

WILDLIFE DIARY

June 2013



Great Finds

White-bellied Sea Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucogaster* seen gliding through Melaleuca wetlands at Lota.

Collared Sparrowhawk, *Accipiter cirrhocephalus* patrolling Tarradarrapin Creek.

Did You Know!

Did you know the Urban Heat Island effect (UHI) is a phenomenon in which ambient air temperatures are higher in urban areas than surrounding rural areas (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2012)? UHI have been measured for many cities including Melbourne, where a peak temperature differential of up to 7°C has been observed in the central business district. Urban heat islands arise through characteristics of cities that include replacement of vegetation and soil with impervious, heat absorbing surfaces such as concrete and bitumen, installation of tall buildings that reduce airflow and ventilation, and generation of heat and greenhouse gases through human impacts. The UHI effect is particularly pronounced overnight when heat stored in buildings and hard surfaces during the day is slowly released overnight, and varies both spatially and temporally depending on the local microclimates, geography and urban development. One explanation is that the UHI allows little relief from the heat overnight, causing extra heat stress for susceptible individuals. Source: NCCARF <http://tinyurl.com/mlq9wd5>

POPULATION MATTERS

Sustainable Population Australia (SPA) supports this year's World Environment Day antifeed waste and food loss campaign that encourages people to reduce their food footprint, or 'foodprint'. SPA maintains, however, that while reducing food waste is essential, future food security also depends on a rapid end to population growth.

Source: <http://tinyurl.com/k7chbai>

The story of the fig and its wasp

Inside the rounded fruit of a fig tree is a maze of flowers. That is, a fig is not actually a fruit; it is an inflorescence—a cluster of many flowers and seeds contained inside a bulbous stem. Because of this unusual arrangement, the seeds—technically the ovaries of the fig—require a specialized pollinator that is adapted to navigate within these confined quarters. Here begins the story of the relationship between figs and fig wasps.

The queen of the fig wasp is almost the perfect size for the job—except, despite her tiny body, she often times will lose her wings and antennae as she enters through a tight opening in the fig. “The only link the fig cavity has to the outside world is through a tiny bract-lined opening at the apex of the fig, called the ostiole, and it is by means of this passage that the pollinating fig wasp gains access to the florets,”

Once inside, the queen travels within the chamber, depositing her eggs and simultaneously shedding the pollen she carried with her from another fig. This last task, while not the queen's primary goal, is an important one: She is fertilizing the fig's ovaries. After the queen has laid her eggs, she dies and is digested by the fig, providing nourishment. Once the queen's eggs hatch, male and female wasps assume very different roles. They first mate with each other (yes, brothers and sisters), and then the females collect pollen—in some species, actively gathering it in a specialized pouch and in others, accumulating it inadvertently—while the wingless males begin carving a path to the fig's exterior. This activity is not for their own escape but rather to create an opening for the females to exit. The females will pollinate another fig as queens. The males will spend their entire lifecycle within a single fruit. Source: <http://www.esa.org/esablog/field/the-story-of-the-fig-and-its-wasp/>



Great Walks

Best visit the Southern Redlands before Redland Council and their developer mates carpet it with houses. The last coastal open space in the Redlands and they want to put 10,000 people on it!

WWW

Push to grow more green spaces

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-06-09/concrete-jungles/4742290>

Queensland Govt. destroying National Parks

<http://tinyurl.com/ovr3wsf>

Grazing cattle on Parks, Where is the science

[Grazing on Parks: where is the science?](#)

ABS show Australia Environment failing

<http://tinyurl.com/lojyles>

Moreton Bay Seagrass Watch

<http://seagrassmb.wordpress.com/>

Using your iPhone to report a Bush Curlew

Seen a Bush Curlew, let us know by taking a photograph with your iPhone or similar GPS capable phone. Click on this link to participate. <http://tinyurl.com/azv4yqh>

Winter wanderers

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

A small bird with a big heart (figurately) is the Silvereeye. See video: <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/video/silvereeye-zosterops-lateralis/bird-foraging-tree> The **Silvereeye**, *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, silvereeyes ('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 silvereeyes 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 dependent 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 organs and transferring the same to wing muscles. Another migratory honeyeater is the **Scarlet honeyeater**, *Myzomela sanguinolenta*. This is a beautiful honeyeater 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.climatewatch.org.au/species/birds/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 colour 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.

