

WILDLIFE DIARY

June 2011



Great Finds

Humpback whales *Megaptera novaeangliae*, sighted off Moreton Island.

30 **Topknot pigeon**, *Lopholaimus antarcticus*, dropped into West Mt Cotton.

While a **Pied Currawong**, *Strepera graculina*, seen at Point Halloran.

POPULATION MATTERS

For too long have we supposed that technology would solve the "population problem." It won't. I first became fully aware of this hard truth when I wrote my essay "The Tragedy of the commons," ... Never have I found anything so difficult to work into shape. I wrote at least seven significantly different versions before resting content with this one. It was obvious that the internal resistance to what I found myself saying was terrific. As a scientist I wanted to find a scientific solution; but reason inexorably led me to conclude that the population problem could not possibly be solved without repudiating certain ethical beliefs and altering some of the political and economic arrangements of contemporary society.

Garrett Hardin: Preface of "Exploring New Ethics for Survival" (1972) <http://www.population.org.au/>

Dugongs on the move

Dugongs are at their Southern most extent on the Eastern side of Australia and will abandon feeding areas if the water temperatures fall below 19°C. Little surprise then that they move out off Moreton Bay to enjoy the relative warmth of the East Australasian current. The Eastern Banks region of the bay supports 80 – 98% of the dugong population at any one time. Within this region, there were several dugong 'hot spots' that were visited repeatedly by large herds. These 'hot spots' contained seagrass communities that were dominated by species that dugongs prefer to eat. The waters of Rous Channel, South Passage and nearby oceanic waters are also frequently inhabited by dugongs in the winter months.

Winter flowering Acacia

Winter-spring flowering Acacia species may be temperature dependant and so if temperatures don't reach a certain minimum temperature floral development may not proceed. Low light intensity may cause the same.

Did You Know?

Did you know that rainforest leaf size decreases with a decline in temperature and mean annual temperature exerts the principal control over the percentage of toothed plant species across most mesic (containing a moderate amount of moisture) sites worldwide? Also, the high percentage of toothed species found in riparian habitats (the freshwater effect) is likely controlled by water availability another aspect that strongly controls their distribution.

Did you know that the type of land cover that separates koala habitat has a significant impact on the ability of the koala to survive in these patches of habitat? An open paddock with a few trees is far better than an urban environment, which is considered quite hostile in comparison.

Did you know young marsupials use torpor (luggish inactivity) extensively after they develop endothermy (controlling body temperature through internal means, such as shivering or increasing their metabolism), and torpor is generally deeper and longer than in the same individuals when they reach adult size? Adult marsupials also employ torpor during pregnancy and/or lactation to reduce energy expenditure and perhaps to store fat for later use.

Great Walks



An interesting patch of rainforest worth a visit in Winter if you want to sight winter rainforest migrants is found on West Mt Cotton Road at the intersection of Tingalpa Creek. A slow drive along the high ridge line along West Mt Cotton Road or a visit to the bushland along Hilliards Creek can often also be rewarding.

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Super Quarry – it's back again

<http://www.superquarry.org.au/>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjyQoQB8onA&feature=player_embedded#

Good bird website

<http://www.threatenedspecies.environment.nsw.gov.au/tsprofile/index.aspx>

National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility

<http://www.nccarf.edu.au/>

Birds on the move

Winter is a time that we see an influx of some species of birds. Some of these birds travel thousands of kilometres as they following the flowering forests of Australia. Here are but a few.

A small bird with a big heart (figurately) is the **Silvereye**. See video: <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/video/silvereye-zosterops-lateralis/bird-foraging-tree> The Silvereye, *Zosterops lateralis* is mainly migratory, travelling large distances, particularly along Australia's east coast, where movements of up to 1600km have been recorded. Southern populations, especially '*lateralis*', exhibit clear migratory patterns, regularly traversing Bass Strait in early autumn and extending as far as Rockhampton, Queensland, by May. In eastern Australia, seasonal movements increase with latitude; hence northern races such as '*vegetus*' rarely migrate large distances. Instead, they are mainly sedentary or display regional nomadic movements in response to fluctuating food supplies. In Western Australia, silvereyes ('*chloronotus*') are also primarily nomadic. This race travels inland when coastal food sources diminish and return to utilise spring flowering species, rather than displaying innate migratory movements. In comparison, numerous individuals of the south-eastern mainland races regularly move north during winter and are replaced by the Tasmanian race as they advance north. Most migrate at night following established routes and visit particular sites in consecutive seasons. Some pairs and individuals will not migrate and certain silvereyes migrate in some years but not others

Another winter visitor en masse is the **Eastern Spinebill**, *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*. See video: <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/video/eastern-spinebill-acanthorhynchus-tenuirostris/bird-feeding-nectar-first-flying-then-perched> This species is a **honeyeater** found in south-eastern **Australia** in forest and woodland areas, as well as gardens in urban areas. It is around 15 cm long, and has a distinctive black, white and chestnut plumage, a red eye, and a long down curved bill. This species is dependant upon nectar and is a known short distance migratory honeyeater. During May to August this species build up fat reserves, an adaption that meets the greater energy consumption needs occurring during low temperatures and needed for migration. Migratory wader birds are similar, reducing the size on non essential organ and transferring it the same to wing muscles. Another migratory honeyeater is the **Scarlet honey**, *Myzomela sanguinolenta*. This is a beautiful honey eater readily identified by its curved bill and vivid scarlet red and black body with whitish under parts. While this species is a resident in the north of its range it is seasonally migratory in south, with movements associated with flowering of food plants.

Another small inquisitive bird incredibly also a migratory species is the **Grey fantail**, *Rhipidura fuliginosa*. See video: <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/video/grey-fantail-rhipidura-albiscapa/close-bird-calling-wagging-tail> It is readily *recognised* by its constantly fanned tail and agile aerial twists and turns. Both sexes are similar in appearance, grey above, with white eyebrow, throat and tail edges. This bird travels north in winter but there is also an altitudinal movement with birds also moving to lowland forests in winter. It is thought the effects of climate change may influence the timing of seasonal movements by the Grey Fantail. If you would like to help scientists understand the impact of climate change on this and other species visit http://www.climate-watch.org.au/plants-animals/factsheet.aspx?ContentID=grey_fantail It should be noted that there are many different colour patterns and calls associated with the Grey Fantail so much so that this species has been divided into ten separate races, five of which occur in Australia with the remainder in New Zealand and the South Pacific islands. Its redder looking cousin the **Rufous Fantail**, *Rhipidura rufifrons* is also migratory. This species has bright red eyebrow and rump and is found in rainforest, dense wet forests, swamp woodlands and mangroves, preferring deep shade, and is often seen close to the ground. During migration it may be found in more open habitats or urban areas, it is found often in the larger forested areas of Mt Cotton in winter. This species is strongly migratory in the south of its range moving north in winter and virtually disappearing from Victoria and New South Wales at this time.

Probably one of the more attractive migratory birds is the **Noisy Pitta**. See video: <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/video/noisy-pitta-pitta-versicolor/bird-feeding-short-grass> The Noisy Pitta, *Pitta versicolor*, is a species of **bird** in the **Pittidae** family. It is readily identified, the top of its head is chestnut in color with a black central streak. The rest of the head and neck are black. The back is green with a turquoise stripe on the shoulders. The breast and belly is a yellowish buff or light tan-brown. The tail and flight feathers are black with the centre of the lower belly and under tail being a shade of red. It is found in **Australia**, **Indonesia**, and **Papua New Guinea**. It eats earth worms, insects and snails. Its natural **habitats** are temperate **forests**, subtropical or tropical moist lowland forests, and subtropical or tropical moist mountains. The name Pitta is derived from the word *pitta* (meaning small bird) in the **Telugu language** of **Andhra Pradesh** in India and is a generic local name used for all small birds. In winter this bird will move from the mountains to the lowland forests with rainforests like those found at Lamington almost devoid of them during Autumn. Other rainforest birds sighted during winter in the Redlands are the **Topknot pigeon**, *Lopholaimus antarcticus*, which is a nomadic and highly mobile species, it follows seasonal fruiting patterns. The **Rose-crowned fruit dove**, *Ptilinopus regina*, is also a visitor

Never doubt that a small, group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. Margaret Mead.

