



# THE IBOCC

## NEWSLETTER

ISSUE No. 336

ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS CLUB INC NEWSLETTER

MAY 2010



photo by Charles Dove

### Variegated Fairy-wren

Scientific name: *Malurus lamberti*

Family: Maluridae

Order: Passeriformes

Featured Bird Groups

*Small insect-eating birds*

**Description** The breeding male Variegated Fairy-wren is brightly coloured. The crown and sides of the head are blue, and the shoulder patch is a rich chestnut. The depth and variety of colours in the male varies among the four subspecies, distributed across the Australian mainland. Non-breeding males, females and young birds are brownish grey. Females in the Northern Territory and Western Australian populations have a blue-grey (rather than brown-grey) plumage.

**Similar species** Several other species of fairy-wren are found in Australia. The males of each species are quite distinct, but the females and young birds are often difficult to separate. The female Variegated Fairy-wren has a dull grey-blue wash, while female and immature Superb Fairy-wrens, *Malurus cyaneus*, are mostly brown, with adult females having a pale greenish gloss on the otherwise brown tail. The Variegated Fairy-wren is slightly larger in size and has a longer tail than either the Superb or the White-winged Fairy-wrens.

**Distribution** The Variegated Fairy-wren is the most widespread of the nine species of fairy-wrens found in Australia. It is found throughout Australia, being absent only from Cape York Peninsula, Tasmania and the extreme south-west corner of Western Australia.

**Habitat** The Variegated Fairy-wren is found in forest, woodland and shrub land habitats.

**Feeding** The Variegated Fairy-wren feeds on insects and a small amount of seeds. The birds feed around the base of small shrubs, and seldom stray into the open. Some food may be found among the bark and foliage of short trees and grasses.

**Breeding** The male Variegated Fairy-wren is often mistakenly believed to have a harem of females. The small groups actually consist of an adult female with younger or non-breeding birds. As they have a wide range, Variegated Fairy-wrens have been recorded breeding in almost every month of the year. The nest is an oval-shaped dome, constructed of grasses, and placed in a low shrub. The female alone constructs the nest and incubates the eggs, but is assisted by other group members in feeding the chicks.

*(Variegated Fairy Wren information; supplied courtesy of Birds in backyards)*

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**'ONE GOOD TERN  
DESERVES ANOTHER'**

ILLAWARRA BIRD  
OBSERVERS' CLUB INC.

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FAIRY MEADOW, N.S.W. 2519  
[www.iboc.org.au](http://www.iboc.org.au)

Founded in 1977

*Club's Aim: To join together people with a common interest who wish to further their knowledge and enjoyment of the birdlife around them.*

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## MAY ACTIVITIES

**Club Meeting –** Monday 10<sup>th</sup> May 7.30pm - Fairy Meadow Community Hall.  
Cnr of Cambridge Avenue & Princes H'way Fairy Meadow

**Guest Speaker Dr Jack Baker**

Honorary Principal Fellow

Institute for Conservation Biology and Environmental Management

**"Helping threatened birds - some successes and some difficult cases"**

*Please bring a plate of goodies and a cup for supper after the meeting.*

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**Midweek Walk -** Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2010 –  
**Koorangulla Swamp, Purry Burry Point and walk to Heritage Park**  
**Leader Charles Dove.**

Please meet at **Koorangulla Swamp at 8am at the east end of Nicolle Rd.** adjacent to Wetherall Park Primbee; walk about 1 – 1.5 hrs. Then back in to cars and drive to the west end of Nicolle St. turning right at the end into Purry Burry Ave. going to the North to the car park at the Point for Morning tea. Then a leisurely walk to the Point and then going south down the edge of lake and through the Forest leading towards Heritage Park. Both easy walks on level ground.

Contact Charles Dove on 4275 2383 or mobile 0417 422 302

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**Monthly Outing:** Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2010.  
**Triplarina Nature Reserve & Bens Walk, Nowra**  
**Leader Betty Hudson.**

Meet at 9.00am **sharp** on **Yalwal Road Nowra** opposite the entrance to the University Campus, immediately after crossing Flatrock Dam, Park on the side of the road. Travel south along the Princes Highway to Nowra. Turn right at the Kalandar St. traffic lights (the Greenwell Point Road intersection). Take the 2<sup>nd</sup> left at the next roundabout, into Albatross Road and then take the right turn into Yalwal Road just over the creek bridge. Bring a carry morning tea and lunch to eat at the cars.

Contact Betty on 4236 0307 or 0432 892 945

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**May Committee Meeting –**  
Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May at at 7.30pm at Betty Hudson's, 1 Drualla Road, Jamberoo ph. 4236 0307  
members are welcome

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**June 2010 Newsletter –**

Deadline for Articles and **Photos** in the next IBOC newsletter is Wednesday 26<sup>TH</sup> May 2010  
Email contributions to Charles Dove [newsletter@iboc.org.au](mailto:newsletter@iboc.org.au) or post to 2/39 Purry Burry Ave. Primbee 2502. Ph: 42752383

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**ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS – 2010 fees are now due:**

Family \$35.00, Single \$30.00, Junior \$10.00

please pay **Browyn Wilson Treasurer** by cash, cheque or money order.

## REPORTS

Mid-week Walk Wednesday 7 April 2010

Alan Cousins

### PUCKEY'S ESTATE NATURE RESERVE

9 stalwart members and one visitor from Shoalhaven (Stan Brown) braved a wet start to a Wednesday morning. Wet weather gear and umbrellas were the order of the day. With binoculars safely tucked inside our 'macs' we left the Fairy Meadow Surf Life Saving Club car park and proceeded to the start of the reserve situated by the creek running under Elliots Road.

Things started off with plenty of Silver Gulls, a few Magpies, Masked Lapwings, Common Starlings, Welcome Swallows and Rainbow Lorikeets. A Royal Spoonbill was noted flying off the creek.

Umbrellas obscured views but it was with great relief that the rain eased and we were able to shut them down. White-browed Scrubwrens were in evidence by sight and sound and we were all nonplussed by a strange sound which turned out to be a Cockatiel, most likely an escapee? The first part of the track revealed a number of species but the middle part was devoid of much sight or sound. On the third part we were again gifted with our feathered friends. We reached the junction of the track by the footbridge to Squires Way and the ruins of Courtney Puckey's salt tower where there was a convenient picnic table to enjoy morning tea. Wal. and Charlie disappeared for a while and returned having had the sightings of a Caspian Tern, Striated Heron and the good old Galah.

Whilst we were partaking of our refreshments a White-browed Scrubwren was seen repeatedly bathing in an horizontal tree hollow that was filled with water from the recent rains. Bathing over, his (it was a male) place was taken by an Eastern Yellow Robin. An Eastern Spinebill was also spotted flitting around the area. Replenished we proceeded to the ruins of the salt tower but saw nothing there, so we retraced our steps and took the pathway to the beach and headed back towards fairy Meadow. A Crested Tern and a White-bellied Sea-Eagle (juvenile) were spotted over the ocean.

Returning to our cars it was agreed that it had been a worthwhile outing with 34 species seen. Not a bad return for a wet morning.



photo by Charles Dove

### LIST

Pacific Black Duck	Silver Gull	Australian Magpie
Spotted Dove	Galah	Grey Fantail
Australian Pelican	Cockatiel	Willie Wagtail
Striated Heron	Rainbow Lorikeet	Australian Magpie
White-faced Heron	Variiegated Fairy-wren	Eastern Yellow Robin
Little Egret	White-browed Scrubwren	Silvereye
Australian White Ibis	Yellow Thornbill	Welcome Swallow
Royal Spoonbill	Eastern Spinebill	Red-whiskered Bulbul
Black-shouldered Kite	Lewin's Honeyeater	Common Starling
Masked Lapwing	Little Wattlebird	
Caspian Tern	Red Wattlebird	
Crested Tern	New Holland Honeyeater	

### Leeton Camp 10-17 April 2010

*Linda Cohen*

*Confessions of a new birdwatcher*

Over 20 of us spent a week birdwatching at Leeton at the recent camp, including 2 interstate visitors (Qld and SA). There was a great atmosphere and we had a lot of fun. Being a new birdwatcher I found it very exciting and it was so helpful to be surrounded by knowledgeable people who would make sure I saw the birds and could identify them. I was lucky enough to see lots of new birds. I have been warned that this doesn't happen often! Despite the scarcity of waterbirds in the almost-dry wetlands (we suspect the birds have headed for the floods in Queensland!) there were several very memorable sightings, including Brolgas at Fivebough Swamp and Ground Cuckoo-shrikes in a field outside Leeton. Our day visit to Cocoparra National Park was also memorable, including Double-barred Finches, Speckled Warblers and three Wedge-tailed Eagles flying down the gorge above us. Overall our birdlist included over 120 birds. **Full Report and List to follow in the June newsletter ...**

# Some of the Pics coming into the Newsletter from the Leeton Camp

## Have you any Pics? Send them in



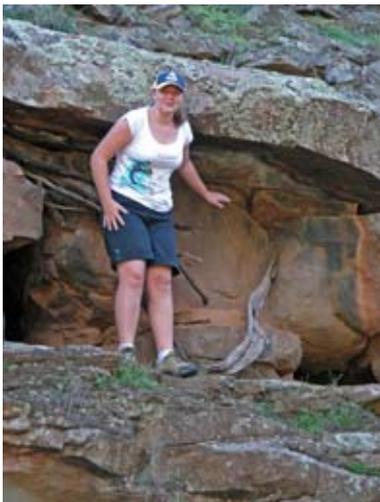
“Whats up there”  
Tera Wheway



Logsitters at Cuba State Forest  
From Carol & Mike



Duck Pond  
From Chris Cartledge



Katherine up the hill  
from Tera Wheway



Tom & Neil “what do u ar reckon”  
from Tera Wheway



Southern Boobook immature  
from Tera Wheway



Another great day  
From Chris Cartledge



Koala up the Tree  
From Chris Cartledge



Superb Parrots  
From Barbara Hales

## ARTICLES OF INTEREST

I would like to invite IBOC members living in the Shellharbour Area to the Backyard Habitats Short Course run under the Blackbutt to Croom Urban Biodiversity Corridor Project.

The first of the short course workshops 'kick off' on April 17 and May 1. The short course will provide a beginners guide to creating backyard habitats. A program of events and times has been included on the attachment. As part of the workshop events we are running a competition to see who can have the best 'before and after' backyard habitat. The major prize is an installed frog pond to the value of \$500. There will also be free giveaways of local plants at certain workshops and lucky door prizes to be won.

Please book your place in the short course by responding to this email by phone on 4221 6043 or by email [biodiversitycorridorinfo@shellharbour.nsw.gov.au](mailto:biodiversitycorridorinfo@shellharbour.nsw.gov.au). Please respond quickly as places are limited.

Cheers

Mathew Misdale

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### **Short Course**

(All workshops run twice at different venues, except for workshop 3) We would prefer you to book at one venue, however we will try to be accommodating clashing dates where possible.

#### **Workshop 1 - Local Backyard Wildlife**

1<sup>st</sup> May 2010 - Shellharbour Stadium (9am -12pm)

Participants will briefly be introduced to the short course program and biodiversity corridors. Local wildlife and frog pond expert, Peter Nolan and Holly Parsons from Birds Australia (Birds in Backyards) will then introduce residents to the local birds and animals they could find in their backyards.

#### **Workshop 2 - Creating Local Backyard Habitats**

29<sup>th</sup> May 2010 - Oak Flats Community Hall (9am -12pm)

12<sup>th</sup> June 2010 - Shellharbour Stadium (9am -12pm)

Participants will be introduced to local plant communities. This workshop will outline how different plants can be used to perform different roles such as shelter, food and provide nesting materials. Plants will be brought in and residents will have the chance to learn how to use plants to plan a backyard habitat. Peter Nolan will be discussing how to use habitat features such as frog ponds, bird boxes and lizard lounges (Receive five plants for attending).

### **Bush Tours**

Tours will highlight the local flora and fauna found within your local reserves. The tours aim to help residents get a feel for the habitats they wish to create.

19<sup>th</sup> June 2010 - Blackbutt Reserve (9am -12pm)

Carl Glaister (Wollongong Botanic Gardens) and John Abela (Shellharbour City Council Ranger) will be leading a tour of Blackbutt Reserve.

26<sup>th</sup> June 2010 - Croom Reserve (9am -12pm)

Carl Glaister (Wollongong Botanic Gardens) will be leading a tour of Croom Reserve.

### **DIY Habitat Day**

10<sup>th</sup> July 2010 - Horsley Creek Reserve (9am -12pm)

17<sup>th</sup> July 2010 - Croom Reserve (9am -12pm)

Participants will be shown how to plant up a small habitat patch. The workshop will also introduce invasive weeds that occur within the corridor and how to deal with them

#### **Workshop 3 - Creating Wildlife Friendly Backyards (9am -12pm)**

14<sup>th</sup> August 2010 & 21<sup>st</sup> August 2010 - 'Dapto Organic Gardens' Darkes Road, Dapto

Participants will be shown how to grow vegies in ways that reduce their reliance on pesticides and chemicals. It will also introduce them to creating backyard habitats with wildlife helpers who eat insects and snails. There will also be information on what to do with injured animals and responsible pet ownership.

**SHOREBIRD UPDATE**

Hi there everyone

Well the Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers are definitely finished for the season and the Little Terns and the Hooded Plovers are finishing up as well. It has definitely been the best season on record for our South Coast Hooded Plovers!

Up at Mary's Bay the local rangers have reported that the two egg nest has hatched, so let's hope these little chicks make it through. Further south at Cudmirrah Beach, just north of Sussex Inlet Surf Club, the 'Hoodie' nest hatched out a week and a half ago. The two chicks are growing quickly and are roaming along the beach feeding with their parents. As a Hooded Plover chick you need to feed yourself, so these little ones learn quickly and can be seen running along the shoreline and in between washed up sea weed picking up crustaceans and insects. Local shorebird volunteers Mike and Rose could not find the 'Hoodie' family on Friday or Saturday and were beginning to think the worst, but low and behold on Sunday they ventured half a kilometre south of the nesting site to find the whole family happily feeding along the shoreline. The tiny chicks really do move quite large distances on those little legs just to find food and avoid people and dogs! At Inyadda Beach the three egg nest has definitely been abandoned, despite the protective cage that was used to protect this fourth nest from predators. The nest was just about to hatch and it is a mystery as to their reasons for abandoning the nest. This pair have been very unlucky and unsuccessful the last two years, to the disappointment of myself and the local volunteers Terry and Carol. I hope the pair try again, although it is unlikely this late in the season with winter like weather and after already having four unsuccessful attempts.

Down at Narrawallee Inlet the resident pair have just fledged their second brood of three chicks. What an amazing result! They are definitely the best pair on the coast. The family can still be seen together feeding along the shoreline in the area. The Rennies Beach pair which fledged three chicks from Pockets (little cove adjoining Rennies to the north), looked ready to nest again as they kicked out the fledglings and made nest scrapes inside the fenced area again two weeks ago. However eggs have not eventuated yet. At Rennies Beach just south there are five fledglings and one or sometimes two adults feeding in the area. A pretty amazing sight to have seven 'Hoodies' all together, but they seem to really like the fenced area we set up there to let them feed and rest in peace over the busy summer holidays. This is probably the Racecourse Beach pair, three Pockets fledglings and another two fledglings from some where else? They all look the same so it is hard to tell who is who. The racecourse Beach nesting area has still been abandoned since the nest was vandalised in mid November. There have been a few 'Hoodie' footprints around but probably just the Rennies and Pockets birds moving around feeding in nearby areas. Actually it is definitely one of the Pockets adults, who only has one foot, so his tracks are very easily identified! At Wairo beach there are still the one and often two adults and a fledgling from an unknown source. No nest scrapes but plenty of footprints, feeding and resting.

Further south at Termeil Lake I discovered a new pair of 'Hoodies' about three weeks ago acting suspiciously, probably the relocated Meroo pair which have not been sighted for months. I could not find any evidence of a nest or chicks, but then surprisingly last week I visited the pair and they had a chick of about two weeks age! These tricky little birds had deceived me and successfully concealed the location of their nest and chicks. Good to know they are cunning parents, hopefully they will also deceive the predators and fledge their chicks. Furthermore, I really cannot believe their nest survived the busy holiday period right next to one of our most popular camping areas! A hard working pair of 'Hoodies' parents.

Down at Willinga the chicks were doing well until a couple of weeks ago. All three chicks were just starting to practice flying, when sadly one chick disappeared, then only a couple of days later a second chick also disappeared. We feared the worst for the remaining chick. Local shorebird volunteers Marg and Maggie anxiously watched over the remaining chick and reported a Whistling Kite hanging around in the area, probably the culprit. However this last chick has successfully evaded the predator, surviving the week and is now flying well. A great success. Down at Kioloa the Hooded Plover pair are feeding just north of Willinga Lake. We were hoping for another nest after they kicked out their fledgling last month, however there has been no signs of nesting yet. Their fledgling and another adult 'Hoodie' are together on Racecourse Beach just to the north. Surprisingly when my Dad visited Pretty Beach last weekend and walked south along Island Beach he reported seeing a lone 'Hoodie'. Very exciting considering the once very successful pair from the area has not been seen all season. I surveyed the beaches a few days later and found two adults together feeding on the spit out to O'Hara Island. One has a droopy wing and is probably one of the returned fledglings sighted earlier in the season. Let's hope this pair take up residence and start nesting.

The Hooded Plovers have had a record season on the South Coast. Usually we fledge 7 or 8 chicks each season but this year we are already up to 15 fledglings! What a great effort,



*Photo by Martin Potter*

thanks to all the new Hooded Plover volunteers who have come on board the South Coast Shorebird Recovery Program. It will be very interesting next season to see if these fledglings stay to nest on our beaches!

The Little Terns have not had such a successful season on the South Coast. The Windang nests were lost to bad weather, Shoalhaven Heads to foxes and Lake Wollumboola was decimated by Ravens. However on a brighter note, Lake Conjola has the biggest colony we have recorded in our decade of monitoring with at least 50 nesting pairs! I have not finished wading through all the data but we have had at least 80 nests with hundreds of eggs and chicks. The exciting part is that at least 70 of these survived to fledge over the last few weeks. A record on the South Coast! These results are pretty amazing when you consider that the NSW Little Tern population was reduced to only 110 breeding pairs along the entire coast in the mid 1980's. Now we have more than 50 pairs at just one colony and have fledged more than 70 chicks. An excellent result thanks to the hard working volunteers and the excellent fox control undertaken by the Livestock Health and Pest Authority rangers.

Thanks for all your support this season and especially thank-you to all the volunteers who have made this season such a successful one!

*Jodie*

The Twitchathon which 5 of us participated in last October

by Alison Foley

**THE WITCH IN THONGS**

"Ali, when is the witch in thongs bringing champagne?"

Not soon enough, I thought. My five-year-old was referring to the Birds Australia Champagne Twitchathon which Dave and I were participating in with Penny and Martin Potter and Mark Micallef. Champagne and birding - had I died and gone to heaven? But no, it was the champagne version of the Twitchathon i.e. the twenty-four hours of insane insomnia must necessarily be punctuated by periods of "no active birding".

The Winners: team with the most species

The Rules: Bird from 4 pm Sat to 4 pm Sun (minus 10 pm to 5 am - blissful slumber though probably dreaming of the winged ones (they don't count!), also discount 30 minutes before noon (morning tea), 1 hour before 3 pm (lunch) and 30 minutes before 4 pm (afternoon tea) and also, over half the team must see (or hear - unfortunately we found this out afterwards) the bird.

From this, many moral dilemmas arose. Could we have afternoon tea while driving? Did raising your eyes from your lunchbox amount to "active birding"?

We set ourselves a goal: 100 species in 24 hours. Here's how we got on:

3.45 pm On way in to Tallawarra Ash Ponds, Dave spots a Grey Goshawk. Doesn't count and I don't see it anyway.

4 pm - 7 pm: the Twitch-off. Four very excited birders manage to see nothing at all in the first ten minutes as a result of said excitement and mounting panic. Finally, our first bird bodes well, a Fan-tailed Cuckoo. Notable frustration is Buff-banded Rail seen by only half the team (Penny and I, much to our chagrin, are busily dialling Mark's number). Total count: 47.

7 pm - 7.30 pm - drive to Cringila - 3 species seen en route. Running total: 50

7.30 pm to 10 pm - Cringila Park Rainforest. Mark provides the champagne and one species - a blackbird for a black period in our timetable. Go spotlighting in the beautiful park. Although only night-bird is one unidentifiable owly-thing flying overhead, highlight is a Lewin's Honeyeater curled up on a branch like a grey fluffy pom-pom fast asleep - so asleep that we can't ID it till the heat from four spotlights wakes it up enough to reveal its crescent moon. Running total: 52

10 pm - 7.30 am - zzzzzzzzzzzzzzz (mblmblmb - CASSOWARY!!!! mblmblmblmb) zzzzzzzzzzz

7.30 am - 10 am - Killalea State Park - a great haul here -

List

Tallawarra Ash Ponds

Black Swan	Pacific Black Duck	Australasian Shoveler	Grey Teal	Chestnut Teal
Hardhead	Australasian Grebe	Hoary-headed Grebe	Darter	Little Pied Cormorant
Pied Cormorant	Little Black Cormorant	Great Cormorant	Australian Pelican	White-faced Heron
Great Egret	Black-shouldered Kite	Whistling Kite	Purple Swamphen	Dusky Moorhen
Eurasian Coot	Bar-tailed Godwit	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	Black-winged Stilt	Black-fronted Dotterel
Masked Lapwing	Caspian Tern	Long-billed Corella	Eastern Rosella	Fan-tailed Cuckoo
Laughing Kookaburra	Superb Fairy-wren	Yellow Thornbill	Noisy Miner	Rufous Whistler
Maggie Lark	Grey Fantail	Willie Wagtail	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Grey Butcherbird
Australian Magpie	Red-browed Finch	Mistletoebird	Welcome Swallow	Little Grassbird (heard)
Silvereye	Common Starling	Common Myna		

salad rolls, choc-chip muffins, apple cake and lashings of piping hot tea (read a lot of Famous Fives when I was young) - and the birding isn't bad either. Highlight for me is my best sighting of a Golden-headed Cisticola, gleaming like a polished brass bedknob in the morning sun. Running total: 70

10 am to 12.30 pm - A pot-pourri of bird havens (Myanmar Wetlands, Whyjuck Bay, Lake Illawarra Caravan Park, Windang, Purry Burry Point and Korrongulla Swamp) are visited, producing the maddest moment of the day for Dave and me. With 350+ species on our life list, a new bird so close to home is very rare so we usually drink it in languidly (if allowed). This Common Tern at Windang receives a "Yes-I-see-it-it's-a-new-bird-what's-next?" Running total: 89

12.30 pm - 2.15 pm Botanic Gardens - My notes say just one word - "Bugger". I presume I was just too exhausted to add the word "...all!" Lunch with eyes closed. Running total: 92

2.15 pm - 3 pm - Byarong Park - Carfternoon tea. Let the excitement begin! 8 species away from our goal with less than two hours to go. Tiptoe through a rainforest. Nothing. So Penny decides to wait by the road while team return for the car. Now stomping through with long strides to get back asap flushes out 6 species. Running total: 98 The pressure mounts!

3 pm - 3.30 pm - Robertson's Lookout - Damn those Peregrine Falcons!!! But bless those Topknot Pigeons!!! Running total: 99!!!!!!

3.30 pm - 4 pm. Mt. Keira Lookout - Running around like decapitated fowl, don't even ask us our names! We're likely to yell out "GREY SHRIKE-THRUUUUUUUSSSHHHH!" Mt. Keira Lookout is The Big Zero in our day. Running total: 99 (boo-hoo!)

Collapsed in a cross-eyed heap with a crease in our necks you could park a bike in and tallied it up. Yep, 99! That Buff-banded Rail really began to hurt.

It was only later that we found out we could count species heard as well so our final and very respectable total increased to 105.

An exhausting yet unforgettable and most enjoyable 24 hours which we plan to repeat this year but in more style. Yep, can't wait for that cuvée-totin', flip-flip-wearin' witch to come round again!

In transit to & at Cringila Park Rainforest

Silver Gull	Spotted Dove	Galah	Lewin's Honeyeater	Common Blackbird
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Killalea State Park

Australian White Ibis	White-bellied Sea-eagle	Swamp Harrier	Nankeen Kestrel	Bar-shouldered Dove
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	Channel-billed Cuckoo	Variiegated Fairy-wren	Spotted Pardalote (heard)	White-browed Scrub-wren
Red Wattlebird	Little Wattlebird	Australian Raven	Satin Bowerbird	Australian Pipit
House Sparrow	Red-whiskered Bulbul	Australian Reed-warbler	Golden-headed Cisticola	

The Pot-Pourri

Australian Wood Duck	Little Egret	Little Corella	Eastern Koel	New Holland Honeyeater
Australasian Figbird	Pied Currawong			

Windang

Australian Hobby	Common Greenshank	Red-necked Stint	Red-capped Plover	Crested Tern
Common Tern	Rock Dove	Crested Pigeon	Rainbow Lorikeet	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	European Goldfinch			

Botanic Gardens

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Musk Lorikeet (heard)	Australian King Parrot	Eastern Yellow Robin
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Mt. Keira

Brown Cuckoo-dove (heard)	Wonga Pigeon	Crimson Rosella	White throated Treecreeper (heard)	Brown Gerygone
Brown Thornbill	Eastern Spinebill	Eastern Whipbird	Grey Shrike-thrush (heard)	

Robertson Lookout

Topknot Pigeon
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Nest with one punctured egg found last month (February) in young Morton Bay fig tree in Bronwyn & George Cole's garden close to street in Austinmer; almost certainly a Satin Bowerbird's with egg size 44 x 30 mm.  
Carol & Mike Morphet

Neil & Tera Whewey had a late arrival with a young Koel courtesy of the Wattle birds



Judy Baker enjoyed her last break at Belligen spending time relaxing and managed some excellent photos of the birdlife in the area.



## NEW SCIENTIST MAGAZINE

### Garden bird feeders spread diseases

- 13 April 2010 by [Andy Coghlan](#)

#### Editorial: [Garden bird feeders on trial](#)

EACH year, millions of people stack their garden bird feeders with seeds and nuts to help birds survive the winter. But as valuable as they are to many species, for a minority of songbirds in Europe and North America bird feeders appear to be a death trap.

Little is known about the impact of bird feeders on wild populations, and some ornithologists liken them to a global experiment in manipulating nature. "We should have a huge amount of data, but we don't," says [Jim Reynolds](#) of the University of Birmingham in the UK. Reynolds will be speaking at a [conference in London](#) next month, which for the first time will examine the pros and cons of feeding wild birds.

The conference will hear that bird feeders have played a key role in two waves of diseases among songbirds, mainly finches. Since 1994, an epidemic of an infectious eye disease called mycoplasmal conjunctivitis, which began in poultry, has wiped out 60 per cent of house finches in the eastern US. Undernourished and unable to see properly, they fall easy prey to predators. Experiments by [André Dhondt](#) of Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, show that the birds pick up the *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* bacterium from making contact with feeders as they peck at seeds.

House finches with mycoplasmal conjunctivitis can't see properly and fall easy prey to predators

The disease has just reached California, and has spread to other species such as the American goldfinch. A new and more virulent strain has emerged in North Carolina. "It spreads much faster, and the eye infections are more severe," says Dhondt.

In the UK, a feeder-related disease has been affecting greenfinches since 2005. Trichomoniasis, or "trike", is related to a disease thought to have killed some [Tyrannosaurus rex](#). It triggers throat swelling, causing birds to starve, and has killed about a fifth of the UK's greenfinches. In 2007 alone, around 500,000 died, according to [Rob Robinson](#) of the [British Trust for Ornithology](#) (BTO).

[Scott McBurney](#) of the University of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, in Canada will report at the London meeting that trike reached Canada in 2007. There are also preliminary reports of cases in the US. This suggests the two outbreaks could overlap, with devastating consequences for finch populations.

None of this means that we should throw out our bird feeders. "This is the first big mortality

effect," says Robinson, "but it's only in one or two species. We're safely feeding another 30 or 40." Other research shows that feeders help birds to survive the winter, and then to produce more young that have higher survival rates.

[Mike Toms](#) at the BTO says that simple measures like regularly washing feeders with clean water can reduce infection rates. He has also found that mesh or metal-frame feeders are less likely to spread disease than feeders with a single point of access.



'Trike' is killing Europe's greenfinches  
(Image: Anna Yu/Photodisc/Getty)

There is another piece of good news in the data to be presented at the conference. Opponents of feeders claim they get birds hooked on "junk" food. But by feeding tits food laced with a radioactive marker, then analysing blood and claw clippings, [Stuart Bearhop](#) of the University of Exeter, UK, and colleagues have shown that only a tiny fraction of their winter food came from feeders.

The results are echoed in findings from [Darryl Jones](#) of Griffith University in Nathan, Queensland, Australia, which show that Australian magpies with easy access to feeders still fed their chicks mainly grubs and worms dug from the ground. "Most birds still eat a largely natural diet, and the food provided is just a snack," he says.

Editorial: [Garden bird feeders on trial](#)

**BIRD SIGHTINGS** March 2010 – April 2010 -Compiled by *Martin Cocker*

Australasian Figbird	45+	06-Mar-10	Ray Crump Oval, Primbee	Park (Largest number recorded)	Ron Imisides
Restless Flycatcher	1	18-Mar-10	Hooka Point, Berkeley	Scrub	Michelle Rower
Brown Goshawk	1	23-Mar-10	Excelsior Forest, Thirroul	Forest	Mike Morphett
Large-billed Scrubwren	1	23-Mar-10	Excelsior Forest, Thirroul	Forest	Mike Morphett
Rose Robin	2	23-Mar-10	Excelsior Forest, Thirroul	Forest	Mike Morphett
Common Blackbird	2	23-Mar-10	Excelsior Forest, Thirroul	Forest	Mike Morphett
Striated Heron	1	24-Mar-10	Para/Fairy Creek Fairy Meadow	Riparian	Mike Morphett
Scarlet Honeyeater	2 Pair	02-Apr-10	Barrack Point	Garden	Michelle Rower
Bar-shouldered Dove	1	03-Apr-10	Jerrara Dam	Bush	Cheryl Atkhurst
Bar-tailed Godwit	200+	04-Apr-10	Bevans Island, Lake Illawarra, Windang	Estuarine	Lorraine Pincus
Azure Kingfisher	1	14-Apr-10	Koorungulla Swamp	Lakeside	Charles Dove
Striated Heron	1	16-Apr-10	Purry Burry Point, Primbee	Estuarine	Martin Cocker
Little Egret	1	16-Apr-10	Kanahooka Point	Estuarine	Martin Cocker
Peregrine Falcon	1	17-Apr-10	Mt. Keira	Forest	Martin Cocker

Things must a quiet with the birds at present a very lean sightings list

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*Val Dolan*