



The Whistler

Newsletter of the Ringwood Field Naturalists Club Inc.

P.O. Box 418, Ringwood 3134
www.rfnc.org.au

Editor: Jack Airey
editor@rfnc.org.au

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From the Editor

Here we are in early April, and I'm already reaching for a thicker jacket as the morning air takes on that familiar autumn crispness. It feels like only yesterday we were navigating the heat of summer, but the season is shifting rapidly. Across Victoria, we've seen a series of significant weather patterns lately, from unexpected late-season storms to the welcome rains that have finally broken the dry spell in our local catchments. While these events can sometimes disrupt our planned outings, they are a vital reminder of the ever-changing nature of the Australian landscape we love to explore.

With the recent rains providing a life-saving watering to our gardens and the soil still holding the last of summer's warmth, keep your eyes firmly on the ground over the next few weeks. This is the prime time for fungi to begin popping up in our damp gullies and bushland reserves. And we are hopeful that these consistent rains will lead to a much more vibrant orchid season than we experienced last year.

This edition of The Whistler is once again jam-packed with reports from our recent adventures. We've had a wonderful weekend away to St Arnaud and some excellent excursions, including trips to a couple of new spots. You'll also find several engaging articles.

As always, a huge thank you to everyone who contributed to this issue – it's your participation that makes this newsletter such a wonderful record of our club's activities. Enjoy the read 😊

Jack Airey
Editor



In December, Judith Cooke and Peter Rogers received a Maroondah Volunteer Service Award (10 years) for their contribution to maintaining the FJC Rogers Reserve in Heathmont. Congratulations!

Contents	
From the Editor	1
Member News	2
In Memoriam	2
Out and About	3
Member's Articles	14
Appendix - sighting lists	19



"... to further the study of Natural History in all its branches"

Member News

Welcome to our new members - Kevin Reed (returning), Joanne Bailey and Betty Clifford.

In Memoriam

Vale Carol Page

Members will be saddened to hear of the passing of our good friend and fellow naturalist, Carol Page.

Carol joined the Ringwood Field Naturalist Club (RFNC) in 2006 having heard about the Club through our website and attending The Victorian Field Naturalist Club.

We first met Carol on an excursion by the Club to Langwarrin Flora & Fauna Reserve. At lunch time we were sitting in a circle eating, when she announced her name was Carol and "if I like you, I will join the Club". She must have liked us and what we did, as she was at the next meeting and attended for many years.

Carol particularly liked our monthly excursions and weekends away. She enjoyed all aspects of nature and was very knowledgeable in many of these. She often had her nose in a book confirming sightings of fungi, plants, birds, insects, marine invertebrates or geology.

In the last few years due to ill health and not being able to drive at night, she couldn't attend meetings. We were still able to send her our six-monthly programs and newsletters so she could keep track of the Club and keep up with our activities.

By Alison Rogers





Out and About

Beenak (including Kurth Kiln)

Sunday 14th September 2025

Leaders: Alison & Peter Rogers

Nineteen members gathered at Ship Rock Falls carpark. Some of the more energetic members walked down to the falls whilst others potted around the surrounding bush.

There were many different Acacias in flower along with *Dampiera stricta* and *Tetratheca ciliatum*.

From Shiprock Falls we moved along heading to Kurth Kiln. A stop along Soldiers Road saw us meander along a track heading into the bush. Here we found *Hibbertia emperitifolia* flowering quite well.

Lunch was taken in the Kurth Kiln picnic area. Following lunch some members checked out the historic kiln. Others walked either the Tomahawk Creek Track or the Kurth Kiln Track.

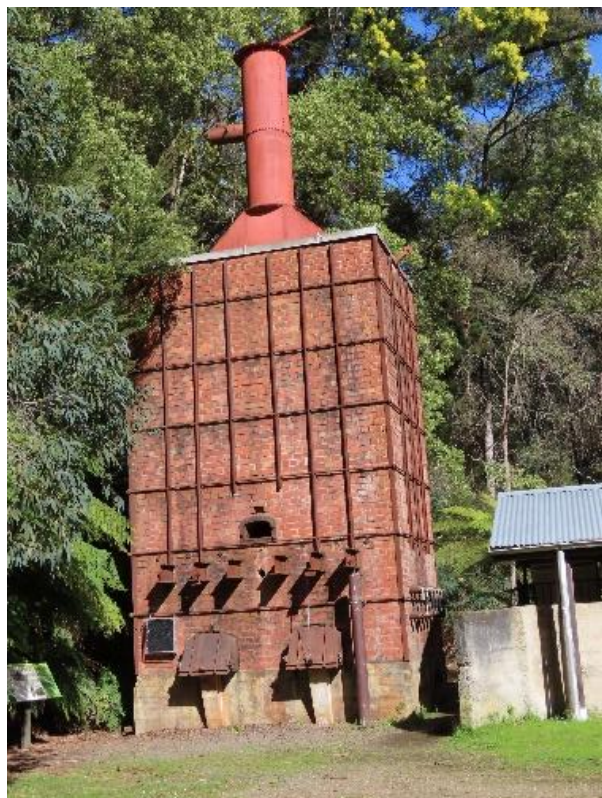
There were 18 birds recorded for the day.

In all, it was a very enjoyable day.

By Alison & Peter Rogers (additional photos by Judith Cooke)



Rock formations seen on the walks



The Kurth Kiln



Peter giving the morning briefing



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Spring Weekend Away – St Arnaud

Friday 10th to Sunday 12th October 2025

Leaders: Helen & Graeme Fernandes

We were pleased to showcase the St. Arnaud district to 28 visitors.

At 4.00 pm, we met at Pioneer Park designed by the renowned landscape gardener, Miss Edna Walling. We took a short walk to the Old St. Arnaud swimming pool which was part of the Lord Nelson Mine. The Lord Nelson mine was one of the biggest gold producing mines in Victoria. From 1862 to 1915 the Lord Nelson mine crushed 670,000 tons of quartz, yielding 352,525 oz of gold. The brick foundations and the poppet heads are still standing. The water from this shaft was used to fill the old swimming pool. Two Sacred Kingfishers were seen in the park.

From there after a short drive, we visited the Comstock open cut mine, which was lit up by the evening sun. Showing its brilliant colours in the rock formations. They have had promising drilling results recently. The evening finished with a group BBQ at the Caravan Park.

On Saturday morning at 9.00am we meet at the Stuart Mill Reserve. The weather was damp but quickly cleared. From there our first stop was the John Colahan Griffin Nature Reserve which consists of 96 hectares of dry healthy forest and box woodlands. This Reserve was formed to protect the Stuart Mill Spider Orchid *Caladenia cretacea*. It is typically white in colour, with long light brown hairy tips, and dark reddish teeth on the labellum. (See Member's Articles for extra information on this rare orchid)



Long-billed Corellas

A further 20 kms on we visited the Bellair Reserve on Basso Road, Emu. The reserve is 260 hectares of healthy woodland which is more Mallee-like because of its sandy soil. Members enjoyed the lovely variety of plants, orchids and the avenue of the golden wattles – Wallowa *Acacia Euthycarpa*. Bird of note - two Wedge-tailed Eagles were spotted.



Brown Treecreeper

We had lunch at the Kooreh Public Hall, where the nesting Fairy Martins kept the photographers busy, before going to Brenda Proctor's property. Brenda is the third generation to set aside one 7th of their farm for the protection of native fauna and flora. She led a tour to three sites which showed how fenced off areas can repair themselves over a period of time. Jack thanked Brenda & her mother Margaret for their informative afternoon. Some visited the Pebble Church at Carapooee on our way back to St. Arnaud for our evening meal at the St. Arnaud Sporting Club.

On Sunday we visited The Wax Gardens Flora Reserve. This 684-hectare fenced area has a dense shrub under storey and ground cover highlighting the many named native plants & the Fairy Wax Flower - *Philothea verrucosa* which is regenerating after years of heavy grazing by wallabies & kangaroos. It was a hot spot for bird life e.g. Rainbow Bee-eater, Fuscous and the Brown-headed Honeyeaters.



From there we passed through the Eucalyptus harvesting farm to L. Bray Road reserve in the Hard Hills. This area was a contrast due to the very dry conditions and poor soil. Returning to town we saw a variety of plants & birds including a number of Chough's nests. Lunch was at the St Arnaud Botanic Gardens in chilly conditions.

The afternoon started at View Point, the highest part of the St. Arnaud Range. The vegetation here is Box-Iron Bark Woodland, one of the few remaining in Victoria.

In the south slope leading up to View Point a fenced colony of the threatened Grey Grasstrees – *Xanthorrhoea glauca* ssp *angustifolia* was observed. Outside of the fence some Purple Beard Orchids – *Calochilus robertsonii* were found.

From here we headed to a private property at Winjallock. The property is owned by Rhonda Fernandes where she has set aside a small reserve for the regeneration of flora & fauna. This little area produced many sun orchids considering the dry conditions.

Rhonda explained how they had revegetated badly scoured gullies. Rhonda and her late husband Robert were original members in this Landcare movement. This area and the bare hill behind it known as Stricta Hill, was first launched by Joan Kirner, the former Minister of Conservation, Forests & Lands and Heather Mitchell, the then President of the Victorian Farmers Federation on November 25th, 1986. Stricta Hill was planted with trees and the hillside disced and planted down with seed grass to slow the run-off of rain. This helped to keep some of the moisture in the ground and improve production.

The afternoon finished at the Barkly Gap where one can see the Grampians in the distance. Unfortunately, the Grampians were covered with a rain cloud and were very hard to see.

This ended a weekend where many birds were observed, a total of 79 species, and fourteen species of orchids. It is as area of Victoria that has a lot to offer and not well known to many Victorians.

We would like to thank Jack for his assistance with compiling the bird and orchid lists.

By Graeme & Helen Fernandes (photos by Jack Airey)



Dusky Woodswallow



Calochilus robertsonii
Purple Beard Orchid



Pterostylis cycnocephala
Swan Greenhood



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McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery

Wednesday 5th November 2025

Leaders: Shirley Smith & Barbara Lloyd

We met in Harry's Cafe for a coffee and cake. It was a very pleasant way to start an excursion. A baby Tawny Frogmouth had fallen out of one of the trees near the lake and we were invited to watch the chick being reunited with its family. The chick was placed quite some distance from the other birds so they would all be less anxious.

Shirley and Barbara then lead the group of 13 around the Sculpture Park enjoying the interesting variety of sculptures throughout the surrounding bushland. We spotted 13 birds on our walk.

After lunch we checked on the Tawny Frogmouths and were delighted they were all close together again. Thanks, Eleanor, for the photo of the reunited family. We then drove to the nearby Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve for an afternoon stroll.

During the recce a week before, many sun orchids were budding, but by the excursion day, their flowering had ended. We did spot a few patches of beautiful purple Diuris.

By Shirley Smith (additional photos by Eleanor Dilley)



Tawny Frogmouth chick, and re-united with its family



Diuris punctata
Purple Donkey Orchid



Western Treatment Plant

Saturday 15th November 2025

Leaders: Hazel & Alan Veevers

Twenty-four members registered for this outing and were split into 3 groups of 8 at Gate 5 car park where we started. Each group, consisting of a lead car and a following car, then set off in different directions around the birdwatching routes. The weather was fine and sunny with light winds - perfect for birdwatching. All the groups were impressed to see the many thousands of Black Swans on the Bay, the huge numbers of Pink-eared Ducks and Whiskered Terns, and the large mixed flocks of migrant waders.

Roger and Inta's group especially enjoyed watching Little Terns diving into the sea, 3 Swamp Harriers close to the cars, and the vast number of waders just outside the windows of the hide. Jack's group managed to see 7 different raptor species, including a White-bellied Sea Eagle. They also enjoyed seeing the waders from the hide and were well entertained by Jack's jokes! Highlights for Alan and Hazel's group included watching a Spotted Crake pottering in the river shallows by the ford, listening to Pied Stilts chattering to each other, and a Grand Finale of 3 Brolgas on Austin Road.



Australian Spotted Crake

Birdcall was held on return to the carpark at 4.00pm, where a magnificent total of 92 species was recorded for the day.

Everyone seemed to have had a great day in the sunshine in this spectacular bird haven. A big thankyou to Roger and Inta and to Jack for their assistance in leading their groups.

By Hazel and Alan Veevers (additional photos by Roger Needham and Jack Airey)



Little Eagle



Swamp Harrier



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Little Tern



Sharp-tailed Sandpiper



Brolga



Bar-tailed Godwit (rear)
Curlew Sandpipers



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January Outdoor Meeting

Wednesday 14th January 2026

Leaders: Jenny & David Williams

The meeting and picnic were held under some large sheltering trees in Town Park opposite Croydon library. Around 30 members attended. We were welcomed by a very noisy flock of Corellas, and they continued to sing or rather screech through the entire meeting!

Afterwards we walked a short distance to Tarralla Creek Wetland which was created following many years of planning and community engagement. The earth works and structural formation commenced in 2020 to formally opening in 2022. Prior to that it was an underground drain that connects to Dandenong Creek.



Long-billed Corella

The project was a joint initiative led by Melbourne Water in partnership with Maroondah City Council, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Yarra Valley Water, Friends of Eastfield Park and the Department of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning (DELWP) (which is now DEECA).

The project has won both the Victorian and National awards for Excellence in Infrastructure at the Australian Institute of Landscape Architecture (AILA) Awards in 2023, as well as the 2024 World Green Infrastructure Network 'Green Neighbourhood Scale and On-grade Projects' Award.

We strolled around the Wetlands area which had much lower water levels than usual as there had been a lack of recent heavy rain upstream.

It was a perfect time however to see a large variety of birds – Jack counted 32 species, which is pretty amazing for a place recently developed, and rather than being a genuine creek despite its name, is really treated as a drain and the wetland is a form of filtration.



A view of the Tarralla Wetlands from the bridge

We had planned an extended walk through some connected remnant bushland but unfortunately the sun was going down so it was decided to continue the circuit around the loop encircling the actual wetland.

Feedback from members was very positive, they enjoyed themselves and they were unaware of this special place previously. We were all pleasantly surprised by the diversity of wetland bird species in a densely populated metropolitan environment.

By Jenny & David Williams (photos by Jack Airey)



Doongalla Forest

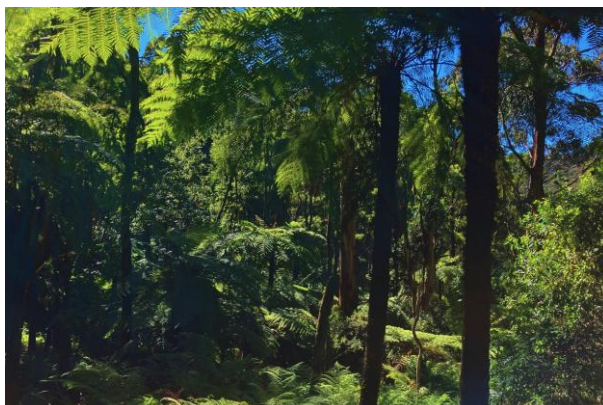
Saturday 17th January 2026

Leaders: Karen Martin & Jennifer Grant

Twenty-six members attended a half-day excursion to Doongalla Forest in The Basin. At 9:30am, members met at the Doongalla Homestead Picnic Ground car park before heading off on two loop walks. Members were given a hand drawn map of the planned walks as many of the area's tracks are not marked on maps of the area.

It was a delightful and not too hot summer day however nearby warning sirens sounded on two occasions prompting monitoring of the VicEmergency app for any fire risk. Fortunately, nothing further came of these alerts.

Doongalla Homestead, a 32-room mansion built in 1892, burned down in 1932, but evidence of its garden could be seen with exotic plants, such as blue flowering hydrangeas and camelia shrubs, dispersed across the area.



Tawny Frogmouths



The first loop walk was short, taking members along tree fern lined Chandler and Lawrence Tracks. These tracks are adjacent to

Dandenong Creek where the remains of an old swimming pool could be glimpsed through the overgrowth. Some steep steps were challenging for a few members who needed to return along the Chandler Track.

The second walk started on the Channel 10 Track, then followed Simson, Dobson and Camellia Tracks before returning along Doongalla Forest Road to the car park. The highlight was sighting two Tawny Frogmouths. The walk offered distant views of Melbourne.

By Karen Martin & Jennifer Grant (additional photos by Eleanor Dilley and David Hewitt)



Common Brown Butterfly (*Heteronympha merope*), Triggerplant (*Stylidium graminifolium*),
Common Fringe-lily (*Thysanotus tuberosus*)

Stockyard Point (Jam Jerrup)

Sunday 15th February 2026

Leader: Jack Airey

Our first February outing took us to Stockyard Point, (usually) one of Melbourne's most reliable shorebird birding locations. Twenty-six members attended for a warm morning in the field, with bright sunshine, a slight breeze, and plenty of bird activity to keep everyone scanning.

We followed the familiar walk along the beach toward the point. Although the tide was high, it wasn't quite high enough to encourage any waders up onto the roosting areas, so the shoreline was much quieter than usual. Disappointingly, only a large group of Silver Gulls were present at the point. Even so, the group worked steadily through the area and recorded around 30 species. Bush birds were active along the track, with Superb Fairy-wrens, New Holland Honeyeaters, White-browed Scrub-wrens, Yellow-rumped Thornbills, and a single Eastern Yellow Robin being seen or heard. A pair of Little Wattlebirds and a Grey Shrike-thrush added to the variety. The highlight came when two Wedge-tailed Eagles soared overhead, giving excellent views as they circled above us—always an impressive sight and a lovely surprise for a coastal excursion.



Fiddler Ray on the beach



Flowering gums at Stockyard Point



Lunch at Grantville

After returning to the cars, we made our way to Grantville foreshore for lunch. While enjoying the shade and a well-earned break, we were joined by a few familiar locals: a small group of Galahs feeding nearby and three Sulphur-crested Cockatoos roosting in the tree above us, keeping a watchful eye on our sandwiches.

Following lunch, the group continued on to Candowie Reservoir. The water held an excellent variety of species, including nine species of ducks, several cormorants and a Great Egret. Raptors also made an appearance here, with a White-bellied Sea-Eagle feeding on the opposite bank and a Swamp Harrier quartering the reedbeds.



Candowie Reservoir

Across the two locations, members recorded 53 species, enjoyed excellent views of several raptors, and experienced a pleasant mix of coastal and freshwater birding. The soaring Wedge-tailed Eagles at Stockyard Point and the diversity of ducks at Candowie Reservoir were clear highlights of the day.

It was a rewarding excursion, full of shared observations and good company—an ideal way to spend a summer day in the field.

By Jack Airey (additional photos by Judith Cooke)



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Stamford Park Wetlands & Shepherds Bush

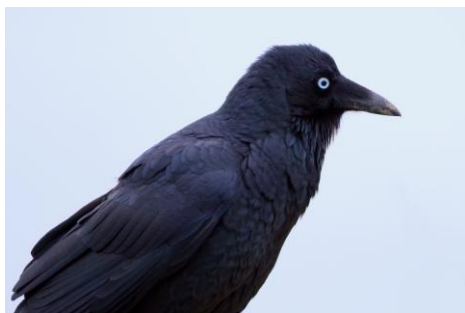
Wednesday 25th February 2026

Leaders: Sandra & Don Redman

Twenty members and one visitor arrived at the meeting point for our mid-week excursion to the Stamford Park Wetlands. This was an area new to some members. The weather conditions had improved from the previous day although somewhat overcast. As we commenced our walk towards the boardwalk, two Red-rumped Parrots were observed feeding near the pathway. As we approached the boardwalk a Latham's Snipe was flushed near the water's edge.



The view from the lookout tower



Little Raven

The water levels were high in some of the wetlands due to the recent rain. A Common Eastern Froglet was calling near the specially designed habitat for the local platypus colony.

An Australasian Darter was observed overhead and a Swamp Harrier flying low some distance away. As we left the Platypus habitat, a large flock of Rainbow Lorikeets flew some distance to a tree seeking cover. Continuing our walk, a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike was heard calling. An enjoyable morning with a bird total of 34.

After lunch eight members travelled to Shepherds Bush for an afternoon walk.

Many Wood Duck and Crested Pigeons were seen feeding on an oval near the car park. We walked along a trail that follows the Dandenong creek. This beautifully treed area is usually a great habitat for birds, but few were calling. A Sulphur-crested Cockatoo was observed in a tree hollow as was a Galah further along the loop walk. The bird count was 17.

Thanks to Jack for the bird list for Stamford Park.

By Sandra & Don Redman (photos by Eleanor Dilley and Jack Airey)



White-faced Heron



Australian Pelican



Magpie Lark



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Healesville Sanctuary

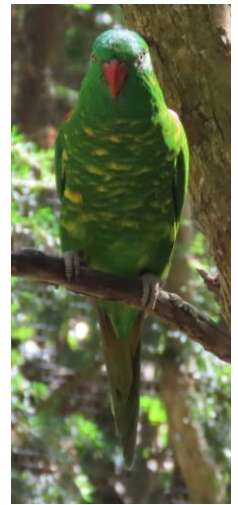
Saturday 14th March 2026

Leader: Barbara Lloyd

17 members gathered at the entrance to Healesville Sanctuary on a bright, sunny day.

We visited many of the enclosures and aviaries including koalas, kangaroos, and tree kangaroos (where we heard about the Coffee for Wildlife Program).

I did have some difficulty getting the members out of the Fighting Extinction Aviary which houses Orange Bellied Parrots, Regent Honeyeaters, Princess Parrots and the Corroboree Frog Breeding Facility!



Orange-bellied Parrot,
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet



Koala with an itch

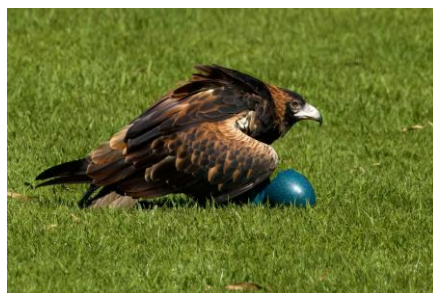
We went to the hospital and saw a turtle being examined by vets and learnt of the Raptor Rehabilitation Facility.

At the Spirits of the Sky Show we enjoyed watching free flying raptors and parrots. During lunch we were seated beside the echidnas which were interested in our group.

Following lunch, we visited more aviaries to see Wetland birds, and the lyrebird aviary. Some people really loved the Nocturnal House where we were able to see Leadbeater's Possums, Mountain Pygmy Possums and Feathertail Gliders.

So, it was quite a busy day for all of us.

By Barbara Lloyd (photos by Eleanor Dilley and David Hewitt)



Clockwise: Pink Cockatoo,
Black-breasted Buzzard,
Eastern Osprey,
Barking Owl



Member's Articles

The Stuart Mill Spider Orchid

Judith Cooke has sourced and provided the two following articles regarding the Stuart Mill Spider Orchid.

The Stuart Mill Spider Orchid (*Caladenia cretacea*) is one of Victoria's most endangered native orchids, known from only a very small area of Box-Ironbark forest. This article from *Science Victoria* highlights the species' ecology, the threats it faces, and the conservation efforts underway to ensure its survival.

By Priya Mohandoss MRSV

Victoria has more than 400 species of native orchids with many occurring nowhere else on Earth.¹ Among these is the endangered Stuart Mill spider orchid.²

The species is aptly named, as it is found in a protected pocket close to the Victorian town of Stuart Mill, in the John Colahan Griffin reserve about halfway between Bendigo and the Grampians/Gariwerd. Unlike other areas nearby, where much iron-bark forest had been cleared during early settlement, this reserve has been left intact. Consequently, this 'ancient woodland', with several species of eucalypts over 300 years old, is able to act as a natural corridor that protects and provides for the spider orchid and other native species.³

A species under threat

With its conservation status of much concern, the population of this species has dwindled due to significant habitat loss. A number of external threats such as introduced plant and animal species, land clearing, stock grazing, and the impacts of climate change influence its chance of survival.

The Stuart Mill spider orchid can adapt to drier climates, staying dormant in dry years and only resurfacing after enough rainfall; however, this is unlikely to be enough to overcome other impacts associated with the variability of weather. Climate change has led to plants budding later than usual after summer dormancy, lower numbers of flowering plants, and shorter flowering times, thereby reducing the species' ability to undergo pollination and survive.⁴

Furthermore, unprecedented weather changes such as drier, shorter seasons may lead to its tuber (the underground section for nutrient storage) becoming smaller, resulting in fewer resources for the next season, and a plant less likely to endure.

Conservation efforts

Within the North Central region of Victoria, a program has been set up in 2008 to propagate this species. Ecologist Julie Radford - "the orchid whisperer" - has worked with threatened native orchids for more than a decade and runs an orchid conservation program in central Victoria.⁵

To grow the seeds, the first stage involves hand pollination, where pollen is removed from one species and put into another one. After a few months, seed capsules form and are gathered. Each one contains a multitude of seeds that look like finely ground pepper. These seeds, along with specimens of plant tissue, are



sent to the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria as part of their Orchid Conservation Program for the remaining stages.

Research ecologist, Dr Noushka Reiter, who leads the Orchid Conservation Program, starts the process of germination. She grows seeds in petri-dishes on top of a fungus that encourages them to sprout, allowing for tubers to grow. After about three to five years, the young specimens are then ready to be introduced into the reserve.

Julie and others that assist with this program have increased the number of Stuart Mill spider orchids from 12 in 2008 to about 186 in 2017, with the goal of achieving 1500 self-sufficient plants across the Stuart Mill area by 2030.⁶ While these conservation efforts provide optimism, this species needs to be closely followed and supported to ensure its continued survival.

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Priya Mohandoss is an RSV member and has a Bachelor of Science and both Masters of Journalism and Communications and Media Studies from Monash University. This piece appears in the September 2023 edition of Science Victoria magazine. All issues can be read online for free at rsv.org.au/Science-Victoria.

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Source: "The Stuart Mill Spider Orchid – an elusive gem of the bush" by Priya Mohandoss, *Science Victoria*, Royal Society of Victoria, September 2023.

This second article provides a detailed account of the Stuart Mill Spider Orchid. Produced by the Victorian Government Department of Sustainability and Environment, it outlines the species' conservation significance and the challenges facing its long-term survival. Note that the Stuart Mill Spider Orchid was formerly classified as *Caladenia sp. aff. venusta* – it is now *Caladenia cretacea*.

Source: *Stuart Mill spider orchid: Caladenia sp. aff. venusta: a threatened species of the heathy woodland community*. Victorian Government Department of Sustainability and Environment, Melbourne, September 2005.

Available online: <https://vgls.sdp.sirsidynix.net.au/client/search/asset/1014387>

A December Portland Pelagic: Grey skies, wild seas and Albatross

Pelagic - open ocean or open water, away from the shore and sea floor.

Pelagic boat trip – typically a small boat, containing a group of bird-watchers, heading 40-odd kms offshore to see birds, risking seasickness, hypothermia and falling off the boat in rough seas.

Pelagic boat trips (commonly referred to as simply “a pelagic”) are always a gamble - the kind of adventure where weather, sea conditions, and luck come together. Organised through a Facebook group, I went on a pelagic out of Portland in December. Boat trips used to be run out of Port Fairy up until a few years ago, but I never managed to get onto one, so I was very keen to get out into the ocean and experience sea birding.



The mix of albatross and petrels on the burley slick

Leaving Portland Harbour at Dawn

We departed Portland Harbour at 6am, pushing out into a morning that was already heavy with low cloud. The sea was unsettled from the outset, and the wind carried a steady drizzle. Conditions remained grey, windy, and wet throughout the day - classic Southern Ocean weather that tests your waterproofs and your balance.

Despite the conditions, spirits were high. There’s something about being on a small boat with a handful of equally obsessed birders that creates instant camaraderie. Everyone was scanning the water before we’d even cleared the harbour.

Numerous Australasian Gannets cruised past the boat as we headed out, which wasn’t surprising, given we were passing by the breeding colony on Lawrence Rocks. A couple of Shy Albatross also gave us a look, and would be the most common albatross throughout the day.

Heading out into the open ocean

The wind strengthened as we headed offshore, and rain came in waves, but the birds didn’t seem to mind. In fact, the rougher the weather, the more active the seabirds often are. And sure enough, the day delivered.



Black-browed Albatross (Campbell sub-species)

Once we reached deeper water, the birds began to appear steadily. Albatrosses arrived early, gliding in low over the swell with the effortless authority that makes them such iconic pelagic species. Throughout the day we recorded a pleasing mix of both great and smaller albatrosses, including Black-browed Albatross and the Campbell sub-species, and a welcome appearance from the Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross. Several wandering-type albatrosses were also seen, these massive birds cruising in to feed at the burley trail behind the boat. They’re broken into sub-species now, and I can’t tell the difference between them yet, so they’re all “wanderers” to me.



Storm-petrels were active around the slick, darting and dancing across the surface in the wind. Prions zipped past in their characteristic erratic flight, and several petrel species made close passes that allowed for confident identification even in the low light. The highlight of the day was a single White-headed Petrel which did a lap of the boat and promptly departed, not to be seen again.



White-chinned Petrel

The birding remained consistent, with no long quiet patches. The group worked well together, calling birds, comparing notes, and helping ensure everyone got onto the key species.

By the time we returned to Portland, soaked and salt-crusted, the harbour felt strangely calm compared to the open ocean we'd just left. Despite the weather - or maybe because of it - the trip was unforgettable. Pelagic birding is raw, unpredictable, and sometimes uncomfortable, but it offers moments you simply can't get anywhere else. Portland continues to prove itself as one of the most rewarding pelagic locations in Australia. I'm looking forward to the next pelagic boat trip I go on but will definitely be upgrading my wet-weather gear before I do!

Here are the pelagic species I recorded:

Albatrosses

- Snowy / Tristan / Antipodean Albatross (great/wandering albatross complex)
- Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross
- Shy Albatross
- Black-browed Albatross (Black-browed)
- Black-browed Albatross (Campbell)

Petrels & Storm-Petrels

- Wilson's Storm-Petrel
- Grey-backed Storm-Petrel
- White-faced Storm-Petrel
- Grey-faced Petrel
- White-headed Petrel
- White-chinned Petrel

Prions & Shearwaters

- Fairy Prion
- Flesh-footed Shearwater

Other Seabirds

- Crested Tern



White-headed Petrel



White-faced Storm-Petrel

By Jack Airey



Wilson's Storm-Petrel and Grey-backed Storm-Petrel



"... to further the study of Natural History in all its branches"

FJC Rogers photo collage

Below is a photo collage from the December working bee at the FJC Rogers Reserve in Heathmont.

Working bees are informal and don't involve any heavy gardening, and are held on the 1st Wednesday of the month (except January), 12-2pm.



By Judith Cooke



Appendix

Beenak (including Kurth Kiln) flowering plants

Compiled by Alison & Peter Rogers

<i>Acacia dealbata</i>	<i>Acacia genistifolia</i>	<i>Acacia melamoxylon</i>
<i>Acacia mrytifolia</i>	<i>Acacia oxycedrus</i>	<i>Acacia verticillata</i>
<i>Ampera xipoclada</i>	<i>Bauera rubioides</i>	<i>Correa reflexa</i>
<i>Dampiera stricta</i>	<i>Hakea sericea</i>	<i>Hibbertia emperitifolia</i>
<i>Hovea linearis</i>	<i>Pimelea flava</i>	<i>Platylobium infecundum</i>
<i>Spyridium parvifolium</i>	<i>Tetratheca ciliata</i>	

Beenak (including Kurth Kiln) orchid list

Compiled by Alison & Peter Rogers

<i>Pterostylis melagramma</i>	Tall Greenhood
<i>Pterostylis alpina</i>	Alpine Greenhood
<i>Pterostylis pedunculata</i>	Maroonhood

Beenak (including Kurth Kiln) bird list

Compiled by Alison & Peter Rogers

Common Bronzewing	White-throated Treecreeper	Eastern Yellow Robin
Dusky Woodswallow	Crimson Rosella	Pied Currawong
Brown Thornbill	White-browed Scrub-wren	Grey Shrike-thrush
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Superb Fairy-wren	Grey Fantail
Australian Magpie	Wedge-tailed Eagle	Laughing Kookaburra
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Eastern Spinebill	Scarlet Robin

St Arnaud orchid list

Compiled by Helen & Graeme Fernandes (assisted by Jack Airey)

<i>Caladenia carnea</i>	Pink Fingers	<i>Pterostylis cycnocephala</i>	Swan Orchid
<i>Caladenia cucullata</i>	Hooded Caladenia	<i>Pterostylis nana</i>	Dwarf Greenhood (leaf)
<i>Caladenia moschata</i>	Musky Caladenia	<i>Thelymitra antennifera</i>	Rabbit Ears
<i>Calochilus robertsonii</i>	Purple Beard Orchid	<i>Thelymitra ixioides</i>	Spotted Sun Orchid
<i>Diuris behrii</i> (likely)	Golden Cowslips	<i>Thelymitra pauciflora</i>	Slender Sun Orchid
<i>Diuris leopardina</i>	Yellow Leopard Orchid	<i>Thelymitra megcalyptra</i>	Scented Sun Orchid
<i>Glossodia major</i>	Waxlip orchid	<i>Thelymitra X macmillanii</i>	Crimson Sun Orchid



"... to further the study of Natural History in all its branches"

St Arnaud bird list

Compiled by Helen & Graeme Fernandes (assisted by Jack Airey)

Australian Wood Duck	Eastern Rosella	White-winged Triller
Australian Shelduck	Red-rumped Parrot	Rufous Whistler
Pacific Black Duck	Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	Grey Shrike-thrush
Australasian Grebe	Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	Grey Fantail
Darter	Sacred Kingfisher	Willie Wagtail
Little Pied Cormorant	Laughing Kookaburra	Magpie Lark
Little Black Cormorant	Rainbow Bee-eater	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
White-faced Heron	Brown Treecreeper	Olive-backed Oriole
Australian White Ibis	White-throated Treecreeper	Dusky Woodswallow
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Superb Fairy-wren	Australian Magpie
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Currawong
Brown Falcon	Striated Pardalote	Australian Raven
Black Kite	Weebill	Little Raven
Brown Goshawk	Buff-rumped Thornbill	White-winged Chough
Nankeen Kestrel	Red Wattlebird	Australian Pipit
Black-shouldered Kite	Blue-faced Honeyeater	Red-browed Finch
Masked Lapwing	Noisy Miner	Diamond Firetail
Crested Pigeon	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	House Sparrow
Common Bronzewing	Fuscous Honeyeater	Mistletoebird
Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon	White-plumed Honeyeater	Welcome Swallow
Peaceful Dove	New Holland Honeyeater	Tree Martin
Long-billed Corella	Black-chinned Honeyeater	Fairy Martin
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Brown-headed Honeyeater	Rufous Songlark
Galah	Flame Robin	Common Starling
Little Lorikeet	Red-capped Robin	Common Blackbird
Musk Lorikeet	Varied Sittella	
Crimson Rosella	Crested Bellbird	79 species



Western Treatment Plant bird list

Compiled by Hazel & Alan Veevers

Blue-billed Duck	Little Eagle	Purple-crowned Lorikeet
Musk Duck	Brown Falcon	Easter Rosella
Black Swan	Brolga	Red-rumped Parrot
Australian Shelduck	Buff-banded Rail	Superb Fairy-wren
Pacific Black Duck	Australian Spotted Crake	White-browed Scrubwren
Australasian Shoveler	Purple Swamphen	Striated Fieldwren
Grey Teal	Dusky Moorhen	White-fronted Chat
Chestnut Teal	Black-tailed Native-hen	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Pink-eared Duck	Eurasian Coot	Red Wattlebird
Hardhead	Bar-tailed Godwit	Singing Honeyeater
Australasian Grebe	Marsh Sandpiper	White-plumed Honeyeater
Hoary-headed Grebe	Common Greenshank	Magpie-lark
Great Crested Grebe	Wood Sandpiper	Grey Fantail
Little Pied Cormorant	Red-necked Avocet	Willie Wagtail
Pied Cormorant	Red-capped Plover	Australian Magpie
Little Black Cormorant	Black-fronted Dotterel	Little Raven
Great Cormorant	Masked Lapwing	Singing Bushlark
Australian Pelican	Silver Gull	Skylark
White-faced Heron	Caspian Tern	Richard's Pipit
Little Egret	Red-necked Stint	House Sparrow
White-necked Heron	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	European Goldfinch
Great Egret	Curlew Sandpiper	Welcome Swallow
Australian White Ibis	Pied Oystercatcher	Fairy Martin
Straw-necked Ibis	Black-winged Stilt	Reed Warbler
Royal Spoonbill	Crested Tern	Little Grassbird
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Little Tern	Golden-headed Cisticola
Black-shouldered Kite	Whiskered Tern	Silvereye
Black Kite	Common Bronzewing	Common Blackbird
Whistling Kite	Crested Pigeon	Common Starling
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	Galah	Common Myna
Swamp Harrier	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	92 species





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Doongalla Forest bird list

Compiled by Graeme Fernandes

Brown Goshawk	White-throated Treecreeper	Eastern Yellow Robin
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Superb Fairy-wren	Golden Whistler
Australian King-Parrot	White-browed Scrubwren	Grey Fantail
Crimson Rosella	Brown Thornbill	Pied Currawong
Tawny Frogmouth	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	
Superb Lyrebird	Eastern Spinebill	16 species

Stockyard Point, Grantville and Candowie Reservoir bird list

Compiled by Jack Airey

Cape Barren Goose	Wedge-tailed Eagle	Brown Thornbill
Black Swan	White-bellied Sea-Eagle	Little Wattlebird
Blue-billed Duck	Swamp Harrier	New Holland Honeyeater
Musk Duck	Nankeen Kestrel	Eastern Yellow Robin
Australian Wood Duck	Eurasian Coot	Golden Whistler
Grey Teal	Black-fronted Dotterel	Rufous Whistler
Chestnut Teal	Masked Lapwing	Grey Shrike-thrush
Australian Shelduck	Pacific Gull	Grey Fantail
Hardhead	Silver Gull	Willie Wagtail
Pacific Black Duck	Crested Tern	Magpie Lark
Australasian Shoveler	Caspian Tern	Grey Butcherbird
Australasian Grebe	Spotted Dove	Australian Magpie
Great Cormorant	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Australian Raven
Little Black Cormorant	Galah	Little Raven
Little Pied Cormorant	Rainbow Lorikeet	Welcome Swallow
Great Egret	Superb Fairy-wren	Common Myna
White-faced Heron	White-browed Scrubwren	Common Blackbird
Australian White Ibis	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	53 species





Stamford Park Wetlands & Shepherds Bush bird list

Compiled by Sandra & Don Redman (with assistance from Jack Airey)

Australian Wood Duck	✓	✓	Eastern Rosella		✓
Pacific Black Duck	✓		Brown Thornbill		✓
Australasian Darter	✓		Grey Fantail		✓
Little Black Cormorant	✓		Superb Fairy-wren	✓	✓
Little Pied Cormorant	✓		Laughing Kookaburra		✓
Australian Pelican	✓		Red Wattlebird	✓	✓
White-faced Heron	✓		Little Wattlebird	✓	
Australian White Ibis	✓	✓	Yellow-faced Honeyeater		✓
Straw-necked Ibis		✓	Willie Wagtail	✓	
Swamp Harrier	✓		Magpie Lark	✓	✓
Australian Swamphen	✓		Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	✓	
Eurasian Coot	✓		Grey Butcherbird	✓	
Latham's Snipe	✓		Australian Magpie	✓	
Masked Lapwing	✓		Little Raven	✓	
Silver Gull	✓		House Sparrow	✓	
Crested Pigeon	✓	✓	European Goldfinch	✓	
Spotted Dove	✓		Welcome Swallow	✓	
Galah	✓	✓	Fairy Martin	✓	
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo		✓	Common Starling	✓	✓
Rainbow Lorikeet	✓	✓	Common Myna	✓	✓
Red-rumped Parrot	✓		41 species		

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