

SWAMPS, RIVERS & RANGES SUMMER UPDATE

BIRD SURVEYS

Summer surveys are conducted throughout February
Update from Richard Loyn:

Many thanks to all who have submitted spring counts. It was a very strange spring, with heavy rain and cold weather lasting well into November, and we feel for all who have suffered the effects of flooding.

A total of 917 individual birds of 99 species were observed (on or off-site) from 30 completed surveys. Across all sites the ten most numerous species were Superb Fairy-wren (109), Australian Magpie (72), Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (68), Rufous Whistler (60), Yellow-faced Honeyeater (52), Grey Shrike-thrush (45), Noisy Miner (44), White-plumed Honeyeater (42), Eastern Rosella (38) and Grey Fantail (35). One of these species (Rufous Whistler) is a summer migrant to our area, and two others are much more common in summer than winter (Yellow-faced Honeyeater and Grey Fantail), and all three appear to be more common than usual this year. Summer migrants were generally late arriving, perhaps waiting for warmer drier weather. Painted Honeyeaters arrived near Beechworth in mid October (three weeks later than last year), and they are now holding territory though they remain scarcer than usual. Excitingly, a pair of Regent Honeyeaters made two attempts to nest on private property near Carboor, while feeding on Red Box and then Yellow Box blossom, but they were deterred by heavy rain. An individual was seen feeding from flowering Callistemons in the suburbs of Wangaratta and Glenrowan. Numbers of Black-chinned Honeyeaters were also observed in the Carboor area.

Other special birds found recently include Peregrine Falcon, Turquoise Parrots, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike and Cicadabird. A flock of 40 Gang-gang Cockatoos in forest near Carboor (seen by Geoff Barrow) contained few adult males, suggesting most were immatures and they have had a good breeding season. Eastern Koels are again calling loudly in gardens and parks (e.g. Wangaratta, Beechworth and Murmungee) and we should keep an eye out for an even rarer and noisier species of cuckoo, the Channel-billed Cuckoo, as one was seen three times in Melbourne 11-12 November and it is known to follow floodwaters. It is the largest brood parasite in the world, and it lays its eggs mainly in ravens' nests.

Cuckoos observed on our surveys have included a Brush Cuckoo, Fan-tailed Cuckoos and both Horsfield's and Shining Bronze-Cuckoos (but no Pallid Cuckoos, which have presumably remained inland this year).

Stubble Quail and Golden-headed Cisticolas were found again in paddocks containing long grass, but heavy grass growth may have contributed to apparent declines in woodland birds such as Brown Treecreeper, Restless Flycatcher, Willie Wagtail, Jacky Winter and Diamond Firetail, especially at higher elevations. No Varied Sittellas were recorded on the surveys submitted so far this spring, and this species seems to be struggling locally, for unknown reasons.

Waterbirds are generally scarce, as there is so much water for them in inland Australia. Nevertheless, it was pleasing to find White-necked Herons nesting again at a small dam near the Warby Ranges. We can expect a big influx of waterbirds when inland waters begin to dry out, perhaps along with inland bush birds such as Budgerigars and Crimson Chats, which have probably had their third consecutive bumper breeding season. It will be interesting to see what we find in the next few months, including our summer surveys in February 2023.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Bird survey volunteer catch ups

We greatly appreciate the efforts of all of our survey volunteers and so want to touch base through a series of morning teas. We encourage new volunteers to join us.

You can join us at the following dates and locations:

Rutherglen - Late January/Early Feb (more detail to come)

Birds in gardens workshop

Coming early Feb 2023

Field day as a follow up to our online event, see real examples of how you can encourage birds into your garden.

SRR AGM

6.30pm Friday 31st March - Wangaratta

Featuring a guest speaker, new members welcome.

We are always interested in hearing what type of events you would like to see in our region, so please let us know.

Please contact our project coordinator, Sophie Enders (swampsriversranges@gmail.com) for membership forms or further information on any of these activities. You can also visit our website for more information

<http://swampsriversandranges.org.au/>



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WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

- We have been collating and analysing our collective bird survey data from Spring - see summary from Richard above.
- We have been planning events and opportunities for delivery across 2023 - see the events section.
- Attended a range of events and planning sessions to help keep SRR well educated in the issues affecting the region.
- We've been involved in the Bush for Birds project with NECMA.
- We enjoyed catching up with bird surveyors in Greta for a field day.
- We have been developing ongoing projects for mammal monitoring in Bushfire affected areas. - If you'd like to get involved please let us know.
- We had a short Christmas break to fresh and reset for another great year.



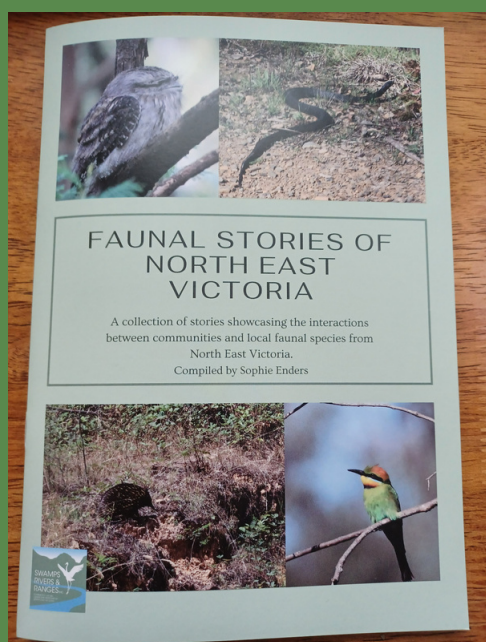
FROGS COMING TO WINTON

- SRR have been excited to be involved with Winton Wetlands project to translocate and reintroduce Growling Grass frogs into the wetlands.
- Recently we've planning engagement opportunities across 2023 and getting the pond and lab facilities ready for the frogs to arrive in early 2023.
- After the project launched in November 2022, Taskforce Growler has been growing in interest rapidly with a range of merchandise now available.
- Opportunities with Taskforce Growler include:
- Frog handling training and husbandry training
 - Insect or vegetable greens food growing
 - Developing your frog ID skills
 - Events and field days across 2023
- If you'd like to get involved in Taskforce Growler and its many opportunities please register at <https://forms.office.com/r/tSSem5BV8S>



Faunal stories have arrived!

We are pleased to announce that our faunal stories of North East Victoria booklets have arrived and they look great. The digital version will go up on our website and hard copies will be available.



Join Us!

Did you know you can become a member of Swamps, Rivers & Ranges? Membership is just \$22 for three years and will help us to continue telling you about our projects and generate information to better manage our landscapes for the benefits of wildlife and people. Get in touch to sign up!

UPCOMING FIELD DAYS:

- Field camera set up
- Field camera retrieval

To join us on an upcoming field day send us an email to register your interest and so we can let you know the specific locations and needs for each day.

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