



Warringal  
Conservation  
Society

**50 YEARS OF CONSERVATION IN BANYULE**

**Vol 50/three May/June 2020**

*Warringal Conservation Society is a local, not-for-profit, community organisation caring for the environment in Banyule.*

*Formed in 1970, the Society is an active and productive steward of Banyule's environmental heritage.*

**Join us!!**

Warringal Conservation Society is not just a local environment group: it is stimulating, fun and companionable and takes an active role in the wider community.

Single \$20  
Family \$25  
Pension/student/  
unemployed \$15  
Life \$200

Articles and photographs for the newsletter are welcome. We may edit for legal, space or other reasons. Opinions expressed in articles are not necessarily those of the Warringal Conservation Society.

Newsletter printed courtesy of Kate Thwaites MP, Member for Jagajaga

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Warringal Conservation Society has cancelled all meetings and events till further notice. Check [www.warringal.org.au](http://www.warringal.org.au) or [www.facebook.com/WarringalConservationSociety](https://www.facebook.com/WarringalConservationSociety) for updates on when we will resume activities.

**MAY SPEAKER**

**CANCELLED**

**Virginia Trescowthick - Environmental Legislation**

Virginia is a lawyer for Environmental Justice Australia (EJA). She will speak about EJA, their latest projects and provide an overview of environmental legislation in Australia.

**When operating normally:**

**Meetings on first Thursday of the month from 7.30 pm  
at the Old Shire Offices, 60 Beverley Road, Heidelberg.**

**Enter from Buckingham Drive near the Banyule Theatre  
*All Welcome***

**AT A GLANCE**

**May**

**Thurs 7th:** No General Meeting

**Sat 9th:** World Migratory Bird Day

**June**

**Thurs 4th:** General Meeting unlikely

**Fri 5th:** World Environment Day

**July**

**Thurs 2nd:** General meetings may resume - see [www.warringal.org.au](http://www.warringal.org.au)  
or [www.facebook.com/WarringalConservationSociety](https://www.facebook.com/WarringalConservationSociety)  
for updates

## Message from the President

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century the world was opening up to international trade. European countries claimed vast tracts of Africa, India and the Far East. To impress the ruling kings and queens it was not uncommon for a sultan to ship exotic animals from Africa, to add to the royal menageries thousands of kilometres distant. In the book which I am reading a female giraffe captured near the Blue Nile is on her way to Paris, in 1826. The brigantine ship sailing from Alexandria, Egypt to Marseille, southern France, is not allowed to dock because of the dreaded fear of the Plague. They had to anchor 3 miles offshore and people and animals disembarking had to go into quarantine for several weeks. What an eye opener this was to me; it's all been done before!



Hello dear members. We hope that you and your families and friends are keeping safe and well through this 21<sup>st</sup> century pandemic. Two months ago I did not mention Covid-19 but here we are in lock down. Our WCS social activities had to be cancelled and no end in sight, but we shall be in touch whenever we can see a return to normal. And wow, we had been hoping to celebrate WCS's 50<sup>th</sup> year with a great celebration – sadly now postponed.

If you have any interesting sightings for Nature Notes please send them in. I am finding my garden bird visitors quite entertaining. We can all take pleasure in the natural world around us, the sky, the trees and tiny critters on shrubs. Who's that in the birdbath?

How did the giraffe journey end? She walked the 680km from Marseille to Paris, and thrilled the locals on the way.

Keep up all your health precautions. We hope that you enjoy this newsletter.

*Daphne Hards*

## News & Events

### Report on Clean Up Australia Day at Grotty Pond Sunday 1st March

This was our last activity before things shut down due to COVID-19. There was a good turn out on a lovely day, with many arriving early before the heat.

Lots of rubbish was collected including a tire, a camp stretcher and large industrial cable holder. Also retrieved were some solid, wet bundles of undelivered junk mail and magazines. Some areas of blackberries had been slashed around the pond,

### Who we are and how to contact us

#### Warringal Conservation Society Inc

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**Planting Coordinator:** Heather Smith

**Committee:** Anthea Fleming, Celia Smith, Daphne Hards, Doug McNaughton, James Deane, Heather Smith, Michelle Giovias.

## News & Events cont.

making it easier to get in and pull out a lot of plastic and glass bottles, and drink cans. Thanks to Emma from the Banyule Bush Crew for her support on the day and Kylie for coordination.



### WCS turns 50!

50th birthday celebrations started with Grand Parade. The WCS committee and friends put a lot of work into preparing for the Banyule Festival Grand Parade. We really wanted to let everyone know that we are celebrating 50 years of conservation in Banyule this year – so we pulled out all the stops with new T-shirts, new banners and two giant numbers [5 + 0] made from cardboard and painted fluoro yellow.

Unfortunately, the parade was cancelled but we still wanted to show off our new t-shirts! Thanks to Denise and Daphne for organising the photo opportunity. Of course, all the rest of our planned anniversary events are on hold for now. The Society actually formally began in August 1970 so we can celebrate up to August 2021.



### 50th Anniversary WCS T-Shirts for sale

This is your chance to be part of WCS history with your own very own LIMITED EDITION 50th Anniversary t-shirt! Dark bottle green with fluoro yellow graphics, you're guaranteed to be the centre of attention at meetings, working bees and any environmental gathering. Adults \$25 and kids \$15. Email [warringal3084@gmail.com](mailto:warringal3084@gmail.com) and we will organise payment/delivery details.



### 10 More Years of Native Forest Logging in Victoria

The Victorian Government has updated Regional Forest Agreements to allow logging of native forests until 2030. While there are plans to phase out native forest logging after 2030, the concern is that waiting this long poses and unacceptable risk to threatened species including Leadbeater's Possum and the Greater Glider. A changing climate and widespread loss of habitat due to bushfires make the need to preserve native forest even more pressing. Environmental Justice Australia have published a report titled "No Longer Tenable: Bushfires and Regional Forest Agreements" that is available at: <https://www.envirojustice.org.au/no-longer-tenable-bushfires-and-regional-forest-agreements/>

### Welcome to New Members

We extend a warm welcome to Stephen Trajkovsky, Ken Bladwell and family, and Megan Lowe and family, and trust that their membership will be rewarding. We have had a long association with Megan as she was in the Banyule Bush Crew for many years, now moved to Melbourne Water, so we are delighted to maintain our friendship with her and her family.



## March Speaker Report - Andrew Skeoch - The Sounds of Nature

Andrew Skeoch has been recording the sounds of nature for the last 30 years. He started his talk with a short recording from where he lives in Central Victorian Box-Ironbark country. The recording was shown as a spectrogram, a visual representation of sound frequencies and intensities over time. Andrew went through the recording and identified birds including: a Spotted Pardalote, Rufous Whistler, Bronzewing Pigeon, Corellas, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Australian Raven, Superb Fairy Wren. To the educated ear, the combination of calls in a recording like this can be used to determine the location, habitat type, time of day and season.

Birds call for many reasons; to warn of danger, to find mates and to establish their territory. Bird calls can also be a ritualised form of engagement that avoids a physical confrontation that might result in injury. Andrew gave the example of Golden Whistlers that take alternate turns to call, rather than singing over the top of each other. He also played a recording of a pair Grey Shrike-thrush taking turns to repeat the same call. The song continued until one of them decided to change it slightly and the other responded with the new song immediately. This went on for a while until a third Grey Shrike-thrush in the distance joined in. The whole interchange occurred in a very organised and polite manner.

Calls are also used to communicate with other

species of birds in mixed flocks. Andrew discussed the example of mixed flocks in Sulawesi Indonesia that move through the forest often led by a Rachis-tailed Drongo that mimics the calls of other birds in the flock. This wave of birds displaces insects in a manner that is to the advantage of all birds in the flock. Similar busy mixed flocks of Whistlers and Thornbills are found in the Australian bush.

Mimicry is a common phenomenon in the bird world. Andrew played an interesting Magpie call that briefly lapsed into a horse vocalisation. He also noted that Regent Honeyeaters often mimic calls of the Little Wattlebird, presumably to escape attention by blending in.

Andrew commented that there are very few birds that completely monopolise the soundscape. Bell Miners however are a bird that attempts to completely dominate the acoustic resource by creating a wall of sound. This behaviour and their aggression excludes other birds from their territory.

Andrew's presentation showed us that listening to the sounds of nature is a very powerful way of understanding birds and other animals. A written account does not do justice the recordings that Andrew presented and you can hear examples of his work at <https://www.listeningearth.com.au/>

*James Deane*

## Duck Shooting in 2020

On April 12th Premier Daniel Andrews announced that Victoria's state of emergency, due to the corona virus, will continue until May 11th. This means that the current restrictions in Victoria will remain in place on May 2nd which was the date set to be Victoria's opening weekend for a limited duck shooting season of five weeks.

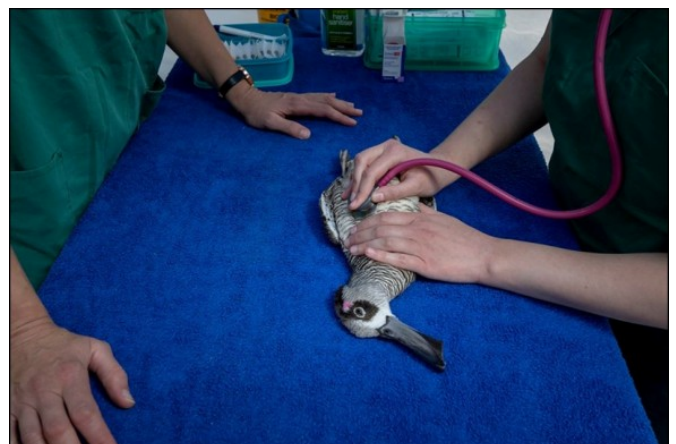
The Premier has confirmed that the restrictions mean that the opening weekend cannot go ahead. The future of the rest of the season will depend on whether the state of emergency is extended again. This will be assessed later on.

The Coalition against Duck Shooting is on standby in case the Covid-19 restrictions are lifted before the duck shooting season is scheduled to end on June 8th. Experienced and dedicated teams of rescuers are organised and ready to help native waterbirds if duck shooters are going to be allowed to travel to Victoria's wetlands in the next few weeks.

Concerns remain because shooting is being

allowed on private land, and the fact that some shooters might try to flout laws to travel to private properties to shoot. Good sense suggests the Government should cancel the season entirely, and cancel it on all types of land.

*Celia Smith*



*Vets examining a Duck wounded by shooters*

## Woody Weeds

Our April working bee was to be the removal of woody weeds along the banks of Salt Creek, near the confluence of the Yarra River. We would have been continuing the work done last year by WCS, Friends of Salt Creek and the Banyule Bush crew. A surprisingly large percentage of the Bush Crews' work is removing and controlling the spread of weeds on Banyule's public land.

So why is it important to control the spread of weeds? Because they are a serious threat to Australia's biodiversity. There are at least 2,700 introduced plants with established populations in Australia, and sixty-eight per cent of these are considered a problem for natural ecosystems.

Weeds invade our native ecosystems, displacing native species and may alter the genetic composition of the native plant populations. Weed plants also include native species that have spread beyond their natural range. Ecological control through local insects and fauna doesn't apply to many exotic species, allowing them to spread, compromising the beauty and integrity of our native bushland.

Apart from the expense of weed control, it has been estimated that the annual cost of invasive plants to Australian agriculture is \$4 billion through yield losses and product contamination.

### Noxious Weeds

There are four categories of noxious weeds – State Prohibited; Regionally Prohibited; Regionally Controlled and Restricted. Each species is allocated a score generated by considering five attributes:

- impact on natural systems
- area of potential distribution remaining
- potential for invasion
- rate of dispersal
- range of susceptible habitat types.

The higher the score the higher the risk of environmental/economic harm, or potential to cause harm. They may also present risks to human health.

### Woody weeds in the Banyule area

Banyule has a collection of woody weeds including Broad Leaf Privet, Sweet Pittosporum [native but still an invasive weed], Desert Ash, Box Elder Maple, Hawthorn and Madeira Winter Cherry. Control is expensive and time consuming; each species may need a mixture of eradication methods, at different times during their annual cycle. At our working bees, our usual techniques are to either hand weed or cut and paint plants.

Cutting and painting is mainly used for small infestations of trees and woody weeds. Stems are cut

as low as possible and the stumps immediately painted with herbicide. If the herbicide is not applied immediately after cutting, the stump seals up and the herbicide will not be fully absorbed, allowing regrowth to occur.

When hand weeding, we aim to remove the entire plant, including its roots, from the soil, therefore reducing the above-ground plant-mass before follow up methods are applied. This can be achieved by 'grubbing' out by hand.

### Early detection and eradication

We all need to be aware of the weeds around our area and report any infestations to the council as soon possible. Many weeds produce seeds that are able to survive for decades in the soil, waiting for the best opportunity to sprout. Total eradication of large infestations of environmental weeds is very difficult, if not impossible, and expensive. The faster we act when we see a small area of invasive weeds, the more chance we have of success.

### Resources and further information:

#### Weeds in Banyule

This clear and comprehensive booklet lists those plants that are common weeds of parklands and gardens in Banyule and suggests methods of control. <https://www.banyule.vic.gov.au/About/Documents/Weeds-in-Banyule>

#### Agriculture Victoria

A selection of declared and non-declared invasive plants in Victoria. Just click on the plant name to read more about that species.

<http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/weeds/a-z-of-weeds>

*Heather Smith*



*Cut and paint method used on Cootamundra Wattle saplings in 'Warringal Pond'. Before (left) and after (right) photos show the extent of invasion.*



## Yarra Wetlands and Billabongs

Fifty years ago, Warringal Conservation Society was formed by residents of the City of Heidelberg, who were concerned that the local wetland, Banyule Swamp, was to be lost due to the development of sports-fields at Banyule Flats on the Yarra Valley floodplain. They were also concerned about the future management of Banyule Billabong.

At this time the Yarra floodplain was used for cattle grazing, and it was largely cleared. Only a few large trees survived on the banks of the Billabong, which was used for watering stock (photo 1). It is now hard to believe that there was once a clear outlook almost to Templestowe Road. Masses of 40 year - old trees now obscure the view.



1. Banyule Billabong c.1970 (Derry Sargent)

Thanks to the efforts of members of the Society and the City Council, first of Heidelberg and now of Banyule, we have seen major improvements in the natural environment, not only in Banyule Flats Reserve but also in Warringal Park. Council's Bushland Management Crews have been of the greatest help throughout the City.

WCS members have planted thousands of trees and shrubs, weeded plantings, and collected rubbish. They have monitored the programs of Council and State and Federal Governments and provided constructive comment.

It is sad to see that Banyule Billabong has now been dry for many years. It was formerly kept full, for the benefit of the cattle, with the use of a windmill which pumped water from the Yarra River. This meant that many water-birds also benefited. Since the removal of stock circa 1993, the Billabong has not been artificially filled and its sluice-gates were removed. In recent years, it has been filled only by occasional natural floods – which are now much rarer. Following construction of major dams, it is estimated that the Yarra's flow has been reduced to

about one third of its original volume. In recent years, Melbourne Water has pumped water into the billabong on two occasions (photo 2), but the water did not last more than a few weeks – probably because of very hot weather, and because the billabong's bottom is now cracked and lacks its natural bio-seal. The re-filled Banyule Billabong attracted many frogs, invertebrates and breeding water-birds, but unfortunately not for long.



2. Banyule Billabong rewatering 2019 (Heather Smith)

In 1999, Banyule Council enlarged the Banyule Swamp by blocking one or more land-drains. This has resulted in a large sheet of fairly shallow water, providing an admirable view of open water and water birds. Banyule Flats Reserve was listed as one of the Best 100 Birdwatching Sites in Australia by Sue Taylor (Newsouth Publishing, 2013). The swamp rarely evaporates completely and is a refuge for wildlife in dry times. Recent severe drought has encouraged the re-colonisation of the area by Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Swamp Wallabies and Common Wombats.

A similar program of habitat improvement has taken place at Wilson Reserve, again from the effort of a devoted Friends Group and the Council's Bushland Management Crew. Here there are two billabongs and an ephemeral wetland.

In Warringal Swamp, an attempt to improve a wide, shallow swamp by excavating a deeper section at the south end has had most unfortunate results. In recent dry and drought years, all the water has run into the deep end, and the shallow section has remained completely dry. The marshland flora which originally grew there has been lost, and the dry area has been invaded by thistles and other weeds. It may be good habitat for reptiles

## Yarra Wetlands and Billabongs cont.

Similar stories could be told of many of the parklands in the Chandler Basin. Willsmere Park (Kew) and the Alphington Wetlands, among others. Bolin Bolin Billabong particularly deserves mention, as well as serious conservation treatment. Yarra Flats Park needs some very serious weed eradication work – as do many other parks.

But the present number of billabongs and wetlands in the Middle Yarra is a miserable remnant compared with those lost since white settlement. So many have been drained, filled or “reclaimed” that

very few now remain. Their great value as slow-release flood-water storage, and as habitat for all forms of wildlife, has not been recognised over the last 200 years.

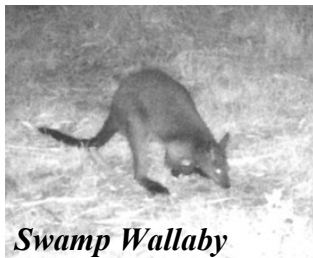
At Warringal Conservation Society, the Yarra River, which we strive to know and enjoy, is one whose wetlands and billabongs are preserved and enhanced by careful, intelligent and scientifically-informed management.

*Anthea Fleming*

## Banyule Flats while the Humans are Sleeping

Banyule Flats is a busy place by day, particularly at the moment. Most animals sensibly wait until night fall to come out. The night images here were captured at the Flats using a motion-triggered camera with a red light that does not disturb wildlife.

*James Deane*



*Swamp Wallaby*



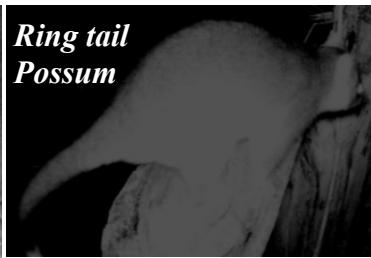
*Wombat*



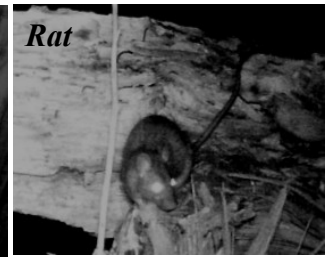
*Rabbit*



*Fox*



*Ring tail  
Possum*



*Rat*

## Recent Submissions by the WCS Committee

The following submissions are attached to the electronic newsletter and will be available on the WCS website:

- 1) A comment to the Banyule City Council on a proposal to release bushfire affected Koalas at Banyule Flats. We expressed concern about the ability of the area to support a Koala population.
- 2) A submission to Banyule Heritage Study.
- 3) Comments on the Draft Yarra Strategic Plan expressing concern that the North East Link is exempt from the Yarra River Protection Act.
- 4) Comment on a discussion paper for a review of the Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act.

## Vale Helen Aston

It is sad to report the recent death of Helen Aston, who was a great help to us in WCS' early days. Many of our founding members belonged to the Bird Observers Club – Reg Johnson, the Jarmans, and Xenia Dennett. Helen, also a B.O.C. member, was a botanist at the National Herbarium, and an expert on water plants. In our very early days in 1971, she was asked for advice in regenerating Warringal Swamp, then in poor condition. After inspection, she provided a list of suitable plants. These were not commercially available, so WCS members collected specimens to propagate from the Kew Billabong.

She strongly suggested that Banyule Swamp should be protected as a bird breeding area. In 1972 she spoke to a WCS meeting on Water Plants. She wrote a text book on this subject. She rose to be Curator of the National Herbarium, and was awarded the Australian Natural History Medallion in 1979. She was very active in many other natural history societies, and I the ACF. She was very kind and I remember her many helpful answers when I phoned the Herbarium for information. She will be greatly missed by her many friends.

*Anthea Fleming*

## WCS Annual Subscriptions

### WCS subscriptions are due July 2020

WCS membership subscriptions for 2020/2021 are due in July. These are used for the costs of running the Society that include hall hire, insurance, and postage. Subscriptions can be paid to the Treasurer Daphne Hards at a meeting or planting, or a cheque can be sent by mail using the form below. Subscriptions can also be paid electronically directly into the

Society's bank account using the following information:

Account Name: Warringal Conservation Society

BSB: 633108 Account No: 143918613

Be sure to identify yourself as the depositor. To be certain, you can email [warringal3084@gmail.com](mailto:warringal3084@gmail.com) that your deposit has been made.

### Warringal Conservation Society Annual Subscription

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**Special area of interest:**

**Where did you hear about us?:**

**Annual subscription type:**

☐ **Single \$20**

☐ **Family \$25**

☐ **Concession (seniors, students etc) \$15**

☐ **Life subscription \$200**

**Membership application/renewal (for July 2020-June 2021)**

**Donations always welcome**

**Please send this form and subscription (cheque or money order) to:**

**Warringal Conservation Society PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084 VIC**

## Nature Notes - March/April 2020

### March

Celia Smith - 71 Wood Ducks and 2 Masked Lapwings at Warringal Parlands, 2 Swans at Banyule Swamp

Jen Chellew - Large bird of prey fitting the description of a Peregrine Falcon

James Deane - Little Eagle and a Brown Goshawk on Viewbank hill. Peregrine Falcon on high voltage power line tower near Bonds Rd.

Dave Herbert - Melbourne Water spraying weeds in Banyule Billabong. Unexplained survey marks near Windmill

Anthea Fleming - Great Crested Grebe and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at Jawbone Sanctuary Williamstown, Grass blue butterfly, Skipper butterfly, and a Crested Pigeon. A small Scorpion in Ivanhoe backyard

Chris Goddard: Since the bushfires, Grey Butcherbirds in the morning and evening. They were occasional visitors before but now they greet us everyday. Ivanhoe is overrun with Indian Mynahs. Also lots of European wasps.

John D'Aloia - Sunday 22/03/20 - Kookaburra at his house on Beverley Road (right)





## Nature Notes cont.

Dianne Williamson - 3 Tiger Snakes in garden on Buckingham Drive

Liz Evans - March 31 Native Heath *Epacris impressa* ready to burst into bloom

Daphne Hards: Eastern Spinebill and Brown Thornbills returned to garden after welcome autumn rain.

Rare visit from an Eastern Rosella.

Penny Grose - A flock of Red-rumped Parrots on the grass near the Kintala building.

Robert Bender - Photos from Wilson Reserve:

- 1) Weasel Skink at Muttonwood site east of Ivanhoe golf course practice fairway
- 2) Tawny Frogmouths on trees overlooking the Yarra
- 3) A Bronze Wing by the Yarra
- 4) A pair of pure white pigeons on Ivanhoe golf course



## April

Heather Smith & Don Stokes (Week 5-12 April):

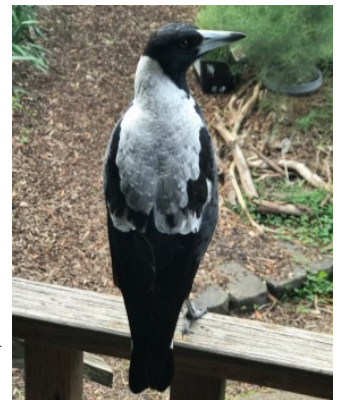
15-25 Straw-necked Ibis and 2 White-faced Herons feeding on Heidelberg football club oval.

Flocks 20-30 Yellow-tail Black Cockatoos in Pine trees in Heidelberg Park

Brown Thornbills and Eastern Spinebills in garden feeding on Correa bushes.

Spotted Pardalote and Grey Fantails up in backyard trees - presume after insects

Recent appearance of a friendly lone Magpie, which waits every morning at back door - will walk in if door open. Follows us around the garden, perched on barrow or tools watching us.



Dianne Williamson - 2nd April - A Black Swan on Banyule Swamp. Swamp

Wallaby and 2 male Eastern Greys boxing. Butcherbirds, King Parrots, Magpie teenager practicing carolling, Pied Currawong, wrens.

Daphne Hards: Lots of bird activity/song, with Red Wattlebirds gathering and Corellas travelling overhead.

Common Mynahs far too common. A Noisy Miner came and went – luckily.

Liz Evans - April 10 - Greenhood orchids *Pterostylis pedunculata*, *Pterostylis curta* and *Pterostylis nutans* in garden are all flourishing and getting ready to flower.

James Deane - April 11th - 4 Wedge-tailed Eagles over Viewbank Hill. Regular sightings of a Little Eagle (1). Swift Moths casings along Main Yarra Trail after rain (2). Pink-eared Ducks at Banyule Swamp had 6 ducklings (3) that were getting quite large but still unable to fly. There is only one duckling left now.



## Nature Notes cont.

Anthony Fernando - Spotted 5 Swift Parrots in Rosanna Parklands. Likely calls heard beforehand in Macleod/Rosanna. Unfortunately they were being chased by the ubiquitous Noisy Miners in the area.

Anthea Fleming

White Ibis, sometimes with a few Strawnecks, regularly feed in the horse-paddocks off the Boulevard.

This area is also the favourite area for Cattle Egrets - regular winter migrants. The nearest breeding area that I know of is the Shortland Wetlands near Newcastle, NSW. How soon will they return this winter?

Noisy Miners feeding on green flowering Correa

10 April - a small snake seen at Wilson Reserve - it had been basking in the sun but hastily hid in *Tradescantia*. Probably Tiger Snake. The last snake of summer?

11 April - 9.00 am - about 100 Little Corellas over Clark Rd, circling and calling before they flew off northward.

27 April - Pair of Swift Parrots flying overhead

White-faced Heron at Willsmere Billabong (below)



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