 juveniles (one banded).	AW
Red-kneed Dotterel	1	11/4	Batesford, on private property.	RGa
Banded Lapwing	58+	7/4	Connewarre, on SW corner of Bluestone School Rd and Black Rocks Rd.	TFl, GFl
Arctic Jaeger	1	20/3	Corio Bay	BL
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	16	24/3	Bellbrae, flying N.	AW
	50±	31/3	Bellevue Ave, Highton, flying S at 1645.	BAt
	5	7/4	Newcomb, flying S at 0845.	BAt
	9	7/4	Highton, flying N at 1000.	BAt
	12±	9/4	Bellbrae. 80–100 on 5/4.	AW, PWa
	60+	12/4	Bluestone School Rd, Connewarre	HS

Species	Number	Date	Comments	Observer
Gang-gang Cockatoo	Present	20/4	Zillah Crawcour Park/Geelong College, Newtown. Seen every day feeding primarily on small green pine cones. {See front cover & p. 10]	RGa
Long-billed Corella	60+	12/4	Queens Park. No feeding observed.	RGa
Rainbow Lorikeet	Present	17/4	Newcomb	AW
	2	18/3	Bacchus Marsh, rare in town	MHe
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	Present	8/4	Ocean Grove	TFl, GFl, LFl
Musk Lorikeet	50+	28/3	Ocean Grove	BL
	72	6/4	Bacchus Marsh	MHe
	Present	10/4	Wensleydale	JN
	Present	17/4	Newcomb	AW
	127+	19/4	Point Henry	RGa
	Present	23/4	Wandana Heights	LPh
	Present	April	Deakin University, Waurn Ponds, many present.	LPh
Little Lorikeet	Present	8/4	Ocean Grove	TFl, GFl, LFl
	1	10/4	Wensleydale. First record here.	JN
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	Present	10/4	Wensleydale	JN
	28+	19/4	Alcoa grounds, in flowering gums.	RGa
Swift Parrot	5	5/4	Harkness Rd, NW of Melton, in remnant Grey Box/Yellow Gum woodland in farmland.	MHe, DHe
	1	19/4	Point Henry, flying NW.	RGa
Orange-bellied Parrot	3	1/4	Lake Connewarre	MHw
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	1	4/4	Batesford, calling repeatedly after dawn chorus.	RGa
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	1	17/4	NW of Rowsley, calling frequently.	MHe
Southern Boobook	1	11/4	Batesford, a dead bird caught on barbed-wire.	RGa
	1	18/4	Manifold Heights, a juvenile in the Primary School grounds. [See photo on p. 13]	JH
Tawny Frogmouth	2	12/4	Dickins Rd, Freshwater Creek	HS
White-throated Needletail	5	9/4	Barwon River, Fyansford	BAt
Striated Fieldwren	5	19/4	Alcoa wetlands, doing aerial displays and songs.	RGa
Speckled Warbler	4	10/4	White Elephant Reserve, Rowsley Valley, 2 in Grey Box woodland, 1 in Messmate, 1 in Yellow Gums.	MHe, DHe
Weebill	Present	3/4	Batesford, small flocks (one of 8+) moving through the tops of tall eucalypts. First record here in 4 years.	RGa
	1	3/4	Stony Creek, Brisbane Ranges, calling from epicormic growth. Unusual here.	MHe, TFl
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Present	12/4	Point Addis, continuous small flocks flying NNW.	GMc
	Present	12/4	Fairmont Rd, Newtown, 3 flying W at 0812, 2 flying W at 0830, 2 flying W at 0845.	CMo
	Present	18/4	Newtown, a small flock.	JH
White-naped Honeyeater	Present	Mar/ Apr	Small flocks continually flying through Bacchus Marsh, Werribee Gorge, Rowsley, White Elephant Reserve.	MHe
	Present	12/4	Point Addis, flying NNW following the coast.	GMc
Painted Honeyeater	1	7/4	Drysdale Rd, You Yangs, possibly a female.	VC
Jacky Winter	1	7/4	Bellbrae	AW, PWa
Scarlet Robin	2	16/3	Ironbark Basin, in carpark area.	BH
	4	16/3	Bald Hills Rd, Anglesea 2 males and 2 females.	BH
	4	6/4	Jarosite Rd, Bellbrae	AW, PW
Flame Robin	4	7/4	Drysdale Rd, You Yangs	VC, JCo
	2	9/4	Dickins Rd, Freshwater Creek, a pair.	HS
	4	14/4	Bellbrae, 2 males and 2 brown birds.	AW, PWa
	19	14/4	You Yangs, Hovells Creek	MHe, DHe, RMc
Rose Robin	3+	16/3	Lake Elizabeth	BL, CMo. et al
	1	9/4	Queens Park river walk/Buckley Falls Park, a male.	BAt
Pink Robin	1	6/4	Fyansford, a brown bird.	JH
	1	8/4	Gnarwarre, a brown bird.	BAt
Hooded Robin	1	8/3	You Yangs, western boundary off Stockyards, heard mid-morning.	MHe
Spotted Quail-thrush	1	11/3	N Brisbane Ranges, Spring Creek Track	MHe
	2	3/4	Brisbane Ranges, Durdidwarrah Track	MHe, DHe, TFl
Olive Whistler	3	16/3	Lake Elizabeth	BL, CMo, et al
	2	25/3	Carlisle SP, a pair.	BH
Rufous Fantail	3	16/3	Lake Elizabeth	BL, CMo, et al
	1	1/4	Anglesea in thick teatree.	JN
White-winged Triller	1	11/4	Batesford, on private property.	RGa
Olive-backed Oriole	1	28/3	Balyang Sanctuary	BAt
	1	5/4	Deakin University, Waurn Ponds	LPh
Grey Currawong	4	23/4	Deakin University, Waurn Ponds.	LPh
Beautiful Firetail	1	25/3	Carlisle SP, a male.	BH
Bassian Thrush	1	18/3	Portreath Rd, Bellbrae, sifting through leaf litter.	AW, PWa

Mid-week Bird Group excursion

Brisbane Ranges

Thursday 24 May

Leader: Kay Campbell

Meet: 8.30 am at Balyang Sanctuary car park to share transport or 9.00 am at the Anakie store, Geelong–Ballan Rd. [*Melway* Key Map 11 A11 or Tour Map 611, D4]
Finish: About 12.30
Bring: Morning tea

Enquiries: Kay 5243 3311 or Polly 5244 0182

Campout

Kerang wetlands

9–11 June 2007

The lakes around Kerang are internationally significant and have a RAMSAR rating. We will explore some of the lakes between Kerang and Swan Hill as well as the Loddon River and some mallee reserves.

Accomodation will be at the Pelican Waters (formerly Hiawatha) Caravan Park at Lake Charm (which does have water in it!). There are 4 ensuite units and 6 non-ensuite units on site as well as the usual caravan and tent sites. Phone Murray on 5457 9318. There is a shop and petrol at Lake Charm.

If you want motel accommodation there are several at Kerang, about 10 minutes south of Lake Charm.

For more details contact Lorraine Phelan 5243 0636

Eco Book Group

Tuesday May 29 2007

Unbowed: My Autobiography, Wangari Maathai

Wangari Maathai is a Kenyan who won a Nobel Peace Prize for her work with the very successful Green Belt Movement that encourages women to plant trees near their villages.

Contact Lorraine for venue details. Ph. 5243 0636

Excursion

Small mammal habitat in Otway Ranges Sunday 20 May 2007

Leader Trevor Pescott

Meet: 9.00 am at rear of Geelong Botanic Gardens on the corner of Eastern Park Circuit and Holt Road to car pool.
Bring: all the usual things including lunch, snacks and drinks.

We will visit the mammal trapping sites in the Anglesea area, then move on to other parts of the Otway Ranges to see what various species frequent.

Enquiries: Trevor Pescott ph 5243 4368, email ppescott@optusnet.com.au

Boneseed Pull at the You Yangs

Saturday, May 26

9.30 am start
3.30 pm finish

Rob Beardsley, Dennis and Claire Greenwell look forward to seeing you at this worthwhile activity.

All levels of fitness can be utilised, the agile and not so agile: your help would be appreciated not only by the leaders but also by the environment! The improvement over the years has to be seen and experienced to have a full appreciation of the efforts by members in previous years. Please come, bring your lunch (we have a wonderful day socialising as well), gloves and suitable clothing.

Directions: Travel via the Great Circle Drive following the GFNC signs and arrows to Rockwell Road. The gate will be unlocked, please replace it behind you as this road is closed to the general public. We will be at the top of the Saddle road.

Phone contact: Claire 5243 7047 or 0408 108992

Next OBP count
May 13, 2007

Contact: Craig Morley 5221 4604

GFNC COMMITTEE 2006–2007

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Vice-President	Vacant		
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" "	Hans Streefkerk	5264 5235	streef@bemail.com.au
" "	Peter Williams	5221 3503	peter.w@westnet.com.au

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP CONVENERS and OTHER CLUB POSITIONS

Belmont Escarpment Group	Dick Southcombe	5243 3916
Bird Group	Barry Lingham	5255 4291
Conservation Group	Dick Southcombe	5243 3916
Editor	Lorraine Phelan	5243 0636
Geelong Bird Report	Marilyn Hewish	5367 3196
Jerringot Group	Valda Dedman	5243 2374
Mammal Study Group	Trevor Pescott	5243 4368
Membership Officer	Peter Williams	5221 3503
Plant Group	Dick Southcombe	5243 3916
Web-master	Barry Lingham	5255 4291

Coming events

MAY 2007

1	General Meeting: Small mammals of Victoria's South West—Trevor Pescott
8	Plant Group: Workshop Meeting
17	Bird Group: Lorikeets—Valda Dedman
17–20	Mammal Group Survey
20	Excursion: Small mammal habitat of the Otways Leader: Trevor Pescott
24	Mid-week Bird Group Excursion: Brisbane Ranges—Leader: Kay Campbell
26	Boneseed pull—You Yangs. Leaders: Rob Beardsley, Claire & Dennis Greenwell
29	Eco Book Group

JUNE 2007

5	General Meeting: Biodiversity conservation within the Corangamite Region: Lessons learnt—Chris Pitfield
9–11	Campout: Kerang Wetlands and district
12	Wider Geelong Flora Lecture: Valuing Riparian Vegetation—Greg Peters
17	Excursion—River environment
21	Bird Group
28	Mid-week Bird Group Excursion

Consider this for your bookshelf

Melbourne's Wildlife: a field guide to the fauna of Greater Melbourne
Museum Victoria and CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne, 2006

This book contains identification information for wildlife in the terrestrial and marine environments of the wider Melbourne area (and this includes Geelong). Worms, snails, beetles, insects, butterflies, lizards, birds, mammals, sea stars, molluscs, fishes, marine mammals and crustaceans are just some of the catagories covered. There are notes and a photograph for each animal as well as informative introductory paragraphs for each group.

The closing date for the next magazine will be Monday evening, 28 May, 2007.
Early lodgement of articles (small & large) would be a great help—late copy may not be accepted.
Hard copy or diskette (saved as a Word document or .rtf please)
Photographs—digital as .jpg (100 to 250 KB approx. if sending by e-mail), slides or prints for scanning to 5 James Cook Dve Wandana Heights, 3216 —OR—e-mail: lphelan@bigpond.com.au
For further details and a copy of 'Guidelines for Authors' phone Lorraine Phelan: 5243 0636

Meetings start at 8.00 pm at:

Geelong Botanic Gardens Friends Room.
Entrance is at the intersection of Holt Rd and Eastern Park Circuit in Eastern Park.
[Melway Map 452 G4]

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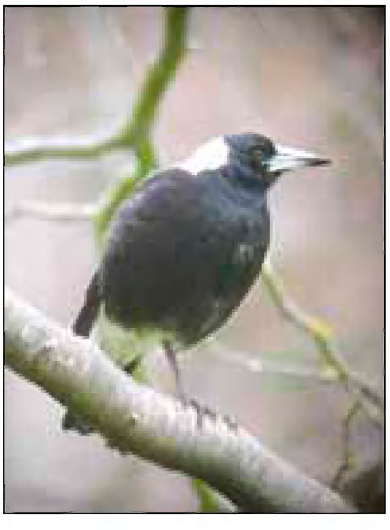

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