

SEANA Southern Grampians area bird and wildflower tours 2-4 Oct. 2009

Report on birds and wildflower tours led by Rod Bird

Saturday morning & afternoon sessions (each 3 hours) to Rifle Range & Bryans Swamp

The group drove along the Victoria Valley Rd to the south end of the Rifle Range. We parked by the lane to the west and walked across the road and up the closed track to the range (a distance of about 400 m). We saw very few birds and our total of 14 species was fewer than the exceptionally large number of orchids seen (22). The group were more than delighted with the wildflower display.

Birds seen at the Rifle Range:

Brown Thornbill	Grey Shrike-thrush	Rufous Whistler
Common Bronzewing	Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo	Spotted Pardalote
Crimson Rosella	Mistletoebird	Superb Fairy-wren
Eastern Spinebill	New Holland Honeyeater	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Emu	Scarlet Robin	

Orchids seen at the Rifle Range:

<i>Caladenia carnea</i> (many)	<i>Diuris pardina</i> (many, esp. on range)
<i>Caladenia clavigera</i> (several)	<i>Glossodia major</i> (100s)
<i>Caladenia parva</i>	<i>Leptoceras menziesii</i> (leaves)
<i>Caladenia phaeoclavia</i>	<i>Pterostylis concinna</i>
<i>Caladenia gracilis</i> (many)	<i>Pterostylis melagramma</i>
<i>Caladenia iridescens</i> (1 only)	<i>Pterostylis nana</i>
<i>Caladenia venusta</i> (many)	<i>Pterostylis nutans</i>
<i>Caleana major</i> (1 only)	<i>Pyrorchis nigricans</i> (leaves)
<i>Calochilus robertsonii</i> (bud)	<i>Thelymitra antennifera</i>
<i>Corybas incurvus</i> (leaves)	<i>Thelymitra pauciflora</i> (bud)
<i>Diuris orientis</i>	<i>Thelymitra</i> sp (leaves – Blotched Sun-orchid?)

Our tour then proceeded via Crawfords Rd, past a farm wetland to McIntyre's Crossing –Vic Valley Hall Rd, then left at the T junction and follow around to Bryans Swamp. This route gives a good view of the adjacent wetlands (Marneys Swamp and others – all drained but still holding water). We viewed birds from behind a pine tree 100 m west of the Church. The swamp was full and frogs in fine voice. The most prolific waterbird was a raft of 800 Eurasian Coot. Rufous Songlarks were seen and heard, along with Eurasian Skylark. In all, 39 species of bird were seen at or near the swamp.

Birds seen at and near Bryans Swamp:

Australian Magpie	Masked Lapwing
Australasian Pipit	Musk Duck
Australian Shelduck	Royal Spoonbill (Crawford Rd dam)
Australasian Shoveller	Rufous Songlark
Black-shouldered Kite	Pacific Black Duck
Black-tailed Native Hen (Crawford Rd)	Straw-necked Ibis
Black Swan	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Blue-billed Duck	Superb Fairy-wren
Brown Songlark	Swamp Harrier
Emu	Welcome Swallow
Eurasian Coot	Wedge-tailed Eagle
Eurasian Skylark	Whistling Kite
Forest Raven	White Ibis
Great Egret	White-faced Heron
Grey Shrike-thrush	White-fronted Chat
Grey Teal	White-necked Heron
Hoary-headed Grebe	White-plumed Honeyeater
Little Eagle	Willie Wagtail
Long-billed Corella	Yellow-billed Spoonbill (Crawford Rd)
Magpie-lark	

Sunday morning excursion to Lake Linlithgow & associated wetlands

Stop 1 – Lake Linlithgow. We drove from Dunkeld along the Glenelg Highway to Lake Linlithgow Rd, thence south to North Lakes Rd where we turned west and stopped on the high bank of the lake.

The lake held water in the central and southern section; only a little was seen in the northern section, mostly obscured by grass. Whiskered Terns were seen over the lake, with Black-winged Stilt in the distance. Brown Songlarks called and Skylarks sang overhead. The various tree-planting projects of HFNC and Parks Victoria (through John Harris) were indicated.

Stop 2 –Lake Kennedy. Next stop was at the junction of West Lakes Rd and Chatsworth Rd. The saline lake was full and we viewed it from there – a few Eurasian Coot, Hoary-headed Grebe, Black Swan and Grey Teal – noting John Harris’s tree-planting and fencing, and the view to Mt Napier.

Stop 3 – Soldiers Swamp. We turned east, then took Huff’s Rd south to Hamilton Highway, turned right there and headed back towards Hamilton until West Boundary Rd on the left was reached. Shortly, Soldiers Swamp was viewed from the rise. A few Chestnut Teal, Grey Teal, Australian Shoveler, Hardhead, Masked Lapwing, Black Swan, Hoary-headed Grebe and Purple Swamphen were seen.

Stop 4 – Tabor Swamp. Continuing on, we turned into an unused road reserve that led past a farm house and sheds to Tabor Swamp – another of John Harris’s Parks Victoria projects. We walked onto the low bridge and viewed the works John has installed to hold water in shallow ponds across the slope. The stream was flowing briskly but there were few birds there at this time (Cisticola were seen, along with Australasian Pipit and Eurasian Skylarks) – the wetland is at its best in summer.

Stop 5 – Lake Linlithgow. We continued east to the Tabor Church, turning left to return to the Hamilton Highway, then left again for a short distance to Lakes Rd to the right. This took us past some drained swamps (with a fringe of *Gahnia trifida*) and the little **Harnath Swamp**, holding water but few birds, to Chatsworth Rd. Directly opposite is the entrance to Lake Linlithgow. We viewed the water from the high banks on The Point. There were a few Swan nests and Whiskered Tern scanning the lake bed. Water levels were low and birds not common.

Stop 6 – Bullrush Swamp. We drove slowly past Bullrush Swamp, a short way east along Chatsworth Rd, instead of stopping. Although there was water seen below the grass in the swamp there were too few birds seen to spend any time there and so we continued on to Mibus Lane, turning left. A Whistling Kite, Brown Falcon and Black-shouldered Kite were seen en route.

Stop 7 - Krauses Swamp. This was our final stop. There we saw a few Pink-eared Duck amongst Grey Teal, and Australian Shelduck. The Swamp was overflowing into the stream under the road and connecting to Bullrush Swamp to the west. Brolga can often be seen there but not this time.

Forest Lane - we continued north towards Dunkeld via Forest Lane, where the wide reserve carries a magnificent sward of native grasses and herbs. Regrettably, a couple of years ago a landholder sprayed and cultivated a 6-m strip along the paddock boundary and that now carries only Capeweed and pasture weeds. We did not have time to stop here to look at the flora (it is at its best a little later) or to look for the Banded Lapwings nesting in the paddocks to the west (we counted 16 birds later that afternoon on a stubble paddock). From Forest lane we turned right at its junction with Hayes Rd and drove on to its junction with Penshurst Rd, then turning left to go back to the Glenelg Highway and Dunkeld. Our party arrived back at the Retreat at 12.30 pm, in time for lunch, before departing.

Birds seen on the wetlands tour:

Australasian Pipit	Common Starling	Masked Lapwing
Australian Magpie	Eurasian Skylark	Pink-eared Duck
Australian Shelduck	European Goldfinch	Purple Swamphen
Australian Shoveller	Golden-headed Cisticola	Restless Flycatcher
Black Swan	Grey Teal	Welcome Swallow
Black-shouldered Kite	Hardhead	Whiskered Tern
Brown Falcon	Hoary-headed Grebe	Whistling Kite
Chestnut Teal	House Sparrow	White-faced Heron
Common Greenfinch	Magpie-lark	White-necked Heron