



**EUROBODALLA
NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
Inc.**

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October 2026

Jacky Winter - *Microeca fascinans* – (Latham, 1801)

The Jacky Winter is the plainest member of the *Petroicidae* family of robins and flycatchers. The generic name *Microeca* derives from the Greek *micros* meaning small and *oikos* meaning house; this species builds the smallest nest of any Australian bird. The specific name *fascinans* is Latin for 'fascinating' or 'bewitching'. Common names include Brown Flycatcher, Peter-Peter, Postboy, and White-tail.

The 'nominate' race, *M.f. fascinans*, inhabits central and eastern Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and southeastern South Australia. The other three subspecies are: *M.f. zimmeri*, found in southeastern New Guinea; *M.f. assimilis*, of South Australia and south Western Australia; *M.f. pallida* seen in the northern and western Queensland, Northern Territory, and the Kimberley in Western Australia.

The Jacky Winter is a small bird, 12-14 cm long, smaller in the north than the south of its range, weighing about 15 g. Plumage is the same in both sexes. Upperparts are grey-brown, underparts mainly white. The tail is dark brown to black with white outer feathers that are most noticeable when the bird wags its tail from side to side. The bird has a pale eyebrow ('supercilium'), a white eye ring and a narrow black stripe from eye to 'lores' (the area between the base of the bill and the eye). There are small differences between the three Australian subspecies: *M.f. assimilis* is darker and *M.f. pallida* paler.



Photo R Soroka

Similar species include the Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, *Microeca flavigaster*, which is slightly smaller, with a longer tail, lacking the white edge and, as the name suggests, a yellowish belly. Female and immature robins are similar but have a distinctive light bar in the wing.

The Jacky Winter eats insects, spiders and other small invertebrates. It uses regular perches, from which it pounces to the ground or darts to catch prey in flight. The preferred habitats of the species include open dry Eucalypt woodlands, mallee, some farmlands, and scrubland with a layer of shrub and some bare ground. The species is also found in cleared lands, parks and gardens. Data on their movement is limited; birds are generally thought to be resident but may be seasonal visitors to some more open areas. The longest journey recorded by a tagged bird is under 10 km.

The names 'jacky winter' and 'peter peter' derive from the common call, which consists of two loud, bright, much-repeated notes. The bird starts calling before sunrise, stops during the middle of the day, and sometimes starts again towards sunset. It calls while sitting upright on a perch, wagging its tail. During courtship and breeding, males sing constantly, in a complex song that includes mimicry. They also perform 'song flights', calling while flying very high and displaying, like a European lark.

In the eastern states, the Jacky Winter breeds mostly to the west of the Great Dividing Range, in its preferred habitat of eucalyptus woodland. The breeding season is reported variously as September to November and August to January. A pair produces one or two broods per season. Helpers have sometimes been observed. The

female builds the nest, usually about 5 m above ground in the exposed fork of a horizontal, usually dead, branch. The nest is a very small (5 – 7 cm across) shallow cup of grass, bark and roots, bound with spider web, lined with fur, bark, feathers and lichen, sometimes decorated with bark. Clutch size is 1–3, usually 2. Eggs are about 20 mm x 14 mm, light grey-blue or blue-green, with spots and blotches of reddish-brown and lavender. The female incubates the eggs for 16–18 days then broods the nestlings. Young leave the nest at 17–20 days, and parents then feed them for 10–15 days. The breeding success rates are quite low: hatching success between 25 and 50% and fledging as low as 9%. Nests are parasitised by Brush Cuckoo, Pallid Cuckoo and Shining Bronze-cuckoo.



Photo P Mesenberg

The species is a common breeding resident throughout the Eurobodalla and its conservation status is listed as 'Least Concern'. However, like many other woodland birds, it has declined significantly in some areas, the main cause being loss of habitat due to clearing for housing and farming. Bare ground decreases populations of the insects that are its main food source, and fewer nesting sites are available. Climate change is likely to cause further decline. Changes in breeding and migration patterns and reductions in size have already been noted in other species around the world. Similar changes are expected to occur in Australia, as droughts become more frequent and fires more severe. Gillian Macnamara

What's coming up.....

Saturday 10 October, 2pm 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.

Sunday 25 October, 9am Mystery Bay (2-3km – Grade 1-2) Travel 2km down Mystery Bay Road and meet at the carpark on the left opposite Lamont Young Drive. We will convoy from there. A walk along a formed driveway through dry eucalypt forest with pittosporum, casuarina and a variety of understorey bushes. Gang-gang Cockatoo, Golden Whistler, Channel-billed and other cuckoos, honeyeaters and small bush birds. The optional walk down to Tilba Lake will add a variety of waterfowl. (ENHS Members Only)
(Note: this is a change from the program circulated with the last Newsletter)

Saturday 14 November, 2pm Kianga Lake (approx. 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, Brown Gerygone and various honeyeaters in the forest.

Sunday 29 November, 9am Waders The venue for this walk depends on wader activity, weather and water levels in the estuaries. An email will be sent out to members after November 16, or you can email Julie or Annie for the venue.

Nature in Eurobodalla 40 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 2025.

A warm welcome to new members

Peter Hay and Jennie Powell, Bermagui.
Alex Shain, Sarah Kearney, Willamina and Ernie, Moruya Heads
Susan Mathams, Curtin, ACT

Field Meeting – Blackfellows Point -11 April 2026

The Saturday field meeting in April saw 11 of us gather near the creek at Potato Point, where we were greeted by our leader Deb.

It was suggested that, before we head off to the main site at Blackfellows Point, we do a bit of a scan of the creek. It's often a promising location for Azure Kingfishers, and a very picturesque waterway to enjoy just for its own sake. As luck would have it, we did not even need to leave the carpark, as an Azure Kingfisher appeared on a low branch, staying long enough for all to observe. Rob's photograph determined that it was a young bird, showing just the beginnings of its beautiful azure and gold colouring.

Along the Casuarina-fringed creek, we had good views of several species of duck: Wood Duck, Chestnut Teal and Pacific Black.

Bearing in mind the limited number of visitor car-parking spaces at Blackfellows Point, we car-pooled out to the Beachcomber camping precinct, then headed on foot to the forested area, checking out the coast and beach along the way. The forest included a mixture of eucalypts, including some fine Bangalay specimens. Many had well-formed hollows, so hopefully there is a healthy population of arboreal mammals. It transitioned from coastal woodland dominated by Bangalays (*Eucalyptus botryoides*) with a low scrub layer of mainly Scentless or Bastard Rosewood (*Synoum glandylosum*) to a taller Spotted Gum (*Corymbia maculata*) forest as we climbed to the ridge, with some grand old specimens of Spotted Gum along the way.

The path, although steep in places, was well-formed, leading down to an extensive stand of Casuarinas alongside the southern shore of Tuross Lake. The Casuarinas were alive with Yellow Thornbills, a bird which, in my experience, seems to favour this species of tree.

There was some reluctance to retrace our steps and climb back over the ridge, but after a period of fruitless bush-bashing through the dune on the spit, it became obvious that there was no other option. But that off-road excursion had enabled us to add Silvereye to our species list. During the return walk, a beautiful lace monitor led us along the track for some distance, before ambling off into the undergrowth.



Creek at Potato Point Photo M Anderson.

We gathered at the original meeting site to do the bird-call, which resulted in a total of 34 species, of which the Azure Kingfisher was the highlight for me. Anyone who has visited Blackfellows Point will have seen the huge number of Eastern Grey Kangaroos, as well as Red-necked Wallabies. They are completely fearless, having become accustomed to human company – and due to the “no dogs” policy. We had also noted a couple of Swamp Wallabies along the track.

Some members had spotted a couple of representatives of the local Potato Point Emu population on the way into the village. Once restricted to Potato Point, this population appears to be spreading into nearby areas.

Thanks to Deb for leading us, and to the whole group for their enjoyable company. Mandy Anderson and Deb Stevenson

Tree broom heath - *Monotoca elliptica*

We regularly walk sections of the Bingie Dreaming Track for our daily exercise, and during winter it is difficult to find much colour in the bushland. It was therefore lovely to see a tree laden with flowers in early August along the Budjarns Track – a 600m sandy track from near Bingie Point running between Kelly Lake and the dunes. Neither Dave nor I could remember the name of the species, but after some searching through our



Azure Kingfisher
Photo R Clunes

reference books, we concluded that it was *Monotoca elliptica*, commonly known as the tree broom heath. I decided to find about more about the species, and this is the result.

Monotoca is from the Greek monos (single) and tokos (birth) because the plants have a single seed. *elliptica* refers to the shape of the leaf. It was collected by Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander at Botany Bay in 1770, and in 1810, the Scottish botanist, Robert Brown published it in his *Prodromus Florae Novae Hollandiae*, as *Monotoca elliptica*. *Monotoca* is an “epacrid” or heath-plant. This generally means that leaves are simple, often clustered heavily on stems, short and prickly, with parallel venation on the undersides (an unusual feature for dicotyledonous plants). Its bark is dark, rough, and has deep grooves.



Photo H Kay



Photo D Kay

The leaves of *Monotoca elliptica* are usually 10 to 25 millimetres long. They are about 3 to 7 millimetres wide. The underside of the leaves is paler. You can also see long veins running through them. Each leaf has a sharp little prickly at its tip. The leaves can be shaped like an ellipse, an oblong, or a reverse lanceolate. The leaf stem is short, only 1 to 2 millimetres long. It feels rough if you touch it.

White flowers start to appear in late winter and early spring. They are small white bells with a tube less than 3mm long and five spreading lobes. They grow in clusters at the end of branches. These flowers have red, swollen parts called anthers. After the flowers, red or orange round fruits grow, usually appearing in spring and summer. These fruits are small, about 3 to 4 millimetres wide and were a food source for Indigenous Australians.

Monotoca elliptica is a durable species that can live for more than 100 years. It is mainly found forming part of coastal heathlands and shrublands, often growing very close to the coast, as well as in dry sclerophyll woodlands and forests, occurring mostly on sand-dune soils or sandstone. Its distribution extends from the Sunshine Coast in Queensland to Tasmania. Helen Kay

Why did the bandicoot cross the road? Because at last, he could

I didn't know that road ecology was a thing, but in his new book *(Be)wilderred*, Daryl Jones outlines an outstanding example.

As we all realise, a major freeway is a diesel-fumed cacophony of noise overload, deemed to be at a level medically dangerous to hearing. Undeniably, roads and highways and freeways are an indispensable factor of modern life, but their impact on the natural world is catastrophic. Ten million animals are killed each day in Australia alone, but the effect on habitat is even more significant.

Roads cause wildlife to be living in isolated, fragmented pockets, islands of landscape. Any species living in small pockets of bushland hemmed in on all sides, will inevitably be in-breeding, and entire populations can be lost in the event of wildfire, serious storms or disease.

Enter road ecology, in the form of an experiment on a major road, Compton Road in Brisbane, a death-trap for any animals trying to cross. Brown bandicoots, for example, being nocturnal animals, begin moving at dusk, coinciding with peak hour in city areas.

During an upgrade of Compton Road, a group of councillors and environmentalists, including Daryl Jones, met to devise a plan to make the road safer for wildlife. They proposed to make the project a landmark model. Five years later, an hourglass-shaped overpass had been constructed, 70 metres long, 15 metres wide at its waist, and 20 metres wide at the splayed ends. It was covered in soil, leaf litter and mulch, and planted with seeds of various native grasses as well as young native shrubs. It was watered regularly using a drip-system. A row of poles was installed for gliders to use as they moved across, meaning that they did not need to descend to the ground; and above, flexible canopy bridges for possums and other arboreal species were installed.

Beneath the road, two large purpose-built underpasses were constructed, which included a beam a metre off the ground, again to provide a safer option for ground animals to cross. Exclusion fences were built along the freeway, guiding animals along the perimeter of the road and into their specially prepared tunnels.

Monitoring commenced after 6 months. The animals needed to be given time to return to what had been a noisy construction site for months. Would they even come at all? In typical journalistic stirring, one newspaper headline screamed “Struggling ratepayers pay for Cane Toad Highway”.

Motion-sensor cameras were installed, as well as sand pads to detect footprints, sticky fur-traps on glider poles were put in place and droppings were monitored.

Very soon after monitoring began, wallabies, kangaroos and hares were seen grazing on this green patch. Cameras detected possums and echidnas. Through the underpass were filmed dunnarts, antechinus, echidnas, rodents, bandicoots, possums, skinks and snakes. An average of 42 individuals per night could be definitely identified. Possums and small gliders were detected, having left strands of fur on the sticky fur “traps”. All of those involved in the project were relieved, astonished and utterly thrilled with the outcome.

After 6 years, a study of the forest overpass was undertaken, and it was found that the artificial planted habitat already resembled the surrounding forests.

An unexpected benefit related to small birds which also had been reluctant to fly across the vast expanse of a major road, but which were comfortable making their way through the new habitat – fairy-wrens, robins, finches, scrubwrens, all reuniting with populations on either side and providing renewed genetic diversity.

One of the specialist environmentalists specifically monitored reptiles and frogs, detecting 29 species in the underpass, and 19 on the overpass. In fact, many had taken up residence on the structure, and were not just passing through.

Since insects generally avoid vast fume-filled expanses that multi-lane highways represent, they too began congregating along the overpass, and two species of microbat took advantage of this.

In March 2025, Australia had 8 fauna overpasses, with a further 3 under construction. The Netherlands, a country which is 0.5 per cent the area of Australia, has 66. In France, such structures were first installed in the 1950s.

Jones concluded his article with a positive message: “Today, fauna crossing structures have been constructed throughout the world. Species as varied as African Elephants, Swedish Moose, Bengal Tigers, Singaporean Pangolins, Bornean Orangutans, Brazilian Howler Monkeys are routinely crossing roads that were once death traps. Road ecology is a rare good news story in the otherwise grim arena of human impacts on the natural world.” Mandy Anderson

Reference – Jones, Daryl, (Be)wilderred. Syd, UNSW, 2025

Mud dauber season is about to start!

In the April newsletter I wrote about one of our local paper wasp species. This month, I thought to continue the theme and cover one of our prominent mud wasps.

It is coming up to the time of the year where our local mud wasps begin nest building. It is well worth watching them as they are remarkable builders, displaying great expertise in their task. One group that is prominent in the Eurobodalla are the mud dauber wasps in the genus *Sceliphron* (family Sphecidae). Members of this genus are solitary, parasitoid wasps. They make mud cell nests that they provision with spiders for their young.

The female *Sceliphron* wasp collects a wet ball of mud, 2 to 3mm in diameter, perhaps from the edge of a pond, and she carries it between her head and front legs to her chosen nesting site. She ensures that her mud ball contains enough clay to give rigidity to the structure she is creating. Favoured spots are under rocky overhangs or under human structures like the eaves of a house. She applies the ball of mud to the surface and tamps it into place by vibrating her mouthparts into the mud (just as a human concreter does with a pneumatic vibrating rod). There is an audible buzzing sound as she does this. She repeats the process building concentric rings of mud until she has created a cigar-shaped cell about 20-30mm long (Fig 1). The entrance to the cell is at the end of the “cigar” and the plane of the entrance is at right angles to the plane of the substrate. This building style distinguishes the nests from other mud nest builders.

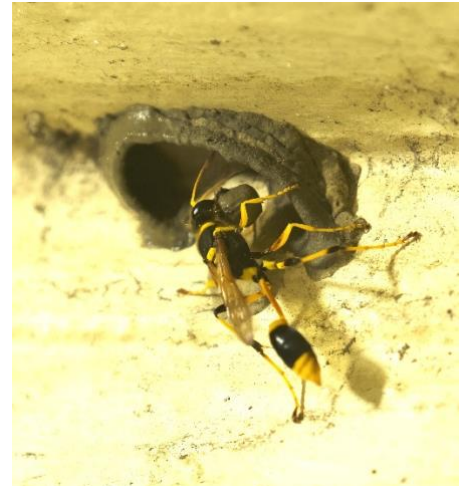


Figure 1: *Sceliphron laetum* applying a ball of mud to her nest.

When the wasp has finished her building work, she provisions the cell with paralysed spiders and lays her eggs in the cell, with these spiders as food provisions for the larvae (Figure 2).

One nest aggregation, in my garden shed, was constructed of multiple cells with strands of grass interwoven in three dimensions into the mud structure to give strength. This allowed the wasp to layer three levels of cells one on top of another. Of course, evolution has crafted this innate behaviour over millions of years, but watching the wasp at work, you could be forgiven for thinking she spent years at wasp university perfecting her engineering skills!



Figure 2: *Sceliphron* wasp provisioning the nest with a spider

Studies have shown that she provisions her nest with a certain mass of spiders, usually three to nine in number. There is a particular sequence to be followed; spiders with hard integuments are left until later in the sequence with softer spiders in the early provisioning. This is thought to be because the young instars of the wasp larvae might not be able to penetrate the harder spiders (Elgar 1999). In this case, the nest in my shed eventually became a large aggregation of about 40 to 50 cells, all made and provisioned by a single female. I estimated this individual wasp must have carried 300 or more spiders to the nest in the course of a season – a very helpful contribution to keeping down the number of spider webs around our house! This wasp was unusually industrious; most nest aggregations end up being a bit smaller at 6 to 20 cells in size.

When the female wasp has finished laying her eggs in this structure, she may then cover it with a layer of mud. This mud cover often features raised mud ridges and is to disguise the nests and give some protection from parasitoids that seek to lay their own eggs on the provisions (Fig 3).



Figure 3 Cluster of nest cells with a protective mud covering

The images of the nests above are all of *Sceliphron laetum*. This is one of two Australian native species in the genus, the other being *S. formosum* and both these species are found in the Eurobodalla. The wasps look similar at first glance, but an easy way to distinguish them is the antennae colour. *S. laetum* has yellow antennae

with blackish tips. *S. formosum* has predominantly black antennae. The nests can be distinguished by the mud covering; *S. laetum* usually puts a lot of effort into a thick mud covering over the finished cells, whereas *S. formosum* usually leaves her nests uncovered and usually with an air gap between each of the cells. The wasps differ in their choice of prey. *S. laetum* predaes primarily on orb weaver spiders of the family Araneidae, whereas *S. formosum* shows a much wider range of prey preferences that include at least seven spider families (Yuan 2022).

There is also an introduced member of the genus, the American species *S. caementarium*, but this has not reached the Eurobodalla at this stage.

Mud daubers are hosts for various parasitoids as well as providing homes for several opportunistic insects which utilise the mud nests for shelter. One study into *Sceliphron* wasps showed that there are 16 families and 23 species of insects from Hymenoptera, Diptera and Coleoptera that are associated with the mud nests (Yuan 2022). When I was photographing the construction of one nest, I noticed a cuckoo wasp, (Family Chrysididae), checking progress on the construction. This kleptoparasite was clearly assessing the opportunity for laying her own eggs in the provisions (Fig 4).



Figure 4: Cuckoo wasp checking the *Sceliphron* mud nest

A parasitoid that targets the *Sceliphron* nests is the Ichneumonidae wasp, *Stenarella victoriae*. This species is found throughout eastern Australia and is the only known Australian member of the genus (Fig 5). The amazingly long ovipositor is to allow it to pierce the mud wasp nest structure and lay its eggs, even into the cells at the centre. Interestingly this Ichneumonid is itself a host for a tiny Chalcid wasp, *Melittobia australica*. In the insect world, the hunters are always themselves being hunted!



Figure 5 The Ichneumonid wasp, *Stenarella victoriae*

So keep an eye open for the *Sceliphron* nest builders this season. Admire them for the amazing insects they are and perhaps appreciate them for their high work rate in reducing the spider population around your house! Maybe you will see some of the other insects that are associated with their nests. Phil Warburton

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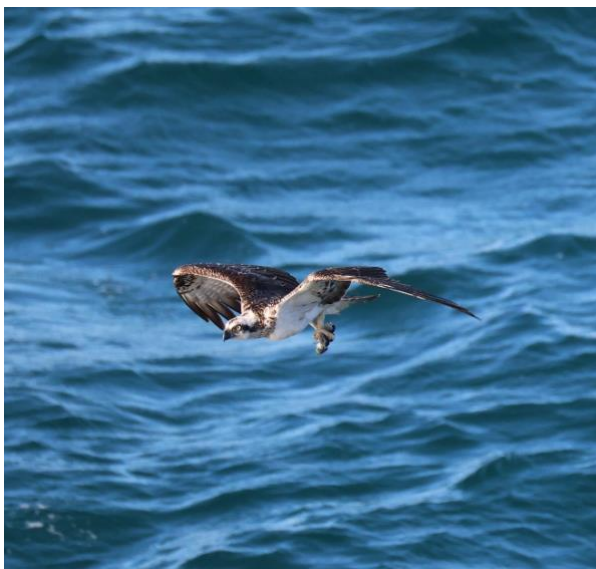
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- Yuan, D., Beckman, J., Florez Fernandez, J., & Rodriguez, J. (2022). Nest ecology and prey preference of the mud dauber wasp *Sceliphron formosum* (Hymenoptera: Sphecidae). *Insects*, 13(12), 1136.

Field Meeting – Toragy Point – 11 July 2026

A sparkling winter's afternoon greeted a gathering of 15 ENHS members and friends for the walk at Toragy Point, Moruya Heads. A number of members who were local residents attended the walk and there was much debate as to which path we should take to explore the headland. We started by walking towards the ocean hopeful of seeing an albatross or whales on their migration, but the sea was calm and very little to be seen apart from a couple of Australian Gannet. We took the eastern track up towards Toragy Point and saw a number of honeyeaters, including New Holland, Yellow-faced, Red and Little Wattlebird and surprisingly four Scarlet Honeyeater. This species usually migrates north for the winter but this year a number remained in the Eurobodalla.



Osprey photos: B. Lunn

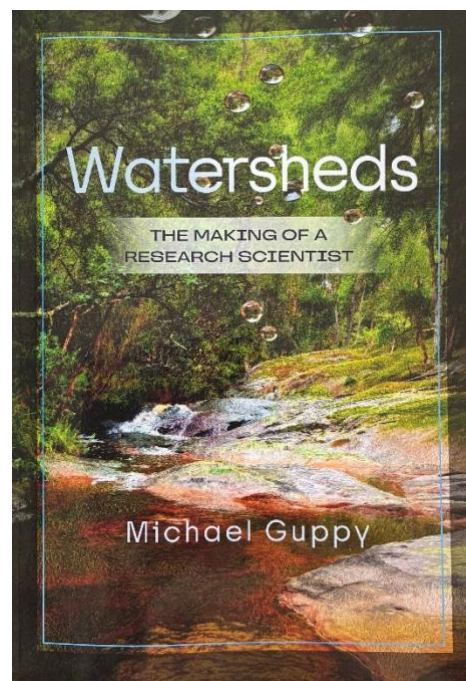


As we reached Toragy Point, an Osprey flew overhead and then returned as we watched ten Australian Fur Seal loll in the water off the rocks. Photographer, Bradley Lunn, captured stunning shots of the Osprey which was carrying prey. We appreciated Bradley's skill and the quality of the photos and were able to identify the prey as a fish. From here the group divided in two, one group staying on the coast and the other cutting back through the forest. The group that stayed on the coast had the fortune to see another two Osprey, which made a total of 3 for the day. We finished the field meeting with a walk down to Quondolo Island where there was some debate over a lone egret in the water, which was eventually identified as a Great Egret. Julie Morgan

Watersheds

Michael Guppy and his wife, Sarah, are long time members of the Society. Over the years they have been active contributors to this newsletter. Michael has recently published a new book, called Watersheds -The Making of a Research Scientist. The book details Michael's life as a research scientist and describes the watershed moments which led to his career as a productive and successful scientist. He candidly and modestly describes in detail the multi-faceted, onerous, difficult and ultimately rewarding aspects that comprise the lot of the research scientist.

Michael wrote this book for two reasons. "First, there is a plethora of books and television shows on what we know about our planet; its history, its makeup, and all the types of life forms on it, including us. There is little, however, on how this knowledge was gathered by the various research scientists. In this book I try to convey some of the character of this little-known world, based on my experiences as a biochemist, and latterly as a bird ecologist. Second, and this reason may resonate with a wider audience, much of my journey towards becoming a research scientist was directed by watershed people and watershed events. These people and events were more pivotal than any of the conscious decisions I made along the way."



The book is available for purchase at Moruya Books for \$35.00

Field Meeting – Durras Discovery Trail – 23 August 2026

The Faraway Forest and Future Feasts for Frugivores:

The 23rd August Field meeting at the Durras Discovery Trail was attended by 11 people, from throughout the Eurobodalla and beyond, with a couple of new members.

Strength in numbers

The Durras Discovery Trail is located along the northern foreshore of Durras Lake. The immediate vicinity of the trail comprises numerous landforms, including the lake foreshore, a creek, adjoining alluvial flat, and surrounding hills create a south-facing gully. This gives rise to many ecosystems, including Saltmarsh, Swamp Oak Forest, Wet and Dry Sclerophyll Forest and Warm-temperate Rainforest, and a corresponding diversity of flora.

Borrowing from the neighbours...

The walk was led by experienced botanist, Bruce Wilson, who did the preparation and reconnaissance of the species we might see. This ensured an enriching experience for participants. Bruce is a volunteer with the Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens and the Batemans Bay Bushwalking Club. Bruce volunteered his time and we are grateful for his contribution!

Your biggest fans. The walk begins on the moist and shady valley floor through an area that post fire has experienced a mass recruitment of Cabbage Tree Palms (*Livistona australis*). Big fan-shaped leaves in green frame both sides of the track at eye-level.

Is there platypus in there? The trail criss-crosses a creek flanked by ferns and riparian shrubs including Water Fern (*Blechnum nudum*), False Bracken (*Calochlaena dubia*) and Black Wattle (*Callicoma serratafolia*). There's something special about perennial water courses in such great condition!

Perched, twisted or attached - plants on plants - Perched within the canopy were many specimens of Snake Orchid (*Cymbidium sauve*). Looking down we saw ferns, including *Asplenium* sp. and *Pyrosia* sp. attached to the trunks of a large Burrawangs. Or if twisting is more your thing, the fronds of Fragrant Fern (*Mircroscorum* sp.) twisting round and round Lillipilli and Sassafras trunks. Everywhere a habitat.

The Land of the Faraway Trees

The trail passes a number of BIG trees; *Blackbutt* (*Eucalyptus pilularis*), Sydney Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus saligna*) and Spotted Gum (*Corymbia maculata*). The bases are huge, and you can't see the tops! Already generations old, and probably many generations still to go; swapping stories slowly, muttering something about 'transience' and things that go by quickly.



A bit sweet a bit spicy; ID assisted by smell.

Find a leaf with serrated margins, and if it smells spicy/sweet like Sassafras (*Doryphora sassafras*) it just might be. Breathe it in. When the fruit and inflorescences are up in the canopy, smell and touch becomes important.

Future Frugivore Feast – stopping halfway up the trail and taking in the view of the forest floor, it was impossible not to marvel at the sea of Cabbage Tree Palms in flower. Large yellow inflorescences up to 1m long, calling forwards to a future frugivore feast!

And the birds. 36 species were recorded on the walk with Brown Gerygone calling all along the track. There were a number of honeyeater species including White-naped, Brown-headed, Scarlet, White-eared, Lewins, Noisy Friarbird and Eastern Spinebill. The highlights included Large-billed Scrubwren (a few calling and one seen!), Little Lorikeet calling in to the tops of the trees, and the return of Shining and Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo. Vivien Howard



Some good news for Bogong Moths

For most of us, Bogong Moths *Agrotis infusa* are those annoying moths that seem to hide in dark places around the house and fly straight at our heads when we disturb them. For the Mountain Pygmy Possum *Burramys parvus*, they are an important food source. Bogongs are an iconic species and were an important food source for Indigenous Peoples. The name Bogong is derived from the Dhudhuroa word 'bugung' which describes the brown colouration of the moth. The drought of 2016-19 significantly affected their numbers in Australia and in 2021, the species was added to the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List as an Endangered Species.

On September 25, I woke to the news of thousands of Bogong Moth at the home of a friend in Guerilla Bay. I walked outside and found over 100 around my home at Moruya Heads. I then learned that there were over 100 at Meringo and smaller numbers in various other parts of the shire. That morning, I went for a walk at Pedro Point with Deb Stevenson and we saw Bogong Moths throughout the forest. It has been years since we have had large numbers reported in the Eurobodalla and this was particularly good news for the species.



The larger female Bogong Moth on the left with a male.
Photo: J Morgan

Most people think that Bogong Moths are large but they are in fact a medium sized moth, with a wingspan of 45mm. The females are slightly larger than the males and have dark brown wings. The males can be lighter greyish brown or darker brown. Both males and females have two spots that run through a black streak on the forewing. The larger of the two spots is kidney shaped. These features help identify the species. There is research being conducted on the Bogong Moth so sightings should be reported (you will need a photo of the moth) to Moth Tracker <https://mothtracker.swifft.net.au/> Julie Morgan

Bird Flu/Avian Influenza

Avian influenza is an infectious disease caused by strains of the Influenza A virus that primarily affects birds, but it can also affect other animals and, very rarely, humans. The H5N1 clade or H5 bird flu which recently reached Australia, is a highly pathogenic strain of this virus for which there is no approved treatment.

Avian influenza strains are described as either low pathogenicity (LPAI) or high pathogenicity (HPAI). Most LPAI strains of the virus cause minimal disease, but HPAI strains have high mortality rates. Different HPAI strains have different risks e.g. H7 strains previously caused serious outbreaks in poultry, but Australia successfully contained and eradicated these outbreaks. (Note: Most bird flu strains do not spread easily from animals to people and there is no evidence that the current H5N1 strain has spread between people.)

The H5N1 strain, which originated in China in 2021, has rapidly spread worldwide, causing severe disease and high mortality in wild birds, poultry and some species of mammal. Over 600 species of bird and 100 mammal species have been affected so far. The wild birds most affected include waterfowl, shorebirds, seabirds, birds of prey and scavengers. The virus has also impacted marine mammals and been detected in domestic pets, some farm animals and terrestrial mammals including polar bears and foxes.

Infected birds spread the virus through body fluids, droppings and feathers. Importantly, the virus has been shown to live on in dead birds for up to 100 days and survive in the environment for months under the right conditions. It is also spread through infected animals or contaminated material such as clothing, vehicles or equipment. Transmission requires close contact with infected birds, animals or contaminated environments. Incubation takes 14-21 days and death occurs within 24-48 hours of symptoms appearing. Infected birds may look very sick or they may show no symptoms at all. Recovery is unlikely once signs of infection develop and effective containment or eradication is not considered feasible.

Common signs of H5N1 in wild birds:

- inability to stand, walk or fly
- a droopy appearance
- swelling around the head, neck and eyes
- breathing problems (coughing or sneezing)
- unusual head or neck postures
- cloudiness or changes in eye colour
- sudden death in large numbers

In June 2026, H5N1 bird flu was first detected in migratory seabirds on Australia's southern coastline. These original cases did not come via the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, as had been expected, but from Heard Island via the sub-Antarctic Southern Ocean Flyway. The death toll from H5N1 in some areas overseas has climbed to hundreds of thousands of birds, consequently mass bird mortality is expected to occur in Australia from late September, with Crested Terns and Shearwaters likely to be most affected.

There have also been mass deaths of marine mammals overseas, particularly those that congregate in large groups and/or share habitat with infected birds and/or predate on infected birds, so tens of thousands of these animals are expected to be affected across Australia. Young animals are particularly vulnerable because they have not built up immunity to disease. The impact on Australian terrestrial mammals is uncertain, but carnivores and scavengers such as quolls and Tasmanian devils with their gregarious feeding habits, are likely to be most at risk. There is currently no evidence of mammal-to-mammal transmission of H5N1 in Australia.

A major outbreak of H5N1 in Australia could have disastrous consequences given that 1 in 6 Australian birds are already facing the threat of extinction. Birds most at risk include those that gather in high densities to feed or roost and those which share habitat with several other species, such as shorebirds and waterbirds. The impact of the virus could be particularly devastating for birds that have small populations and/or are restricted to a small number of locations. In such bird populations overseas, H5N1 outbreaks have wiped out over 50% of the population. This sudden loss is likely to have negative flow-on effects within the broader environment.

While a vaccine for H5N1 has been developed, broad scale vaccination of wild populations is not considered feasible. However, the government is currently undertaking vaccine trials to provide safety data which will inform the use of these vaccines on rare and threatened bird species.

The response to H5N1 in Australia will continue through our summer and is likely to be required for successive summers as migratory species arrive along various flyways. The implications for veterinary clinics are huge, particularly for staff dealing with infected birds who will be required to perform regular and stringent decontamination measures, as well as keep up to date with their influenza shots. Locally, the Narooma veterinary clinic has been contracted to euthanase and dispose of infected birds, while the Moruya veterinary clinic has closed to all birds.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries website provides information about the status of H5N1 cases in NSW and how the public should respond if they detect infected birds (<https://www.nsw.gov.au/regional-and-primary-industries/biosecurity/bird-flu>). The key messages are:

- avoid – do not approach or handle affected wildlife
- record – note the number of affected animals, the species, their location and the date and time.
- report – call the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on **1800 675 888**

In addition, people are advised against feeding wild birds, which tend to congregate at feeding stations, and are encouraged to be vigilant with bird baths and clean them frequently. They should also control dogs in habitats that are important for birds, such as beaches, lakes and wetlands, by keeping them on a lead so they do not interact with dead or dying birds or swim in contaminated water. Mandy Anderson and Deb Stevenson

For further information on H5N1 check out the Avian Influenza Fact Sheet on the Birdlife Australia website <https://birdlife.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/FAQ-July-2026-H5-Bird-Flu-BirdLife-Australia.pdf>

Highlights from ENHS records - Winter 2026

Avian species	Number	Place	Observer	Comments
Emu	Up to 18	Bodalla	MA	Immatures
Musk Duck	11, 4	PS/MB	JM/MA	
Australian Shelduck	3 or 4	Com	JC	
Hardhead	2	MO	NM	In July
Northern Mallard	2 or 3	Com	JC	In July/August
Australasian Grebe	40, 20, 15	Eurobodalla Rd/ Com/MB	MA/JC	
Hoary-headed Grebe	15, 12, 4	Barlings S/MB/ PS	JM/MA	
White-headed Pigeon	20	MHS	JM	Unusually high number in this location
Brown Cuckoo-Dove	13, 5, 1	MKS/Cool/MO	SMG/DO/NM	
Bar-shouldered Dove	2	Sth DS	JCof	
Topknot Pigeon	6	MO/NA	NM/MA	In June/July
Tawny Frogmouth	2	Pedro/MB	JS/MA	
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	1	DS Discovery Trail	FM	In August
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	1	DS Discovery Trail	FM	In August
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	5, 4	DS Discovery /Pedro/Deau NP	FM/JS/JM/AM	Species present across the shire during winter.
Buff-banded Rail	2	Com/MB	JC/ A Christensen	
Dusky Moorhen	1	Com/Bodalla	JC/MA	
Eurasian Coot	Up to 300	MB	MA	
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	1	Kianga	T&A Ross	
Royal Spoonbill	24, 20	NA/MYA	MA/JM	
Nankeen Night Heron	2 or 3	NA	MA	
Cattle Egret	30, 20	MYA/Com	JM/JC	
White-necked Heron	1	Mogo/Bergalia/ Com/Bodalla	MA/JC	
Intermediate Egret	1	NA	MA	In July
Little Egret	17	Nangudga	MA	
Eastern Reef Egret	1	MB	MA	

Australasian Gannet	7, 6, 2, 1	MO/MB/MHS/ Sth DS	NM/MA/FM/ JCof	
Great Pied Cormorant	12, 2	Sth DS/MO/ Kianga	JCof/NM/MA	
Australasian Darter	1	Com/NA/BI	JC/MA/DO	
Beach Stone-Curlew	1	Sth DS	JCof	
Aust Pied Oystercatcher	Up to 12	NA	MA	
Sooty Oystercatcher	6	MB	MA	
Pied Stilt	2	MB/Little Lake	F Ellison/MA	In July/August
Red-capped Plover	20, 13, 10	MB/Sth DS/ Brou L	MA/JCof	
Double-banded Plover	9, 2	MB/Brou L	MA	
Hooded Plover	2	MB	B Harvey	
Black-fronted Dotterel	2, 1	Runnyford Rd /MO/Com	FM/NM/JC	
Far Eastern Curlew	1	TS/NA	M Craig/MA	In August
Bar-tailed Godwit	54, 6, 1	NA/MB/TS	MA/M Craig	Recorded throughout winter
Sanderling	2	MB	MA	In June; rare winter record
Little Tern	Up to 8	MB	MA	In July/August; rare winter record
Caspian Tern	5, 2, 1	Brou L/MB/ Kianga	MA	
White-fronted Tern	1	Bingie Pt	DHK	In June
Greater Crested Tern	Up to 400	MB	MA	
Greater Sooty Owl	Call	PS/MB	JM/MA	
Barn Owl	1	MYA	SMG	
Powerful Owl	1	PS	JM	
Southern Boobook	1	MKS/MB	SMG/MA	
Osprey	3, 2, 1	MHS/Kianga/ NA/Tilba	FM/T&A Ross/MA	At same nesting site in NA as last year
Square-tailed Kite	2, 1	PS/MB/Bingie Pt/Kianga	JM/MA/DHK	Pair displaying at PS in August
Little Eagle	2, 1	Carters Bch/ Kianga/NA	T&A Ross	
Swamp Harrier	1	Eurobodalla Rd/ MB	MA	
Spotted Harrier	1	Bodalla	MA	In July
Grey Goshawk	1	PS/Bingie Pt/ Bodalla/NA	JM/DHK/MA/ T&A Ross	
Brown Goshawk	2, 1	Little Lake/MO	MA/NM	
Collared Sparrowhawk	1	PS	JM	
Azure Kingfisher	1	Sth DS/Punkalla	JCof/MA	
Sacred Kingfisher	1	Tilba	MA	In June
Australian Hobby	1	Pedro	JS	
Brown Falcon	1	Com/MB/Tilba	JC/MA/ T&A Ross	
Peregrine Falcon	1	MYA/PS/Pedro	JM/JS	
Glossy Black Cockatoo	5, 3, 1	MKS/Pedro/PS/ MYA	SMG/JS/JM/ LD	
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	Up to 40	MB	MA	
Gang-Gang Cockatoo	13, 10, 5, 1	MB/Deua NP/ Cool/Broulee	MA/JM/AM/ DO/GH	Inspecting hollows at MB and Corunna
Eastern Rosella	10, 4, 2	Com/Bergalia/ MB/Bodalla	JC/DHK/MA	
Musk Lorikeet	Calls	MB	MA	
Little Lorikeet	6 or calls	MB/DS Discovery Trail	MA/FM	
Superb Lyrebird	Calls	Widespread	Various	

White-cheeked Honeyeater	2, 1	PS/Deua NP/ MO	JM/FM/NM	
White-naped Honeyeater	8, 6, 5	Deua NP/PS/ Cool/MB	FM/JM/DO/ MA	
Brown-headed Honeyeater	13, 4, 2	PS/Com/Cool	JM/JC/DO	
White-eared Honeyeater	3, 2, 1	Dampier SF/PS/ Deua NP/DS Discovery Trail	FM/JM	
Scarlet Honeyeater	4, 1 or call	MHS/PS/ Surfside	FM/JM/M Lawrence-T	Present from MYA to BB throughout winter
Fuscous Honeyeater	4, 3, 2, 1	PS/MO/Clyde R NP/MB	JM/NM/FM/ B Harvey	
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	4	Deua NP	JM	
Striated Pardalote	10, 3, 2, 1	Deua NP/PS/ Com/MB	JM/AM/JC/ MA	Nesting at Com in July-August
Yellow-throated Scrubwren	Calling	Deua NP	FM	Donald's Ck Rd
Large-billed Scrubwren	3	DS Discovery Trail	FM	
Buff-rumped Thornbill	20, 4	Dampier SF/ Runnyford Rd	FM	
Varied Sittella	6, 4	Clyde R NP/ Bodalla SF/Com	PG/MA/JC	
Australasian Figbird	10, 1	MYA	JC/JM	Overwintered in MYA
Olive-backed Oriole	3, 2, 1	PS/Cool/MKS/ Bergalia/MB	JM/DO/SMG/ DHK/MA	Present over winter
Eastern Shrike-tit	2	Kianga	MA	
Rufous Whistler	1	PS/Cool	JM/DO	First return on August 24
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	1	PS	JM	
Dusky Woodswallow	3	MHN	DHK	
Spangled Drongo	1	BP	T&A Ross	In August
Restless Flycatcher	2, 1	Com/MB	JC/MA	
Magpie-lark	Up to 15	MYA	JM	Unusually high numbers over June/July
Little Raven	30, 2	Com/Little Lake	JC/MA	
White-winged Chough	16, 12, 7	Cool/Pedro/ MKS/BB	DO/JS/SMG/ M Lawrence-T	
Rose Robin	2, 1	PS/Cool/ Dampier SF	JM/DO/FM	
Scarlet Robin	4, 2, 1	Bingie/MB/ Eurobodalla Rd	AM/MA	
Tree Martin	20, 10, 5, 4	MYA/Com/Euro bodalla Rd/MO/ MB	JM/JC/MA/ NM	
Silvereye	30, 10	MB/PS/MO/ Com	MA/JM/NM/ JC	
Bassian Thrush	Call	MB	MA	
Common Blackbird	1	MYA/MB/Tilba	JM/MA	
Mistletoebird	8, 1	Deua NP/PS	FM/JM	
Australasian Pipit	2, 1	Com/MB/Bingie Pt	JC/MA/DHK	

Non-avian species	Number	Place	Observer	Comments
Common Wombat	1 or signs	Com/Cool/ Dampier SF	JC/DO/FM	

Short-beaked Echidna	1	PS/MB	JM/MA	
Spotted-tailed Quoll	2, 1	Ner/MYA SF/ Dampier SF	IJ/JC/D McLaughlin	Unusual daytime sightings of this species
Long-nosed Bandicoot	2 or signs	Pedro/PS/MB	JS/JM/MA	
Common Brushtail Possum	3, 2	Pedro/PS/Com	JS/JM/JC	
Eastern Grey Kangaroo	28, 27, 20	Sth DS/Cool/PS	JCof/DO/JM	
Red-necked Wallaby	5, 3, 1	Pedro/Cool/ Eurobodalla Rd	JS/DO/MA	
Swamp Wallaby	16, 9, 5	MB/Pedro/PS	MA/JS/JM	
Grey-headed Flying Fox	Camp	WL	DO	Until June
House Mouse	6	Pedro	JS	
Black Rat	2	Pedro	JS	
Fallow Deer		West Flat	JC	West of Bodalla
Sambar Deer		West Flat/Belowra	JC	
Bottle-nosed Dolphin	Large pod	MB	MA	In June
Australian Fur Seal	10, 5	MHS/MYA	FM/DHK	
Humpback Whale		Off BP/Mossy Pt/ Kianga/NA/MB	GH/T&A Ross/MA	Moving north in June/July, south in August
Bearded Dragon	1	Pedro	JS	In August
Lace Monitor	Up to 3	Pedro	JS	In July/August
Diamond Python	1	Akolele/Cool	DO	In June and August
Red-bellied Black Snake	1	PS/Pedro/Com/MB	JM/JS/JC/MA	

Frogs JC/JM/DO	Common Eastern Froglet, Brown-striped Frog, Dendy's Toadlet; tree frogs: Brown, Peron's, Verreaux's.
Moths JC/JM	Southern Variable and Pale Oxycanus, Concealer, Light Brown Apple, Tree Lucerne, Corded, Wave-lined and Ragged Geometrid, Bracken, Dashed Geometrid, Ringed and Ring-tipped Bark, Spring Taxeotis, Varied Grey, Golden-fringed Emerald, Cream Wave, Plantain, Apple Looper, Native Cranberry, Rufous Snout, White-stemmed Gum, Replete and Common Anthelid, Two-coloured, Magpie, Crimson Tiger, Plain Pantydia, Green-blotched, White-collared and Tawny-collared Noctuid, Tasmanian and Black Cutworm, Bogong, Variable Cutworm, Native Budworm.
Butterflies JC/JM/FM	Black Jezebel, Cabbage White, Meadow Argus, Common Grass Blue.
Bugs JM	Cherry Ballart Shield and Green Vegetable
Beetles JC/JM	Plague Soldier, Click, Fungus. Ladybirds: Tortoise-shelled, 26 Spotted, Mealybug, Striped, Steel Blue, Yellow-shouldered, Common Spotted.
Other insects JM	Australian Emerald Dragonfly, Methana Cockroach.
Spiders JC/JM	Black House, Leaf-curling, Jumping, Huntsman, Daddy Long Legs, Flat Rock, Red-back, St Andrew's Cross, Golden and Garden Orb, Wolf, Orange-legged Swift, Red and Black, Splendid Peacock.

RAINFALL (mm). **June:** 9 at Bergalia, 3.5 at Com, 2.75 at Cool. **July:** 4 at Bergalia, 4.5 at Com, 10 at MB, 6.75 at Cool. **August:** 18 at MKS, 20 at Bergalia, 17.5 at Com, 28.5 at MB, 16.75 at Cool.

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MA	M Anderson, MB	DHK	D&H Kay, Bergalia	Others:	M Craig, TS
JCof	J Coffey, DS	AM	A Marsh, Bingie		A Christensen, MB
JC	J&P Collett, Com	NM	N Montgomery, MO		F Ellison, MB
LD	L Dann, MYA	JM	J Morgan, PS		B Harvey, MB
PG	P Gatenby, Broulee	JS	J Sagar, Pedro		M Lawence-Taylor, Surfside
SMG	S&M Guppy, MKS	RSor	R Soroka, Surfside		D McLaughlin, Bumbo Rd
GH	G Hounsell, Broulee	DO	D Ondinea, Cool		T&A Ross, Kianga
IJ	I Joyce, Nerrigundah	FM	Field Meeting		
Places					
BB	Batemans Bay	LP	Lilli Pilli	PS	Pedro Swamp
BBWG	Batemans Bay Water Gardens	MKS	Maulbrooks Rd S, MYA	PP	Potato Point
BI	Bermagui	MO	Meringo	SB	Surf Beach
BP	Burrewarra Point	MYA	Moruya	SF	State Forest

Cool	Coolagolite	MH	Moruya Heads, N&S	T'bella	Trunketabella
Com	Comerang	MB	Mystery Bay	TN	Tomakin
CO	Congo	NA	Narooma	TS	Tuross
DS	Durras	Ner	Nerrigundah	WL	Wallaga Lake
DY	Dalmeny	NP	National Park		
ERBG	Eurobodalla Botanic Gardens	PDD	Percy Davis Drive, MYA		

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