

Durras Discovery Trail and Depot Beach Field Meeting, Sunday March 25th 2012

The calls of Scarlet Honeyeater and Noisy Friarbird and a single Rose Robin greeted the large group that congregated on Mount Agony Road near Durras on a slightly cloudy but dry morning. The ENHS 'locals' were joined by over 20 visitors from Birding NSW who were visiting the area for a few days of birding, led by Alan Morris.

While we organised ourselves in the car park at the start of the Discovery Trail, we heard Gang-gang Cockatoos, then saw three flying over. Because of the large number of participants, we split into a couple of groups for the walk, which took us through Red Bloodwood, Sydney Blue Gum and Blackbutt forest with an understorey of Burrawang and tree ferns. After some weeks of wet weather, the track was muddy in places. Red Bloodwood blossom was visible in the upper branches and here and there we noticed little bunches of cream carpeting the ground; presumably these were the work of Grey-headed Flying Fox.

Noisy Friarbirds continued to call but we heard and saw little else at the start of the walk. However, as the sun emerged from behind light cloud and penetrated the foliage, bird activity increased, and there were several simultaneous cries of 'What's that?' and 'Over there'. We all heard the distinctive 'burring' call of a Rose Robin, and I saw a female. Lyn Burden and Peter Haughton spotted a Rufous Whistler. There was also a good view of two Rufous Fantail close to the track. Those at the front of the first group had a brief view of a male lyrebird that moved steadily away from us, hopped on to and then over a large log, and was soon hidden from view.

What sounded like a host of bowerbirds was crashing around in the lower foliage and calling; we heard a bowerbird rendition of the Black-faced Monarch among the calls. We were also lucky to have a very clear view of a Scarlet Honeyeater that perched on a branch only a metre or so above our heads, the vivid scarlet clearly visible even without binoculars. The second group had a good view of a female Cicadabird with an immature following close behind and a glimpse of two Crescent Honeyeater. When we reached the lake we spotted a couple of fishermen in canoes but only one bird, a Great Egret. As we headed back away from the lake, we saw two Wedge-tailed Eagle flying high, visible through the branches.

A brief drive took us to Depot Beach. Most of the activity at the beach was of the human variety, but we did see three Sooty Oystercatchers and four White-faced Heron on the rocks. Out at sea, there were no albatross, only a lone Australasian Gannet and a few Silver Gulls. By now it was pleasantly warm and we enjoyed the opportunity to chat with the visitors while we ate lunch in the sun. Gillian Macnamara.



ENHS members and visitors enjoy lunch at Depot Beach

Photo: P. Haughton