



EUROBODALLA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Inc.

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Red-browed Finch - *Neochmia temporalis* - (Latham, 1801)

Red-browed Finches are the most common finches seen in the Eurobodalla. They are highly sociable and are usually seen in small flocks of 10 to 20 individuals, often foraging for grass seeds on the ground. When disturbed, the whole flock will disperse, cheeping, and re-congregate nearby. Alternate common names for the species include red-browed firetail, Sydney waxbill and redbill.

The Red-browed Finch is most easily recognised by its bright red eyebrow, rump and beak, on an otherwise green and grey bird. Upperparts are olive green with grey underneath. Both sexes are similar in appearance and adults are 11–12 cm long. Juveniles do not have red brow marks and lack olive colouration on the collar and wing coverts. The bright red eyebrow distinguishes the Red-browed Finch from the two other red-rumped finches which found locally, the Beautiful Firetail and Diamond Firetail (*Stagonopleura bella* and *S. guttata*), both of which are much less common.



Red-browed finch
Photo P Gatenby

The species is found mostly east of the Great Dividing Range, between Cape York in Queensland and the Mount Lofty Ranges in South Australia. It has been introduced to French Polynesia and to southwest Australia, where it is sometimes confused with the Red-eared Firetail (*Stagonopleura oculata*).

The species was first described by the English ornithologist John Latham in 1801 under the name *Fringilla temporalis*. It is one of four species in the genus *Neochmia*, the others being the Crimson Finch, Plum-headed Finch and Star Finch. There are three subspecies: the nominate species *N. temporalis temporalis*, in most of the east coast, and inland New South Wales and Victoria, *N. temporalis minor*, which is distinguished by a white breast, in northern New South Wales, and southeast of Australia, and *N. temporalis loftyi* in the south west corner of South Australia, although the latter is sometimes not listed as a subspecies, as the differences between it and the type species are relatively minor.

The Red-browed Finch is found in grassy areas interspersed with dense understorey vegetation and flocks are sedentary or nomadic in their local area. They prefer semi-open woodland, especially edges of forests, where brushy scrub meets cleared areas, especially near creeks. Its preference for open grassy areas surrounded by dense shrubbery enables it to survive well in weedy areas along roads, railway tracks and creek lines, where seeding grasses escape the lawnmower.

The species is primarily a seed eater, living mostly on grass and sedge seed, but will happily feed on many non-native seeds and insects. It feeds mainly on the ground, but sometimes perches on seeding grass heads. It may also benefit from bird feeders, it is one of only a very few small Australian birds that can be attracted to bird feeders, provided the seeds are small and larger competitors are excluded. Wild birds will even enter large-mesh aviaries in suburban areas to eat seed, given the opportunity.

Flocks will often forage with other seed eating birds, especially other finches and parrots, such as Red-rumped Parrots. They also often associate with small insectivorous species, especially family groups of Superb Fairy-wrens, as well as Yellow-rumped Thornbills. The association with the fairy wrens is especially interesting, as the simple song of the Red-browed Finch - short, piping high-pitched cheeps or whistles sometimes sounds superficially like the contact call of the Superb Fairy-wren.



Red-browed Finch nest

Red-browed Finch nest communally. Nests are usually built 2–3 metres above the ground in dense shrubs. They are large and domed, woven from grass and small twigs, with a side tunnel for an entrance side. Both parents share nest building, incubation of the eggs, and feed the young together. Four to six white eggs are laid per clutch two or three times per year, between October and April. Juveniles are fully independent within 28 days. David Kay

A warm welcome to new members

Isis Joyce, Nerrigundah
Habiba Gitay

What's coming up:

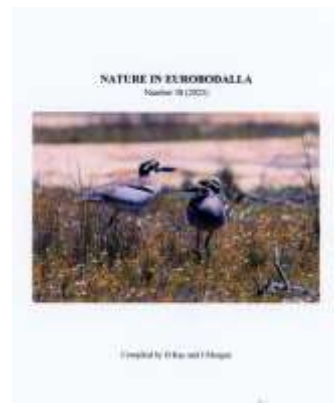
Saturday 12 October, 2pm Old Mill Rd, Turlinjah (2-3km Grade 2). Meet at the car park at the Tuross turnoff, corner of Princes Hwy and Hector McWilliam Dr. A walk along a dirt road in mixed eucalypt forest. Yellow-faced, Crescent and Fuscous Honeyeater, Red Wattlebird, Rose Robin, Superb Lyrebird, Pilotbird, Varied Sittella, Eastern Whipbird, Red-browed Treecreeper

Sunday 27 October, 9am Punkalla Creek Bridge, Narooma (2km Grade 1) Meet at Quota Park, Riverside Drive, Narooma. The walk is a 20 minute drive from Narooma and includes forested and open areas. Nankeen Night Heron, Cattle Egret, Royal Spoonbill, White-headed Pigeon, various honeyeaters, Rose Robin, Black-faced Monarch, Variegated Fairy-wren, Red-browed Finch.

Saturday 9 November, 2pm Bingie Point Geology Walk (2km Grade 2) Meet at the Bingie turnoff, intersection of Princes Hwy and Bingie Rd. A headland walk 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 24 November, 9am Waders (2-4km Grade 2) The venue will depend on wader activity, weather and water levels in the estuaries. Depending on coastal conditions, this walk may be cancelled, and an alternative walk will be proposed. An email will be sent out beforehand, or you can call Julie or Mandy for the venue.

Nature in Eurobodalla 38 will shortly be available to download from the Society's website (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 2023.



Field meeting program for 2025

The committee will be meeting before the end of this year to plan the program of field meetings for the coming year. Suggestions for places to visit would be most welcome. Please let a member of the committee know if there are any walks you'd like to see included or if there is a location within the Eurobodalla you'd like to visit. Contact details of the committee are on the last page of the newsletter.

Field meeting – Murramarang National Park – 14 September 2024

I'm not sure whether it was the fact that a severe weather warning had been issued for the afternoon, or the excitement of the local Council elections that kept people away, but a select group of just 6 members attended this meeting.

The weather was fine and still as we waited at the assembly point and watched a Square-tailed Kite glide overhead. A short drive took us to our destination in the National Park – a fire trail just off North Head Drive which had provided good birding when Julie Morgan had visited earlier in the week to check out potential sites for the walk. On this day however things were rather quiet (apart from a large group of trail bike riders who went past just after we'd arrived) with not a lot of birds to be seen. A flock of 12 Great Cormorants flew overhead in a classic V formation, but for the most part it was a case of distant birdcalls being identified by Demetris or one of the Julies. Fortunately, there were lots of things in flower in the understorey along the track - wattles, bushpeas, mintbush – and these provided interest, though I lack the botanical expertise to reliably identify many of the species.

After about 40 minutes walking there were signs that the severe weather was not far away, (Julie Collett had got a message to say that the front had hit Narooma and was severe) so we decided to head back to the cars. The return trip provided the afternoon's best birding, with one patch giving views of several species including Varied Sitella, Rufous Whistler and Black-faced Monarch (my pick for bird of the afternoon). As we reached the cars the first spots of rain were felt so the record sheet was filled out in double quick time (26 bird species, though a number were calls rather than sightings) and we got out of the forest and back on the highway before the rainstorm hit.
David Kay

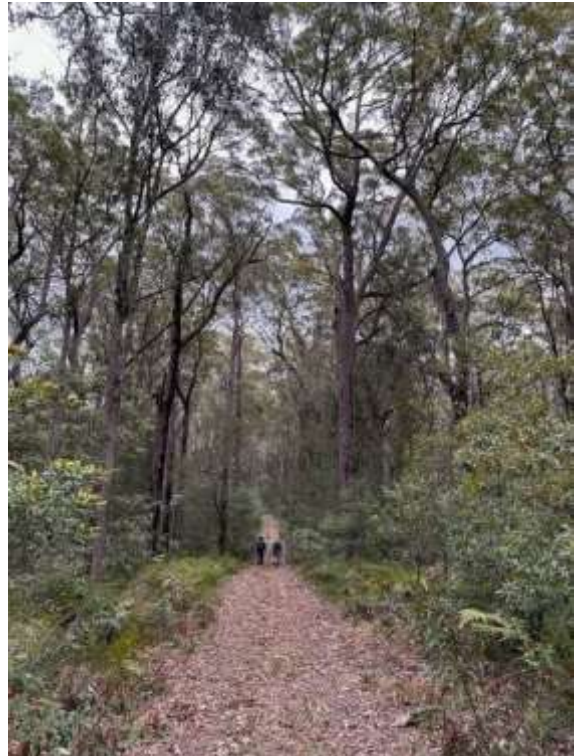


Photo J Morgan

A Eurobodalla record of the Short-tailed Line-blue (*Prosotas felderi*)

On 29 April 2024, we were walking in the Bengello Forest reserve between Broulee and Moruya Airport. Just south of Bengello Creek we went to access Bengello Beach via a foot track that winds through Banksia woodland and dunes to the beach. While traversing the dune area we noticed a flowering Bitou Bush (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera*) that had a couple of butterflies flying around it. We went to check what they were; one was a Cabbage White (*Pieris rapae*), the other was a small blue that was unfamiliar to us. Prue took several photos so we could check later but even after consulting a field guide (Braby 2016) we were still uncertain so sent the photos to our friend and fellow butterfly enthusiast Suzi Bond. She suggested a female Short-tailed Line-blue (*Prosotas felderi*) and we agreed that seemed to be the best match. With our permission Suzi forwarded the photos to Michael Braby for his opinion, and he confirmed the identification, noting that this was well south of any previous records he was aware of.



While we were watching, the line-blue spent its time feeding on the Bitou Bush flowers and defending itself from a couple of Saltbush Blue (*Theclinesthes serpentata*) males that appeared interested. After persistent harassment from the latter, the line-blue eventually flew off.

Whether this was a vagrant or is part of a southern range expansion remains to be seen. One of the larval food plants of the species is Coast Wattle (*Acacia sophorae*) which is abundant on dunes at the site we observed the butterfly, and on the NSW south coast in general. There are a couple of quite recent records of the species from Shoalhaven Shire in the Atlas of Living Australia which suggests that range expansion is a possibility.

Thanks to Suzi Bond for help with identification and for locating other records, and to Michael Braby for expert assistance. Steve Holliday and Prue Buckley

PS. After Steve and Prue sent through the article, they learned that there had been another record of the species in Moruya in March 2024, which was reported on NatureMapr but was initially misidentified.

Reference

Braby MF (2016). The complete field guide to Australian butterflies. Second edition. CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne

Mystery Bay Bioblitz

In July I attended a seminar at the Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Garden presented by the Australian Citizen Science Association (ACSA), where I learnt a great deal about the wonderful volunteer work done by this group of people. We discovered that the branch known as the Budawang Coast Atlas of Life had extended its boundary southwards, so that it now included Mystery Bay. Dr Annie Lane, President of ACSA, was a keynote speaker, and I was delighted when she announced that their group was holding a Bioblitz in Mystery Bay on 17-18 August during Science Week.

An impressive group of leaders had been assembled, and it was a great opportunity to do some networking, putting faces to names which over the years I had read on documents, on websites, in books and in photo captions. I offered to lead a bird walk on the Sunday, being familiar with the area under study, as I have lived in Mystery Bay for 17 years. Other groups looked at plants, and at marine creatures on the Billys Beach rock platform.

Plant and bird surveys took place in the area of bush which has become informally designated the Mystery Bay Biodiversity Corridor. It is the known home of many birds, including several vulnerable and endangered species. Amongst these are the Glossy Black-Cockatoo, the Gang Gang, Powerful Owl, Sooty Owl, Square-tailed Kite and Little Lorikeet. It is also visited by Swift Parrots when the Spotted Gums are in blossom. We were able to add to this list during our survey- the Olive Whistler, which is a very rare visitor to Mystery Bay, preferring the higher altitude of nearby Gulaga.

Prior to the Bioblitz, motion sensor cameras had been put in place by council officers, to capture images of night creatures that we were unlikely to observe during the daytime walk. The Saturday evening spotlight walk did not encounter any nocturnal birds, but our leader was delighted with several invertebrates, and we also disturbed the sleep of a Brush-tail Possum.

Sunday's activities offered participants two choices from amongst plant, bird and marine life surveys. Leading the morning walk, my friend Bronwen and I compiled a list of 35 species, including the Olive Whistler and the recently arrived Grey Currawong. I joined the plant walk in the afternoon session. The highlight for me was one of the small, dainty greenhood orchids, which I had never seen before in this area. As a bird-watcher, I am usually looking up, and thereby miss much of what is on the forest floor.

Over the day, more than 250 species were identified, including some not identified before in this location.

During the lunch break, we were treated to a very entertaining talk by Susan Rhind, about the Brush-tailed Phascogale, an endangered marsupial, a mouse-like creature with an impressive brush-shaped tail. One has been spotted in Mystery Bay as recently as 2020. Then Courtney Fink-Downes spoke about promoting sensible

cat management. One of the images captured by the cameras was of a cat, disappointing to those of us who live locally.

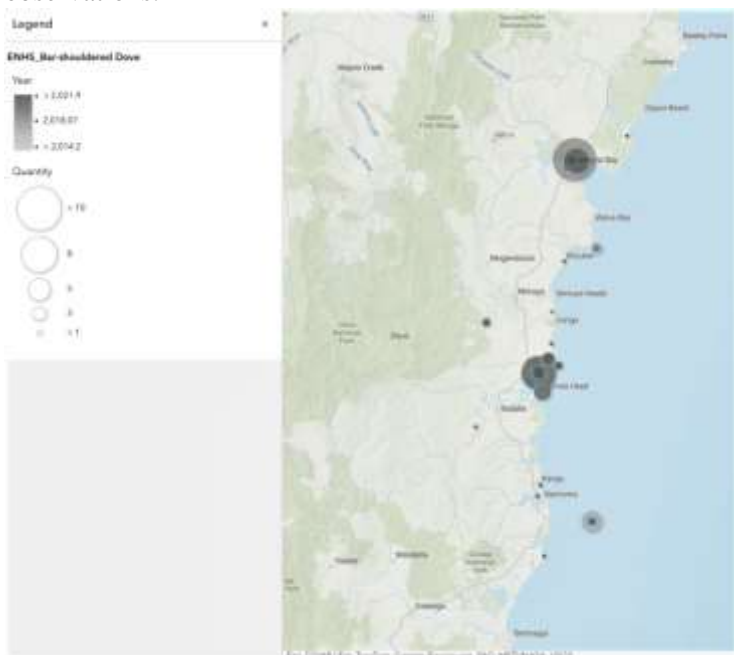
It was a very successful and enjoyable event, giving us all an extra insight into the boundless natural assets that make up the Mystery Bay environment. I was extremely grateful to the organisers, the ACSA team, along with the other visiting experts Thomas Mesaglio, Jackie Miles, Mike Jefferis, and Sharon Pearson.

Mandy Anderson

Linnean Society symposium

I was keen to speak about the Eurobodalla Natural History Society at the Linnean Society symposium, which was held in September at Batemans Bay. The Linnean Society NSW was founded in 1874 and is committed to 'Natural history in all its branches' which includes fauna, flora and geology. The talks on the first day followed these themes and three of our members presented: Michael Guppy on the findings from the long-term study of nesting birds on their property at Maulbrooks Road, Moruya; Phil Warburton and the use of photography to help identify insects to species level and I spoke about the Eurobodalla Natural History Society, our history and the data we have collected over the past 38 years. I will share some of the themes of my talk here.

As many of you may already know, ENHS was established in 1986 by a group of people interested in understanding more about nature in the local area. Stephen Marchant was instrumental in establishing the society and in the chairman's forward to the first edition of *Nature in Eurobodalla* (NIE), spoke not only of the data contained within this publication but how much we did not know about the state of nature in the shire. He saw this first edition of NIE as an invitation for more people to report their sightings from across the shire, to fill in what was not known. By 2001, over half of the society's members were contributing their observations.



The lighter the circle, the older the data and the larger the circle, the greater the number reported. Prepared by Josh Gowers.

ENHS has always been committed to collecting systematic data over time and this longitudinal data tracks many interesting changes. It shows, for example, the movement south of species like the White-headed Pigeon, White-cheeked Honeyeater, Bar-shouldered Dove and Australasian Figbird. The Bar-shouldered Dove was first reported in 2008 at Coila Lake and then in the following year in Cullendulla Creek. In 2011 and 2012 it was recorded on Montagu Island, in 2013 at Burrewarra Point and in 2014 at Comerang. It has continued to expand across the shire and has been reported from South Durras in the north to Wallaga Lake in the south. The map shows these developments across time.

Our data has also shown the decline of species like the Scarlet and Flame Robin, Brush Bronzewing, Spotted Quail-thrush and Red-browed Treecreeper. Many of these

species have also been affected by the bushfires of 2019/20 which badly damaged their habitat. It also illuminated the presence of species previously thought not to occur in the Eurobodalla, including the Noisy Pitta, Painted Honeyeater, Spotted Harrier, Striped Xenica and Bent-wing Ghost Moth. As naturalists, we have a curiosity for the natural world and also a knowledge of what we regularly observe. In 2011, one of our members, Robin Corringham from Meringo, mailed me the wing of an insect as she was keen to know what it belonged to. I had been studying moths for a few years and so when I opened the envelope, I knew exactly what it was. I contacted Ted Edwards from the Australian National Insect Collection who confirmed that this was a new southern limit for the species. He organised a trip to Meringo to investigate the habitat and we found signs of where the larva of this moth had bored into the stems of the Forest Red Gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*) on the property. This is a very large moth, with each wing measuring up to 9cm, and while it may be hard to



miss, it only flies at night and has a very restricted flight time which may explain why it is not reported very often.

Our data also shows what is not present in the Eurobodalla and one bird which we have not recorded often is the Noisy Miner. We are indeed happy not to have this species in large numbers in the shire, but it does make one wonder why this species does not occur here. ENHS has only three records over the past 38 years, an unconfirmed report in 1986 from Batemans Bay, a sighting in Congo in 2004, and in Belowra in 2017. There have also been a few records from just south and west of the shire. Interestingly, in preparing for this talk,

I found that the ALA database had a number of records of Noisy Miner right across the Eurobodalla. The data was drawn from eBird, Birddata and Bionet and seemed to increase sharply from 2020. I found this to be curious and spoke with a number of members located in the areas where the birds had been reported who confirmed that they had not recorded the species. We have a number of theories on what might be happening, first that inexperienced birders are mistakenly reporting the species or that people expect to find the species here and so report it without realising they do not occur. I wondered whether there were any photographs of these birds and checked the iNaturalist database to find that on this database, there are no records of this species in the Eurobodalla.

Our data is extremely valuable as it tracks changes over time that are not captured by other databases and fills in important details in the establishment and disappearance of species. For many years, we have attempted to have our data integrated into various databases but unfortunately the format of our data is incompatible with these databases. Earlier this year, we applied for a data migration grant to help in the process of preparing our data to improve its compatibility, but we were unsuccessful. We will try again as I believe that having our data included in a broader database would add significantly to the knowledge of nature in our area and honour the efforts of our founders and the many ENHS members that have contributed their sightings over the past 38 years. Julie Morgan

Sweet Pittosporum *Pittosporum undulatum*

Have you noticed the abundance of pittosporum over the last few months with their shiny new leaves and slightly sickly scented flowers?

Pittosporum is a large genus, found in Africa, Asia, New Zealand and the Hawaiian Islands. There are 14 Australian species and, on the South Coast, the most common species is Sweet Pittosporum, *Pittosporum undulatum*. The name, Pittosporum is derived from Greek, meaning “pitch seed”, referring to the resinous coating on the seed and undulatum, from the Latin unda, a wave or surge referring to the characteristic wavy edges of the leaves. Its common name is native daphne. It is a hardy and adaptable plant which appreciates most acidic soils and extra moisture yet can also withstand extended dry periods once established.

Its natural habitat consists of rainforest and moist eucalypt forest. It is a medium sized tree growing to 14 metres, with rough brownish bark. Its leaves are alternate or grouped together, elliptic in shape, 5-12 cm long and 2-3 cm wide. Leaves are usually dark green above, and new growth is bright green. The white, strongly perfumed flowers growing in clusters at the end of the branches are 10 cm long. The fruit is an orange globular capsule, about 10 cm in diameter and the seeds have a sticky coating.



Photos D Kay





Noisy Pitta
Photo A Christensen

I was surprised to discover through my research and talking to friends, that though it is a native species, it is widely considered as a weed. Many Councils, including our own, have listed it as a weed. According to their website, “the idea of a 'native weed' may seem like a contradiction, but regardless of its origin, native weeds can displace locally native species and alter the habitat for our native animals, sometimes drastically”.

There are several reasons for this classification: These trees grow rapidly, shading out other trees such as eucalypts and depriving them of sunlight. They have a very large root system, spreading their roots and depriving neighbouring trees of moisture. Unlike most natives, their seeds can germinate without needing fire, leading to rapid growth in areas that have been cleared. On the other hand, because it is so fast growing, it has been used to regenerate disturbed sites after fire and drought.

Sweet Pittosporum is also found in remnant littoral rainforest, which is an endangered ecological community, and in rainforests of the south coast of NSW. This habitat is important to bird species such as the Noisy Pitta and the few sightings of this species in the Eurobodalla have been in the understorey of thick stands of Sweet Pittosporum. This habitat is also important to other bird species

including Rufous Fantail, Black-faced Monarch, Rose Robin, and Superb and Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove. Helen Kay

Bird flight

Most birds fly. They fly to get where they want to go, to do what they need to do to survive. Many fly to feed: some catch prey in the air; some fly high into treetops to feed on nectar or insects, some hover to reach nectar in flowers. Flight also helps birds escape from predators. And some birds fly extraordinarily long distances, following the migration patterns laid down for them by previous generations.

I have always loved watching birds fly and observing the different ways they do it. But I have never thought much about the evolution of flight or the physics of flying. This article focuses on these aspects of flight and the next one will look at the various ways in which birds fly.

How did flight develop?

There are a few theories, including that:

- ✦ it developed from falling or gliding from trees or other heights
- ✦ it started with running and jumping
- ✦ wings developed as birds needed to run up trees, to escape predators for example
- ✦ birds' predator ancestors ambushed their prey by leaping down from the trees, and evolved mechanisms to better control these movements, leading eventually to flight

The first two theories are the most popular and, of those, the second seems the most likely, given that birds are thought to have evolved from small, two-legged predators.

Bird anatomy and flight

Several features of a bird's anatomy assist in flying, including:

- ☞ asymmetric and stiff feathers (for more, please see the earlier article on feathers)
- ☞ aerodynamic wings
- ☞ a light, stiff skeleton
- ☞ light keratin beaks rather than heavy jaw bones
- ☞ some air-filled bones
- ☞ fewer 'hand bones'
- ☞ some very large muscles to provide greater power for flight
- ☞ a ventral 'keel' on the sternum where those large muscles attach

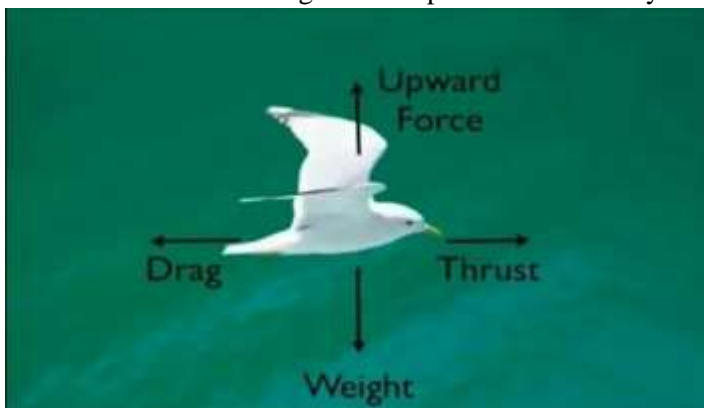
(For much more detail on the biomechanics and aerodynamics of bird flight, you can download PDF articles from Current Biology 24 October 2022.)

How do birds fly – the physics of flight

Anyone who remembers school physics lessons or knows about aircraft flight can skip this bit. For everyone else, a few concepts will be helpful.

No doubt we are all aware of **gravity**, the force that keeps us on the surface of Earth rather than floating about, and it is one of the forces that birds contend with when airborne.

Two other forces that affect bird flight are **lift** and **drag**. Both are produced by the movement of air past the bird. A bird's wing is shaped so that airflow on and around it produces more upward than downward force, so the net effect is **lift**.



To move forward, a bird must overcome **drag**, which is the force opposite to the direction of the bird's movement. Drag is produced by air hitting the bird's frontal area and by the friction of air against its body. Streamlining of body shape and feathers helps reduce these drag forces. There is also **lift-induced drag**. Briefly, lift produces changes in air pressure above and below the wing, which results in air movement and creates vortices at the wingtips, which in turn produce drag.

To fly forward against drag, a bird must produce **thrust** by flapping its wings. This uses **energy**. Energy comes in several forms, including chemical energy and motion. To fly, birds convert the energy stored in their muscles into the energy of motion.

Wing loading is the relationship between a bird's weight and the total area of the upper surface of its wings, measured in grams per square centimetre or kilograms per square metre. Birds' wing loadings are between 1 and 20 kg/sq m, and the maximum wing load for a flying bird is around 25kg/sq m. The higher the wing load, the more speed is required for the bird to take off, and the more energy is required to remain airborne. The wing loading of the Australian Pelican is very high, whereas that of Frigatebirds is extremely low.

Wing aspect ratio is the relationship between wingspan and wing area, shown as the square of the wingspan divided by the wing area. So, a short, rounded wing has a low aspect ratio and a long, pointed wing has a high aspect ratio. Most birds that hover have a high wing aspect ratio, suited to low-speed flying. Hummingbirds are an exception.

And there will be more about hovering hummingbirds, along with soaring kestrels and whiffling waterfowl in the next newsletter. Gillian Macnamara

Second generation anticoagulant rodenticides – a painless alternative

An invasion of rodents into one's home is a very unwelcome event. I recently had such a situation happen to me. Judging by their droppings, they were *Antechinus*. At first, I thought it was quite cute to see a sweet little mammal running across the lounge-room floor, but this enchantment did not last long. They took up residence in my pantry and nested in my stationery cupboard.

I tried trapping them by a variety of methods, initially using a couple of iterations of humane traps and then resorting to the more violent variety. But all to no avail. Not even the alluring combination of peanut butter and rolled oats could entice them.

Second generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) such as Ratsak were out of the question because of the terrible impact on our nocturnal predatory birds, which could eat the dead animals and thus absorb the poison. Research carried out at Deakin University showed that of one group of 60 dead birds studied, SGARs were implicated in more than 50 individuals. The study showed that the concentration of SGARs in the liver, causing toxic or lethal impacts were likely to have occurred in 33% of Powerful Owls, 68% of Tawny Frogmouths 42% of Southern Boobooks and 80% of Barn Owls tested.

By using these rodent poisons, you are likely to be contributing to the deaths of precious native birds. In addition, you could possibly kill your own dog or cat.

So, what is the answer? Obviously allowing rodents to take over one's home is out of the question. But I was rescued by a friend who lives deep in the forest and who has been the victim of similar invasions. There is an alternative, and what I am now using is a plug-in electronic rodent deterrent which emits a signal, somehow deterring the animals from entering the dwelling. I don't know how it works, and why it doesn't bother other pets (apart from pet rats, I suspect). According to the packaging information, even caged Budgies are not affected at all. The wild birds still come to my back deck for their occasional feed, not impacted at all by the device.

I have installed 3 units – one large one in the main living room and another in the room where the nesting had taken place. In addition, I plugged one into the garage power-point because it's well known that rats do like to chew on engine leads. My travelling friend Lyn was not able to proceed from Lamington National Park one morning when her vehicle would not start. The RACQ mechanic discovered that some of the engine leads had been chewed, damaged beyond their ability to function. A car engine can offer a nice warm roost in cooler weather.

The brand of the units that I purchased from Bunnings was Big Cheese. I have not had a single recurrence of visiting rodents and I know that I am not contributing to the death of any of our local owls or frogmouths. It seems to be the perfect solution. Mandy Anderson



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 and will be published both in the newsletter and on the website. Photos are welcome. Please send your contributions to mypatch@enhs.org.au

Logo design by Trevor King

A surprise flowering of orchids

Nature never ceases to surprise me. In August this year, we witnessed a delightful show of flowering terrestrial orchids at our place. We have lived here for over 18 years, and this is the first year we've seen them. Clumps of 5 to 12 flower spikes 20-25 cm high emerged. The bulk of them were in an area about 2m by 6m starting only 3m from the house, in an area that I regularly mow, but there were other smaller clumps scattered around the mown area of the block. At the peak there were well over 100 flowers and the flowering continued for over 4 weeks.

My attempts to identify the species got me to the stage of thinking it was one of the greenhoods (genus *Pterostylis*) but given there are over 100 species in the genus I decided I needed some help. In response to my posting on the ENHS Facebook page, Adrian Cram suggested the Maroon Greenhood (*Pterostylis pedunculata*). Checking the descriptions I could find of that species it certainly looks highly probable. I've posted photos on iNaturalist in the hope of getting confirmation from experts, but so far have had no response. David Kay



Complex Communication by the Grey Shrike-thrush

We feed the birds at our place. We give bird seed to the parrots, lorikeets, finches and pigeons. For the currawongs, magpies, bowerbirds and the Shrike-thrush, we make a special mix, bits of bread with vegetable oil, lorikeet and honeyeater powder, and puppy pellets. The pigeons, finches and bowerbirds have never really

cottoned on to ‘asking’ for food, unlike the rest of the species, who will come and sit on windowsills, deck railings etc, and stare intently at us. This is interesting in itself; why do some species do this and others not?

But another very interesting relationship has developed this winter, between us and a couple of Shrike-thrushes. There are two that visit. One is an adult male, the other is a first-year immature bird, sex unknown. For a couple of months, these birds would come and sit on the railing of our deck, from where they could see us as we sat in our sunroom which looks out on the deck. They would give the one note of what we call the ‘plink’ call to attract our attention, whereupon we would put a bit of the bread mix on the railing or throw it out onto the deck. The trouble with this was that the currawongs, magpies and bowerbirds were constantly on watch from some tree or another and would swoop down to get the offering. As you know, the Shrike-thrush is a very timid bird, and would fly off at the slightest disturbance from any of the other species.

So, we tried sneaking the bread out onto the railing, and we tried opening the door of the room very slightly and rolling the bread out along the deck. But there was no fooling the big three! The next development was that every time we got up to respond to the ‘plink’ call, the thrushes would jump off the railing and disappear below the deck towards the bottom of a large *Pittosporum* bush, which rises above the deck to about 10-15m. The bottom of this bush is large, dense and close to the brick wall of the house, not the sort of place for at least the Currawongs and Magpies. For some weeks of this behaviour, we simply thought that the thrushes had become so cagey with all the swoopings by the big three, that they had become afraid of us as well.

One day we decided, just in case, after the thrush disappeared off the railing, to chuck a bit of bread over the railing, down to the bottom of the *Pittosporum*. The bird immediately came out from within the bottom of the bush, grabbed the bit of bread and flew off with it. From then on, a thrush would come to the railing, ‘plink’, and without waiting for us to get up, fly off the railing to the bottom of the *Pittosporum* and wait for us to come out and throw a bit of bread down there. In hindsight, we now realise that the thrushes had decided that the situation up on the deck in the open was too dangerous, so were training us to throw the bread into a more secure place. As stated above, it took us some time to ‘get it’, but we eventually got there. We think this is quite a complex concept to come up with. Get the attention of these people, and communicate to them that we want some food, but not up there, down here where it is much safer. A very rewarding experience for us, finally figuring out what the thrushes have been trying to tell us. And remember, two birds are doing this, which is even more interesting. Perhaps the immature belongs to the adult male, and has learnt from it, we don’t know. And we didn’t take notice of which bird first started the behaviour. Michael and Sarah Guppy

Highlights from ENHS records - Winter 2024

Avian species	Number	Place	Observer	Comments
Emu	2	Bodalla/ Blackfellows Pt	DHK/FM	
Blue-billed Duck	Up to 18	Barlings Swamp	NC/V Brown	In August
Pink-eared Duck	Up to 6	Com	JC	In June
Australian Shelduck	Up to 8	Com	JC	
Hardhead	3	Com	JC	In August
Australasian Shoveler	4	Com	JC	In June
Australasian Grebe	10, 4, 3	Com/Bingie/MB /MYA	JC/DHK/MA	
Hoary-headed Grebe	2	Com	JC	In July
Brown Cuckoo-Dove	13	MKS	SMG	
Tawny Frogmouth	Call	Bergalia	DHK	
Eastern Koel	1	BB	DB	In August. Male, over-wintering or early return.
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Up to 6	Broulee/ Broulee Is	GLM/FM	In August. Records throughout winter.
Lewin’s Rail	1	TS River	PG	At a dam
Dusky Moorhen	2	Com	JC	
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross		BP	NC/GC	In June
Black-browed Albatross		BP	NC/GC	In June
Shy Albatross		BP	NC/GC	In June
Giant Petrel sp.	1	BP	NC	In June

Wedge-tailed Shearwater		BP	NC	
Fluttering Shearwater		BP	NC	
Royal Spoonbill	4	Com/MB	JC/MA	
Straw-necked Ibis	380	Eurobodalla Rd	MA	In June
Striated Heron	1	Mummaga L	T&A Ross	
Cattle Egret	50, 30	MYA/Com	JM/JC	
White-necked Heron	4	MYA	JM	On riverflats north of MYA
Intermediate Egret	1	Broulee/Com	GLM/JC	
Little Egret	4, 1	MB/NA	MA	
Eastern Reef Egret	1	Broulee/ Mullimburra Pt	GLM/DHK	
Australasian Gannet	5, 4	Corunna Pt/ Broulee/MB	FM/GLM/MA	
Great Pied Cormorant	7, 6, 1	NA/Broulee Is/ MB	MA/FM	
Australasian Darter	2, 1	BI/Mossy Pt/NA Broulee Is/Com	DO/GH/FM/JC /MA	
Beach Stone-Curlew	1	CO	GC	In August
Aust Pied Oystercatcher	4	Corunna Pt	FM	
Sooty Oystercatcher	6	MB/Broulee Is	MA/FM	
Pied Stilt	1	Com	JC	In June
Red-capped Plover	12, 8, 6	MB/Corunna Pt/ WL	MA/FM	
Hooded Plover	2, 1	WL/Bingie Pt	MA/DHK	
Black-fronted Dotterel	6, 1	Com/Bingie	JC/DHK	
Far Eastern Curlew	3	Mummaga L	C Marshall	In August
Bar-tailed Godwit	25	Mummaga L	C Marshall	In August
Caspian Tern	5, 4	MB/Corunna Pt	MA/FM	
White-fronted Tern	20	Wasp Head/BP	DB/NC	In June
Brown Skua	1	Wasp Head	DB	In June
Greater Sooty Owl	Call	PS	JM	In August
Barn Owl	1	Com	JC	
Powerful Owl	1	PS/Cool	JM/DO	
Southern Boobook	1	PS/Bergalia/ Com	JM/DHK/JC	
Osprey	2, 1	NA/MB/MHS/ PS	T&ARoss/MA/ JM	Nesting at NA; nest dismantled at MHS
Square-tailed Kite	1	MB/PS	MA/JM	First return to MB in June
Swamp Harrier	1	Com	JC	
Grey Goshawk	2, 1	PS/TS River/ PP/NA	JM/PG/MA/ T&ARoss	
Azure Kingfisher	1	Broulee/Mumm aga L/TS River	GLM/ T&A Ross/PG	
Sacred Kingfisher	Call	MB	MA	In July
Peregrine Falcon	1	Bingie Pt	DHK	
Glossy Black Cockatoo	9, 6, 5	MYA/PS/ Broulee	L Dann/JM/ GLM	
Gang-Gang Cockatoo	Up to 19, 7, 2	Broulee/MB/ Cool	GH/GLM/MA/ DO	Inspecting hollows in July; 2 immatures
Eastern Rosella	8, 2	Com/Bergalia/ MB	JC/DHK/MA	
Musk Lorikeet	20 or call	MB/TS	MA/GM	
Little Lorikeet	2	PS	JM	
Noisy Pitta	1	Rosedale	PG	In August
Superb Lyrebird	3, 1 or calls	Cool/MB/MKS/ Broulee/Cadgee	DO/GLM/MA/ SMG/FM	First confirmed sighting for MB
Variegated Fairy-Wren	40	Broulee Is	FM	

Southern Emu-wren	Up to 12	Broulee	GLM	
White-cheeked Honeyeater	12	Broulee	GLM	
White-naped Honeyeater	20, 6, 3	PS/Wasp Head/ Cadgee/ Blackfellows Pt	JM/FM	
Brown-headed Honeyeater	6	Broulee Is/ PS/Com	FM/JM/JC	
White-eared Honeyeater	2, 1	Cadgee/Cool	FM/DO	
Noisy Friarbird	2	PS	JM	First return August 26
White-fronted Chat	4	Coila L	AM	In August
Striated Pardalote	4, 3, 2	Com/Rosedale/ PS	JC/PG/JM	Nesting at Com in August
Pilotbird	Call	Bumbo Rd	FM	
Large-billed Scrubwren	1	Cadgee/Broulee	FM/MA	
Buff-rumped Thornbill	Calls	Cadgee	FM	
Varied Sittella	6, 3	PS/Com	JM/JC	
Australasian Figbird	Up to 8	MYA	DHK/JM	In August
Olive-backed Oriole	1 or call	Broulee/PS/Cool /Bergalia/Com	GLM/JM/ DO/ DHK/JC	July/August
Spotted Quail-thrush	2	Araluen Rd	V Brown	In August
Eastern Shrike-tit	2, 1	Murrumarrang NP/Broulee	M Burk/GLM	
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	2, 1	PS/MYA	JM	
Grey Currawong	1	MB	MA	
Restless Flycatcher	2, 1	Com/Bergalia/ TS River	JC/DHK/PG	
Little Raven	100, 2, 1	Com/Corunna Pt /MB	JC/MA	
White-winged Chough	9	PS	JM	
Rose Robin	2, 1, or calls	PS/Com/MB/ Wasp Head	JM/JC/MA/FM	
Flame Robin	1	TS River	PG	
Scarlet Robin	4, 1	Cadgee/Eurobod alla Rd/TS River /NA	FM/MA/PG/ S Pearson	
Golden-headed Cisticola	2	Com	JC	In June
Tree Martin	20, 10, 3	MYA/Com/ Cadgee	JM/JC/FM	
Silvereye	30, 16, 10	Corunna Pt/ Broulee/Com	FM/GLM/JC	Fewer elsewhere
Bassian Thrush	1	ERBG	NC	First record since the fires
Mistletoebird	1 or call	PS/MYA/Com	JM/JC	
Australasian Pipit	4, 3, 2	Com/Bingie Pt/ MB	JC/DHK/MA	

Non-avian species	Number	Place	Observer	Comments
Common Wombat	1 or signs	Broulee/Com/ Cadgee/Cool	GLM/JC/FM/DO	
Short-beaked Echidna	1 or 2	PS/MB	JM/MA	
Long-nosed Bandicoot	1 or signs	Broulee/MB	GLM/MA	
Common Brushtail Possum	2, 1	Broulee/Com/ MB	GLM/JC/MA	
Eastern Grey Kangaroo	Up to 28	Cool	DO	
Red-necked Wallaby	4	Cool	DO	
Swamp Wallaby	Up to 4	PS/Cool	JM/DO	Pouch young at Cool
Dingo	Calls	Com	JC	

Grey-headed Flying-Fox	Up to 6	PS	JM	In June
Sambar Deer	1 or 2	West Flat/Cool	JC/DO	
Seal sp.	2	Broulee Is/BP/ Kianga	FM/NC/ T&A Ross	Seal pups at Kianga
Humpback Whale	Up to 14	Off Wasp Head/ BP/Kianga	DB/FM/NC/T&A Ross	Moving south
Yellow-bellied Water-Skink	1	ERBG	GC	August
Eastern Blue-tongue	1	Broulee	GLM	In August
Lace Monitor	1	PS	JM	In August
Red-bellied Black Snake	1	Broulee/PS/ Cool	JM/JC/DO	

Frogs JC/GH/JM/DO	Common Eastern Froglet, Brown-striped Frog, Tyler's Toadlet; tree frogs: Brown, Jervis Bay, Peron's, Tyler's, Verreaux's.
Moths JC/JM	Pale Oxycanus, Black Geometrid, Plantain, Mecynata, White-stemmed Gum Moth, Variable Halone, Black Noctuid, Green-blotched, Brown Cutworm, Native Budworm.
Butterflies JC/JM/FM	Black Jezebel, Cabbage White, Meadow Argus, Australian Painted Lady, Wanderer, Varied Dusky-blue, Common Grass Blue.
Bugs (JC)	Green Vegetable, Seed Bug.
Beetle (JC/JM/FM)	Diaperine, Honeybrown, Metallic Green Acacia. Ladybirds: Spotted Amber, Common Spotted, Striped.
Other insects JC/JM	Australian Emerald Dragonfly, Australian Wood Cockroach.
Spiders JC/JM/GLM	Golden Orb, Black House, Leaf-curling, Jumping, Huntsman, Daddy Long Legs, Flat Rock, White-tailed, Red-back, Orange-legged Swift.

RAINFALL (mm). **June:** 82 at Bergalia, 61 at Com, 78.25 at Cool. **July:** 12 at MKS, 44 at Bergalia, 15 at Com, 20.25 at Cool. **August:** 3 at MKS, 7 at Bergalia, 4 at Com, 6.5 at Cool.

Contributors

MA	M Anderson, MB	GLM	G&L McVeigh, Broulee	FM	Field Meeting
DB	D Bertzeletos, Surfside	AM	A Marsh, Bingie	Others:	V Brown, ACT
GC	G Clark, ACT	GM	G Macnamara, TS		M Burk, DS
JC	J&P Collett, Com	JM	J Morgan, PS		L Dann, MYA
PG	P Gatenby, Broulee	DO	D Ondinea, Cool		C Marshall, NA
SMG	S&M Guppy, MKS				S Pearson, NA
GH	G Hounsell, Broulee				T&A Ross, Kianga
DHK	D&H Kay, Bergalia				
Places					
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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