

Newsletter of The Land For Wildlife Program - December 2022

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Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

Land For Wildlife Victoria Website:
<https://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/land-for-wildlife>

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Letter from the Editor

Dear LFW Member,

Normally, the LFW newsletter appears in your inbox around the middle of December. However, this edition was delayed while I was supporting the Victorian flood emergency leading up to December.

This edition of the 2022 newsletter features a variety of articles, all of which I hope are informative, practical and perhaps entertaining. For example, discover how much you know about Fairy-wrens with the Fairy Wren quiz ([bottom of page 5](#)). The article on Remote Cameras ([page 15](#)) may be useful to assist in monitoring wildlife visiting a revegetated area.

Nature Projects Online ([page 5](#)) is an example of the diversity of resources and information available on the internet. Listen to the different sounds that nature makes, including the chorus of calls that make up the natural world around us. Hear from Sean Mc Connell ([page 9](#)) as he interviews land owners who are balancing production with conservation, restoring and protecting landscapes, and taking our land use to new innovative places.

Read how the translocation of Koalas in Victoria has been an important component of Koala management for more than 90 years, beginning with a history of Koalas on [page 12](#).

I hope this edition of the 2022 LFW Newsletter finds you motivated for another year of managing and restoring wildlife habitat.

**All the best,
Peter Johnson
Statewide Coordinator
Land For Wildlife Victoria**

P.S. National Eucalypt Day is March 23, celebrating 10 years in 2023!

[Click here for more details](#) or copy and paste the link:

<https://www.eucalyptaustralia.org.au/national-eucalypt-day/>

Land for Wildlife Membership, Victoria.

LFW Membership	Total Property Area Hectares (ha)	Habitat Existing & Retained	Habitat Under Restoration	Total Retained and Restored Habitat
4,500	500,000 ha	140,00 ha	25,000 ha	165,000 ha

*Since 1981
10,000 Properties
1 Million ha Registered*

Cover Images: Crested Bellbird and one of its habitat types, Box Ironbark Forest (see [page 14](#) for more information). *Images by Felicity Johnson.*

Letters to The Editor

Wallaby Captured on Camera Bathing in a Cow Trough

Whoever would have thought!!

By Thais Hardman, Timboon

This is not the first time wallabies have been seen climbing in for a dip in an old cow trough kept filled for the native animals to drink from. An image from earlier in the year has two of them in together then one got out and put hands and feet in that little green dish beside the trough.

If we hadn't seen it on our field camera we would have dismissed the idea. Not sure that the temperature is correct (7⁰C), but despite the weather or the temperature these Swamp Wallabies enjoyed the water.



Long-nosed Bandicoots

When we first purchased our 50 acre bush block (Damp Forest in the gullies) Moist shrubby Foot hill Forest and walked over it I suspected we may have had bandicoots from the conical diggings I saw. We put cameras in what we thought were gullies with dense thickets of coral fern etc with no luck. Then the deer numbers increased and opened up these gullies. After that I thought well maybe we don't have them. So, after a few years thinking we don't have them- we were so stoked to get this shot! We went back to the top of the gully to check out the habitat – the gully was quite open but with dense pockets of ferns-scattered in and on the sides of the gully. I guess this is where they are living!

Cheers Penny & John, Noojee

Please Note: The 2021 Newsletter had it wrong for some details in the article regarding Dodder Laurel. This response came from Dr. David Cheal:

The 2021 edition of the Land for Wildlife Newsletter includes an article on Dodder-laurels (*Cassytha* species). It says that these parasites do not photosynthesize. I think you'll find that they do photosynthesize (via their stems and even via the small leaves they have on first germination). The haustoria hook into the host's xylem & this provide access to water and dissolved simple nutrients. This is not true of *Cuscuta* species (Dodders) which probably do not photosynthesize but attach to the phloems of the host plants.

Thank you for this newsletter – a thoroughly worthwhile read.

**Kind regards,
David Cheal, Redesdale**

Kingfisher Cam

From Brendan & Jenny OBrien-Thoona

I have two remote cameras set up on our 37ac block near Thoona in NE Vic.

One camera is on the edge of our dam and is capturing many species, including hundreds of shots of our resident Sacred Kingfishers.

The image below appears to capture them in the middle of a chin-wag.

The other camera is in a forest we planted, and is busy capturing images of snakes, Antechinus, possums, echidnas and Lace Monitors.



Editor's Note:

[Click here to see page 15 for the article on using Remote Cameras.](#)

Read the 2016 edition of the LFW Newsletter for more about how to attract wildlife using small ponds:

[“Using Small Ponds to Attract Wildlife”](#): Or copy & paste the link below into your internet browser:

https://bit.ly/LFW_Newsletter_2016

Converting an abandoned block of almost bare farmland into a diverse wildlife habitat by excluding stock and continually planting local tree species over 38 years has been a really rewarding experience and highly recommended.

I use Maginon Wildlife cameras purchased for under \$150 from a certain German supermarket chain which they put on sale twice a year. The file size for each pic is about 2.5 MB which is reasonable resolution.

“The tricky bit with wildlife cams is positioning them where the light will illuminate your local wildlife for most of the day. Another consideration is placement of these motion triggered cameras where wind moving the branches of nearby trees will not trigger the shutter, thus avoiding having the SD card in the camera fill up with images of ... nothing. Yes, I learnt both these tricks the hard way.”

I can recommend the use of wildlife cameras to discover just how diverse the species list is on LFW properties.

I believe excluding stock has been an essential and effective part of our strategy in terms of achieving species diversity, but I understand that can be difficult for some LFW properties.

See the 2017 edition of LFW News for more about Brendan and Jenny's property:
[Thoona: 30 Years Later](https://bit.ly/LFW_Newsletter_2017) (or Copy and Paste the website link: https://bit.ly/LFW_Newsletter_2017).

Brendan & Jenny

Nature Projects Online

(Links below to websites were current on the date of this publication: February 2023.)

Rural Nature

The [Rural Nature project](#) seeks to elevate stories of land managers, farmers and rural conservationists within the Australian landscape and beyond. This project will gather recollections: piecing together the past, the present, and future predictions of where our landscapes will end up.

Click on the link below to discover the weird and wonderful sounds that nature makes:

<https://www.ruralnature.org/episodes.html>

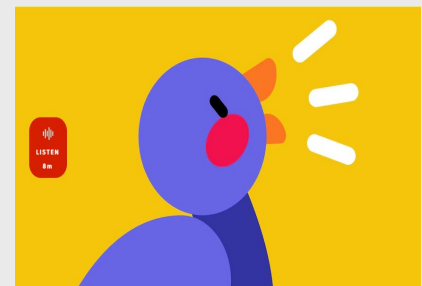


Noisy by Nature

[Click here to listen to the different sounds](#) that Australian nature makes. Along the way we'll find out some fun facts and listen to the chorus of calls that make up the natural world around us.

Website: <https://www.abc.net.au/kidslisten/noisy-by-nature/>

[Noisy by Nature](#) is a collaboration between ABC Kids listen and ABC Science. Host: Dr Ann Jones.



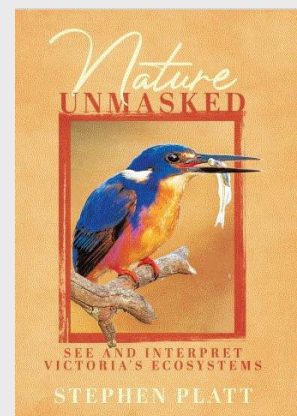
Nature Unmasked

'Nature Unmasked' – This is a book written for people who have a keen interest in nature and want to know more about it. It assumes very limited prior knowledge of the natural world. It's a book about how living things are connected with their environments and each other in the State of Victoria.

OPTION 1: FREE [Click here to download Nature Unmasked.](#)

OPTION 2: Also available in soft cover - \$35 plus \$15 postage & packing.

Enquiries and orders (name, postal address, contact number, email, number of copies) send an email to: natureunmasked1@gmail.com. You will be sent payment details. Website: <https://silverfoxyes.wixsite.com/nature>



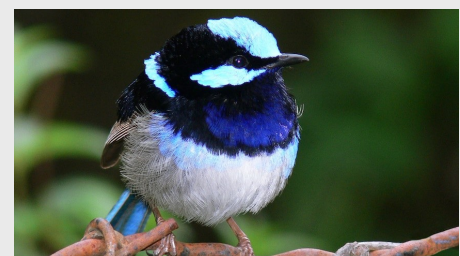
[Click here to add some magic to your day with this fairy-wren quiz](#)

Superb, splendid, and downright lovely. These chipper little song birds flit and flirt their way through our gardens and parks.

Fairy-wrens have probably landed a spot in your heart, but how much do you know about these spectacular birds?

[Click here to learn more](#)

<https://bit.ly/Fairy-Wren-Quiz>



Fat-tailed Dunnarts

6

Fat-tailed dunnarts of the Victorian grasslands

Fat-tailed dunnarts occur across Australia and are found in a variety of habitats. The fat-tailed dunnarts of Victoria are geographically isolated and genetically distinct from the rest of Australia. In Victoria, this species occurs in grasslands, grassy woodlands and shrublands. Grasslands once covered 30% of the state, but there is now <1% of the original habitat remaining.

As 55% of Victoria is freehold agricultural land, most of this species' populations persist on privately owned farmland. Fat-tailed dunnarts can survive in degraded landscapes, but they rely on basalt rocks or soil cracks for shelter which are not maintained in cropped landscapes. *The Fat-tailed Dunnart is listed as Vulnerable in Victoria under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act.*



The Fat-tailed Dunnart is a native marsupial and should never be considered a pest or confused with the introduced House Mouse.



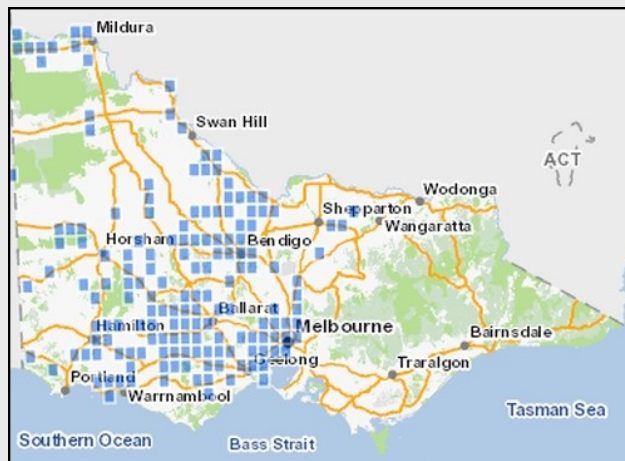
The Fat-tailed Dunnart has a head and body length of 60-90mm, tail 45-70cm in length and weighs only 10-20 g. It has large black eyes, large ears, a pointed snout and a fat tail when in optimum condition.

*Both images at left: Fat-tailed Dunnart (*Sminthopsis crassicaudata crassicaudata*)*

In Victoria, the Fat-tailed Dunnart is only found in the western part of the State generally west of the Hume Highway. Concentrations occur on the Victorian Volcanic Plains, west of Geelong.

For more information and tips on how to protect and attract them to your property, visit the [SWIFFT website](https://www.swiff.net.au/):

Or, Copy and Paste: https://www.swiff.net.au/cb_pages/sp_fat-tailed_dunnart.php



A Regenerative Story

Limestone Road | A Regenerative Story

John Carruthers; Limestone Road • Yandoit

John Carruthers and his team have put together a terrific video of their revegetation work at Yandoit, in central Victoria. For more information about the project, visit the website or contact John directly using the details below.

“We accepted stewardship of Limestone Road, Yandoit, in Central Victoria, in 2017. Since then we have hastened slowly. Our aspirations for this block are limited only by our imagination. And the strength of our tribe: in you we trust. Thank you Peter Watts for your breathtaking videography, and also to Dan Palmer, Greg Denney, David Griffiths, Ken Wellard, Nioka Mellick, Graeme Jennings, Ben Boxshall, Paul Foreman, Cassia Read, Adam Grubb, Nathan Edwards, David Holmgren, Ian Lillington, Ian Higgins, Geoff Park, Anne Bunting, Deane Belfield, Scott Rossiter, Sue Turner, Andrew Rouse, Dom and Julie Purcell, Charles Gillies, Joel Meadows, Josh Meadows, Danni Moore, Terry Willis and others. Our story unfolds thanks to you.”

John Carruthers

Limestone Road • Yandoit

M: +61 412 591 995

E: john.limestoneroad@gmail.com

A Regenerative Project: <https://vimeo.com/677045358/a3c1404868>

[Click here or on the image below](#) - it should take you to the video, otherwise copy & paste the link above (depending on your internet service, allow a minute or two for the video to play).



Plastic Tree Guards

Plastic Tree Guards - are they beneficial?

Seedling growth rate is significantly improved when using plastic guards. Seedling survival rates increase from 60% for unguarded trees to >90% when protected by plastic guards. However, the guarding of plants is only one of a number of factors which influence the survival of plants.

These include:

- ◆ **Timing** - Depending on location, soil types and climatic conditions. For example, soil is still warm and potentially moist in late autumn into early winter. Frost may impact some species.
- ◆ **Site preparation** - Ensure weeds are adequately controlled to reduce competition. Consider the use of weed matting or mulch. Ensure rabbit burrows/warrens are ripped and fumigated and the area to be planted is adequately fenced to control stock.
- ◆ **Choice of plant** - Obtain indigenous tube stock of local provenance from a reputable nursery. Stock should not be taken directly from glass or poly houses but should be hardened off outside, well before planting.



Healthy seedlings, correctly planted, require guarding to protect them during the early growth stages from grazing animals such as rabbits and wallabies. Consider the cost of guarding individual plants compared to erecting animal proof fences around the planted area. Also consider the visual impact of using plastic guards compared with wire mesh.

- ◆ **Preparation:** Many plants do not survive long because they are incorrectly planted. Ideally, holes should be twice as wide and deep as the container and soil well broken-up. Plants should be watered the night before planting and gently removed from the tube by holding the seedling between your first and second fingers, turning the tube upside down and tapping the base while easing the plant out. Care should be taken to ensure the soil surrounding the roots remains intact.
- ◆ **Planting:** Support the roots and stem while backfilling the hole ensuring the base of the stem is level with the top of the hole. Use fine dirt to fill around the roots and firm with your fingertips only. Do not fill the hole with imported soil as this will create a sump effect which will result in waterlogging of the root system and death of the plant. Next, water each plant with half to one bucket of water, pouring the water gently so the soil is not washed away. This is particularly important to remove air from around the roots and to give the plants a good start.
- ◆ **Maintenance.** Many people are under the false impression that once the plant is in the ground and protected by a plastic tree guard that it can be forgotten. This is one of the main reasons for high plant mortality in the early weeks following planting. Bamboo stakes are easily dislodged, guards can lift providing access for rabbits and weeds. Check tree guards at regular intervals after planting.

Rural Nature

The Rural Nature project was started by Sean McConnell and seeks to elevate stories of land managers, farmers and rural conservationists within the Australian landscape and beyond. This project will gather recollections: piecing together the past, the present, and future predictions of where our landscapes will end up.

Taming nature, diverting rivers into channels, draining wetlands into dams, clearing that last patch of remnant vegetation to squeeze in a lateral irrigator: piece by piece, 'nature' has been, and is being, chipped away. As ecosystems become more fragile, climate change threatens to tip the already tentative balance.

Hear from Sean as he interviews land owners who are balancing production with conservation, restoring and protecting landscapes, and taking our land use to new innovative places. Click on images below and listen to each episode, or [Click here for more information](#) and to listen to the recordings. Alternatively, copy and paste the following link: <https://www.ruralnature.org/episodes.html>



[Click here for more information](#) and to listen to the recordings, or copy and paste the following link: <https://www.ruralnature.org/episodes.html>

Helping Platypus

HOW TO HELP A DISPLACED PLATYPUS

This article and the next are both borrowed from the *Newsletter of the Australian Platypus Conservancy* (APC) (Issue 87 – February 2022). [Click here to read and download a copy.](#)

A juvenile platypus typically emerges from its nesting (or nursery) burrow for the first time in mid-summer (though possibly a bit earlier at the northern end of the species' range in Queensland and up to 6 weeks later in Tasmania), when it's around 3-4 months old.

At this age, youngsters face a steep learning curve if they are to survive – it is believed that their mothers will continue to provide milk for at most a few weeks before juveniles are left to fend for themselves. However, it's also likely that most recently weaned juveniles will continue to share their mother's home range until at least late autumn, when many choose to disperse in search of a suitable home of their own. In the intervening period they continue to grow but also tend to lose condition, becoming skinnier as they compete with their mother, siblings and neighbours for food.

First-year juveniles are far more likely than older animals to be encountered by a human on dry land, either near a creek or river or in an unexpected setting such as a puddle by the side of a road. The person is then faced with having to decide what (if anything) should be done to assist the animal's survival.

In some cases, a juvenile may be in genuine trouble and unable to survive without human intervention. This is particularly likely to be true for very small juveniles that have only recently emerged from a nesting burrow and are also in poor condition. For example, a tiny and very weak female was recently found at Malmsbury in Victoria, lying about 30 metres from the edge of the Coliban River (see photo below).

Deciding what to do with a displaced platypus will depend on the animal's behaviour, physical condition (fat vs average weight vs thin), age class and the circumstances in which it is found, along with any evidence of injury. It is best to first contact the [Australian Platypus Conservancy](#) who will provide advice on what to do given the circumstances of the displaced platypus.



Contact Details for the
[Australian Platypus Conservancy](#)

Telephone: 03 5416 1478

Email:

platypus.apc@westnet.com.au
or use their website [contact form](#)

If you think a platypus needs help, it is best to first contact the [Australian Platypus Conservancy](#) who will provide advice on what to do given the circumstances of the displaced platypus.

Platypus Rescue Guidelines are available on the APC website to assist in decision-making: [Platypus Rescue Guidelines](https://platypus.asn.au/2022/03/01/platypus-rescue-guidelines/) (<https://platypus.asn.au/2022/03/01/platypus-rescue-guidelines/>).

Helping Platypus

THEIR TAIL TELLS THE TALE

A rescued platypus's physical condition is important information when deciding how best to help the animal. Because a platypus stores around half of its total body fat in its tail, applying a gentle "squeeze test" midway along the tail's length can provide useful insight into the animal's overall physical condition.

Not surprisingly, the tails of most wild individuals normally attest to an intermediate, average condition – the edges can be bent inwards but the middle 30-60% of the tail remains firm and unbending. Interestingly, research conducted by Drs A. J. Hulburt and Tom R. Grant has found that the average adult platypus has enough energy stored in its body fat to survive approximately 3 weeks of fasting in summer or 2 weeks in the colder winter months.



The tail of a platypus that is in really excellent condition will be packed so firmly with stored fat that the tail edges will barely bend inwards when pressed.

In contrast, the tail edges of a really thin animal will be so depleted of energy reserves that they can easily be made to touch each other (as shown at left); in more extreme cases, the whole tail can be folded in half along its length.

By comparison, juveniles were typically found to have enough body fat to survive for an estimated 4 weeks at the time they first enter the water – an important energy reserve to assist their survival as they learn to find food on their own. However, this is reduced to just 6 days by the end of a juvenile's first winter, testifying to the very genuine challenges facing a young platypus trying to make its way in the world.

The [Arthur Rylah Institute \(ARI\)](#) is working with the [Australian Platypus Conservancy](#), several catchment management authorities (CMAs) and local communities to increase our understanding of threats and improve Platypus habitat. ([Click here](#) for more information: [Helping Platypus Recover](#)).

Or, copy and paste the link below:

<https://www.ari.vic.gov.au/research/threatened-plants-and-animals/helping-platypus-recover>

History of Koalas In Victoria

Hunted, marooned, re-introduced, contracepted: a history of Koala management in Victoria.
(Peter Menkhorst, 2008. *Australian Zoologist* 34:73-92)

Management of Koala populations began in Victoria in about 1910, at which time the species was undergoing a severe decline in population number and distribution. The fortuitous transfer of small numbers of Koalas to two coastal islands in the late 19th Century allowed intensive conservation management to begin in 1923, and it has continued almost unabated for the subsequent 84 years.

Initially, Koalas were marooned for conservation purposes on four other large coastal islands, and several smaller ones, including two in the Murray River. These island populations were then used to re-introduce the species to remaining habitat across the former natural range of the species in Victoria and south-east South Australia. In the process intractable over-browsing problems were inadvertently created at ten sites.

Since about 1985, the sole reason for translocation has been to protect natural values from the impacts of Koala over-browsing. Since 1995, considerable research effort has been directed at finding suitable in-situ population control mechanisms. During the 84 year program more than 24 000 Koalas were translocated to about 250 release sites and Koala populations have been successfully re-established in most areas of suitable habitat in Victoria. The genetic costs of using inbred populations as the source of animals for re-introduction are perhaps yet to be fully realised.

Koalas rely solely on the foliage of Eucalyptus trees for food. Further, they show distinct preferences for the foliage of a small number of tree species at a given site and often prefer the foliage of individual trees over other individuals of the same species. Consequently, the number of Koalas that a given area can support is a function of the density of preferred browse tree species and the frequency of palatable or nutritious individuals of those species.

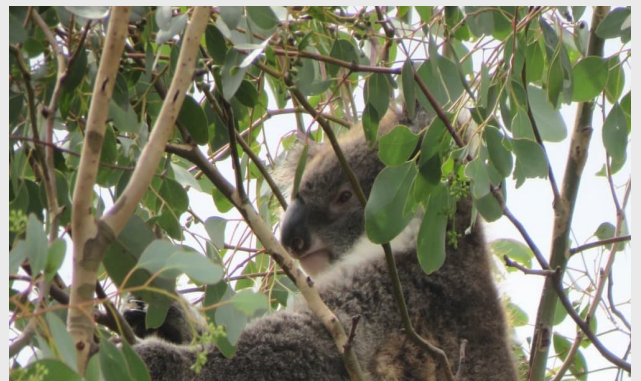
Koalas are long-lived – in Victoria many individuals reach 12-15 years of age and a few tagged and translocated animals are known to have lived for over 20 years. Koalas are also highly fecund with many southern Victorian females producing a single young in most years of their 8-10 year breeding life. Further, predation now plays only a very minor role in population regulation. Consequently, populations can increase rapidly. Populations that are free of Chlamydiosis, which can cause infertility in females, may double every three years; populations in which Chlamydiosis is active can still have a doubling time of about 12 years. As a result, in southern Australia, populations of Koalas in patchy or isolated habitat have a history of reaching unsustainable densities leading to over-browsing of forage trees, widespread tree death and, in extreme cases, mass starvation of Koalas.

[Click here](#) (or copy & paste the link below) to download the full report:

(<https://bit.ly/History-of-Koalas-in-Victoria>)

[Click here](#) (or copy & paste the link below) to hear what a Koala call sounds like:

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcTdpDsoAw4>)



Koala Translocation

Koala Translocation in Victoria: From French Island to Tallarook State Forest: assessing habitat suitability and animal survival. *(Peter Menkhorst, Arthur Rylah Institute).*

In Victoria, translocation has been an important component of Koala management for more than 90 years. The purpose of translocating Koalas has changed in this time as the conservation status of the species has changed. In recent decades, over-abundance of Koalas in certain locations has led to over-browsing of habitat resulting in defoliation and eventually death of preferred feed trees. The aims of translocation in these cases are to reduce habitat degradation and declining Koala health.

Despite the huge scale and duration of this translocation strategy, there have been few science-based investigations into how individual Koalas fare after translocation that can inform future management strategies. To support the translocation of Koalas from French Island, the Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI) identified areas of habitat in central Victoria that may be suitable to receive animals, undertook a trial translocation and assessed the short-term survivorship of individuals.

Translocated Koalas showed very high survivorship during this study (97%), indicating that they successfully adapted to the new environment and unfamiliar Eucalyptus foliage available at the release site. Based on this, several hundred animals have since been released in Tallarook State Forest, which contains over 5000 ha of suitable habitat.

For the full report, copy and paste the link below or [click here to read it.](#)

<https://bit.ly/Koala-Translocation-In-Victoria>



Image Above (Left):

A newly translocated Koala about to explore it's new habitat.



Image Above (Right):

Translocated koalas being released into Tallarook State Forest.

What Are The Best Trees to Plant for Koalas in Victoria?

The best trees to plant for koalas in Victoria are the indigenous trees that naturally grow there. The idea that they only eat one species of eucalypt is a myth. Koalas will usually eat the gum-leaves from where they live, but can be fussy about the quality of foliage from different trees. [Visit the Koala Clancy Foundation](#) website for more details.

Crested Bellbird

14

The Crested bellbird (*Oreoica gutturalis*) is a medium-sized bird of dry forest and woodland habitats with shrubby understoreys, including Box Ironbark Forests and associated woodlands. The male is about 20 cm long, with a grey head, a black crest and breast, and a grey or brownish body. The female and juvenile are similar but the colours are more muted and the black breast is absent. Females may be mistaken for a Grey Shrike-thrush. Starting softly and becoming progressively louder, their distinctive call is a high pitched bell-like sound. More often heard than seen, calling from an elevated, exposed perch, they are superb ventriloquists causing confusion in their location: [Click to hear their call.](#)

Crested Bellbirds feed on seeds and small invertebrates, foraging on the ground or in low bushes. The deep, cup-shaped nest is near the ground, in dense shrub, the crevice of a stump or disused babbler nest. They may eat hairy caterpillars and use them as a decoy, scattering them around the nest, perhaps placed there as camouflage for the young nestlings (see images at bottom of page).

If you encounter this marvellous bird, please lodge your observation with the [Victorian Biodiversity Atlas \(aka VBA\)](#) or [Bird-life Australia](#) (<https://birddata.birdlife.org.au/>).

Crested Bellbird and Box Ironbark Forest images by Felicity Johnson.

(Land For Wildlife Coordinator from 1998 to 2008).



For more information about this interesting bird, [visit Graeme Chapman's webpage](#), including recordings of their call.

Images at left by Graeme Chapman.

Using Remote Cameras

Using Remote Cameras for Wildlife Detection

Remote Cameras (also known as trail cameras) provide an opportunity to capture images of wildlife in a location where using a standard (e.g., DSLR) camera is not practical or useful. Standard cameras require you to be present and potentially disturb your subject, while a remote camera will take pictures or video when a sensor is triggered and save them for viewing later. They can be left outside (deployed) for any period of time, depending on battery life and image storage capacity.

Remote cameras have the ability to take images at night, with a built-in flash. Many models have an invisible infrared flash, so that the flash happens and the photo is taken without anything being seen other than the camera just sitting there, apparently doing nothing.

Many remote cameras have a "camo" finish and are waterproof enough to be left out in the rain. They can be tied or strapped onto a tree or other structure, or mounted on a tripod, normally used for a standard camera. If security is an issue, it's possible to strap them (e.g. to a tree trunk) with a steel cable similar to a bicycle lock as a theft deterrent.



Images above (L—R): Glider sp. (black & white); Tree Mounted Camera; Wildlife pond with a remote camera set-up on a tree trunk (Peaceful Dove at the right of image, sitting on a rock).

As most of our mammals are nocturnal, we rarely see them. A remote camera is the ideal way to observe and learn about their behaviour without disturbing them.

When deploying the remote camera, any location with suitable habitat or with signs of animal activity are good starting points. Look for signs of animal paths or natural openings such as adjacent to rock ledges, logs or creek beds. It may also be useful to place the remote camera in locations with contrasting vegetation structures, such as densely vegetated versus open areas. You can simply mount the camera on a tree trunk or tripod and leave overnight for multiple nights.

Try to minimize your movement and number of visits to the camera as this may deter some species if they detect your scent. Many wildlife species are curious and may investigate the camera. The camera can be placed where you suspect wildlife are visiting or simply going past.

To observe wildlife, you could set-up a small pond (see image above) as described in the 2016 LFW Newsletter “Using Small Ponds to Attract Wildlife”: https://bit.ly/LFW_Newsletter_2016

and attract a diversity of wildlife for your remote camera to record images or videos. Alternatively, it is possible to set-up a remote watering point which may also bring wildlife in, as described in the [2021 LFW Newsletter \(page 10\)](https://bit.ly/LFW_40thAnniversary) - or copy and paste the link: https://bit.ly/LFW_40thAnniversary

Slender Lizards and Snakes

*Or, when Snakes are not Snakes and what's the difference anyway:
They both look and behave like snakes!*

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This is not your usual snake article alerting you to the dangers of snakes or what to do if you encounter one. Having said that, it is of course wise during warm to hot weather in spring, summer and autumn to be “alert and sensible, but not alarmed”.

Several species of legless lizards and small bodied snakes (less than 50cm long) can be found throughout Victoria. While all large snakes are of obvious concern and easily recognised, the main snake of greatest interest is the Eastern Brown Snake. Most of us know what a mature Brown Snake looks like. It's when we encounter legless lizards that we may confuse them with young (and therefore small) brown snakes or other small-bodied adult snakes.

To clarify, legless lizards, sometimes known as worm-lizards, are not snakes! Snakes don't have eyelids or external ears, while most lizards do. Many "legless" lizards also have tiny “flaps” or remnant limbs, while snakes typically have no external appendages at all.

The images below of a Striped Legless lizard show the two important differences between a legless lizard and a snake: a visible ear opening and “flaps” - or, left-overs from legs. Another difference is that lizards have a flat, fleshy tongue, rather than a forked one - but neither of these significant differences are obvious to a startled observer, suddenly coming across an unexpected reptile.

Except for the Hooded Scaly-foot (only found in northern Victorian grasslands), legless lizards *Do Not* have a black head. Some individuals may have a slaty-grey head, but never with a distinctive black-head. Remember, legless lizards will always have a visible ear-opening and a fleshy “lizard” tongue, both not-present in snakes.



Note the (obscure) ear-opening above; and, the more visible “Flap” in the bottom image.

Striped Legless Lizard
image by Peter Robertson (Wildlife Profiles).

Brolga Conservation

The Brolga (*Grus rubicunda*) is a light-grey coloured crane, standing about 1.8 metres high, it has a long, straight bill, long dark coloured legs and a wing span of about 2 metres. Appearance changes with age. Immature birds (up to 10 months of age) have a grey, fully feathered head. Juveniles (11 to 22 months) gradually lose their head feathering and attain a pale orange-red head colouring.

Adults have a conspicuous orange-red head, which contrasts with the bare crown of greenish-grey skin and have a black dewlap under the chin. Adult males and females appear similar, although males are larger.

Brolga numbers are highest in south-west Victoria compared with northern irrigation areas (Est. population 60-70). The higher numbers in the south-west are probably due to higher rainfall and the occurrence of more suitable freshwater habitats.

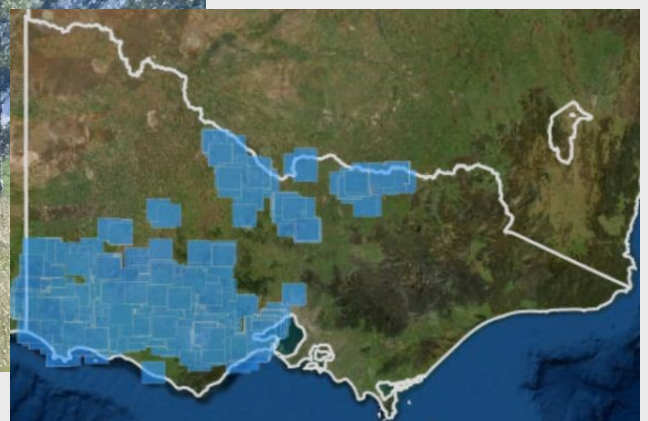
Drought conditions combined with permanent loss of wetlands due to drainage have been major factors affecting low breeding success. The protection of wetlands, particularly on private property, is crucial in retaining suitable breeding habitats. This includes appropriate management of grazing on wetlands for improved habitat quality and fox control around breeding areas for improved breeding success.

[Click here for more information](#) or copy and paste the following link to visit the [SWIFFT](#) website: https://www.swifft.net.au/cb_pages/sp_brolga.php

Image right: Foxes are a major predator (SWIFFT website).

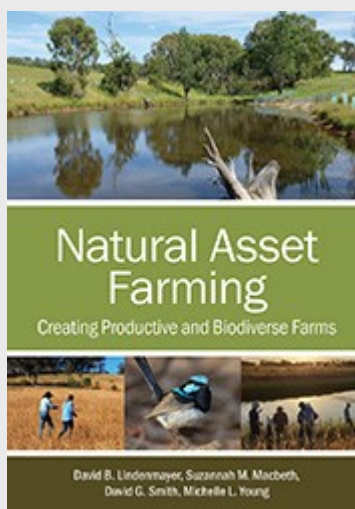
Image below right: Distribution of Brolga across Victoria (SWIFFT website & Federation University, Ballarat).

The image below was sent in by Thais Hardman, taken near Darlington, north-west of Mortlake, in south-west Victoria.



Recent Publications

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NATURAL ASSET FARMING

By: David Lindenmayer, Suzannah Macbeth, David Smith, Michelle Young

Creating Productive and Biodiverse Farms: Enhancing the natural assets of agricultural landscapes for biodiversity and productivity.

Farm dams, creeklines, vegetation and rocky outcrops are natural assets that are essential for healthy, sustainable farms. Protecting and enhancing these elements of natural capital on farms not only supports biodiversity, but also contributes to farm productivity and to the well-being of farmers and farming communities.

Drawing on two decades of long-term ecological monitoring and knowledge exchange with farmers, Landcare groups and natural resource management experts, this book is a tool for building and enhancing natural assets in agricultural landscapes.

Available from CSIRO Publishing. [Click here for more information.](#) Or copy and paste the following website address into your internet browser: <http://www.publish.csiro.au/book/8020/>

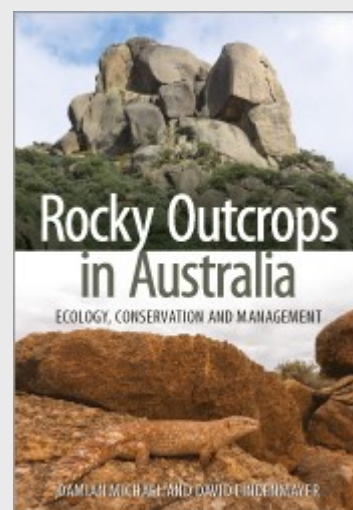
ROCKY OUTCROPS IN AUSTRALIA

Ecology, Conservation and Management

By: Damian Michael, David Lindenmayer

Discover the incredible biodiversity on rocky outcrops and the importance of conserving these crucial landscape features.

Rocky outcrops are landscape features with disproportionately high biodiversity values relative to their size. They support specialised plants and animals, and a wide variety of endemic species. To Indigenous Australians, they are sacred places and provide valuable resources. Despite their ecological and cultural importance, many rocky outcrops and associated biota are threatened by agricultural and recreational activities, forestry and mining operations, invasive weeds, altered fire regimes and climate change.



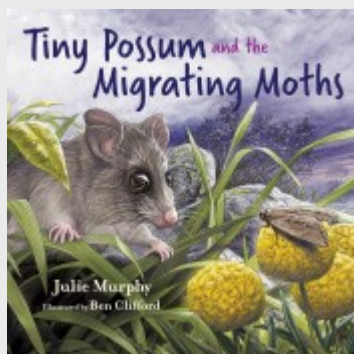
Available from CSIRO Publishing. [Click here for more information.](#) Or copy and paste the following website address into your internet browser: <http://www.publish.csiro.au/book/7725/>

Recent Publications

TINY POSSUM AND THE MIGRATING MOTHS

By: Julie Murphy

Illustrated by: Ben Clifford



A beautiful story of the life of the critically endangered mountain pygmy-possum.

High in the Australian Alps, Possum needs to find enough food and shelter to survive the harsh alpine winter. She will spend months hibernating under a blanket of snow. Will she last through the year to successfully raise a new family?

The mountain pygmy-possum is small in size but huge in appeal! Once thought to be extinct, there are now around 2500 of these tiny survivors in the wild. They need snow and bogong moths to survive, and also the support of great conservation work.

Available from CSIRO Publishing. [Click here for more information.](#) Or copy and paste the following website address into your internet browser: <http://www.publish.csiro.au/book/8009/>

FEATHER AND BRUSH

A History of Australian Bird Art

Second Edition

By: Penny Olsen

Explores the rich history of Australian bird art, featuring more than 400 images by 158 artists.

Feather and Brush traces the history of bird art in Australia – from the simple engravings illustrating accounts of the earliest European voyages of discovery to the diversity of artwork available today. It explores the early European approach, in which naval draughtsmen, officers, convicts, settlers, naturalists, artists and scientists alike contributed both to the art and the science of ornithology, through to a wealth of contemporary artists who feature birds in their works.



Available from CSIRO Publishing. [Click here for more information.](#) Or copy and paste the following website address into your internet browser: <http://www.publish.csiro.au/book/7993/>

Land for Wildlife Contacts

Land For Wildlife Contacts are at the following Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) offices:

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Resources & Events



[SWIFFT](#) have been running quarterly seminars for over 15 years with increasing popularity. These interactive sessions help to connect communities and share stories.

You are invited to attend the [SWIFFT](#) video conferences. [Click here](#) or copy and paste the following link to participate:

https://www.swifft.net.au/cb_pages/video_conferencing.php

Environmental Volunteering Opportunities

[Click here to find opportunities including grants available](#)

Victorian Environmental Volunteer Coordinators are keen to connect interested people with volunteering opportunities. They are not only focusing on traditional on-ground caring for landscapes, but also more broadly on sustainability, citizen science, wildlife care, energy and climate change activities as well.

The following coordinators can help you find out more or connecting in with other groups or activities in your area:

Geraldine Davis: geraldine.davis@delwp.vic.gov.au
(Grampians and Barwon South-West Regions)

Belinda Pritchard: belinda.pritchard@delwp.vic.gov.au
(Loddon - Mallee Region)

Bronwyn Astridge: bronwyn.astridge@delwp.vic.gov.au (Hume Region)

Zoe Squires: zoe.squires@delwp.vic.gov.au (Port Phillip Region)

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Phone the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) on the following free-call number if you have any questions relating to natural resources and the environment: **136 186**