



# EUROBODALLA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY Inc.

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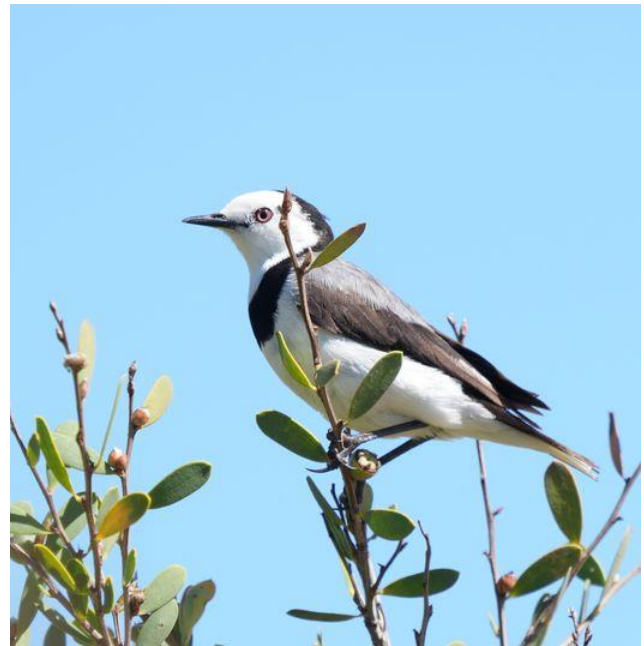
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## White-fronted Chat *Epthianura albifrons* (Jardine & Selby, 1828)

Australian Chats were earlier thought to be members of the Thornbill family, which was understandable given their bill shape and feeding habits. Recent studies have found that they are in fact in the Honeyeater family, Meliphagidae. The derivation of the genus name may be from the Ancient Greek, referring to the bird's short ('epthos') tail ('oura'). The species name, *albifrons* is from Latin, 'albus' meaning white and 'frons' forehead.

The other members of the group, the Orange, Yellow and Crimson Chats and the Gibberbird, mostly inhabit arid areas. The White-fronted Chat is the only one found in temperate as well as arid regions, with a range across southern Australia including Tasmania, from Shark Bay in Western Australia to the NSW/Queensland border. Generally, records of the species indicate a complex pattern of movement. It is resident or sedentary in some areas but a seasonal or irregular visitor in other areas, with occasional records in SW Queensland, for example. It may be nomadic in the drier, inland areas of its range, possibly responding to rainfall.



Male White-fronted Chat Photo P Warburton

Our Eurobodalla records are patchy, which may be partly due to our irregular data collection but also possibly due to the bird's irregular habits. They have been reported in all months, but more commonly in spring and summer, sometimes in flocks of 20-50. The most common locations are Brou and Coila Lakes and the Tuross estuary, with sightings reported at the estuary every year from 2000 to 2016. From 2000 to 2005 there were several sightings in the south of the Shire at Tilba and Wallaga Lakes and Long Swamp then nothing until 2020 when they were reported at Corunna Lake and Mystery Bay. The only record north of Coila Lake was of a single bird at Durras in September 2018. There were no records at all in 2017, 2021 or 2022. Breeding has been reported in several years.

The species can be found in a variety of open habitats with low plant growth, including grassland, low shrubland, saltmarsh, on the edge of lakes and freshwater wetlands, in coastal dunes, on sandy beaches, along roadsides, on swampy farmland and recreation sites. It may also be seen in heath, woodland or open forest following fire or clearance, when vegetation is low during the early stages of regeneration.

The White-fronted Chat is a small, plump bird, about 11–13 cm from bill to tail. The male has a white face, breast and belly and a continuous black 'hoop' that forms a band around the back of the head, continuing into a bar across the breast. This distinctive plumage has led to one of the species' common names, 'Nunbird'. The upperparts are mostly light grey with faint dark brown streaking. The bill, gape and legs are black or grey. The female has similar markings in shades of grey-brown and off-white rather than black and white, and with a narrower breast band. Immature birds are similar to females, but with a fainter breast band.

Calls include a short nasal buzz like that of the Zebra Finch, often given in flight, and a piping 'whit whit whit' call, given during display flight. The short nasal call has given rise to another common name, 'Tang'.

Although the White-fronted Chat has retained the brush-tipped tongue of its fellow honeyeaters, its diet consists mainly of small insects, including beetles, bugs, flies, ants, bees, caterpillars, moths, grasshoppers and spiders. It also sometimes feeds on seeds, nectar or fruit. Usually it takes food from the ground or low shrubs, sometimes from shallow water and from the air. Foraging flocks of around 20 birds may form in areas where there are temporary outbreaks of insects.

The breeding season varies, depending on habitat and rainfall. It is generally described as beginning in winter and ending in January, but there are records of breeding in late summer and autumn. Pairs form in late winter. Males follow their mates during their fertile period and chase off other males. While the male guards her, the female builds a small, deep, cup-shaped nest from grass, leaves and stems, lining it with fine grass and feathers. Nests are usually in low shrubs or grasses, occasionally on the ground. Clutch size is 2 – 4, usually 3, very rarely 5. Both sexes share incubation, which takes 13 – 14 days, and then feeding nestlings for 10 – 15 days. If a pair has a second clutch, they will often move to a new site. White-fronted Chats sometimes form nesting colonies, with nests 5 metres or more apart. Nests are sometimes parasitised by the Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo and rarely by the Fan-tailed Cuckoo.

The species is listed globally as of Least Concern on the IUCN Red List, but the NSW population has declined by 65 percent between 1981 and 2005, and it is now listed as Vulnerable in this state. It is considered Threatened in the Adelaide-Mount Lofty region of South Australia. While it may have benefited from woodland clearance in some areas, urban and industrial development in other regions has led to declines. One of the earliest records of White-fronted Chats in the Australian Museum's collection is a study skin that was collected in June 1868 from Homebush. The species originally was widely distributed in the Sydney region, with records from over 50 localities. Their Sydney distribution is now restricted to two small populations in wetlands in Botany Bay and on the Parramatta River. The latter population will probably become extinct within the next few years. Gillian Macnamara

### **What's coming up.....**

**Saturday 10 February, 2pm Bingie Point Geology Walk** (2km Grade 2) Meet at the intersection of Princes Hwy and Bingie Rd. A headland walk to Bingie Point and a talk on the geology of the area with geologists Judith Egan and Geoff Scott. White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Superb Fairy-Wren, Eastern Reef Egret, Pied Oystercatcher, Hooded Plover and a number of honeyeater species.

**Sunday 25 February, 9am Long Nose Point, Barlings Beach** (2-3km Grade 2) Meet at the carpark at the end of a track that runs along the northern boundary of the Barlings Beach Holiday Park. This track is unnamed and runs east off George Bass Drive. A walk along the coastline among Bangalay Sand Forest and on Barlings Beach and the rock platform. Eastern Yellow Robin, Brown Gerygone, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Great and Little Pied Cormorants and other seabirds, New Holland and White-cheeked Honeyeater.

**Saturday 9 March, 2pm Mummaga Lake Fungi Walk** (2-3km Grade 2) Meet at the Bodalla Park Rest Area on the Princes Hwy just south of Brou Lake Rd. Local fungi expert Teresa van der Heul, will lead the fungi walk. In addition to fungi, Wonga Pigeon, Brown Gerygone, Silvereye, White-naped Honeyeater, Rufous Fantail, Black-faced Monarch, Eastern Whipbird.

**Sunday 24 March, 9am Moruya Ramble** (2-3km Grade 2) Meet at the car park outside the Eurobodalla Shire Council and the Library, off Vulcan Street, Moruya. A visit to locations in the Mogendoura and Glenduart area. Yellow Thornbill, Rose Robin, Scarlet Honeyeater, Eastern Shrike-tit, Eastern Rosella, Jacky Winter, Black-fronted Dotterel, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike.

**Saturday 13 April, 2pm Kianga Lake** (1km Grade 1) Meet on Noble Parade just north of the Kianga Lake Bridge, near the public toilets. Coastal forest and lake walk. White-bellied Sea-Eagle, many waterfowl including Black Swan, cormorants, ducks, grebes and coots, Yellow Thornbill and various honeyeaters in the forest.

## 2024 subscriptions are now due.

A membership renewal form for 2024 has been sent with this newsletter. Single membership is \$20, family \$30 and for under 18s \$5.

**Nature in Eurobodalla 37** is now available to download from the Society's website ([www.enhs.org.au](http://www.enhs.org.au)). It provides a summary of the status of the fauna of the Eurobodalla Shire compiled from records submitted to the Eurobodalla Natural History Society during 2022.

### Field Meeting – Tuross/Coila Lake – 11 November 2023

It may have been the forecast for temperatures in the mid 30s or the strong winds on the day that dissuaded people from attending, but only 8 hardy (foolhardy?) souls assembled at the northern end of Tuross Boulevard for this field meeting. Given the weather conditions we decided to stay on the south side of the lake rather than getting sandblasted crossing the beach to reach the northern shoreline.

There had been reports of a Grey-tailed Tattler in the area, but the bird wasn't sighted as we made our way along the path. There were however a fair number of waterbirds to look at – pelicans, cormorants, ducks and coots, – as well as gulls and terns, including a number of Little Tern, a pair of Pied Oystercatcher and several Masked Lapwing. Nicola's favourite fig tree lived up to its reputation and provided us with good views of a number of Australasian Figbirds as well as 2 roosting Channel-billed Cuckoo. Near the bridge, something resembling an egg was seen on the shoreline and provoked an interesting discussion on what might have laid it there – closer examination however revealed it to be a golf ball.



Grey-tailed Tattler Photo N Clarke

Walking out to the shoreline beyond the bridge it became apparent that most of the waders were on the opposite side of the lake and too far away to be readily identified. On the walk back to the carpark the Tattler kindly put in an appearance, and we ended the day with a count of 37 bird species – more than most of us expected given the weather conditions. Thanks to Nicola for her leadership on the day. David Kay

### The Sea Skaters of Batemans Bay

Roman Soroka recently came across a group of unusual insects called sea skaters. Roman had observed a mating aggregation of several dozens of these interesting and elusive members of the order of Hemiptera (the “true bugs”), in the creek at Cullendulla.

Following a very detailed examination, it seems they are *Holobates zephyrus*, the zephyr sea skaters, members of a genus of marine bugs in the family Gerridae. There are only a couple of previous, rather blurry, observations of this species on iNaturalist. Despite the lack of recorded observations, it is probably not uncommon - just very difficult to photograph and identify, as it probably spends much of its life hidden in mangroves or scooting around in the waters of the bay.

The genus *Holobates* comprises 40 described species, most of which are coastal dwellers like our zephyr skater, but 5 species are ocean travellers that live and breed on the high seas! They are the only insects to inhabit the open oceans.

The *Halobate* species can neither swim nor fly; unlike their relatives, the freshwater Gerridae pond striders, they are permanently wingless. They exist in a two-dimensional world on the water surface. They have a very hydrophobic body surface that helps them survive in this unlikely niche. When they are immersed under the water, body hairs trap a layer of air which enhances their buoyancy and returns them to the surface.

They can effortlessly scoot across the water surface at high speed (up to 1 metre per second) without slipping and can easily leap free of the water surface at will. Oriented hairs and nanostructures on the legs, are central to the mechanism for doing this, allowing them to exploit the surface tension of the water. The front and rear legs are used for spreading their weight evenly on the water surface and the middle legs are used mainly for propulsion.

This marine family are exposed to the sun every day without shade. To deal with this punishing environment their cuticle is highly resistant to UV light and, in one species, has been shown able to block out 99.9998% of the UV radiation. The chemical and physical structures that confer this remarkable property have not yet been fully explained. In a possibly related phenomenon, the species in the photo appears to be black in full sunlight but, in shade, the cuticle appears to have a blue sheen. (Compare the two photos - the first is in sun and the second in shade).



*Zephyr sea skater - female*



*Zephyr sea skater (male left, female -right)*

The 5 species that are known to be ocean dwellers are thought to be quite successful and 4 of the 5 can be found throughout the Indian and Pacific oceans. The other species is found in the Atlantic. They travel great distances, aided by ocean currents. The density of the oceanic populations is difficult to determine because they are difficult to collect in sweep nets. However, in some areas their population has been estimated to be about 1 insect per 19m<sup>2</sup> of ocean – surprisingly prevalent!

Interestingly, the ocean-going species in the family might be amongst the rare beneficiaries of the Anthropocene. They normally lay their eggs on floating debris such as cuttlebone or feathers and breeding is thought to be constrained by the availability of such debris. However, in modern times, they have taken to laying eggs on floating plastic and may be benefiting from this all-too-abundant resource for extra breeding opportunities. In a 2002 study, a floating plastic jug was found to have eggs 15 layers deep on the surface or 70,000 eggs, the product of some 7000 sea skater females. As with many other effects of humans on the environment, the consequences of this disturbance to the ecosystem may have unforeseen implications. However, an increase in their abundance in the ocean might be a good thing for the many fish and sea birds that feed on the sea skaters.

And as for our coastal species, the zephyr sea skater, it has been observed in our bay previously. A definitive 1995 study of sea skaters observed the zephyr skaters amongst mangroves at Mossy Point. It is good to know they are still around in the Eurobodalla. Keep an eye out for them! It would be good to know where else they might be found. Phil Warburton



## Victoria's western deserts

Victoria's tourism advertising claims "You'll love every piece of Victoria". After three trips to three different regions of our southern neighbour this year, I can't help but agree. Having visited the Werribee Sewage Treatment Works and the Traralgon area earlier in the year, our most recent trip took us to the western desert areas.

Our first overnight stop en-route was at Chiltern, an area that we've visited before. On this occasion, we didn't have the luxury of time to search for the famed, and critically endangered Regent Honeyeater, but we visited Honeyeater Dam and the two dams in the Chiltern Valley. There has regularly been a pair of Australasian Grebes on the Honeyeater Dam (whose name, thankfully, has recently been changed from Cyanide Dam), and I wonder whether it is always the same pair. The constant calling of a Sacred Kingfisher was the highlight here, as unfortunately the dam did not live up to its name. There were very few honeyeaters.



Mallee landscape

Our next stop was at Little Desert Nature Lodge, which is situated adjacent to the Little Desert National Park, and which also offers some very good birding within the property. The standout memory of the Lodge is the vast number of woodswallows, whose calls drowned out all other bird calls. They were predominantly White-browed and Masked. There were also resident Southern Scrub-robins at the Lodge, and we had several excellent sightings of Scarlet Robins.



Silo art at Goroke

Victoria has been blessed with great rainfall in recent times, and consequently, the flowering plants throughout the trip were an additional delight. We were also able to visit some of the amazing silo art that abounds in this area.

It was at Little Desert that I got my only Lifer for the trip – a pair of very cooperative Gilbert's Whistlers.

Moving north-west, we continued to the small town of Ouyen. Our accommodation was a cottage which had many idiosyncrasies but did have the major benefit of a Major Mitchell, or Pink Cockatoo, visit the back garden on the

first afternoon. Ouyen also has a very good bakery/coffee shop. Our 6 nights in Ouyen gave us excellent access to Wyperfeld, Murray-Sunset and sections of Hattah-Kulkyne National Parks. The range of desert bird species is immense. Prior to the trip, Lyn had prepared an Excel sheet of potential sightings, and we faithfully filled in the list each afternoon. I would be happy to share the list with anyone who is interested. For me, it was especially good to hear and see the Crested Bellbirds once again. I just love their call.

Mildura was our next destination. Here again we stayed in a cottage in the town and visited further sections of Hattah-Kulkyne and travelled to the most northern corner of the state, where it meets South Australia and New South Wales. Ned's Corner is the name of the property which is now owned and managed by the Trust for Nature, a Victorian-based conservation group which acquires and manages valuable habitats. Ned's Corner is very much a desert area, and such regions are always surprisingly rich in birdlife. We had wonderful views of Chestnut-crowned Babbler, along with Grey-crowned and White-browed.

The weather had turned a little miserable on our second day in Mildura, so we decided to do some easy birding from the car at Buffalo Swamp. There were hundreds of waterbirds to keep us entertained. We were soon joined by a second vehicle whose driver introduced himself to us, and serendipitously revealed that he just happened to be the President of Birdlife Mildura, and just happened to know the location of a Malleefowl nest which was currently active. Without hesitation, we accepted his invitation to join him early the next morning in a section of Hattah-Kulkyne where we had the most wonderful view of a male Malleefowl working the nest, and then a second bird, the female, either inspecting or laying within the well of the mound. Needless to say, we were all breathless with the thrill of this once-in-a-lifetime experience. It was definitely the highlight of the trip.



Mallee eucalyptus blossom

Mildura also has a very attractive arid land botanic garden, where we spent a couple of hours enjoying the flowering plants. Sturt's Desert Pea never fails to delight.

Heading homewards after our two weeks in the west, we overnighted at Leeton so that we could visit Fivebough Swamp. The swamp was absolutely alive with many hundreds of birds, and it was difficult to choose a favourite sighting, but for me the 45 Red-kneed Dotterels were the standout.

By Day 15, our final species count reached 187. Whilst we usually expect to see Magpies, Willy Wagtails, Ravens and Magpie-larks every day on our birding road-trips, I found it interesting that the Striated Pardalote joined this list this time. Mandy Anderson

## Feathers - Part 1

Over the years I have collected a few feathers<sup>1</sup>. Usually, I try to work out where each one has come from – which bird species as well as where on the bird's anatomy – but mostly I just enjoy their colours and shapes. Recently I decided to learn a little more and, with the help of a few sources on plumology<sup>2</sup> I can answer at least some of my own questions.

### What are feathers made of?

They are made of beta keratin, a fibrous protein. Human hair and nails are made of alpha keratin, as are the wool, fur and horns of other mammals, whereas beta keratin is found only in birds and reptiles. It has a different molecular structure and is even tougher than mammalian horns and hooves. You can find more molecular science at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feather>.

### Do other animals have feathers?

Birds are the only feathered animals now living, but fossil records show that some dinosaurs had feathers, though of a more basic design than birds.

### How and where do feathers grow?

They form in the outer layer of the skin. If you look at photos of recently hatched, featherless birds, you will see the 'bumps' beneath the skin from which the feathers will emerge. These bumps or follicles contain cells that produce keratin, which fuses to form feathers. Unlike our hair follicles, birds' feather follicles are arranged regularly across the skin, as feathers need to be in precise locations to function effectively.

Did you know that birds' feathers weigh more than their skeletons? Depending on species and size, they have anything from 1,000 to 25,000 feathers.

## What triggers feather growth and moulting?

As feathers wear, they must be replaced. New feathers develop from the same follicles as the old ones. It is not clear what triggers moulting. In some birds, it follows breeding. The adult male Superb Fairy-wren, for example, sheds his bright breeding colours for duller 'eclipse plumage'. But usually after his fourth breeding season he retains his colours all year.

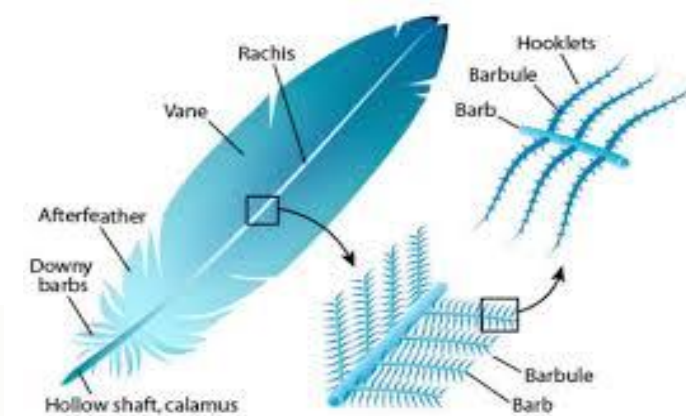
## What is the basic structure of a feather?

### Parts of a feather:

The main feather shaft, known as the rachis, is hollow at the base, or calamus, where it emerges from the skin. Along the shaft are branches or barbs which themselves branch into barbules.

### How many types of feathers are there, and what are their functions?

Feathers can be grouped according to form or function. The two main forms are vaned or pennaceous and downy or plumulaceous.



**Pennaceous** feathers form the outer layer of a bird's plumage. The barbules of vaned feathers have hooks, known as barbicels, which hook into each other to keep the feather in shape.

**Plumulaceous** or down feathers do not have barbicels, so the barbules float loosely, trapping air. Many feathers combine the two, with a downy region at the base of a vaned feather.

**Contour feathers** form the outer layer of a bird's plumage, streamlining its shape. They have a pennaceous section that overlaps with neighbouring feathers to cover the bird's body and they may also have a plumulaceous section. Around each follicle are tiny muscles that keep the feather in place and allow for some voluntary control. This outer layer provides a continuous surface that repels water to some extent. For birds that spend time in or near water, this function is obviously more important. Waterbirds such as cormorants have glands on the surface of the skin that provide oil which the bird spreads along the feathers when it preens.

**Flight Feathers** are specialised contour feathers found in the wings and tail. They are usually larger and stiffer than the other contour feathers and lack a plumulaceous region. The technical term for the flight feathers on the wings is 'remiges'; those on the outer wing are 'primaries' and those on the inner wing are 'secondaries'. The remiges are asymmetrical, with a narrower, stiffer vane on the front or 'leading' edge, which resists twisting and acts like a blade cutting through the air. They are connected directly to the bones of the bird's 'arm'. If you examine a bird's ulna bone, you will see the little bumps where feathers were attached; these are called quill knobs. The tail feathers or rectrices are usually symmetrical, and the central two are attached to the tailbone or pygostyle.

Some birds also have **filoplumes**, fine, hairlike feathers, some with barbed tips. They may be scattered through the plumage and hidden by the contour feathers or visible, such as the white filoplumes on the head and neck of the adult male Little Black Cormorant. Filoplumes are connected to nerves in the skin and provide sensory feedback, detecting movement among the feathers or in the surrounding air, depending on their location.

**Down Feathers** in adult birds grow from specialised follicles and are hidden under the contour feathers. They are entirely plumulaceous, have either short shafts or none, and form an insulating layer. Anyone who has slept under a down quilt or in a down sleeping bag knows what efficient insulators they are. In cold weather, we see birds 'fluffing up' their feathers, increasing the volume of air trapped between their feathers, thereby increasing the efficiency of their insulating layer. Some birds also insulate their nests by lining them with feathers, usually down feathers which they pluck from their breasts. Hatchlings of some species are covered in **natal down**; as the bird matures, this is replaced by contour feathers, which grow from the same follicles as the down.

Some genera, including pigeons and parrots, produce special **powder down feathers**, which grow continuously and are never moulted. Their barbules disintegrate at the tip into a powder that spreads through the bird's plumage. This is thought to be either a water repellent or a defence against parasites. (More about parasites in Part 2.)



**Bristles** are specialised feathers that resemble stiff hairs and are found mainly on the head. Most bristles lack barbs, but some have a few barbs near the base. Many Australian birds, including the Tawny Frogmouth, have ‘rictal’ bristles around the beak. Some guides state that these guide prey into the bird’s mouth, whereas others say that they merely assist the bird in detecting prey. The Emu has what appear to be eyelashes but are in fact rictal eyebrow bristles.

**Semiplumes** are feathers that have barbules but no barbicels, so have less structure than contour feathers, but more than down.

There will be more about the function of feathers as well as feather pests and diseases in Part 2.  
Gillian Macnamara

<sup>1</sup> When researching this article, I discovered that you are supposed to have a licence to collect feathers in NSW. I haven’t heard of any prosecutions, but I suppose it is possible ...

<sup>2</sup> ‘Stray Feathers – Reflections on the Structure, Behaviour and Evolution of Birds’ Penny Olsen and Leo Joseph; CSIRO Publishing 2011 plus the Cornell Lab website and Wikipedia.

### Pūteketeke

One way of increasing interest in local birdlife and conservation is to conduct Bird of the Year polls. In Australia, the Guardian runs theirs every second year and the 2023 poll was won by the critically endangered Swift Parrot, despite stiff competition from the Tawny Frogmouth which benefited from the celebrity endorsement of Guardian cartoonist, First Dog on the Moon. Thousands of votes were cast in every round of voting, and while the poll was open it inspired many conversations among friends and colleagues about their favourite bird and how they were tactically awarding their votes.

But that is nothing compared to the NZ Bird of the Century Poll, held towards the end of the year. The NZ conservation charity, Forest and Bird, has been holding this vote for over a decade, and it always attracts a great deal of interest, with citizens, businesses and sporting teams joining to lobby for their chosen candidate. This year, however, was its most controversial vote yet, thanks to the involvement of British comedian John Oliver, and his television show “Last Week Tonight”. For several weeks, John Oliver used his platform to lobby for his favourite bird, the pūteketeke or Australasian Crested Grebe. The show bought billboards in New Zealand, as well as a number of other countries including India, Brazil and America, and used their considerable reach to encourage people all over the globe to vote for the pūteketeke.

Because of this, the pūteketeke won by a landslide. The competition usually attracts around 60,000 votes, but this year there were over 350,000 votes cast in 195 countries (more countries than the United Nations!). And while there were claims of foreign interference and vote-rigging by some who were lobbying for other birds, ultimately it drew some much-needed attention to the endangered bird life in NZ, which is no bad thing.

The pūteketeke is considered by the NZ Department of Conservation as nationally vulnerable, meaning the species faces a high risk of extinction in the medium term. It is estimated that there were less than 1000 pūteketeke in New Zealand in 2012. The birds reside in lakes in the South Island but are thought to be extinct in the North Island with only the odd individual spotted. The situation was dire for the pūteketeke in the 1980s, when numbers dropped to a low of 200. Numbers are slowly increasing, thanks to the efforts of volunteer groups such as the Lake Wānaka Grebe Project, which has seen more than 500 chicks hatch from its nest platforms.

Forest and Bird chief executive Nicola Toki said the pūteketeke – a first time winner – was an outside contender for the competition, but “catapulted to the top spot thanks to its unique looks, adorable parenting style, and propensity for puking. It’s great to have a successful bird as an ambassador for all New Zealand birds to show that even threatened species can bounce back if we give them a hand.”

If you want a good laugh, watch this You Tube video with John Oliver dressed as a pūteketeke on the Tonight Show in the US. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVE1hBzHn3s> Helen Kay





*ENHS members have many stories to tell about their observations of nature. 'My Patch' is a forum where these stories can be shared with others. Photos are welcome. Please send your contributions to [mypatch@enhs.org.au](mailto:mypatch@enhs.org.au)*

*Logo design by Trevor King*

In August and September, 2014, I made eight recordings of the dawn calls of a Grey Shrike-thrush near our house on Maulbrooks Road. Peter Fullagar and I finally got around to analysing the recordings and published our findings this year. If you go to the link below, you can access the pdf and the sounds.

Title: An Analysis of the Dawn Vocalisation of a Male Grey Shrike-thrush (*Colluricincla harmonica*)  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7882/AZ.2023.023>

You will see from this publication that the data raised a number of questions. With these questions in mind, I decided that what was needed was more recordings at the start of the breeding season, from more than one bird. This required more people with recording devices.

The recording device issue was easy, as most people have an iPhone, or equivalent. The people were a bit more difficult. But, with a bit of gentle persuasion, I managed to rope in three people, two on Maulbrooks Road, and one down in Glenduart who was willing to do Larry's Mountain Road where it joins Maulbrooks. And of course Sarah was more than willing. So I had five recorders, plus I had a large shotgun microphone that I could put on a tripod and leave at a particular site. I spent some time with these 'volunteers', explaining how to do the recordings on the phone using Voice Memos, and familiarising them with the calls. And then we waited for the birds to start calling.

We first heard a call at our house on August 18, so that day I got everyone mobilised for the next morning, at 0630! We all went out each morning for about three weeks, gradually getting earlier, towards the end at 0530. The volunteers would record for 30 minutes if possible, then simply send me the recordings by either Message or Whatsapp. I would go through them superficially to decide if there were Shrike-thrush calls present, then either catalogue them or discard them.

We ended up with recordings from between four and six birds each morning, spread out about every 200m from the beginning of Maulbrooks Road. Sarah and I managed to record and sex our birds (males), and get to another two birds and sex them, males as well.

I now have about 100 recordings to go through, so don't hold your breath for an update! I have listened to bits of all the recordings, and at least some of the syllables are ones I recorded in 2014; but there are also different ones. At first glance, some of the individuals show similarities, but others are very different.

It was a very successful, and enjoyable three weeks. I will get a lot of information, and our volunteers all learned a lot about 'their' Shrike-thrush. Michael Guppy

### Highlights from ENHS records - Spring 2023

Avian species	Number	Place	Observer	Comments
Stubble Quail	Up to 10	Com	JC	
Brown Quail	2, 1	Com/Cool	JC/DO	
Musk Duck	4, 3	Brou L/PS	H Watson/JM	
Australian Shelduck	2	Com	JC	In September
Australasian Grebe	20, 16, 11, 10	TS R Bridge/ Coila L/MB/ Com	GLM/DHK/ MA/JC	
Hoary-headed Grebe	12, 6	Coila L/PS	FM/NC/JM	
Bar-shouldered Dove	3, 1	Coila L/Sth DS/ BBWG	DB/JCof	

Topknot Pigeon	25, 9, 1	PS/Sth DS/ Cullendulla	JM/JCof/RS	
Tawny Frogmouth	4, 3, 1	MB/Broulee/ Mossy Pt	MA/GH/HR	2 young at Broulee
White-throated Nightjar	Calling	PS	JM	
White-throated Needletail	10, 4, 2	PS/MKS/Cool	JM/SMG/DO	First return 5 November
Eastern Koel	6	Broulee	GH	First return 26 September. 1 or 2 elsewhere.
Channel-billed Cuckoo	Up to 3	Widespread	Various	First return 21 September
Horsfield's Bronze- Cuckoo	Call	Com	FM/JC	First return 29 October
Shining Bronze- Cuckoo	1	Broulee/PS/Com	GLM/JM/JC	First return 18 September
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	1 to 4	Widespread	Various	
Brush Cuckoo	1	PS	JM	First return 7 October
Pallid Cuckoo	1	PS	JM	First return 27 November
Buff-banded Rail	1	BBWG/ Mossy Pt	DB/NC/HR	
Aust Spotted Crake	1 or 2	BBWG	DB/NC	
Baillon's Crake	1	BBWG	DB/NC	October-November
Spotless Crake	1	BBWG	DB/NC	
Dusky Moorhen	6, 1	ERBG/Com	MA/JC	
Eurasian Coot	Up to 40	Coila L	FM	
Short-tailed Shearwater	Hundreds	Off BP/Kianga/ NA	GH/T&A Ross	Streaming past in October
Common Diving Petrel	1	Broulee	W Platts	Beach cast
Royal Spoonbill	40	Bumbo Rd	MA	
Nankeen Night Heron	2	BBWG	J Mather	Adult and juvenile
Striated Heron	2	Coila L	DB	
Cattle Egret	Up to 40	MYA	JM	In breeding plumage October
White-necked Heron	5, 1	Sth DS/PS/ Bergalia/Com	JCof/JM/DHK/ JC	
Intermediate Egret	1	Broulee/MYA/ Nangudga	GLM/JM/MA	
Little Egret	3, 2, 1	MB/Coila L/ BBWG	MA/FM/DB	
Great Cormorant	Hundreds	MYA/MHS/TS	JM/C Leslie/ M Craig	Seen flying in large flocks
Australasian Darter	1 or 2	Sth DS/PS/Coila L/Com	JCof/JM/FM	
Beach Stone-Curlew	2, 1	Brou L/Sth DS	DB/JCof/M Burk	Pair at Brou L displaying. Single also reported at LP in August. More sightings this year on the south coast.
Aust Pied Oystercatcher	6, 5, 4	Sth DS/Coila L/ MB	JCof/FM/MA	Nesting at Sth DS
Sooty Oystercatcher	5, 4	MB/Broulee	MA/GLM	
Pied Stilt	3, 2	TS R Bridge/ Coila L/Bumbo Rd/Com	GLM/V Brown /MA/JC	
Pacific Golden Plover	10, 3	MB/Coila L	MA/NC	First return 18 September
Red-capped Plover	40, 20	Coila L/Brou L	DB/MA	Nesting at both locations
Hooded Plover	4, 2, 1	Bogola Head/ MB/Coila L	MA/NC	Two immatures at Bogola Head; nesting at MB
Black-fronted Dotterel	1	Com/Coila L	JC/NC	
Whimbrel	1	Coila L	DB/NC	In September and October
Far Eastern Curlew	4, 1, call	NA/Cullendulla Ck/MHS	MA/RS/JM	Fewer than in previous years

Bar-tailed Godwit	100, 80	Coila L/NA	NC/MA	
Ruddy Turnstone	3	Brou L	MA	November
Great Knot	1	Coila L	NC	October
Red Knot	Up to 9	Coila L	DB/NC/FM	
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	50, 18	Coila L/Barlings S	NC/GC	Overflying Barlings Swamp which is drying out
Red-necked Stint	Up to 20	Coila L	DB/NC/FM	
Grey-tailed Tattler	1	Coila L	NC/FM	
Latham's Snipe	5, 1	MHS/Sth DS/BBWG/ERBG/Com	GLM/JCof/DB/NC/JC	
Little Tern	24, 9	Coila L/Brou L	FM/MA	
Caspian Tern	Up to 24	Sth DS	JCof	24 in September
Greater Sooty Owl	Calls	MB	MA	
Masked Owl	3, 2	Pedro/PS	JS/JM	One young at Pedro
Powerful Owl	1 or call	Com/Cool	JC/DO	
Osprey	Up to 3	NA	T&A Ross/MA	
Square-tailed Kite	2. 1	PS/Pedro Pt/Kianga/MKS	JM/FM/T&A Ross/SMG	
Pacific Baza	1	LP/PS	J Mather/JM	
Swamp Harrier	1	MO/Com/MB	NM/JC/MA	
Little Eagle	1	Kianga	T&A Ross	
Spotted Harrier	1	Coila L	DB/NC	Immature
Black Kite	1	MKS	SMG	October - November
Oriental Dollarbird	4, 1	Com/Broulee/PS/Bergalia/MB	JC/GLM/JM/DHK/MA	First return 2 October
Azure Kingfisher	1	BBWG/Com	DB/JC	
Sacred Kingfisher	4, 2	Com/PS/Sth DS	JC/JM/JCof	Singles elsewhere
Australian Hobby	1	PS/Kianga	JM/T&A Ross	
Peregrine Falcon	1	Cullendulla Ck/MKS/Com	DB/SMG/JC	
Glossy Black Cockatoo	9, 4, 3	Broulee/PS/MKS	GH/JM/SMG	Juvenile at Broulee
Gang-Gang Cockatoo	30, 15	Deua R valley/Mossy Pt	MSummerhays/HR	First large flock seen at the Deua R valley since the 2020 bushfires
Eastern Rosella	12, 4	Com/Bergalia	JC/DHK	
Musk Lorikeet	4	Broulee	GLM	Fewer reports
Little Lorikeet	2, calls	Broulee/TS	MA/GM	Fewer reports
Green Catbird	2 or call	Corunna/Tilba	MA	
Southern Emu-wren	5, 1	Broulee/Cullendulla Ck	GLM/GC	
White-cheeked Honeyeater	10, call	Broulee/Pedro Pt	GLM/FM	
White-naped Honeyeater	6, 4	Corunna/Broulee	MA/GLM	
Brown-headed Honeyeater	6, 1	Com/PS/Corunna	JC/JM/MA	
Noisy Friarbird	Up to 15, 4	PS/Com	JM/JC	Nesting at PS
Scarlet Honeyeater	4, 2	Broulee/PS/TS	GLM/JM/GM	
White-fronted Chat	Up to 15	Coila L	NC/GH/FM	
Fuscous Honeyeater	1	Cullendulla Ck	DB	Unusual at this location
White-throated Gerygone	Call	Com	JC	In September
Varied Sittella	8, 6, 5	Broulee/PS/Com	FM/JM/JC	
Australasian Figbird	10, 1	MYA/Coila L/BB/MB	JM/FM/RS/MA	
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	2	PS/Pedro Pt/Coila L	JM/FM/DB	

Common Cicadabird	6, call	PS/BBWG	JM/DB	First return 19 October
Masked Woodswallow	10	PS	JM	September
White-browed Woodswallow	40	PS	JM	September
Rufous Fantail	1	Broulee/Com	GLM/JC	First return 26 October
Leaden Flycatcher	3 or call	PS/MKS	JM/SMG	First return 9 October
Satin Flycatcher	1	Bergalia	DHK	In November
Restless Flycatcher	1	Com	JC	
Black-faced Monarch	1 or call	Across shire	Various	First return 6 September
Little Raven	20	Com	JC	Also recorded at MB
White-winged Chough	8, 6, call	MKS/Com/PS	SMG/JC/JM	
Rose Robin	2, call	Com/MB	JC/MA	
Flame Robin	1	Belowra	JC	
Scarlet Robin	1	Belowra	JC	
Golden-headed Cisticola	6	Com	JC	
Rufous Songlark	1	BBWG	DB/NC	
Tree Martin	6, 5	Broulee/Com	GLM/JC	
Mistletoebird	2, 1	PS/Com/Broulee /Coila L	JM/JC/FM	
Australian Pipit	7, 4, 2, 1	Bingie/Com/Coila L/MB	FM/JC/MA	
Red-whiskered Bulbul	2	DY/NA	C Marshall/ S Pearson	First records of the species in the shire for ENHS

Non-avian species	Number	Place	Observer	Comments
Common Wombat	1 or signs	Broulee/Com/ Cool	GLM/JC/DO	
Short-beaked Echidna	1 or 2	Broulee/PS/MB/ Cool	GLM/FM/JM/ MA/DO	
Dusky Antechinus	1	Broulee	L Hansch	Female with young in September
Long-nosed Bandicoot	1 or signs	Mossy Pt/Broulee	HR/FM	
Yellow-bellied Glider	Calls	Broulee	JM/HR	
Sugar Glider	1	Cool	DO	
Common Brushtail Possum	3, 2, 1	MB/Com/Broulee/ Mossy Pt	MA/JC/GLM/ HR	
Eastern Grey Kangaroo	38, 26, 20	Cool/SthDS/PS/ Coila L	DO/JCof/JM/ FM	
Red-necked Wallaby	4, 2, 1	Cool/Mossy Pt/ Bergalia	DO/HR/DHK	Pouch young at Bergalia
Swamp Wallaby	5, 3	PS/Barlings S	JM/GLM	
Samba Deer	1	Cool	DO	
Grey-headed Flying Fox	1 or 2	Com	JC	
Bottle-nosed Dolphin	17	Sth DS	JCof	
Southern Right Whale	3	MO	R Horsfall	
Humpback Whale	Pods	Coila/Kianga	GH/T&A Ross	
Port Jackson Shark	1	Broulee	W Platts	Dead
Snake-necked Turtle	8	Com	JC	
Yellow-bellied Water-skink	3	Com	JC	
Eastern Blue-tongue	1 or 2	Broulee/Com/MB	GLM/JC/MA	
Jacky Lizard	1 to 3	Mossy Pt/PS/Cool	HR/JM/DO	
Gippsland Water Dragon	Up to 6	Com	JC	
Lace Monitor	1 or 2	PS/Com/Cool	JM/JC/DO	
Common Scalyfoot	1	Coila L	GC	First record for ENHS
Burton's Legless Lizard	1	PS	JM	First record for ENHS
Death Adder	1	Polwombra	D Allardice	



Diamond Python	1	MB	MA	
Eastern Small-eyed Snake	1	Coila L	GC	
Mustard-bellied Snake	1	Cool	DO	
Tiger Snake	1	Cool	DO	

<b>Frogs</b> JC/JM/HR/DO	Common Eastern Froglet, Brown-striped Frog, Spotted Grass Frog, Dendy's and Tyler's Toadlet; tree frogs: Screaming, Eastern Sedgefrog, Jervis Bay, Peron's, Tyler's, Verreaux's.
<b>Moths</b> JC/JM	Australian Bag, Diamondback, Tree Lucerne, Wool, Red-lined Geometrid, Spring Taxeotis, Triangular, Neat Epidesmia, Cream Wave, Plantain, Mecynata, Subidaria, Variable Halone, Lichen-eating Caterpillar, Dark Spotted Tiger, Tiger, Mistletoe, Green-blotched, Brown and Variable Cutworm, Native Budworm.
<b>Butterflies</b> MA/JC/JM/GLM/ FM	Narrow-brand Grass-dart, Orchard Swallowtail, Black Jezebel, Caper White, Cabbage White, Dusky Knight, Brown Ringlet, Varied Sword-grass Brown, Common Brown, Painted Lady, Common Grass Blue.
<b>Dragon &amp; Damselflies</b>	Common Bluetail, Australian Emperor, Tau and Australian Emerald, Blue Skimmer.
<b>Beetles</b> JC/JM/M Craig	Green and Argentinian Scarab, Acacia Leaf, Small Blue Leaf, Metallic Green Acacia, Dotted Paropsine, Fiddler; Ladybirds: Common and 26 Spotted, Striped, Steelblue, White-collared, Fungus Eating, Tortoise Shelled.
<b>Bugs</b> JC/JM	Seed, Harlequin, Bronze Orange, Green Vegetable, Horehound. Cicada: Silver Princess, Beach Squeaker
<b>Spiders</b> JC/JM	Orange-legged Swift, White-spotted Swift, Black House, Leaf-curling, Jumping, Huntsman, Daddy Long Legs, Whip, Giant Water, Water, White-tailed.

**RAINFALL (mm). September:** 7.5 at MKS, 5 at Bergalia, 3.5 at Com, 6.75 at Cool. **October:** 31.5 at MKS, 49 at Com, 64 at MB, 64.75 at Cool. **November:** 285 at MKS, 257 at Bergalia, 221.5 at Com, 114 at MB, 173.25 at Cool.

#### Contributors

MA	M Anderson, MB	GM	G Macnamara, TS		L Hansch
DB	D Bertzeletos, Surfside	JM	J Morgan, PS		R Horsfall, MO
GC	G Clark, ACT	DO	D Ondinea, Cool		C Leslie, MHS
NC	N Clark, Surf Beach	HR	H Ransom, Mossy Pt		C Marshall, DY
JCof	J Coffey, DS	RS	R Soroka, Surfside		J Mather, LP
JC	J&P Collett, Com	FM	Field Meeting		S Pearson, NA
GH	G Hounsell, Broulee		D Allardice, MYA		W Platts, Broulee
SMG	S&M Guppy, MKS		V Brown, ACT		T&A Ross, Kianga
DHK	D&H Kay, Bergalia		M Burk, DS		M Summerhayes, MYA
GLM	G&L McVeigh, Broulee		M Craig, TS		H Watson, NA
<b>Places</b>					
BB	Batemans Bay	ERBG	Eurobodalla Botanic Gardens	PDD	Percy Davis Drive, MYA
BBWG	Batemans Bay Water Gardens	LP	Lilli Pilli	PS	Pedro Swamp
BI	Bermagui	MKS	Maulbrooks Rd S, MYA	PP	Potato Point
BP	Burrewarra Point	MO	Meringo	SB	Surf Beach
Cool	Coolagolite	MYA	Moruya	SF	State Forest
Com	Comerang	MH	Moruya Heads, N&S	T'bella	Trunketabella
CO	Congo	MB	Mystery Bay	TN	Tomakin
DS	Durras	NA	Narooma	TS	Tuross
DY	Dalmeny	NP	National Park	WL	Wallaga Lake

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