

## Purple-backed Fairy-wren

Scientific Name: *Malurus assimilis*  
Atlas Number: 536

### DESCRIPTION:

Is native to Australia. In a species that exhibits sexual dimorphism, the brightly coloured breeding male has chestnut shoulders and azure crown and ear coverts, while non-breeding males, females and juveniles have predominantly grey-brown plumage, although females of two subspecies have mainly blue-grey plumage. Distributed over much of the Australian continent, the Purple-backed Fairy-wren is found in scrubland with plenty of vegetation providing dense cover.



photo by Charles Dove

### TAXONOMY AND SYSTEMATICS:

Australian ornithologist Alfred John North described the Purple-backed Fairy-wren in 1901, proposing it be called the Purple-backed Superb-warbler. He added that Edward Pierson Ramsay had noted that inland specimens differed from coastal specimens of the Variegated Fairy-wren around 25 years previously. However, Australian amateur ornithologist Gregory Mathews considered it a subspecies of the Variegated Fairy-wren.

It was long considered a subspecies of the Variegated Fairy-wren until its genetic distinctness led to it once again becoming a separate species in 2018.

Within the genus it belongs to a group of five very similar species known collectively as Chestnut-shouldered Fairywrens. The other four species are the Lovely Fairy-wren, Variegated Fairy-wren, Red-winged Fairy-wren, and the Blue-breasted Fairy-wren. A 2011 analysis of mitochondrial and nuclear DNA found that the Purple-backed Fairy-wren was nested within the Variegated Fairy-wren complex, and is the sister taxon of the Lovely Fairy-wren. Purple-backed Fairy-wren has been designated the official name by the International Ornithologists' Union (IOC).

### DESCRIPTION

The Purple-backed Fairy-wren is on average 14.5 cm (5.5 in) long. Like other Fairy-wrens, it is notable for its marked sexual dimorphism, males adopting a highly visible breeding plumage of brilliant iridescent blue and chestnut contrasting with black and grey-brown. The brightly coloured crown and ear tufts are prominently featured in breeding displays. The male in breeding plumage has striking bright blue ear coverts and blue-purple crown and forehead, a black throat and nape, a blue-purple upper back, chestnut shoulders and a bluish-grey tail. The wings are drab brown and the belly white. Within subspecies *assimilis*, the plumage of both

sexes is becoming paler. Males of all subspecies have a black bill and lores (eye-ring and bare skin between eyes and bill), while females of subspecies *assimilis* and *rogersi* have a red-brown bill and bright rufous lores, and those of subspecies *dulcis* have white lores. Immature males will develop black bills by six months of age, and moult into breeding plumage the first breeding season after hatching, though this may be incomplete with residual brownish plumage and may take another year or two to perfect. Both sexes moult in autumn after breeding, with males assuming an eclipse non-breeding plumage.

### DISTRIBUTION AND HABITAT:

The Purple-backed Fairy-wren is widely distributed over much of the Australian continent. It is replaced in southwestern Western Australia by the Red-winged and Blue-breasted Fairy-wrens, and by the lovely Fairy-wren north of a line between Normanton and Townsville in north Queensland. Some early evidence suggested subspecies *assimilis* may be nomadic, but later more detailed fieldwork indicated it was generally sedentary, with pairs of Purple-backed Fairy-wrens maintaining territories year-round.

### BREEDING

Breeding can occur at any time in inland Australia, with birds taking the opportunity to nest after heavy rains, although only one brood is usually raised each year. The nest is a round or domed structure made of loosely woven grasses, twigs, bark and spider webs, with an entrance in one side, and is often larger than those of other Fairy-wrens.

for more info

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purple-backed\\_fairywren](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purple-backed_fairywren)

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Founded in 1977

#### Club's Aim:

To join together people with a common interest who wish to further their knowledge and enjoyment of the bird life around them.

### ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS' CLUB INC.

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## **NOVEMBER ACTIVITIES**

### **GENERAL MEETING ON ZOOM**

**Monday 9th November 7pm for 7.30pm start**

IBOC will be conducting another virtual meeting using Zoom, officially starting at 7:30 pm. Please note that the meeting will once again start at 7:00 pm to allow folks to catch up a bit and join before the business starts.

**Lockdown Escape:** - A presentation by Pam Hazelwood.

Come with me as I go to FNQ and up Cape York to Iron Range. While you shivered down south, together with my companions I was comfortably warm and treated to views of some rare and beautiful birds that are found only in this part of our country. It was an amazing trip that was able to be completed against the odds of COVID-19 lockdowns and Virgin Airlines going into administration.

**Note:** to use Zoom, you need a tablet, mobile or laptop/computer and should download the Zoom app and **make sure Ken Brown has your email at [membership@iboc.org.au](mailto:membership@iboc.org.au)** ; If you require any additional assistance in getting set up, feel free to contact Jann Gowans at [info@iboc.org.au](mailto:info@iboc.org.au) or 4285 9070.

***Please RSVP Jann if you would like to join the meeting ASAP.***

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### **MIDWEEK WALK**

**WEDNESDAY 11th NOVEMBER**

leader Rupert Jarvis

#### **HOOKA POINT**

Meet at 9.00 am in the carpark at the end of Holborn Street, Berkeley. We've done this walk several times before but it usually gives us a good variety of sightings of both land and water birds. Bring morning tea.

*If weather doubtful contact Rupert on 0403 932 635*

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### **MONTHLY WALK**

**SUNDAY 15th NOVEMBER**

leader Alan Cousins

**BANGALEE RESERVE** - North Nowra, allow at least 75 minutes travel time.

From the north take the Princes Highway to Bomaderry. Turn right into Illaroo Road at the traffic lights just before Shoalhaven Bridge. At the roundabout veer right and proceed for approx. another 5K's passing Hockey's Lane and winery on the right before turning left into Koloona Drive. Travel along Koloona forking right at Scout Camp Road and continuing along a narrow winding road for some way, crossing a creek in a steep dip. The entrance to the reserve is on the left at the top of a rise with a less than distinct sign on the right-hand side of the lane. If you reach 'Watersleigh' you have gone too far.

**Meet in the car park at 9am** There are picnic and toilet facilities in the reserve.

There are 2 walks along the Shoalhaven River - the West we will follow before returning to the reserve for morning tea. The Eastern river walk we will follow and return again to the reserve for lunch. After lunch we may wander around the numerous areas to find the abundant bird life.

*In the event of inclement weather contact Alan or Anne Cousins on 0413 869 534 by 7.30am*

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### **NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING ON ZOOM**

**MONDAY 16th NOVEMBER**

Will be via Zoom at 11am, with Ken and Sue Brown hosting.

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### **NEWSLETTER**

**DEADLINE 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2020**

For all articles & photos in the next IBOC newsletter PLEASE E-mail contributions:

To Charles Dove [newsletter@iboc.org.au](mailto:newsletter@iboc.org.au)

or post to 1/13 Horrocks Crescent, Kearney's Spring, Toowoomba QLD 4350.

## Illawarra Bird Observers Club Reports

### **October Meeting Presentation – Around Australia Trip 2019**

After a few false starts due to a weak internet signal Anna and I were able to give the presentation on our birding trip around Australia during 2019. How fortunate we were that we undertook the trip last year as it would have been impossible during 2020.

We started our trip at the IBOC Coonabarabran Autumn Camp during which we had good views of Diamond Firetails, Speckled Warblers, Red Capped Robin and Turquoise Parrot at the Warrumbungles National Park. Next was Dorrigo National Park where we saw rainforest species such as Yellow Throated Scrubwren, Logrunner and Paradise Riflebird.

On the way to “Bowra”, the Australian Wildlife Conservancy Property near Cunnamulla we saw Pale Headed Rosella and Spotted Bowerbird at Thallon. It rained at “Bowra” which restricted us to walking for most of the stay but we did see Red Winged Parrot, Crested Bellbird, Hall’s Babbler and Bourke’s Parrot while there.

Travelling up through Central Queensland we visited Charleville, Barcaldine and Hughenden, all new to us, and had great views of Squatter Pigeon at Porcupine Gorge National Park. We spent 5 nights at the wonderful Boodjamulla (Lawn Hill) National Park seeing birds such as Buff Sided Robin and Crimson Finch before heading up through Burketown to Karumba on the Gulf of Carpentaria Coast. Here we had a boat tour into the mangroves and were able to see Mangrove Robin, White Breasted Whistler and Red Headed and Yellow Honeyeaters. At Leichardt Lagoon we enjoyed Magpie Geese and Sarus Cranes while sitting at our caravan.

After a car service and shop at Mount Isa we headed into the Northern Territory seeing some terrible effects of drought and overstocking. On to Mataranka where we saw Arafura Fantail and Paperbark and Satin Flycatcher on our walks from Bitter Springs which are well worth a stop for a soak in the warm water. At Pine Creek we were fortunate to see about 50 Hooded Parrots feeding in the grass near the caravan park and saw our first Long Tailed Finch for the trip. The walk at Umbrawarra Gorge enabled us to see the Bar-breasted and White Gaped Honeyeaters and Silver Crowned Friarbird. Kakadu National Park was on our agenda again with a walk to Gunlom falls and a Yellow Water Boat trip to see the wildlife and birds in this World Heritage Area. Black Necked Stork, Plumed Whistling Duck, Comb-crested Jacana and Pied Heron were seen as well as Rose Crowned Fruit Dove and Varied Triller back at the Caravan Park. On the way to Darwin we were able to track down the Black Tailed Treecreeper on the Marakai Track and Rainbow Pitta and Lemon Bellied Flyrobin at Fogg Dam.

After a stay in Darwin we headed to the Kimberley stopping at Edith Falls where we saw Sandstone Shrike-thrush, Victoria River Roadhouse to see Purple crowned Fairywren and Keep River National Park to see White Quilled Rock-Pigeon a new target bird for our life list. The Kimberley at last with our first stay at Lake Argyle and on the early morning bird watching cruise we finally saw Yellow Chat about 20 of them. Up in the Wyndham area we had great views of Gouldian Finch, Star Finch, Masked Finch and Pictorella Mannikin. The Mannikin were in a flock of thousands flying back and forth to water and the noise of the wingbeats was incredible. While at Kunnanurra we flew to Purnululu National Park (Bungle Bungle Range) which was an amazing experience with our local Aboriginal Guide. Our next target was Derby and Broome the drive taking us through Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing and some amazing landscapes. We stayed at the Broome Bird Observatory on Roebuck Bay and were able to see flocks of waders starting to return to Australia. To identify the waders Anna and I did a trip with the Wardens as you really need the telescopes and their knowledge to see and identify the birds well. No closeup bird photos here except for the Red-Collared Lorikeet and Yellow White-eye in camp.

Next on our trip was the Pilbara, another new area for us, and our first stay was Indee Station south of Port Headland where we saw Painted Finch and Spinifex Pigeon. We enjoyed the Dale Gorge walk at Karijini National Park, the sunrise and sunset at Onslow and Cape Range National Park near Exmouth where we saw Grey Headed Honeyeater.

Carnarvon effectively saw the start of our trip home with Banded Stilt and Dusky Gerygone seen in the area. Our next base was Hamlin Station, a Bush Heritage property on Shark Bay. Birds seen in this area were Pied and White Fronted Honeyeater, White-winged Fairywren, White Browed Babbler, Chiming Wedgebill, Banded Lapwing, Australian Spotted Crane, Wood Sandpiper, Laughing Dove and Western Grasswren.

After another car service at Geraldton we headed east in to the wildflowers at Coalseam Conservation Park and the Wreath Flowers near Pindar. We again camped at Mount Gibson Station another Australian Wildlife Conservancy Property where they are doing amazing work to ensure the survival of our wildlife through breeding in feral free areas. Red tailed Black Cockatoo and Inland Thornbill were seen here.

The Mute Swan colony was seen at Northam and Carnaby’s Black Cockatoo, Western Rosella and Australian Ringneck (Twenty- Eight Parrot) at Narrogin. The orchids were out all through the Sterling Range National Park where we saw Red-Capped Parrot (one of my favourites), Regent Parrot, Red-winged Fairywren. At the Porongurup National Park we saw Red-eared Firetail and Rufous Treecreeper. Down at Cheyne Beach we had great views of a Southern Right Whale mother and calf and also White Breasted Robin, Spotted Scrubwren and a duel between an Osprey and Sea Eagle. The Noisy Scrub-bird while noisy remained elusive and was only seen briefly. At Bremer Bay we saw about several Rock Parrots which came close to us and I was able to get some good photos.

While we love the trip across the Nullarbor this time we had a deadline to get to Mildura as we had been invited to help release Bilbys into Mallee Cliffs National Park by the Australian Wildlife Conservancy. We did however manage to see Nullarbor Quail-thrush near Nullarbor Roadhouse and had a stop at the Port Augusta Botanic Gardens a wonderful place to see dry country birds such as Chirruping Wedgebill and Black Honeyeater. We also had a short stay at Gluepot the Birdlife Australia property north of Waikerie.

We arrived in Mildura just in time for the trip to Mallee Cliffs National Park where 9,000 Ha feral free enclosures has been constructed through a partnership between the Australian Wildlife Conservancy and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. This partnership aims to re-introduce species back into this area which once lived here and provide a safe breeding area free of feral predators and introduced herbivores. What a wonderful experience for Anna and I to release a Bilby each into this new safe environment. We had the opportunity to each name the female Bilbys we released so Anna released Carol named after her Mother and I released Kate named after our daughter-in-law. Since that release in 2019 we have heard that the released Bilbys have had a successful breeding season.

Our around Australia Trip finished with the IBOC Spring Camp at Cowra where we had a good sighting of Superb Parrots in the town. This was a nice way to end the trip before returning home after our 7 month trip away in our trusty Toyota Fortuner and River Caravan. At the beginning of 2019 we had decided to do a “Big Year” list of all the bird species we saw that year. Our total for the year came to 425 which included 27 new species for the whole year.

What an amazing country we live in!



Mangrove Robin, Karumba, Queensland



Rainbow Pitta, Fogg Dam, Northern Territory



White Quilled Rock Pigeon, Keep River National Park, Northern Territory



Gouldian Finch, Wyndham Caravan Park, Western Australia



Spinifex Pigeon, Indee Station, Western Australia



Red Capped Parrot, Sterling Range Caravan Park, Western Australia

*Photos courtesy of Andy and Anna Knowlson*

## MID-WEEK WALK REPORT

### Byarong Creek, Figtree. Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> October

*by Ken Brown*

13 of us gathered in the carpark at Harry Graham Park at 9:00 am and were immediately rewarded with a view of a pair of Masked Lapwings with 5 chicks on the eastern end of the soccer field. The western end was occupied by a team of 11 Crested Pigeons. Despite being outnumbered, I would put my money on the Lapwings. It looked like they had forgotten to bring the ball, so we didn't wait for the kick-off, but moved around the western end and across to the creek, giving the Lapwings a wide berth. Thoughtfully, someone had erected large professional looking signs asking people to respect the Lapwings, keep dogs on leads and keep cats inside at night. Good to see.

At the creek some movement on the opposite bank turned out to be a pair of Spotted Pardalotes and we had a clear view of them moving in and out of their nest hole in the dirt bank under an overhanging tree. The usual Magpies, Magpie Larks and Noisy Miners were around the fields, but moving further west along the creek we found a Pacific Black Duck looking after 5 good size ducklings. When we reached the point where the bike track crosses the creek we took the path less trod and kept to the southern bank, crossing the little side creek up onto the grassy flat. Along this stretch another pool held a pair of Wood Ducks with 2 ducklings, about the same size as the Pacific Black ducklings. A bird moving about under the bushes at the end of the flat raised some speculation about a Bassian Thrush, but it turned out to be a Blackbird.

Crossing over Uralba St we kept to the southern bank, skirting past a number of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and Galahs who were feeding on the plentiful grass seeds of the wide flat. After passing behind the row of houses we came to the carpark of the indoor swimming pool in Langson Ave and crossed the creek there on the rough stepping stones. This was the half-way point and

a good spot for morning tea at the table and benches near the playground. It was overcast, but a Goldilocks day – not too hot and not too cold, so very pleasant sitting, eating, drinking, chatting and watching the birds in the surrounding trees.

After morning tea, we made our way back down the northern bank of the creek and picked up a few more birds that we missed on the way up. We crossed the creek again on the substantial foot bridge and then back for the last view of the Lapwings on the playing field. They were a bit closer to the carpark so we got some warning swoops as we approached. We finished just before noon after a pleasant morning with 35 species counted.

Thanks for organising it Rupert.

Byarong Creek, Figtree		13 members	35 Species
Crested Pigeon	Rainbow Lorikeet	Masked Lapwing	
Welcome Swallow	Australian Magpie	Common Starling	
Australasian Figbird	Spotted Dove	Little Wattlebird	
Australian Raven	Pacific Black Duck	Australian Wood Duck	
Red Wattlebird	Grey Butcherbird	Topknot Pigeon	
Eastern Koel	Silver Gull	Red-whiskered Bulbul	
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Willie Wagtail	Common Myna	
Magpie-lark	Noisy Miner	Galah	
Spotted Pardalote	Common Blackbird	Crimson Rosella	
Satin Bowerbird	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Laughing Kookaburra	
Australian White Ibis	Australian King-Parrot	Channel-billed Cuckoo	
Eastern Yellow Robin	Superb Fairy-wren		



Australian Magpie



Crimson Rosella



Common Blackbird



Pacific Black Duck

*Photos courtesy of Pam Hazelwood*



The Wedge-tailed eagle is the bird emblem of which Australian state or territory.

## OCTOBER WEEKEND WALK

Mount Annan, Saturday 17th October 2020

Alan Cousins

Our first Spring weekend outing was to the Australian Botanic Garden at Mount Annan.

The temperature at 9am was a bit chilly but 18 members and 1 visitor arrived and after the usual preliminaries we set off around Lake Sedgewick diverting at times around the tops of the planted areas to see magnificent flower displays and hopefully birds, we did indeed see 34 species including Latham's Snipe and Eastern Rosella. Returning to the cars we left the already very busy car park and proceeded to the Bottlebrush Garden for firstly morning tea followed by a walk around the garden. The weather had by now significantly increased in temperature but we had a good bird count then proceeded to the Banksia Garden for lunch and a walk to try and find the Swift Parrots but they seemed to have swiftly departed - never mind the species list was 38 including Little Eagle, Variegated Fairy-wren, Red Wattlebird and 2 Tawny Frogmouths (A) and 1(J). From here we drove to Lake Nadangamba where the bird hide is sited. This area provided 25 species including Red-rumped Parrot, Australian Reed-Warbler and Eurasian Coots with 3 young fluffy chicks.

It was a lovely day out in spectacular surroundings with great friends and a final bird count of 63 species.

### Bird List for Mt Annan—17<sup>th</sup> October 2020

Lake Sedgewick		19 Members	34 Species
Australian Wood Duck	Masked Lapwing	Rainbow Lorikeet	Grey Butcherbird
Grey Teal	Latham's Snipe	Satin Bowerbird	Pied Currawong
Australasian Grebe	Little Pied Cormorant	Superb Fairywren	Willie Wagtail
Spotted Dove	Australian Pelican	Eastern Spinebill	Magpie-lark
Crested Pigeon	Australian White Ibis	Noisy Miner	Australian Raven
Pacific Koel	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Little Wattlebird	Welcome Swallow
Dusky Moorhen	Australian King-Parrot	Red Wattlebird	Common Myna
Eurasian Coot	Eastern Rosella	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Common Blackbird
Australasian Swamphen	Musk Lorikeet		

Banksia Garden		19 Members	38 Species
Australian Wood Duck	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Scarlet Honeyeater	Grey Butcherbird
Crested Pigeon	Eastern Rosella	Spotted Pardalote	Australian Magpie
Tawny Frogmouth	Rainbow Lorikeet	Striated Pardalote	Grey Fantail
Australian White Ibis	Satin Bowerbird	Brown Thornbill	Australian Raven
Little Eagle	Variegated Fairywren	White-throated Gerygone	Eastern Yellow Robin
Brown Goshawk	Superb Fairywren	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Welcome Swallow
Laughing Kookaburra	Bell Miner	Eastern Whipbird	Common Starling
Nankeen Kestrel	Noisy Miner	Golden Whistler	Mistletoebird
Galah	Little Wattlebird	Rufous Whistler	Red-browed Finch
Little Corella	Red Wattlebird		

Lake Nadungamba		19 Members	25 Species
Australasian Grebe	Great Egret	Yellow Thornbill	Australian Raven
Crested Pigeon	Red-rumped Parrot	Grey Butcherbird	Australian Reed Warbler
Dusky Moorhen	Superb Fairywren	Australian Magpie	Common Starling
Eurasian Coot	Noisy Miner	Willie Wagtail	Common Myna
Australasian Swamphen	New Holland Honeyeater	Grey Fantail	Red-browed Finch
Masked Lapwing	Striated Pardalote	Magpie-lark	European Goldfinch
Little Pied Cormorant			



Eurasian Coot



Dusky Moorhen



Australasian Grebe



Eurasian Coot



Tawny Frogmouth



Musk Lorikeet



Bell Myna



Eastern Great Egret  
Going into Breeding Plumage

Photos from Mt Annan  
courtesy Pam Hazelwood

## **NOTE: There will be no 2020 AGM!**

Please note that the committee has made the decision to cancel the 2020 AGM since we are not yet meeting in person at the hall, meaning all members who wish to attend may not be able. This is permitted by the Department of Fair Trading due to changes made because of COVID-19 and means the November meeting will be a normal general meeting. Many current office holders have agreed to stay on for 2021 (when it's hoped a normal AGM can be held) and deserve thanks.

There are also a few **COMMITTEE VACANCIES**. The committee needs a **new secretary** and there are two openings for **committee members**. Please consider if you might be willing and able to step up and help out. You can approach any committee members to inquire

## **AUTUMN CAMP 2021**

**will be at Tumut from Saturday 24 April to Saturday 1 May 2021. Accommodation will be at the Riverglade Caravan Park, Snowy Mountains Highway, Tumut, NSW. Accommodation bookings can be made on the caravan park web site. The main Gala Day for the end of the Festival of the Falling Leaf may be on Saturday 24 April with activities in the town and fireworks in the evening (subject to Covid-19 restrictions). It is suggested that bookings are made early. The official camp program will start on the Sunday.**

## **ILLAWARRA ESCARPMENT MOUNTAIN BIKE STRATEGY – UPDATE**

Following on from my April newsletter report, the Minister Mat Kean, following his receipt of a Briefing Note from the overall project Governance Group, declared that the Mt Keira area posed numerous constraints in respect to aboriginal cultural and heritage matters and that any proposed mountain biking be re-focused to the south of Mt Keira with particular reference to the Mt Kembla-Mt Brisbane locality.

Consequently, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) called tenders and subsequently selected Synergy Trails to prepare a new draft Strategy showing the proposed trail network in the Mt Kembla-Mt Brisbane area of the Escarpment.

At the same time, NPWS also reconvened the project's Advisory Group (AG) committee in which the Illawarra Escarpment Alliance (EscA) is a member. IBOC is an affiliated member of EscA with my representation.

NPWS has, in the past weeks, released Synergy Trail's draft Strategy for the AG's assessment and feedback report.

EscA has carried out several site inspections of the proposed trails and has identified serious anomalies in their locations. Many are located either in or immediately adjoining the Ecologically Endangered Communities of the Illawarra-Shoalhaven Subtropical Rainforest throughout the study area. In other sections, proposed trails will also adversely impact on other Escarpment flora-fauna communities of high conservation value including ground dwelling/dependant bird species. EscA has now submitted its report to the AG and NPWS, clearly indicating that there needs to be a more professional and objective environmental-flora/fauna assessment in determining trail locations.

Once this matter has been resolved, a comprehensive Review of Environmental Factors (REF) will be commissioned and released for public comment.

Still many environmental and project details (eg funding etc) yet to be sorted. I will keep club members posted on further developments

### WATER-DIVINING MAGPIE

Mike Morphett

Thursday mid-afternoon on 24<sup>th</sup> September, and I'm just approaching the driveway to my Thirroul home, when I notice a lone Australian magpie on the nature strip on the creek-side of my street. It appears to be drinking. Nothing unusual about such activity, except I can't see the source of the water. After parking the work vehicle, I walk across to where I'd seen the bird, which by now has taken off. On the roadside there's a waste-water manhole cover, around which I mow the grass, as a gesture of tongue-in-cheek gratitude for my ongoing payment of council rates. The magpie obviously didn't have the wherewithal to lift up the cover to access its water supply; but, amazingly, it did find water in the lid itself, in one of the two holes used by Sydney Water personnel to insert a rod for that purpose. What I do find intriguing is this bird's opportunistic ability, more so after I take some measurements: the hole in the metal plate is a maximum 45mm by 25mm and 30 mm deep; and the depth of the rainwater that has collected inside is a mere 5 mm. Whilst the rainfall I've recorded at home for the first nine months of this year (1390 mm) far exceeds each of the two previous dry years (831 and 839 mm), this September's rainfall was only 2.4% of the total for the previous months. This may well account for this bird's perception of a limited supply of surface water; however, if it had ventured into my property, it would have found an abundance of clean rainwater in the four birdbaths I've installed. Nonetheless, in my view, it's still a very clever bird.



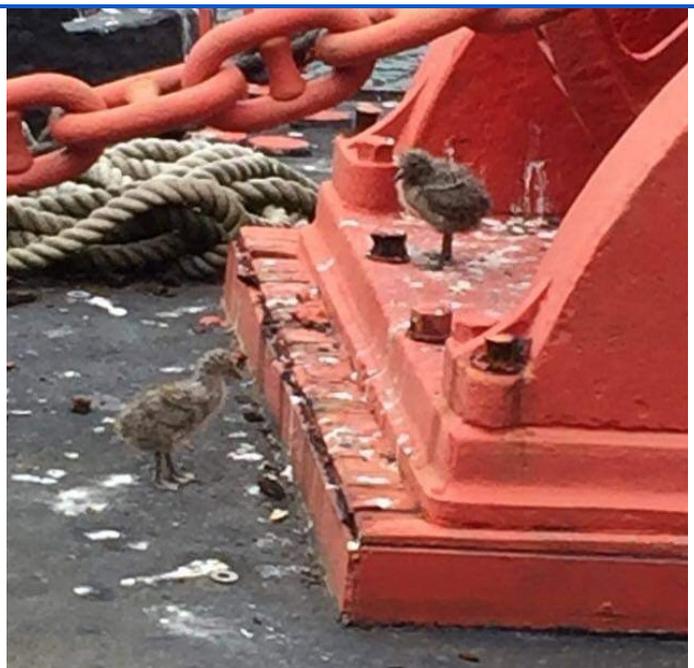
I haven't included a photograph of the subject magpie, as I didn't get the chance to capture it on camera. Also, because our readers will already have excellent knowledge of this species, especially those who may have been swooped upon during the current or previous breeding seasons.

### Seagull Chicks

A couple of pictures of seagulls nesting on a boat at the maritime museum in Sydney.

There were a few baby seagulls .... an unusual place for nesting! Feel free to share if you like.

Courtesy of Joan Wylie



## **A** Northern Territory

## 'Jet fighter' godwit breaks world record for non-stop bird flight

The Guardian, Daniel Boffey, 13 Oct 2020

A bird said to have the aerodynamic build of a “jet fighter” has been tracked flying more than 12,000km (7,500 miles) from Alaska to New Zealand, setting a new world record for avian non-stop flight.

The bar-tailed godwit set off from south-west Alaska on 16 September and arrived in a bay near Auckland 11 days later, having flown at speeds of up to 55mph.

The male bird, known as 4BBRW in reference to the blue, blue, red and white rings fitted on its legs, also had a 5gm satellite tag harnessed on its lower back to allow scientists to track its progress. It was one of four to leave together from the Alaskan mudflats where they had been feeding on clams and worms for two months.

The male bar-tailed godwit, whose standard weight is between 190gm and 400gm, can double in size before a long flight but is able to shrink its internal organs to lighten the load.

After leaving Alaska, the birds headed south over the Aleutian Islands and on to the Pacific Ocean. The journey is thought to have been prolonged by strong easterly winds, which pushed the group towards Australia.

The satellite recorded a point-to-point flight of 12,854km but the scientists believe that once rounding errors are taken into account the journey will have been around 12,200km. It is estimated that the total flight time was 224 hours. The previous longest recorded non-stop flight by a bird, of 11,680km, was recorded in 2007.

Dr Jesse Conklin, from the Global Flyway Network, a consortium of scientists studying epic migratory journeys, said: “They seem to have some capability of knowing where they are on the globe. We can't really explain it but they seem to have an onboard map.

“They are flying over open ocean for days and days in the mid-Pacific; there is no land at all. Then they get to New Caledonia and Papua New Guinea where there are quite a few islands and, we might be anthropomorphising, but it really looks like they start spotting land and sort of think: ‘Oh, I need to start veering or I will miss New Zealand’.”

It is not certain but it is believed the birds do not sleep on the journey during which they flap their wings most of the time.

“They have an incredibly efficient fuel-to-energy rate,” Conklin said. “They have a lot of things going for them. They are designed like a jet fighter. Long, pointed wings and a really sleek design which gives them a lot of aerodynamic potential.”

The birds were among 20 caught and tagged by the Pūkorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre, in the Firth of Thames, south-east of Auckland, in late 2019. They are expected to start the return flight in March, flying across Asia where they will feed for a month around the Yellow Sea, before returning to Alaska.

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## LINKS

**Just goes to show that we should feed magpies**

**'Blood was dripping, I could barely see': Man airlifted to hospital after magpie attacks both eyes**

Businessman James Glindemann sat down at a park bench to eat his lunch and started talking to a magpie "because I like them" — but the bird had other ideas. [Read the full story](#) Shared from [ABC app](#)

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**Grave fears as Port Fairy's yearly visitors are again uncharacteristically late**

Bird experts warn of gruesome scenes as a south-west short-tailed shearwater population fails to arrive for the start of the breeding season for the second year running. [Read the full story](#) Shared from [ABC app](#)

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**'Really nasty' brush turkeys violently trying to breed with backyard chooks**

Native brush turkeys are attacking and forcefully trying to mate with domestic hens and there is very little that can be done to stop them. [Read the full story](#) Shared from [ABC app](#)

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**Who's a clever cocky? How much do you know about this iconic bird?**

It's about time for sulphur-crested cockatoo chicks to be hatching — so what do you know about this clever, iconic Australian bird? [Read the full story](#) Shared from [ABC app](#)

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**Gwen and Jeff Young plant thousands of trees to create 9-hectare haven for birds on their Port MacDonnell farm**

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-10-24/port-macdonnell-farmers-transform-9-hectares-into-bird-haven/12801382>

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**What are Lurps**

<https://www.birdlife.org.au/australian-birdlife/detail/exuding-abundance>

**MONTHLY SIGHTINGS: September/October 2020**

compiled by Darryl Goldrick

SPECIES	NUMBER	DATE	LOCATION	HABITAT	OBSERVER
Brown Quail	1	6-Oct-20	Woodland creek, Thirroul	thick grass	Ian McKinlay
Eurasian Coot	4 ad +3 juv	11-Oct-20	Blue Lagoon Woonona	on water	Mike Morphett
Chestnut Teal	1	11-Oct-20	Blue Lagoon Woonona	on water	Mike Morphett
Spotted Dove	2	11-Oct-20	Blue Lagoon Woonona	bank vegetation	Mike Morphett
Sooty Oystercatcher	1	6-Oct-20	Woonona beach	Ocean rock pool	Alan & Anne Cousins
Crested Pigeon	19	13-May-20	Tarrawanna	Grass verge adjacent to Oval	Alan & Anne Cousins
Bar-shouldered Dove	1	6-Oct-20	Bellambi Dunes	forest	Ian McKinlay
Wonga Pigeon	1	21/09/2020	Cordeaux Heights	Backyard	Wayne Green
Topknot Pigeon	small flock	24-Sep-20	Thirroul Escarpment	Tall forest	Ian McKinlay
Eastern Great Egret	1	10-Sep-20	Puckey's Estate	Towradgi Arm	Mike Morphett
White-faced Heron	1	10-Sep-20	Fairy Creek Lagoon	Creek line	Mike Morphett
Kelp Gull	1 immat	11-Oct-20	Bellambi Beach	end of Bellambi Creek	Mike Morphett
Little Pied Cormorant	6 (5 on nest)	11-Oct-20	Blue Lagoon Woonona	coastal banksias	Mike Morphett
Great Cormorant	2	11-Oct-20	Blue Lagoon Woonona	coastal banksia	Mike Morphett
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	2	4-Oct-20	Wollongong Golf Course	small lagoon	Ian McKinlay
Ruddy Turnstone	2	13-Oct-20	Woonona pool	Rock platform	Ross and Jann Gowans
Brown Falcon	1	22-Sep-20	Bellambi Dunes	forest edge	Ian McKinlay
Purple Swamphen	1 juv on nest	11-Oct-20	Blue Lagoon Woonona	reeds	Mike Morphett
Common Sandpiper	1	13-Oct-20	Woonona pool	In creek	Ross and Jann Gowans
Dusky Moorhen	4 ad + 2 juv	11-Oct-20	Blue Lagoon Woonona	Blue Lagoon Woonona	Mike Morphett
Eastern Rosella	1	6/10/2020	Botanic Gardens	Eucalypt tree	Robyn/John Cashman
Eastern Koel	1 calling	14-Oct-20	Tarrawanna	Escarpment	Alan & Anne Cousins
Eastern Koel	1	4/10/2020	Lake Illawarra South	Backyard	Darryl Goldrick
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	1	10-Sep-20	Puckey's Estate	Towradgi Arm woodland	Mike Morphett
Southern Boobook	1	27-Sep-20	Thirroul	edge of Excelsior & residential area	Mike Morphett
Southern Boobook	1	27-Sep-20	Thirroul	edge of Excelsior & residential area	Mike Morphett
Southern Boobook	1	1-Oct-20	Gunya Park West Wollongong	Suburban park	Chris. Cartledge
Satin Bowerbird	1 fem	15-Oct-20	On bird bath in garden	Hedge	Alan & Anne Cousins
Superb Lyrebird	1 female	2-Oct-20	Gibson Track, thirroul	rainforest	Ian McKinlay
White-throated Treecreeper	1	2-Oct-20	Thirroul Escarpment	tall forest	Ian McKinlay
Green Catbird	1	2-Sep-20	Thirroul Escarpment	rainforest	Ian McKinlay
Satin Bowerbird	1 (M)	13-Oct-20	Tarrawanna	Garden	Alan & Anne Cousins
Superb Fairy-wren	7	11-Oct-20	Blue Lagoon Woonona	bank vegetation	Mike Morphett
Variegated Fairy-wren	4	6-Oct-20	Woodlands creek, Thirroul	tall grass/shrubs	Ian McKinlay
Yellow-throated Scrubwren	2	2-Oct-20	Firetrail, Thirroul Escarpment	forest edge leaf litter	Ian McKinlay
White-browed Scrubwren	1	9-Oct-20	Puckey's Estate	Sheoak forest	Mike Morphett
Brown Thornbill	2	10-Sep-20	Puckey's Estate	Sheoak forest	Mike Morphett
White-cheeked Honeyeater	1	6-Oct-20	Woodland Creek, Thirroul	floodplain shrubs	Ian McKinlay
Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike	1	27-Sep-20	Campbell Street, Woonona	backyard	Mike Morphett
Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike	1	27-Sep-20	Campbell Street, Woonona	backyard	Mike Morphett
Olive-backed Oriole	1	10-Sep-20	Puckey's Estate	Towradgi Arm woodland	Mike Morphett
Willie Wagtail	2	11-Oct-20	Blue Lagoon Woonona	bank vegetation	Mike Morphett
Black-faced Monarch	1	2-Oct-20	Firetrail, Sylvan Woods, Thirroul	forest edge	Ian McKinlay
Eastern Yellow Robin	1	10-Sep-20	Puckey's Estate	Towradgi Arm woodland	Mike Morphett
Silvereye	1	9-Oct-20	Puckey's Estate	Sheoak forest	Mike Morphett
Silvereye	2	11-Oct-20	Blue Lagoon Woonona	bank vegetation	Mike Morphett
Red-whiskered Bulbul	2	10-Sep-20	Puckey's Estate	Sheoak forest	Mike Morphett
Red-whiskered Bulbul	2	11-Oct-20	Blue Lagoon Woonona	bank vegetation	Mike Morphett
Red-whiskered Bulbul	2 (m&f). nest	14-Oct-20	Tarrawanna	Hedge around front yard	Alan & Anne Cousins
Bassian Thrush	2	2-Oct-20	Firetrail, Thirroul Escarpment	roadway leaf litter	Ian McKinlay
Common Blackbird	1	5+23 Oct -20	Lake Illawarra South	Yard	Darryl Goldrick
Red-browed Finch	2	26-Sep-20	Thirroul	backyard	Mike Morphett
Red-browed Finch	2	26-Sep-20	Thirroul	backyard	Mike Morphett



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